

U.S. Statement

- Recalling the March 21 letter and co-signature 79 FAO members (22 FAO Council member nations, one member organization, and 56 FAO members who are observers of the Council), the United States proposes for decision the text of Council Document CL 169/4, to be approved in the Report of the 169th Council. The co-sponsorship for this session and its draft decision represents more than one-third of FAO Conference membership.
- We deplore the human suffering shown in horrific images and first-person testimony emerging from Bucha and other towns, documenting apparent atrocities committed by Russian forces in Ukraine.
- Ukraine is a world breadbasket. The impacts of Russia's unjustified and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine recognize no borders. Russia's actions are affecting the entire global food supply chain, as the world still grapples with the pandemic and devastating climate change events.
- On March 24, 140 UN General Assembly members adopted an important resolution addressing the humanitarian impact of Russia's war. They specifically expressed concern about the conflict's impact on increased global food insecurity, in particular in the least developed countries.
- It is therefore appropriate and essential that this UN organization with the lead mandate for food security step forward to lead the response.
- FAO must align itself with the UN Secretary General and the overwhelming majority of UN members in condemning Russia's actions, demanding its immediate withdrawal, and explicitly linking Russia's actions to exacerbating global hunger.

- As FAO has reminded members with its briefing and analysis materials, Ukraine's and Russia's agricultural production and foodstuffs are critically important worldwide.
- Thirty percent of the world's wheat exports typically come from the Black Sea region, as does 20 percent of the world's corn and 75 percent of sunflower oil. The global impact of heightened food prices caused by the war is disproportionately affecting countries dependent on food imports.
- Russia's war has destroyed Ukraine's roads, railways, and rail stations that facilitate overland transportation. Russia is actively targeting grain silos, food storage, and export facilities.
- Russia has bombed at least three civilian ships carrying goods from Black Sea ports to the rest of the world, including one chartered by an agribusiness company. The Russian Navy is blocking access to Ukraine's ports, further cutting off exports of grain.
- Furthermore, the United States has information that Russian forces are repeatedly damaging grain storage facilities in eastern Ukraine. As of late March, at least six grain storage facilities had been damaged as a result of these attacks.
- Because of this, and because of Russian warships blocking Ukraine's ports, Ukraine has not been able to export grain supplies, not even to other populations in need.
- These reckless actions are clear examples of how Russia's actions directly affect civilians in Ukraine and far beyond, threatening food security around the world.
- We have all heard Russia attempt to blame others for the consequences of its actions by insisting multilateral sanctions targeted against Russia's elite are the problem. This is false.
- Food and agricultural exports by Russia are not directly sanctioned. We have worked with our Allies and partners to target our sanctions on Putin and his inner circle. We have tailored our actions to minimize spillover effects on other economies to the extent possible.

- This includes a wind down period for certain sanctions so that U.S. persons can use that time to identify alternative methods of processing payments, where appropriate.
- We also have issued general licenses to facilitate transactions related to humanitarian needs, such as medicine and agricultural commodities, as well as fertilizer. Transactions not covered by existing general licenses will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis when specific license requests are submitted.
- The facts are clear: it is Russia's aggression that is preventing Ukrainian farmers from planting or harvesting crops, and its ports from exporting foodstuffs. It is Russia's war that is increasing the prices of key food commodities in regions like the Middle East and Africa, where countries like Lebanon, Pakistan, Libya, Tunisia, Yemen, and Morocco have been major importers of Ukrainian wheat and sunflower oil and are highly vulnerable to supply disruptions.
- As FAO has stated, one growing season has already been affected, but the next five growing seasons are already threatened, meaning the effects of this war already are projected to last years.
- The fastest and most effective way to stave off a global food crisis is for Russia to end this senseless war at once, allowing Ukrainian farmers to plant, harvest, and export.
- During my recent visits to FAO projects in Kenya and Madagascar, I saw firsthand the communities that could be impacted by these shortages. The war's impacts on the world's hungry will cause undue hardship and suffering. It is inhumane.
- It is critical that this meeting also focuses on how FAO and its members can most effectively respond.
- We must work together to overcome food insecurity resulting from rising commodity prices by ensuring that agricultural trade barriers are removed. History has shown that isolationist export restrictive policies do not work. It is incumbent upon countries to maintain open and

transparent markets, and to provide accurate and timely market information in order to keep supply chains moving and to keep trade flowing.

- We agree with FAO's policy-recommendation that countries should avoid export bans that restrict trade in food and agricultural products. Export restrictions, total bans, or hoarding will only exacerbate problems and high prices for other countries. Market transparency and policy dialogue should be strengthened right now.
- In line with the draft resolution, the United States strongly urges FAO:
 - To continue providing data and analysis about the impacts of the crisis on global food security;
 - To develop immediate, medium-term, and longer-term plans that can help all of us respond more effectively to the crisis both for Ukraine's agricultural recovery and focusing on the most vulnerable globally; and
 - To coordinate within the UN system as well as with Members, donors and other stakeholders to identify and prioritize actions to prevent increasing food insecurity.
- I would like to ask the following questions about FAO's plans for responding to this crisis:
 - Could you tell us more about the proposal of an FAO import facility and how that would help the countries worst affected by the initial shortages of wheat, corn, and vegetable oil?
 - Does FAO have specific recommendations for how to strengthen the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS)?
 - This Council approved a rebalancing of Priority Program Areas under the Strategic Framework and Program of Work and Budget in December. Is this prioritization still fit for purpose? Are there work streams we should consider shifting in

order to free FAO bandwidth to help countries hardest hit to adjust?

- **We note FAO's \$50 million Rapid Response Plan for Ukraine. What are FAO's longer-term plans and needs?**
- **Finally, the United States is committed to help all those affected across the globe by rising prices and food and agricultural disruptions.**
- **Last month, President Biden announced \$1 billion in new humanitarian assistance funding specifically for those affected by Russia's war in Ukraine and its severe impacts around the world.**
- **The United States stands with Ukraine, the Ukrainian people, and all people around the globe affected by hunger and food insecurity as a direct result of this senseless war.**

End.