

Statement delivered by
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on the occasion of the 43rd Session of the FAO Conference (1-7 July 2023)
4 July 2023

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for giving me the floor.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

To begin with, Czechia fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union and its 27 Member States delivered by Spain.

In addition, Czechia would like to make following remarks and observations:

First, the theme of integrated water resources management is critically important and we appreciate that it is discussed during this Conference. We believe that outcomes of the Conference will encourage FAO to further accelerate its work with all partners on this vital topic.

Second, we fully support constructive outputs of the UN 2023 Water Conference. “Keep calm and carry on” is not a viable option to resolve the global water crisis unfolding before our eyes. Transformational change is needed. Water must be understood, managed, valued and protected, for the benefit of all. Achieving these goals is the responsibility of all water users, stakeholders and governments. The key messages from the UN Water Conference were that water is a global common good; access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene is the most basic human need and right and must become a true catalyst for health and well-being, securing nutrition and energy for all.

UN 2023 Water Conference confirmed fundamental role water plays in all aspects of life. Water is directly linked to the three pillars of sustainable development, which are social, economic and environmental. All these three pillars should be given equal attention. We welcome also that sustainable water management will be overseen by the new UN Special Envoy for Water.

Third, as stated in the FAO document, integrated water management is crosscutting theme and supports the achievement of many SDGs through close linkages with agriculture and food security, climate change, biodiversity, gender equality and health, and others. Droughts and water shortages on one hand and floods on the other affects livelihoods of billions and food security globally every day.

Fourth, as far as Czechia is concerned, it develops its water resources management considering drought periods of last years which affected crop production and forestry sector significantly. We also work on measures to mitigate negative impact of floods.

Fifth, the water management is extremely fragile in countries, where crisis, conflicts and wars occur. Therefore, Czechia is deeply concerned about the unprecedented Russian attack against Ukrainian critical civilian water infrastructure, with the destruction of the Dnieper Nova Kakhovka dam and hydroelectric power plant. The Russian Federation continues to push the boundaries of its aggression and endangers the lives of tens of thousands of civilians and environment by a flood wave. This brutality and atrocity must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. We recall that attacks on critical civilian infrastructure can be considered war crimes and their perpetrators must be held accountable in accordance with international law.

The attack on the Nova Kakhovka dam means another humanitarian, ecological and technological

catastrophe brought to Ukraine by the Russian aggression. Irrigation systems are destroyed, and Ukrainian agricultural land is being degraded. Czechia supports humanitarian activities to cope with the Russian Federation made disaster and expresses full solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. The Kakhovka water reservoir is an important source of water for the cooling technology of the Zaporozhye Nuclear Power Plant, which brings another threat to the Ukrainian nuclear safety and security systems.

Sixth, Russian Federation's unprovoked, unjustified and illegal aggression against Ukraine, with an active involvement of Belarus, grossly violates international law and the UN Charter, and seriously undermines stability and international security, including global food security. Russian army targets farmers, fields, machinery, food production and storage capacities as well as transport and export infrastructure. Russian Federation's war of aggression is also in violation of the object and purpose of the FAO as enshrined in the Preamble of the FAO Constitution.

Unprecedented worldwide surge in food, fertilizer and energy prices, combined with the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic and boosted by the Russian war of aggression still has far-reaching consequences for the world food security, nutrition and food systems as illustrated in the latest FAO's assessment reports.

It is vital that the FAO continues its support to address the consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine on global food security, nutrition and agriculture. Also, we stress the importance of the Black Sea Grain Initiative for the global food security, in particular in the most vulnerable regions and countries, and it is therefore essential that this initiative remains in place for as long as necessary.

Allow me, Mr. Chair, to articulate final remark on sanctions against the Russian Federation: They have only one purpose – to target the ability of the Russian Federation to finance the aggression. They are primarily directed at the Russian government, army, financial sector and economic elites. They do not target the Russian agricultural sector. Any negative impact on agricultural production in Ukraine and global food security is a result of the destabilizing effects of Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.