



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

9036th meeting

Thursday, 19 May 2022, 11 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Blinken/Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield/Mr. DeLaurentis . . (United States of America)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Xhaçka
Brazil	Mr. Costa Filho
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Mr. Adamo
Ghana	Ms. Botchwey
India	Mr. Muraleedharan
Ireland	Mr. Brophy
Kenya	Ms. Omamo
Mexico	Mr. Villalobos Arámbula
Norway	Ms. Tvinnereim
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

Conflict and food security

Letter dated 12 May 2022 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2022/391)

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22-35447 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

Conflict and food security

Letter dated 12 May 2022 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2022/391)

The President: Let me start by very warmly welcoming the Secretary-General and the distinguished ministers and other high-level representatives here with us today. Their presence underscores the importance of the subject matter that is under consideration.

Before each participant is a list of speakers who have requested to participate in today's open debate in accordance with rules 37 and 39 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure, as well as the previous practice of the Council in that regard. We propose that they be invited to participate in this meeting

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Programme; and Ms. Sara Menker, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Gro Intelligence.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/391, which contains the text of a letter dated 12 May 2022 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept note on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres.

The Secretary-General: When war is waged, people go hungry. Some 60 per cent of the world's undernourished people live in areas affected by conflict. No country is immune. In April, the World

Food Programme and its partners distributed food and cash to more than 3 million Ukrainians. Until March, their country was feeding the world with abundant supplies of food.

I thank the United States Government for focusing on this crucial issue during its presidency of the Security Council.

Last year, most of the 140 million people suffering from acute hunger around the world lived in just 10 countries: Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan, the Sudan, Syria and Yemen. Eight of those countries are on the agenda of the Council.

Let there be no doubt: when the Council debates conflict, it debates hunger. When it makes decisions about peacekeeping and political missions, it makes decisions about hunger. And when its members fail to reach consensus, hungry people pay a high price.

(spoke in French)

At the most basic level, armed conflict creates hunger, as fighting destroys farms and factories, drives people away from harvesting their crops, causes shortages and drives up prices. Today the impact of conflicts is magnified by the climate crisis and economic insecurity, which has been compounded by the pandemic. Consequently, decades of progress in combating hunger are being undone. I saw that with my own eyes when I visited the Sahel two weeks ago.

The Niger, for example, faces armed extremist groups and cross-border incursions extending from Mali to Nigeria. Only 6 per cent of its population is fully vaccinated against coronavirus disease. While the Niger is ranked at the bottom of the Human Development Index, it is also among the 10 countries most vulnerable to the climate crisis. The number of people who face acute food insecurity in the Niger has more than doubled over the past two years and, unless there is an immediate response, that number could reach 4 million this year. The Niger and its neighbours are in urgent need of a coordinated large-scale international effort to strengthen the links among peace, humanitarian action, adaptation to the impacts of climate change and sustainable development.

(spoke in English)

To help respond to this growing crisis, I am pleased to announce today that we are releasing \$30 million

from the Central Emergency Response Fund to meet the urgent food security and nutrition needs in the Niger, Mali, Chad and Burkina Faso. But it is a drop in the ocean. It brings the funding channelled through the Central Emergency Response Fund to the Sahel since the start of the year to almost \$95 million.

I am also deeply concerned about the food security situation in the Horn of Africa, which is suffering its longest drought in four decades. More than 18 million people are affected, and the World Food Programme (WFP) has warned that millions in Somalia will be facing famine within months. The perilous state of food security in Ethiopia and Somalia is compounded by continued conflict and deep insecurity. Around the world, 49 million people in 43 countries are at emergency levels of hunger, known as Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) 4 — just one step away from famine. In other words, they are facing starvation and doing anything they can to survive. As always, women and girls are the worst affected, which is reflected in rising rates of trafficking, forced marriage and other abuses. More than half a million people in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Yemen and Madagascar are already at IPC level 5, meaning in catastrophic or famine conditions.

The war in Ukraine is now adding a frightening new dimension to that picture of global hunger. Russia's invasion of its neighbour has effectively ended its food exports. Price increases as high as 30 per cent for staple foods are threatening people in countries across Africa and the Middle East, including Cameroon, Libya, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen. I discussed the deeply troubling situation with the leaders of Senegal, the Niger and Nigeria during my most recent visit. They confirmed that we are on the brink of a perfect storm that threatens to devastate people and economies.

Our humanitarian operations are gearing up to help, backed by a proven record of success. Humanitarian agencies and their partners helped to bring six counties in South Sudan back from the brink of famine last year. Over the past six years of conflict in Yemen they also ensured that the worst outcomes did not materialize, with food aid reaching more than 10 million people per month in 2021. But humanitarians too are suffering from the impact of rising prices. In East Africa, the cost of food assistance increased by 65 per cent on average in the past year. The WFP has already been forced to reduce its support to 8 million hungry people in Yemen.

I believe there are four actions that countries can take now in order to break the deadly dynamic of conflict and hunger. First, they should invest in political solutions to end conflicts, prevent new ones and build sustainable peace. Most important of all, we need to end the war in Ukraine. I call on all Council members to do everything in their power to silence the guns and promote peace in Ukraine and everywhere else.

Secondly, international humanitarian law, as reflected in resolution 2417 (2018), specifies that goods and supplies that are essential to civilians' survival — including food, crops and livestock — must be protected. It also states that humanitarians must have unimpeded access to civilians in need. The Council has a critical role to play in demanding adherence to international humanitarian law and pursuing accountability when the law is breached. I urge it to take maximum action to fulfil that role.

Thirdly, the interconnected risks of food insecurity, energy and financing require far greater coordination and leadership. There is enough food for everyone in the world. The issue is distribution, and it is deeply linked to the war in Ukraine. I established the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance in March to provide data and analysis and to propose solutions. The Group immediately recommended lifting all food export restrictions, releasing strategic reserves and allocating surpluses to countries in need.

As I said at yesterday's Global Food Security Call to Action ministerial meeting, any meaningful solution to global food insecurity requires the reintegration of Ukraine's agricultural production and Russia and Belarus's food and fertilizer production into world markets, despite the war. We are working to find a package deal that will enable Ukraine to export food not only by train but also through the Black Sea, while bringing Russian food and fertilizer production to world markets without restrictions. That will require the goodwill of all the countries concerned.

Fourthly, donors must fund humanitarian appeals in full. Almost halfway into 2022, our global humanitarian response plans are just 8 per cent funded. In global terms, those are minuscule amounts. I urge everyone to demonstrate the same generosity that has been shown to Ukraine to all other countries in need. Official development assistance is more necessary than ever. Diverting it to other priorities is not an option when the world is on the brink of mass hunger. Indeed,

the deep connections between conflict and hunger mean that generosity is not just an act of altruism. Feeding the hungry is an investment in global peace and security.

In our world of plenty, I will never accept the death from hunger of a single child, woman or man. Neither should the members of the Council.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Beasley.

Mr. Beasley: I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comments.

When the Nobel Committee awarded the World Food Programme the 2020 Peace Prize, it was clearly a message to the world that food security is critical to peace and stability all over the world. What we are seeing now is an extraordinary destruction of the values that we hold so dear — feeding the poor and helping those in need around the world.

Before the Ukraine crisis struck, I had been saying to leaders around the world that we were facing an unprecedented storm, a perfect storm caused by conflict, climate change and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Just when we thought it could not get any worse, the situation in Ethiopia worsened. Once again, we thought it could not get any worse, but then the situation in Afghanistan worsened. Then, when we really did think things could not get any worse, we had Ukraine. And as the Secretary-General alluded to, that comes in addition to areas that are struggling with droughts and famine knocking on the door, such as the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and more — I could go in a ring of fire around the world. In terms of those marching towards starvation, the numbers have escalated, from 80 million to 135 million before COVID-19 and then, because of COVID-19, 135 million became 276 million. Because of the Ukrainian crisis, that number will rise to 323 million at least.

