

Australia's intervention for Agenda Item 2

Australia is alarmed by the sombre picture painted by the SOFI 2022 report on the current state of the world's food security and nutrition. We also recognise the path ahead is challenging. All countries are currently facing a suite of unprecedented challenges stemming from, among other things, the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, rising cost of living, and conflicts.

Advancing global food security is a collective responsibility. This is even more important noting the latest reports from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the UN World Food Programme suggest that global food security is likely to deteriorate further in 2022, with up to 205 million people around the world facing acute food insecurity and requiring urgent assistance.

Australia is committed to play its role to help turn these figures around. We are working hard to implement practical solutions that will help the global community to achieve the 2030 Agenda, in particular SDG 2, and get back on track to end hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition.

In this regard, Australia condemns Russia's unilateral, illegal and immoral aggression against the people of Ukraine, which is a gross violation of international law. Russia's invasion has only served to exacerbate an already precarious global food security situation and lead to a further deterioration in the global economic outlook. Russia's actions are constraining growth, increasing inflation, heightening energy and food insecurity, and elevating financial stability risks. Australia and our partners have imposed targeted financial sanctions to inflict heavy costs on those responsible for Russia's invasion. Targeted sanctions are an appropriate, effective and legitimate measure that are fully compliant with international law, including the United Nations Charter.

Adhering to a global trading system that is predictable, transparent, rules based and non-discriminatory, keeps supply chains open, encourages diversification of food supply and helps ensure food is available when and where it is needed, especially for the most vulnerable. Free and open global trade, underpinned by the multilateral rules-based trading system and risk and science-based decision making, will be essential to facilitate long-term resilience in agriculture, and meet our global food security needs.

We must invest in the multilateral system and support multilateral solutions, including by reinvigorating the World Trade Organization negotiations on agriculture reform. Last year, government support to agriculture across 54 countries increased by 13 per cent to USD 817 billion. Almost half of this support distorts international markets and undermines the important role of trade in our food systems. Reviving the WTO Agriculture reform agenda to address the impact of environmentally harmful subsidies and reduce current and emerging distortions in global markets, will go a long way to help ensure long-term global food security.

Enhancing sustainable agricultural productivity growth at the national level must go hand in hand with support for international trade if we are to advance the cause of global food security. For instance, the OECD has outlined that average global agricultural productivity needs to increase by 28 per cent over the next decade to achieve SDG 2 and simultaneously keep agricultural emissions on track with Paris Agreement targets. However, in recent times, the share of global agriculture sector support for general services, such as innovation, biosecurity and

infrastructure, has declined to 13 per cent of the total support level, down from 16 per cent two decades earlier. Re-directing public supports, including towards investments in innovation, will be key to unlocking the sustainable productivity growth that we need to meet our global goals – particularly in light of the ongoing impacts of climate change.

Australia recognises the importance of taking domestic action to improve the efficiency, productivity, and sustainability of agricultural production. In this regard, we emphasise the importance of recognising there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to sustainability, given the diversity of climatic and environmental conditions that shape agriculture and food production around the world. It will also be critical to remain committed to gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment since these are essential elements for achieving food security and nutrition, and Agenda 2030 more broadly.

Australia will continue to work constructively with all stakeholders, including through the CFS and HLPE processes, to contribute to the development of food systems solutions that are flexible, informed by scientific evidence and appropriate to national contexts, needs and priorities.