

Main Statement
By the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to FAO
and other international organizations in Rome,
Ambassador V.L.Vasiliev
on item 3 of the agenda of the 169th Session of the FAO Council

8 April 2022

Director-General,

Mr Independent Chairperson of the Council,

The delegation of the Russian Federation thanks the Director-General of FAO, Dr Qu Dongyu, as well as the Secretariat of the Organization, in particular FAO Chief Economist Maximo Torero, for the preparation of this session of the Council, including the information on the state of the global food market. However, we are compelled to point out that the urgency with which it was convened did not allow the Independent Chairperson to conduct the necessary consultations with the participation of all Members of the Council about the agenda and the documents presented for discussion and decision.

Proceeding from FAO's mandate as a specialized organization in the UN family, I wish to mention the following.

Russia, as one of the biggest producers of agricultural products, is following closely and analysing recent trends in the global food market and is prepared to participate actively in the development of practical measures to improve the situation.

We consider the current state of affairs – the deterioration in food security over the past 5 years – to be the result of a whole series of factors, including the coronavirus pandemic, climate change, the rise in quantity and increase in intensity of natural disasters, the continuation and emergence of new conflicts, and deepening inequality both within countries and between states, most notably between North and South. This is supported by the statement of the UN Secretary-General, Mr A. Guterres, at the UN Food Systems Summit in September 2021; the Executive Director of the UN World Food Programme, Mr. D. Beasley, who warned as early as mid-2020 of the danger of the emergence of "hunger on a biblical scale"; as well as the objective data of the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS). In November 2021, it was reported to the G20 that the rise in the food price index had exceeded its 2008 peak and was just 3% below its 2011 level.

Moreover, UN General Assembly resolution 74/306 of 11 September 2020, adopted in the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasized another significant factor impacting food security. Specifically, the resolution "Strongly urges States to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral economic, financial or trade measures not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that impede the full achievement of economic and social development, particularly in developing countries".

We note with regret that the international community's response to the negative trends in the area of food security was either inadequate or led to the presentation of attractive diagrams without concrete actions in the "field". The time has come for meaningful discussion on this issue.

According to consolidated data from the UN, by the start of this year there were already more than 350 million people in the world facing hunger. A large number of them are in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. The reason: large-scale conflicts and their consequences, notably in Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan and a number of other states. As a result of these conflicts, which were largely provoked or supported from outside, these countries are deprived of the opportunity to develop agriculture and ensure their food security. In total around 60 million people in these countries are in urgent need of food aid. That said, the provision of aid through international organizations is encountering artificial barriers. Russia has repeatedly, in various forums including donor conferences, called for the regularization of this situation, in order to assure the provision of these states with international development aid, including assistance for the reconstruction of agricultural production.

It is no secret that unilateral, illegal, economic sanctions are also impacting agricultural production and the ability of states to ensure their food security. During the sessions of the Committee on World Food Security in December 2021, a group

of countries, Russia included, drew attention to this topic. However, a meaningful discussion of this topic was not achieved due to its blatant disregard by the states that are the authors of these sanctions. Moreover, data presented by Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua shows unequivocally the negative consequences of the restrictions on the food security of these countries.

The initiators of this session are trying to imply that the conflict in Ukraine "is destroying world food security", and blaming Russia for this. We categorically disagree with this presentation of the issue. In 2020, Russia became a net exporter of agricultural production; that is, we supply more to the global food market than we buy. Our supplies have gone to 160 countries around the world, including the most food-insecure states. In the UN World Food Programme alone, Russia contributed more than 160 million dollars in 2020-2021, and this did not include Russian vehicle technology equipment for the WFP global transportation fleet, or food supplies provided through bilateral arrangements. If we are looking at Ukraine, it is worth noting that since the beginning of the conflict in 2014, Russia alone has sent more than 100 humanitarian convoys there, including food convoys. The special military operation by Russia in Ukraine has little impact on global agricultural production. The main problem is the rupture in industrial haulage and financial chains due to the introduction of illegal unilateral sanctions against our country by the West. In fact, large-scale economic war has been declared on Russia. We are talking about more

than 5000 different sanction measures, many of which were introduced even before events in Ukraine. How can we stabilize agricultural commodity value chains if there are seizures of dry-cargo carriers, closures of air corridors, rail and road connections are disrupted, state and private banking activities frozen – in fact a raider seizure of Russian private companies operating abroad, the exclusion of Russia from the SWIFT system? All this makes the delivery of food and agricultural raw materials and fertilizers from Russia and Belarus to countries that need them practically impossible. Therefore the claims by the initiators of this session, that food, agricultural products and fertilizers are not the object of the sanctions, is blatant deceit.

It should also not be forgotten that all these restrictions are also impacting the export of energy from Russia. The worsening of the situation in the energy sphere as a result of the non-market, crude administrative pressure being exerted by a number of countries on the company Gazprom will inevitably impact the production of fertilizers. Many countries, especially developing countries, will in the face of a shortage encounter difficulties with the supply of fertilizers in the current season, which may affect the crop yield in these countries. And the development of Western countries themselves is already seeing consequences in the form of a rise in the price of everything: from utilities to petrol. Ukraine itself is a consumer here.

It is also indicative that developed countries will also try to withdraw from emissions trading mechanisms, with a knock-on effect on food suppliers, energy carriers, fertilizers. This is mentioned directly in the recently adopted, short- and medium-term action strategy of the European Commission in the area of food security and support for farmers and consumers in the EU. The very same Western countries are exacerbating the rise in global prices for food and agricultural produce, heightening the shortages of food products in the poorest regions of the world.

In order to deflect attention from the real reasons for the emergence of tensions in the global food market, the USA and EU are choosing to disseminate blatantly false information that the Russian Armed Forces have supposedly intentionally destroyed the agricultural industry in Ukraine, are exposing agricultural lands to bombardment, are blocking foreign civilian vessels and ports, are obstructing the recovery of agriculture in the controlled territories and so on.

Yet not one of these claims is accompanied by the presentation of credible evidence. Just as information is omitted about daily humanitarian actions by Russia in Ukraine, in the course of which the Ukrainian population is given food, drinking water, and medicines.

Separate attention should be dedicated to the subject of biolaboratories in Ukraine, the activities of which are carried out under the oversight of the US Department of Defense. Materials about this were provided, by us, to the chairs

of the regional groups and to the Secretariat of FAO at a meeting with the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council on 23 March this year. According to the documentary evidence, research was being conducted in the laboratories on dangerous pathogens of animal origin, methods of their transmission and transmission to humans. It is no coincidence that they were all secret in nature. The concealment of the results of the research that was being conducted could lead to the risk of the spread of epizootic diseases and the danger of further deterioration of the food security situation.

We regret that the initiators of this session did not find in themselves the strength for dialogue and a common quest for solutions to the situation, in the spirit of the goals and tasks set out in the preamble to the FAO Constitution. In turn, Russia is open to dialogue. We have examined carefully the information document prepared by the FAO Secretariat and consider that the measures listed in it can help to find solutions to the problems that stand before us. Unilateral approaches without consensus, on the other hand, may block this process.