What is extremely troubling is that of those 276 million people marching towards starvation, struggling to find food on a daily basis and living from hand to mouth every day, there are 49 million in 43 countries, as the Secretary-General very clearly stated, who are knocking on famine's door. If we overlay those 49 million people in those 43 countries along with economic indices because of economic deterioration over time, including the droughts, we begin to see the 43 countries that could very well be destabilized and

face famine that would result not just in deaths, but in unrest and mass migration.

We are truly facing an unprecedented crisis. Food prices are our number-one problem right now, as a result of the perfect storm in 2022, but in 2023 the problem is very likely to be food availability. When a country like Ukraine, which grows enough food for 400 million people, is out of the market, it creates market volatility, which we are now seeing. In 2007 and 2008, we all witnessed what happens when pricing gets out of control. More than 40 nations had to deal with political unrest, riots and protests. We are already seeing riots and protests taking place as we speak in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Pakistan and Peru. We have already seen destabilizing dynamics in the Sahel, in Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad. Those are only signs of things to come. We have enough historical experience to understand the consequences when we fail to act. When a nation that is the breadbasket of the world becomes a nation with the longest breadlines in the world, we know that we have a problem.

As the Secretary-General clearly stated, we are now reaching approximately 4 million people inside Ukraine. In fact, we are scaling up to 900,000 people on cash-based transfers as we speak, which will put liquidity back into the marketplace, but that does not solve the problem outside Ukraine. That is why we must get those ports running. We must empty the silos so that we can help stabilize the food crisis we are facing around the world.

More than 36 nations receive 50 per cent or more of their grain from that region. When we consider those nations, in addition to the 43 nations I mentioned, coupled with other economic indices and debt because of the coronavirus disease, we begin to see why the world is very fragile. We must therefore respond. Truly, failure to open the ports in the Odesa region will be a declaration of war on global food security and will result in famine, destabilization and mass migration around the world.

Many here today have been out in the field and have talked to the poorest of the poor. I have had more mothers tell me “Mr. Beasley, my children have not been fed in two weeks”, “My husband had to join an extremist group just to stay alive”, “We have to migrate” or “We have to choose between heating oil and cooking oil”. When a mother has to choose between her child freezing to death or starving her child to death,

something is wrong, especially when there is so much wealth on the planet today — more than \$430 trillion worth of wealth.

The problem will only get worse because production around the world will decrease. We have all been talking to ministers of agriculture and leaders to maximize production as fast as we can. How do we get fertilizers back out into the marketplace? The African Development Bank provided some statistics the other day that were frightening. Africa alone would need more than \$2 billion worth of new fertilizer because of the costs, if it can get it at all, because smallholder farmers rely on it. That would mean a loss of approximately \$11 billion worth of food production in Africa alone, which is already struggling because of that perfect storm we are talking about.

It is time that we and the leaders of the world do everything that we can to bring the markets to stability, because things will get worse. Nonetheless, I have hope. We averted famine. We averted destabilization over the past many years because many in the Chamber stepped up. We delivered, and we can do that again. There are things that have to happen, such as opening the ports, stabilizing the markets and increasing production around the world. We will get through this storm, but we must act. We must act with urgency, and that must be today.

The President: I thank Mr. Beasley for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Qu Dongyu.

Mr. Qu Dongyu: The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) deeply appreciates the opportunity to speak to the Security Council on this important topic and the continued attention placed on the issue of conflict and food security.

Two years ago, I briefed the Council on the multiple risks facing global food security at the start of the pandemic (see S/2020/340). Today we gather again for people, peace, prosperity and the planet to discuss several overlapping crises in the area of food security, such as health security, climate change, food insecurity, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and conflict.

Worldwide, prosperity is being reversed. There is less food security, less health security, less income and greater inequality. My message today is more relevant than ever before. Agriculture is one of the keys to lasting peace and security.

Over the past five years, we have seen yet another spike in the global level of acute hunger. According to the *Global Report on Food Crises*, released on 4 May this year, in 2021 approximately 40 million more people experienced acute food insecurity as compared to 2020, thereby bringing the total to 193 million people in 53 countries and territories. Worryingly, the projection is for further deterioration through 2022, including in places with catastrophic food insecurity. There is a risk of famine in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and Afghanistan.

FAO has stepped up its efforts to strengthen agrifood systems, save lives and protect the agricultural livelihoods of the world's most vulnerable. From our cutting-edge analysis, normative work, global and national policy guidance and life-saving aid, FAO helps people, communities and Governments cope with growing uncertainty. Yet more needs to be done together.

Conflict remains the single-greatest driver of hunger. Between 2018 and 2021, the number of people in crisis situations in countries in which conflict was the main driver of acute food insecurity increased by a staggering 88 per cent, to just over 139 million people.

As the world began to recover from COVID-19, another conflict with far-reaching effects broke out. The war in Ukraine revived concerns about historically high food and energy prices and their impact across the world. The war has disrupted exports and logistics and seriously affected food availability. Ukraine and the Russian Federation together export 30 per cent of the cereals and 67 per cent of the sunflower seeds in the world. The increase in energy and fertilizer prices is putting the next global harvest at risk. According to our most recent scenarios, it could increase chronic undernourishment by an additional 18.8 million people by 2023.

We are neighbours on this small planet-village. What happens to one affects us all. FAO will continue to fully align with the Secretary-General's call to end the war, restore peace and save lives. We must strengthen the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. We must analyse the root causes of acute food insecurity, including conflict and climate change, and apply those lessons to our actions. FAO does that through our Integrated Phase Classification analysis, which is widely accepted, our co-leadership of the Global

Network Against Food Crises and our co-leadership of the Global Food Security Cluster.

We must prevent the acceleration of acute food insecurity trends in the coming months and years. Food production at the country level must be expanded. We need to provide cash and critical inputs for cereal and vegetable production and to protect livestock with treatments, vaccinations, feed and water. Agrifood supply chains and value chains must be strengthened with the engagement of the public and private sector in support of smallholder farmers and households. That is what FAO has been doing in Ukraine, Afghanistan and other countries. In 2021, FAO reached more than 30 million people worldwide with emergency agricultural assistance and resilience-building programmes. For example, in Afghanistan we reached 3 million people, including with wheat cultivation packages, which cost just \$160 each and meet the staple cereal requirements for a family of seven for an entire year. In local markets, the cost of the same amount of food is six times higher. Our support helped livestock farmers increase milk production equivalent to a level that would enable every Afghan child to have one glass of milk a day for at least five months. In Ethiopia, despite access challenges, the seeds and planting materials provided by FAO and agriculture cluster partners enabled local farmers to produce 900,000 tons of food — five times more than the humanitarian and commercial food supplies that entered the region.

Yet despite the critical importance of agriculture to food availability and access in crisis contexts, only 8 per cent of total funding for the humanitarian food security sector goes to agriculture. We must protect people, agrifood systems and economies against future shocks. To prevent conflicts from worsening food insecurity, we must increase sustainable productivity, strengthen capacities to deliver relevant services and commodities and provide access to innovative financial tools and digital services. Members urgently need to transform their agrifood systems so that they are more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable, in order to achieve better production and nutrition, a better environment and a better life, leaving no one behind.

