

50th Plenary Session of the Committee on World Food Security
Statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Maldives His Excellency Abdulla
Shahid

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We meet at a time when the world faces several crises that affect and exacerbate one another. These include the COVID19 pandemic, climate induced shocks, and conflicts, including the ongoing war in Ukraine. Their cumulative impacts have jeopardized global food security and created the worst cost-of living crisis in a generation.

The international community must work in a coordinated manner to enhance country-led responses to this crisis, both in terms of immediate responses and long-term solutions. These solutions must draw inspiration from and aspire to meet the targets outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In the short-term it is vital that we stabilize prices and accelerate supply chains. In the long-term we must work together to transform our agricultural practices and food systems, so that they are more resilient, fair, sustainable, and inclusive.

Excellencies,

It was in recognition of the need for a coordinated short term and long-term response, that as the President of the 76th Session of the General Assembly, I convened with the Committee on World Food Security, a High Level Special Event entitled “Time to Act Together: Coordinating Policy Responses to the Global Food Crisis” on 18 July.

The event brought together Member States, civil society, the private sector, and other relevant stakeholders, to foster coordinated global policy responses to the current food crises.

What became clear from the event was that there is convergence around the core elements of what would comprise an integrated response to address the cost-of-living crisis we face and enhance food security.

These include:

- Addressing the humanitarian context, by ensuring that even the most vulnerable have affordable access to food.
- Stabilizing markets and commodity prices and avoiding unnecessary trade restrictions.
- Encouraging local production, by supporting and protecting smallholder and family farmers, cooperatives, and SMEs. While doing so, we must also reduce food loss and waste.

- Restoring the availability and affordability of inputs including fertilizers; and advancing agricultural efficiency through innovative approaches.
- Reinforcing social protection systems
- And equipping countries with the necessary financial resources. This includes making financing available as well as affordable, and alleviating debt-burdens.

Excellencies,

The Maldives, like other SIDS that are import-dependent have been severely affected by the cost-of-living crisis, even as the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our economy continues.

While we have social protection schemes to protect our most vulnerable, we cannot sustain them without more revenue.

In terms of food-security, we do not have sufficient land for mass agriculture, and we are dependent on global supply chains.

We are also grappling with the climate crisis. We are determined to do our part, for instance by transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy – yet we can only succeed with the requisite financing, and the collective global will to contain and reverse climate change.

Excellencies,

Since we held the High-level Special Event on Food Security, one of the most significant efforts to address the crisis has been the Black Sea Initiative. We are deeply appreciative of the Secretary General for his critical role in its launching and success.

This initiative allowed the resumption of Ukrainian grain exports and paved the way for Russian food and fertilizers to reach global markets.

It is our hope that this can stabilize prices and address the famine and hunger affecting millions today.

The agreement on the Black Sea Initiative is a strong example of what multilateralism can achieve, even in the face of enormous and complex challenges.

We need more such feats of multilateralism to solve remaining issues, not just regarding food, but other interrelated crisis – including energy, finance, debt, and trade.

Excellencies,

Our task is not easy, and we face ongoing challenges. It is estimated that in just over two years, the number of people experiencing severe food-insecurity doubled from a pre-pandemic figure of 135 million to 276 million.

The war in Ukraine is expected to drive this number to 323 million in 2022. And while this year's challenge is food access, next year's could be about food availability - if there are more shocks to agricultural output.

The challenges we face are borderless in their dimensions and profound in their scale. We must work together because isolated solutions cannot meet the demands of this moment.

Therefore, the work of the United Nations and its relevant agencies is essential, as is the need for coordination among multilateral bodies. Such coordination is exemplified in the Global Crisis Response Group, that brings together all relevant agencies to tackle today's multi-dimensional, multi-faceted crises.

In addition to Governments and formal multilateral bodies, we also need the involvement of the private sector and civil society.

Only a full scale and coordinated mobilization can help us find and sustain comprehensive solutions.

In that spirit, let us resolve to join hands, and work with renewed purpose to address the cost-of-living crisis, address global food insecurity, and solve all remaining challenges.

Thank you.