In the past three months I have been to Bangladesh, where farmers are using innovation to improve their rice yields. Earlier this month, I travelled to Azerbaijan to see young farmers, who are producing seven tons per hectare of winter wheat, using a new variety of wheat and irrigation systems and appropriate fertilizer. The yield

this year has doubled. Yesterday I met Mr. Villalobos Arámbula, the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Mexico, where the corn yields in some provinces have doubled through the use of new corn varieties, new fertilizer and irrigation. So there is great potential. I sincerely hope that States will continue to provide the necessary aid to mitigate food insecurity globally, allocate new resources to sustain agricultural production in challenging contexts and recognize and support the role of agriculture in food security and peace and the contributions of international organizations such as FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme. Based on my professional knowledge and experience, I believe we can feed the world sufficiently and sustainably with our existing tools if we all play our part.

In this great country of America, irrigated land can produce two times more than land that is unirrigated and naturally rain-fed. Only 18 per cent of arable land in this country is irrigated. In Asia, it is 48 to 60 per cent; in Europe, it is 12 per cent; in Africa, it is only 3 per cent; and in Latin America, it is about 20 per cent. I therefore strongly encourage all States and partners represented here to improve their water management and irrigation systems. Yields depend not on God alone but rather on our technology and investment in infrastructure. That is why we need to unleash the potential of innovation, science and responsible investment. For so many years, in both developed and developing countries, investment in agriculture in rural areas has been left behind. I strongly recommend that Mr. Blinken and others look at those issues, such as soy and other bigger issues. We need at least 10 to 20 years of looking at soy science. With quality soy seeds, the seed yield can improve by 20 to 30 per cent. That is similar to the yields with hybrid rice, where we see 30 to 50 per cent increases, and hybrid corn, which can have increases between 30 and 40 per cent. Mr. Villalobos is an expert breeder. The technology is there. The tools are there. We need a strong political commitment and responsible investment. We must work together with the private sector and get every key partner on board. That is why we must stress the importance of hand-in-hand initiatives.

States can put policies in place that both increase productivity and protect natural resources. We always say that we should produce more and better with less, but less what? Is it less impact, less input or less negative impact on the environment? The solution is

technology and good policies and management. We can invest more in innovation and new technologies, especially water management, irrigation systems and high-quality agricultural inputs, including fertilizer, and in more transparent market information systems. Agricultural systems provide food, feed, fibre and biofuels, including biogas. So agriculture not only provides food, feed, fibre crops and biofuels, which are truly renewable sources of energy, it also supports the future of people on this small planet — the farmers.

On 19 May 1943, our predecessors convened the first United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture in Hot Springs, Virginia, in the United States. Was it destiny? Was it a coincidence? What is today's date? Today is 19 May. Seventy-nine years later, let us recall that our founders saw that FAO had a vital role to play in the quest for peace. They wrote,

“[t]he Food and Agriculture Organization is born out of the need for peace as well as the need for freedom from want. The two are interdependent. Progress towards freedom from want is essential to lasting peace.”

Much has changed since then, 79 years later, but one thing remains a constant. The world needs enough food, good food and better food for all. Investing in our agrifood systems is more relevant than ever. Let us work together effectively and coherently.

I learned from the Secretary-General when he switched from English to French. Now I will say my final words in Chinese. There are six official United Nations languages, so I wrote a special poem for the President.

(spoke in Chinese)

The mountain is high, and people depend on food to survive. We must remain united, working together, to serve the millions of people around the world.

The President: I thank Mr. Qu Dongyu for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Menker.

Ms. Menker: I thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me to address the Security Council. It is an honour to be here today to highlight and reaffirm that food security is in fact national security and global stability.

Before I share some data-driven insights on the state of our global food systems, let me tell the Security

Council a little bit about Gro Intelligence. Gro is a company founded to help tackle two of the greatest challenges we face as humankind — food security and climate change. We are a global company with offices in Nairobi, Singapore and New York. Our team comes from over 40 countries that range from Ethiopia, where I am from, to Russia, Nigeria, India, the United States, China and Ukraine. We are a company of domain experts in software infrastructure, climate science, agronomy, trading and financial markets. We combine that with world-class engineering and artificial-intelligence talent. We work with large and small companies, financial institutions and Governments.

I come here today to share insights from our data, with the underlying hope that all of us here with the power to change the course of history will choose to do so.

I want to start by explicitly saying that the Russia-Ukraine conflict did not start a food security crisis. It simply added fuel to a fire that was long burning — a crisis whose tremors we detected long before the coronavirus disease pandemic exposed the fragility of our supply chains. I share that because we believe it is important for everyone to understand that, even if the war were to end tomorrow, our food security problem would not go away anytime soon without concerted action.

Now on to the statistics. Gro Intelligence estimates show that price increases in major food crops year-to-date have made an additional 400 million people food insecure. There are few food and security statistics shared, so I wanted to define that by saying that we are talking here about the number of people living on \$3.59 a day. That is a broader standard, but it is a march towards starvation. To put it into perspective, that is equivalent to the number of people that China has taken out of poverty over the past 20 years. In five months we have undone 20 years of progress.

Furthermore, our economic-shock models show that year-to-date changes in prices of agricultural products have already affected some economies by 3 to 5 per cent of their gross domestic product. Countries disproportionately affected are in regions such as North Africa and the Middle East, the Horn of Africa and West and Central Asia. And it can get much worse. Data shows that the food security challenges we are facing will last several years.

There are five major challenges occurring simultaneously that are each, individually, extraordinary — lack of fertilizer, climate disruptions, record low inventories in cooking oils, record low inventories of grains and logistical bottlenecks that have already started to unravel decades of global economic progress. Without substantial, immediate and aggressive coordinated global actions, we stand the risk of allowing extraordinary amounts of both human suffering and economic damage. This is not cyclical, this is seismic. It is a once-in-a-generation occurrence that can dramatically reshape the geopolitical era.

Now let us move to the five challenges.

The first is fertilizer. Global fertilizer prices have nearly tripled year-on-year, and quadrupled over the past two years, because of supply shocks driven by logistical bottlenecks, restrictions on natural gas, which impact the ability to produce fertilizer, sanctions and export restrictions amid the Russia-Ukraine war. That risks significant crop-yield reductions in key producing regions such as Brazil, the United States and Western Europe later this year and next year, severely impacting global food security and inflation for the next 3 to 5 years, at a minimum.

The second challenge is climate. Global drought conditions for wheat are the worst in over 20 years. Major breadbaskets such as the United States and Brazil, the world's two largest exporters of agricultural products, are also experiencing extreme droughts. For example, Brazil's cropland soil moisture is at a 20-year low. Major grain importers in the Middle East and Africa are also experiencing record droughts. In short, both major importers and major exporters are experiencing exceptional drought conditions.

The third challenge is cooking oils. The price of traditionally cheap palm oil nearly tripled in the past two years, driven by increased biofuels demand, drought in regions that produce alternative cooking oils, such as Brazil and Canada, record import demand from China and the loss of nearly 75 per cent of global sunflower oil exports due to the Russia-Ukraine war. The recent export ban in Indonesia, the world's largest palm-oil producer, which is responsible for 60 per cent of global production, has added significant upward price pressure to vegetable oils.

The fourth challenge is grains. Official government agency estimates from around the world put wheat inventories at 33 per cent of annual consumption.

Verifiable data from public and private sources that our company organizes and then builds statistical models to connect the dots between them on our platform show that global wheat inventories are in fact closer to 20 per cent, a level not seen since the financial and commodity crisis of 2007 and 2008. We currently have only 10 weeks of global consumption sitting in inventory around the world. Conditions today are worse than those experienced in 2007 and 2008. It is important to note that the lowest grain inventory levels the world has ever seen are now occurring, while access to fertilizers is highly constrained and drought in wheat-growing regions around the world is the most extreme it has been in over 20 years. Similar inventory concerns also apply to corn and other grains. Government estimates are not adding up.

The fifth and final challenge is logistics. Russia and Ukraine used to provide nearly a third of the world's wheat exports and are both among the top five exporters of corn globally. Combined, they used to export 75 per cent of global sunflower-oil supplies. All Ukrainian ports remain closed, making it impossible to move any of Ukraine's harvested grain across its borders. Shifting to rail will move less than 10 per cent of pre-war flow, which is not enough. Russian exports, which also include fertilizer, are limited because of Black Sea maritime hazards.

Any one of the five things I outlined would be considered a major issue in commodity markets. The five combined are truly unprecedented.

I come here today not to specifically offer or provide solutions, as there will be other venues to do so, but rather to X-ray and diagnose the problem for those in this Chamber who have the power to change the course of our history. In a world that is increasingly isolationist, we need to come together. Food is personal, but our agricultural systems are global. There is no version of the world where every country has all the natural resources it needs to survive and thrive.

One key takeaway from our data is how often we see repeated examples of cause and effect, highlighting surprising connections and interdependencies. For example, in the United States, the most self-sufficient country globally, a consumption-weighted basket of food — a grocery basket — has doubled in price since April 2020. Price increases were driven by unprecedented demand around the world alongside

climate-related supply-side shocks. We cannot solve food insecurity on a national scale anywhere.

One thing we strongly believe is that we can have a healthy economy and a secure food system without degrading our environment. We have the capability to help everyone feel secure about having enough food.

Data helps us navigate because we are not blind to risks and outcomes related to food security. We cannot say that we did not know. There are positive solutions and approaches that can be proffered and delivered, but they will require coordinated global effort. We are all dependent on one another.

In wrapping up, what does the data tell us about risk and interdependencies? It tells us, not unlike the global financial crisis of 2008, that there are fault lines and tremor-like early-warning signals that seem disconnected at a global level, but are not.

What does the data tell us about hope? It tells us that, while the next few years will likely be difficult as a result of the statistically unusual confluence of the five challenges I shared, we can coordinate a global response, eschew a “to each their own” mentality as to food security and climate risk, be willing to have constructive, albeit difficult, conversations and jointly accept that what we have to address is less of a food shortage and more of a crisis of prioritization.

The President: I thank Ms. Menker for her briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Secretary of State of the United States of America.

I thank the Secretary-General, Executive Director David Beasley, Director-General Qu Dongyu and Gro Intelligence Chief Executive Officer Sara Menker. I thank them for their superb briefings to the Council today, which bring powerfully before us the facts and the challenges that we have to meet. I thank them for their work every day on an issue that is truly critical to humankind.

We are meeting at a moment of unprecedented global hunger, fuelled, as we have heard, by climate change and the coronavirus disease, and made even worse by conflict. Indeed, conflicts across the world are increasingly driving this crisis. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Food Programme, the number of people affected by food insecurity due to conflict rose from about 100 million people in 2020, to 139 million

or so in 2021, to an estimated 161 million in 2022. The World Bank believes that Russia’s war in Ukraine could add another 40 million people to that total.

Yesterday ministers from more than 30 countries came together here at the United Nations to address the drivers of and advance solutions to global food insecurity, including by meeting the urgent need for food, for fertilizer and humanitarian financing, investing more in the resilience of agriculture and vulnerable populations. For our part, the United States announced another \$215 million in emergency food assistance to add to our \$2.3 billion in humanitarian food aid since February. I want to thank all the countries that stepped up, and I want to encourage others to join us.

In 2018 the Council adopted resolution 2417 (2018), which condemned the use of starvation of civilians as a tool of war and noted that such a use may constitute a war crime. Yet in the years since the adoption of that resolution, the problem has only grown worse. The Russian Federation’s flagrant disregard of that resolution is just the latest example of a Government using the hunger of civilians to try to advance its objectives. It is also another example of how Russia is violating the rules-based international order that is integral to the shared security and prosperity of all States Member of the United Nations, an order that the Council and in particular its permanent members have a responsibility to uphold, defend and strengthen.

In the Council, a few members have repeatedly used language lamenting the suffering caused by this war and calling on all sides to bring it to a stop. Let us not use diplomatic-speak to obfuscate what are simple facts. The decision to wage this war is the Kremlin’s and the Kremlin’s alone. If Russia stopped fighting tomorrow, the war would end. If Ukraine stopped fighting, there would be no more Ukraine. Russia’s unprovoked war of aggression has halted maritime trade in large swaths of the Black Sea; it has made the region unsafe for navigation, trapping Ukrainian agricultural exports, as we have heard, and jeopardizing global food supplies. Since 24 February, Russian naval operations have demonstrated the intent to control access to the north-western Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, to block Ukrainian ports.

Our assessment is that this is a deliberate effort evidenced through a series of actions taken by the Russian Government. On the first day of the invasion, Russia issued an official warning to all members

that significant areas of the Black Sea were closed to commercial traffic, essentially shutting them down to shipping. Since then, the Russian military has repeatedly blocked safe passage to and from Ukraine by closing the Kerch Strait, tightening its control over the sea of Azov and stationing warships off Ukrainian ports. Russia has struck Ukrainian ports multiple times.

Those and other actions have effectively cut off all commercial naval traffic in and around the port of Odesa. The Russian Federation has mirrored these attacks on land, repeatedly attacking Ukrainian civilian infrastructure that is critical to the production and transport of food, such as water, power and rail lines, destroying Ukrainian grain-storing facilities and stealing stocks of food in the parts of Ukraine that it illegally occupies.

The consequences of those actions have been devastating. The food supply for millions of Ukrainians and millions more around the world has quite literally been held hostage by the Russian military. The World Food Programme recently estimated that a third of all Ukrainians are facing food insecurity, with children, pregnant women and the elderly at heightened risk of malnutrition. In besieged cities such as Mariupol, Russian forces have repeatedly blocked the delivery of food and other life-saving aid to tens of thousands of trapped civilians. A mother who recently escaped from the city talked about the agony of watching her 6-year-old daughter suffer the daily pangs of hunger and being powerless to do anything about it. "I just sobbed", she said, "screaming into a pillow when no one could see". She and her children eventually escaped; countless thousands of others are still trapped.

The Russian Government seems to believe that using food as a weapon will help accomplish what its invasion has not: to break the spirit of the Ukrainian people. Still, Ukrainians are going to great lengths to feed their own people and to feed the world. Farmers in Ukraine continue to risk their lives to produce wheat and other crops. Many have returned to fields that are filled with mines. They wear bulletproof vests and helmets as they harvest.

And, as we have heard already powerfully this morning, it is not only Ukrainians who are suffering as a result of the Russian Government's actions; some 20 million tons of grain sit unused in Ukrainian silos as global food supplies dwindle and prices skyrocket, causing more around the world to experience food

insecurity. That includes countries already under enormous duress. The Secretary-General alluded to a number of them, including Lebanon, which usually gets 80 per cent of its wheat imports from Ukraine, and Somalia, already on the brink of famine even before Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine, and which must now deal with rising wheat and flour costs.

The Russian Federation claims falsely that the international community's sanctions are to blame for worsening the global food crisis. Sanctions are not blocking Black Sea ports, trapping ships filled with food and destroying Ukrainian roads and railways. Russia is. Sanctions are not emptying Ukrainian grain silos and stealing Ukrainian farm equipment; Russia is. Sanctions are not preventing Russia from exporting food and fertilizer. The sanctions imposed by the United States and many other countries deliberately include carve-outs for food, fertilizer and seeds from Russia, and we are working with countries every day to ensure that they understand that sanctions do not prevent the flow of those items. No, the decision to weaponize food is Moscow's and Moscow's alone.

Do not take my word for it. Even Dmitry Medvedev, Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of the Russian Federation and former Russian President, recently said that Russia's agricultural products were its "quiet weapon". He then added, "Quiet, but ominous".

The Council has a unique responsibility to address the current crisis, which constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security. That starts by strongly and unequivocally calling the Kremlin out for its atrocities in Ukraine and for worsening the global food crisis through an unprovoked war of aggression. More concretely, members of the Council and, for that matter, every State Member of the United Nations should press Russia to stop actions that are making the food crisis in Ukraine and around the globe worse than it already was.

Stop blockading the ports in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. Allow for the free flow of ships, trains and trucks carrying food out of Ukraine. Stop preventing food and other life-saving supplies from reaching civilians in besieged Ukrainian towns and cities. Stop threatening to withhold foods and fertilizer exports from countries that criticize Russia's war of aggression. All of this is essential to save lives in Ukraine and to save lives around the world.

The Russian Federation is not the only government or organization to exploit food insecurity for its own

cynical ends. South Sudan, armed groups and warring parties have for years blocked humanitarian assistance to civilians. Experts estimate that up to 7 million people will face crisis-levels of food insecurity in their countries this year. In Syria, with the Kremlin's ongoing support, the Al-Assad regime has besieged such communities as eastern Ghouta and caused the widespread starvation of its own people. It also routinely obstructs the cross-border delivery of life-saving humanitarian aid, robbing and even attacking United Nations convoys, as we have discussed repeatedly in the Security Council. The Council must consistently call out governments and armed groups when they use similar tactics, such as attacking the means of food production and distribution, blocking humanitarian aid from reaching those in need and besieging civilian populations.

The United Nations was created with the aim of advancing human rights and preventing atrocities, including the atrocity of using starvation as a weapon against civilians, such as during the siege of Leningrad by the Nazis, during which an estimated 1 million Russians lost their lives, including many who starved to death — among the victims was the one-year-old brother of President Putin — or during the Holodomor, during which millions of Ukrainians died of hunger owing to a Soviet campaign of forced collectivization and terror.

It is on us to prevent this history from repeating itself, to make sure that the past is not prologue. It is simple. The lives of millions of people depend upon it.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana.

Ms. Botchwey (Ghana): I would like to thank you and the United States delegation for highlighting the very important subject of armed conflict and food insecurity during your presidency of the Security Council this month. I would also like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres, the World Food Programme Executive Director, the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the founder and Chief Executive Officer of Gro Intelligence for their briefings. We appreciate their useful perspectives on armed conflict and food insecurity.

The Security Council is no stranger to the harrowing reports of starvation and other forms of food insecurity caused by conflict in various parts of the world. Millions of people, especially children, have suffered or perished from food insecurity in the challenging periods of conflict that my own continent has had to endure, especially over the past three decades. The food systems of those countries in conflict usually collapse, with huge consequences for the economy, livelihoods and living standards.

Those impacts were localized, and those of us who lived outside the theatre of war were involved only inasmuch as our conscience compelled us to act, including taking in refugees or by intervention, through peace support operations. Today, however, perhaps the first time since the Second World War, we see the impact of one conflict on food security in every country, every home and on everyone. We experience together the profound anxiety of a global economy in uncharted waters, buffeted by uncertain headwinds.

It is in this context that Ghana welcomes the important contribution that resolution 2417 (2018) makes in acknowledging the interlinkages between conflict and hunger. There is still much to be done to build resilience in food systems and enhance global respect for norms relating to populations' right to food regardless of the state of conflict and to integrate peacebuilding objectives into the creation of resilient food systems, with a backward interlock of food security objectives into peacebuilding programmes and activities.

As we mark the fourth anniversary of the Council's adoption of resolution 2417 (2018) this month, unfolding global events continue to be a rude and painful reminder of the debilitating linkages between armed conflict, hunger and food security. Although the current global food insecurity crisis predates Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the war has clearly exposed the interconnected nature and fragility of global food systems, with serious consequences for global food and nutrition security, particularly for vulnerable countries and populations.

The food crisis that millions of the world's citizens are confronting now, especially in Africa, which is the hardest hit, cannot wait until we have a perfect outcome among all States. What is needed are purposeful actions that support the efforts of developing countries, such as the African Common Position for sustainable

food systems. Those actions must focus on building resilience in economies and food systems.

The scale and effectiveness of the efforts of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in filling the financing gap in Africa in response to the coronavirus disease pandemic through, inter alia, fast-track facilities, contingency emergency financing as well as the IMF's issue of special drawing rights provide a model for addressing short-term shortages and building resilience. It also requires action by the parties to the conflict to facilitate the movement of food and fertilizers through the Black Sea ports and other transportation lanes, and we call on those in a position to do so to act in the interest of international cooperation and the values of our United Nations.

We are encouraged by the role that global humanitarian hubs such as the International Humanitarian City in Dubai and regional humanitarian hubs such as the one in Accra can play in interconnecting humanitarian needs with food availability. The international humanitarian community must deepen their national and regional coordination mechanisms for programming and responding to humanitarian crises and align their interventions with national and regional response plans. Additionally, major donors must cooperate to shift funds out of separate silos to enable integrative work — and also in a manner that does not prioritize food distribution to vulnerable communities over the sustainable approach of helping them to reconstruct their food systems.

In concluding, I would like to stress Ghana's readiness to join any effort aimed at removing export restrictions on excess grains; bringing grains on stream in parts of Eastern Europe, where the present conflict is raging; reactivating global maritime transport, with a priority on food supply; and ensuring that those countries that are experiencing the perfect storm of pandemic and war have the required credit to purchase grains and food supplies. We must do everything in our power to prevent starvation and death anywhere and to restore economic and financial stability for the sake of all our peoples.

The President: I now call on the Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Kenya.

Ms. Omamo (Kenya): I congratulate you, Mr. President, on the able stewardship the United States has shown in leading the Security Council this month. I thank you, Sir, for the invitation to today's important

open debate. I also express the gratitude of my delegation for leading insightful conversations on the important subject of food security over the past two days. It takes courage to lead, and we thank you. I also thank the Secretary-General and the other briefers for their insightful remarks. I particularly applaud Sara Menker, whom I know from Kenya. I say, *asante shukran*.

Throughout history, sharp and rapid rises in food prices have often been a root cause of social unrest, political instability and violent conflict. Even today, the price of bread in many countries is a reliable indicator of rising political tensions. The fact that we are having this discussion in the Security Council is proof that the recent rise in food insecurity may lead to heightened threats to international peace and security.

The facts, to say the least, are alarming. In the Horn of Africa, an extreme drought could cause up to 20 million people to go hungry this year, many of whom will be women and children. That emergency is making it more difficult to pursue and sustain peace. It is making entire populations dependent on food aid, and it is becoming part of the conflict dynamics in our region as militants and belligerents exploit the emergency to entrench their control and access to financing.

There is a strong connection between the food shortages in Yemen, Afghanistan, the Sahel and parts of the Horn of Africa and conflict-related instabilities. In Somalia, Al-Shabaab, an Al-Qaida-affiliated terrorist group, last year alone displaced nearly 30,000 people from 42 villages. It imposed blockades in various towns in the Bakool region, leading to shortages of food and essential commodities since early 2021. That weaponization of food is a matter that should be of concern to all of us in the Security Council.

More recently, the war in Ukraine is causing unprecedented global food and energy supply disruptions. With Ukraine and Russia as major global suppliers of wheat, sunflower oil and barley, as well as fertilizer, the conflict-induced disruptions have driven food prices sharply higher.

We commiserate with the people of Ukraine, and we understand their suffering, which is real and deeply regrettable. But we also wish to note that that war is leading to many more victims around the world.

Against that background, Kenya appreciates the Secretary-General's initiative in establishing the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance.

Its recommendations offer us a useful starting point in the immediate actions we need to take in response to the immediate pressures that we are facing, particularly in Africa and developing countries. However, we must do more than take short-term actions in the hope of a return to the status quo. That status quo, even before the outbreak of war in Ukraine, was filled with expanding and protracted famines. The status quo must be unacceptable to all of us. We must address it with alacrity through cooperation and through a new kind of multilateralism that uplifts and focuses on the weakest of our peoples.

We need to learn from the coronavirus disease and from the pandemic that it has spawned throughout the world that we need to be taught, and we need to learn that manufacturing capability and production must spread into different regions of the world.

In the same way that the pandemic invites us to seek fundamental change, this food crisis calls for us to reach for bolder solutions. One of the least appreciated and most consequential changes under way should inform this conversation, that is, the impact of population growth in Africa and in the developed world. There is an increasing certainty in the projection that Africa's population may reach 2.5 billion people by 2050. That population will move from rural areas to urban settings, leaving Africa with fewer farmers and fewer hands to produce food. The ability to provide that enormous population with affordable food, decent jobs, security and other public goods means that Africa must have competent States, able to deliver value for their people. Therefore, as we tackle food security, let us tackle the capacity challenges in Africa. Let us build strong States with strong capabilities.

Recognizing that, His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta made food security one of his Big Four Agenda items in his second term. That has led to higher investment in the agricultural sector, subsidies for fertilizer for small-scale farmers and a focus on increasing the incomes of farmers through improved market linkages, based on information and communications technology platforms.

There is a great deal more that we need to do in Kenya and to do worldwide, including in Africa, to ensure that food security does not become an existential threat for all of us. The lack of ambition, of innovation and of courage will be the only impediment to finding

solutions for the multiple crises that are beginning to grow throughout the world.

It is for that reason that we look forward to welcoming all those present to the second United Nations Ocean Conference, which Kenya will co-host with Portugal in June this year. That conference will give us an opportunity to harness and integrate the dividends of the oceans into a sustainable and equitable food future. We must use all the food available to humankind. We must use our oceans and our land to increase productivity for our people.

As I conclude, allow me therefore to make some proposals on how we can act together, as I said, in a spirit of change, multilateralism and cooperation so that we can be that generation that answered the historic call to action at a time such as this.

First, let us shift Africa's place in the global trading system. We can no longer solely be the source of raw minerals and cash crops, while importing food to feed the fastest-growing population in the world. We need to modernize our agricultural systems, not only for large-scale farmers but also for small, poor rural farmers. Africa must move beyond rain-fed agriculture. We need to build fertilizer factories, seed factories and pesticide factories. We need research institutions. We need to be able to provide our farmers with the know-how, the data and the will to invest in agriculture.

A large part of that is ensuring that, in addition to feeding domestic demand, agricultural markets in Europe and other wealthier regions must also open their doors to African food products. There must be an end to unnecessary tariffs.

The countries with the largest shareholdings in international financial institutions need to insist on a fundamental shift in financing, enabling agricultural and food systems transformation. That must include climate change financing, with an emphasis on adaptation, to assist those that perpetually suffer from climate shocks.

Secondly, it is essential to build a bridge between humanitarian assistance, development and peacebuilding. Long-term food assistance should actively integrate peacebuilding approaches by prioritizing the humanitarian, development and peace nexus. If we are to improve food security needs, greater cooperation and coordination among actors in humanitarian assistance, development cooperation

and peacebuilding are fundamental. Added to that, the Security Council must demand that all parties to armed conflict comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law by taking constant care to spare civilian objects, including objects necessary for food production and distribution, as well as lifting embargoes and blockades that prevent the movement of food.

Thirdly, local response mechanisms and capacities relating to food crises and conflict need to be better understood and integrated into relief operations, as well as national response strategies.

Fourthly, the international community must unite in upholding the values of market openness, with the understanding that food security is a transnational problem.

Fifthly, it is even more crucial to establish and build on existing global emergency mechanisms that include debt restructuring, debt delay and food aid, given that traditional approaches must not only respond adequately to extreme global food shocks but also build and strengthen nations.

Breaking the link between conflict and hunger and harnessing the potential of food security to contribute to peace demand our collective action and objective collaboration. We must therefore strive to uphold resolution 2417 (2018), because our aspirations for development, security and human progress rest on achieving food security for all.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Gabon.

Mr. Adamo (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I commend you, Sir, on taking the initiative to hold this important debate on the close link between conflict and food security, which is an urgent issue with regard to the many countries that are overwhelmed by armed conflicts. I thank the Secretary-General for his informative briefing, and I welcome his commitment to combating hunger and insecurity throughout the world. I also thank Mr. Beasley, Mr. Qu Dongyu and Ms. Menker for their respective briefings.

In unanimously adopting resolution 2417 (2018) on 24 May 2018, the Security Council acknowledged the closely linked relationships of armed conflicts in their role as aggravating factors of food insecurity in the world. Millions of people struggle for access to basic food products, and more than half of them live in

countries at war. Access to food is hampered by fighting, which leads to hunger and malnutrition-related diseases.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, countries in conflict are six times more likely to suffer from famine, and 23 famine hotspots have been listed worldwide. Whether as a direct result of fighting or its consequent destruction, the massive displacement of people is a major factor in generating food insecurity.

Moreover, in times of armed conflict, civilian infrastructure is often targeted, and the major repercussions concerning the provision of public services, agricultural capacities and production and transport capacities exacerbate food crises. In some cases, hunger is also used as a weapon of war. It is not uncommon for parties to conflict to deliberately destroy food stores, burn fields, destroy food production and distribution infrastructure, block trade routes, impede port activities, poison wells and destroy fields and seed reserves. As a result, displaced persons fleeing combat zones are generally faced with the inability to access sources of subsistence.

In recent years, climate change and, more recently, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic have exacerbated the situation for many people in conflict situations, thereby making the challenges on the ground even more complex. Those two factors have exposed the need for greater international cooperation in responding to global challenges. World hunger is one such challenge, as it exacerbates States' vulnerability.

If the link between conflict and hunger is at the heart of the international agenda and is garnering the attention of the international community as a result of the war in Ukraine today, it is because its ramifications pose a threat to global food security and are aggravating the situations in regions, such as the Sahel, that face recurrent food challenges.

The dynamics surrounding the efforts taken in response to the war in Ukraine and the resultant solidarity can be a catalyst for planning ways to prevent, address and attenuate the effects of armed conflict on global food security. The international community must be more resolutely involved in ending the vicious circle and preventing the emergence of new famine hotspots.

Beyond the current dynamics, it is imperative to address the root causes of conflicts and strengthen existing post-conflict prevention and peacebuilding

mechanisms. Similarly, conflict prevention and resolution must be fully able to integrate the management of food crises into their deployment in accordance with the provisions of resolution 2217 (2015), on hunger and security; resolution 2573 (2021), on the protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population in times of conflict; and resolution 2417 (2018), which calls on the parties to conflict to allow for the proper functioning of food systems and markets in conflict situations.

Such mechanisms undoubtedly provide an ideal framework for safeguarding food security stocks, including by providing technical support for countries that are considered vulnerable in the areas of reserve storages and the corresponding technologies. It goes without saying that compliance with international humanitarian law and the resolutions I just mentioned, in particular resolution 2417 (2018), on the protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population in times of conflict, is imperative.

It should be emphasized that States are obliged to allow humanitarian personnel free and unhindered access in delivering humanitarian aid whenever it is necessary to meet urgent food needs, without restrictions or politicization.

My country welcomes the establishment of the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance to support vulnerable countries that face the potential scope and magnitude of the consequences of war and the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to build on that momentum, specific social actions must be considered within the framework of multilateral responses, in cooperation with United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, financial institutions and regional organizations. They can be an effective response to combat the effects of conflict on food security.

We support the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire and his condemnation of actions that target food production infrastructure and restrict humanitarian access.

In conclusion, we call on the international community to further reflect on accountability for the crime of starvation. It is self-evident that starvation and its devastation within the health and social spheres are as destructive as they are dehumanizing.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania.

Ms. Xhaçka (Albania): Let me start by thanking you, Secretary Blinken, for your presence in the Security Council today and your leadership in our work on this crucially important issue. I especially thank the briefers for their insightful presentations.

Yesterday we had an important discussion with the launch of the Roadmap for Global Food Security — Call to Action, which Albania was pleased to join. We highly appreciate your personal contribution, Mr. Blinken, and the United States leadership in focusing the attention of the Security Council on the factors driving food insecurity worldwide. Today's conflicts, long-term crisis and the recurrence of chronic food insecurity are more complex and are lasting longer. It is undeniable that conflict is now the main driver of hunger and food insecurity. As we heard during yesterday's discussion, as well as this morning, the number of people experiencing hunger globally and suffering from food insecurity has been rising since 2014. In countries affected by conflict, civilians continue to be attacked, killed and forcibly displaced. The destruction of civilian infrastructure and other aspects indispensable to the civilian population's survival drastically reduces the ability to produce food and earn income. Conflicts contribute to the deepening of existing inequalities, while two years of the coronavirus disease pandemic, on top of climate change, have made a difficult situation worse. Close to 193 million people are acutely food insecure and in need of urgent assistance across 53 countries. In Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Haiti and elsewhere, millions of people need food. Millions do not know when they will get their next meal.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine is further exacerbating an already acute global food insecurity situation around the world. The blockade and destruction of critical Black Sea ports and other infrastructure are disrupting the vital supply of food commodities and key agricultural inputs that are critical to global food security. There is food in Ukraine, but it cannot get out of the country. That is unacceptable and must stop. The severe disruption of production and trade, and the rising prices globally of food, fuel, fertilizer and energy as a consequence of the war, are aggravating existing inequalities in the regions affected, endangering food security, worsening existing humanitarian crises and pushing more people into poverty. The war in Ukraine

could drive as many as 40 million more people into poverty and hunger, and is threatening future global food security. That is a sad reality and the truth.

In its adoption of resolution 2417 (2018), the Security Council recognized that hunger and conflict fuel each other in a vicious cycle and declared that using the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare could constitute a war crime. The resolution is a call to action based on humanitarian principles. It demands the effective implementation of international humanitarian law and accountability for those who violate it. It also emphasizes the importance of humanitarian access as imperative. We have the tools, and we must use them. We advocate for the Security Council to play a more active role in considering and addressing conflict-induced hunger. Early warning and early action lead to prevention. Preventing conflict-induced hunger requires ensuring respect for international humanitarian law on the part of all parties to the conflict. Humanitarian action and respect for international humanitarian law can only mitigate the effects of a conflict on food systems, which is why political solutions to end conflicts are urgently needed.

Tackling food insecurity worldwide requires urgent multilateral action on several key aspects. First, we need to address the causes of food and nutrition crises, as well as the humanitarian, development and long-standing structural problems that make food systems vulnerable. We then need to enhance the sustainability of those systems.

Secondly, there must be a coordinated, multisectoral response through development, humanitarian and peace initiatives in order to reduce the risk of future conflict.

Thirdly, actions through the United Nations system and international financial institutions should lead to investments in sustainable food systems and gender equality. Funding for food security is an important component.

Fourthly, we need better and more timely reporting. The Security Council has a unique ability to demand and secure timely reporting, data and action on situations of food insecurity. In that context, Albania supports establishing a position for a United Nations Special Envoy or focal point on the implementation of resolution 2417 (2018).

No one has to go hungry if we can prevent it. If we want to end hunger and ensure food security, we should

all act now to prevent and stop conflicts by choosing peace and development.

The President: I now call on the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Mexico.

Mr. Villalobos Arámbula (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico is grateful to the United States, in its capacity as President of the Security Council this month, for convening this open debate, enabling us to highlight the importance of the link between conflict and food security. We also appreciate the briefings by and the presence here today of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, as well as the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Ms. Sara Menker, as a representative of civil society. I want to thank Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the FAO, for his references to one of my country's social programmes on fertilizer for small corn producers in Mexico. It is indeed the case that small farmers have doubled their harvest thanks to Mexican fertilizer production. The joint and coordinated work of these agencies is essential to effectively addressing and mitigating the growing impact of the global food security crisis.

While the causes of food insecurity are multidimensional, it is inevitable that armed conflicts — most of which are found on the Security Council's agenda — are a determining factor in initiating or aggravating them, and their consequences are unjustly borne by the civilian population. Unfortunately, there is no shortage of examples, from Africa to the Middle East and, most recently, in Ukraine.

It is unacceptable that in a world of material abundance and natural resources, vast amounts of money are spent to meet superfluous or at any rate non-essential costs while 193 million people across 53 countries are living with food insecurity. And 100 million of them are in those unfortunate circumstances as a result of armed conflict. To take some specific cases, such as in the Horn of Africa, 15 million people there are in a situation of food insecurity. In West Africa and the Sahel, more than 27 million people are experiencing conditions of severe food insecurity, while child malnutrition rates are truly alarming. In Syria, the population suffering from hunger has increased since 2018 and now stands at close to 60 per cent. In our region of Latin America and the Caribbean, Haiti is the most serious case, with half

of its population in need of food assistance and more than a million in extreme poverty.

It is equally important to recognize that despite the timely food production and distribution efforts of the World Food Programme and FAO, among others, such efforts can fall short due to a lack of economic resources, inputs, the impact of pests and diseases and increases in food, energy and raw material prices. Other problems such as climate change, declines in soil fertility and the coronavirus disease pandemic, as well as a lack of water for agriculture, have a considerable impact on food production and distribution. It is therefore imperative to recognize that the world's food systems are interdependent, and that as we have seen, an armed conflict in one place will sooner or later alter the food system as a whole. Given that interconnectedness, it is important to develop alternatives that do not jeopardize food security in the global context.

The Security Council has tools designed to address those challenges, although much remains to be done to ensure that they are utilized to the full. Resolution 2417 (2018), adopted in 2018, was an important step in responding to the causal links between armed conflict and famine. Food insecurity is a key issue on the international peace and security agenda and requires our immediate and sustained attention. Ending hunger and malnutrition, addressing protracted humanitarian crises, preventing and resolving conflicts and building peace are not separate tasks but complementary aspects of the same challenge. Presidential statement S/PRST/2017/14 also acknowledges the importance and need for the Security Council to be warned by the Secretary-General whenever there is a risk of famine in conflict-affected areas. As an elected member of the Security Council, Mexico reiterates its call for compliance with the provisions of relevant resolutions already adopted.

I would like to underscore the importance of the early-warning mechanisms available to the United Nations system. Humanitarian and development agencies should be able to identify and prevent situations that could lead to famine and its impact on international peace and security. Humanitarian exceptions should also be made in order to facilitate the work of those agencies in such circumstances. If we are to end food insecurity in conflict situations, we must redirect resources and priorities. Rather than increasing our spending on weapons that prolong conflicts and destroy human, animal and plant life, we should

earmark resources for humanitarian action and work chiefly to address the underlying causes of conflicts, as my President said in the Council in November 2021 (see S/PV.8909).

In conclusion, Mexico expresses its commitment to joining all countries with the goal of preventing people from suffering from or dying of hunger in a world with the tools and ability to avoid that fate.

The President: I now call on the Minister of International Development of Norway.

Ms. Tvinnereim (Norway): I thank Secretary Blinken for organizing today's debate. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Guterres, Executive Director Beasley, Director-General Qu Dongyu and Chief Executive Officer Sara Menker for their sobering briefings.

Let us imagine that 70 per cent of the population of a country needs food assistance — I repeat, 70 per cent. That is the reality in South Sudan. On a recent visit, I saw at first-hand the devastating effects of conflict on food security. That is just one of several examples of the catastrophic effects of conflict on millions of men, women and children. At the same time, the climate crisis is becoming more and more pronounced, affecting livelihoods and multiplying the risks of further conflict.

In adopting resolution 2417 (2018), the Council acknowledged that we must break the vicious cycle of armed conflict and hunger, and that we, the international community, are committed to ending all forms of hunger and malnutrition by 2030. Yet the Russian Federation, a permanent member of the Security Council, has launched an illegal war against another independent country. That unprovoked aggression is a blatant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. It is also an attack on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The invasion has exacerbated an already strained global food security situation. It is the Russian war on Ukraine, not targeted sanctions against the aggressor State, that has caused the steep rise in global food prices and food insecurity. The way the war is being conducted is in violation of international humanitarian law. The obligations not to attack civilians or civilian objects necessary for food production are not optional, and neither is the obligation to facilitate full, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to those in need. We are appalled by reports of starvation as a method of warfare. The perpetrators of those crimes must be held accountable.

Disruptions in food markets and rising prices have the potential to spark unrest and conflict. The Security Council has a clear preventive role to play, in line with resolution 2417 (2018). To end hunger, we must pursue all possible avenues to prevent and resolve armed conflicts, in line with the Council's mandate to maintain international peace and security. Last week, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Food Programme jointly presented a report on food crises. The update paints a gloomy picture. The acute global food insecurity situation is expected to deteriorate further. However, we also see examples of how agricultural production can greatly relieve the need for humanitarian aid, even during a conflict, and that gives me hope. In addition to our humanitarian efforts, we must scale up our investments in food production and resilience, both inside and outside conflict zones.

I see small-scale food producers as the backbone of our food systems in all countries. I believe in their ability to work the land and resources in a sustainable way, while providing food for local and regional markets. I grew up on such a farm myself. Small-scale farmers are truly indispensable partners for our collective survival. We need targeted interventions to provide the seed and fertilizers that small-scale farmers need, as well as the tools to enable them to cope with threats they may encounter — conflicts, climate change or other crises. Women and girls have a special role to play in that context. We are food producers, traders, consumers, decision-makers and negotiators. Protecting women and girls from violence, including sexual and gender-based violence, is crucial to eliminating hunger. In many households, food insecurity and poverty prevail when women are hurt.

The sheer number of people on the verge of starvation leaves us no choice but to mobilize now. Norway will invest in resilient food systems, and I am sure that many other donors will do so as well. We must listen to African voices and solutions. I learned a great deal from the briefing given by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on food security and conflict in Africa. I am pleased to note that the private sector has begun to recognize the value of investing in agriculture. Furthermore, the agricultural sector needs predictability from Governments, efficient United Nations agencies and the constructive involvement of civil society. The war in Ukraine has also exposed Africa's chronic dependence on food imports. That raises the spectre of mass starvation on a continent that

depends on food imports to feed itself. If ever there was a time to drastically raise food production in Africa, it is now.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): I would like to begin by joining others in commending the United States and Secretary Blinken for focusing the Security Council's attention on food insecurity at this critical time. The global food insecurity crisis is indeed untenable, and we need to join forces to address the growing supply and distribution challenges. I want to thank the Secretary-General and the briefers for their valuable insights. I was particularly struck by the data presented by Ms. Sara Menker, which sounded a very clear alarm to the Council on how close we collectively are to the brink. As she also said, we all need one another to work through this crisis, and no nation can do that alone. Our agricultural system is truly global.

As a country that imports 90 per cent of its food, the United Arab Emirates sees food security as a top priority both for itself and for our region more broadly. We are deeply concerned about the alarming rise of global food insecurity, driven or exacerbated by conflicts, climate change and the coronavirus disease. As yesterday's call to action reaffirms, we need to act with urgency and at scale, and in concert with other international stakeholders. No country is immune to these shocks. We listened to African leaders yesterday describe how from Cairo to Cape Town, Africa is facing an acute shortage of food that will undermine stability, security and sustainable development. And we all heard Secretary-General Guterres sound the alarm today. Price increases on foodstuffs of up to 30 per cent threaten communities across Africa and the Middle East.

Data from the World Food Programme (WFP) show that before the conflict in Ukraine began, some 276 million people were already in the grip of acute hunger globally, and the WFP now projects that the figure could rise to 323 million in 2022. We cannot ignore the devastating impact on children in particular. According to UNICEF, at least 13.6 million children under five suffer from severe acute malnutrition, resulting in one in five deaths among the age group. The situation is simply untenable and morally unfathomable when juxtaposed against \$430 trillion of wealth on the planet today.

The United Nations Food Price Index also reached an all-time high this year, with an impact on

Governments, farmers and tens of millions of the world's most vulnerable people. Fertilizer price increases are already undermining future planting seasons, laying the ground for a protracted food security crisis. Risks of large-scale domestic and international migration, criminality, human trafficking and sexual exploitation, domestic unrest and even conflict will continue to grow until the issue is addressed urgently at the global level. The Council has a critical role to play in addressing the intersection of food insecurity and conflict, and we would like to highlight three potential actions that the Council could take that build on resolution 2417 (2018), unanimously adopted four years ago.

First, we already know that food insecurity is both a root cause and an accelerator of conflict, and it has a disproportionate impact on people already living in fragile and conflict-afflicted situations. In that context, we urge continuing to actively call for full respect for international humanitarian law, including where it relates to the rapid and unimpeded passage of impartial humanitarian relief to all those in need, as well as the protection of civilian objects that are critical to ensuring that civilians have sufficient access to food. Additionally, we must continue to ensure that sanctions include the necessary exemptions on food and agricultural inputs critical to communities and do not impact the free flow of essential commodities in any way or impede the passage of impartial humanitarian relief to those in need.

Secondly, the Council should follow up on its many calls for risk mitigation strategies in the context of climate change and other threat multipliers. Last year, the United Arab Emirates was proud to launch the Agricultural Innovation Mission for Climate with the United States and other countries. Many of those strategies ultimately rely on international public financing for food, water and social protection systems in fragile countries. Despite the proven cost-effectiveness of those investments, the United Nations Development Programme reports that just \$2 per person of climate finance flows to highly fragile countries. A correction there would be a major contribution to food security and conflict prevention, and the Council's normative endorsement of investment targeting fragile settings would be an important signal for the future allocation of resources.

In the same way that the Group of Seven is working on energy transition packages for coal-consuming countries, it would be timely for a multilateral

workstream, perhaps facilitated by the Secretary-General, to apply the same concept to climate adaptation for fragile and vulnerable countries. It will be critical to identify and to finance country-specific projects and policies that can prevent food insecurity.

Thirdly, the Council should continue to bring attention to and be briefed on the specific gender and age dimensions of food insecurity. That can improve our response, the effectiveness of our actions and support those most disproportionately affected. Furthermore, we need a proper public-private partnership aimed at ensuring women's full, equal and meaningful inclusion and participation to improve food security. Women have a role that is critical to the well-being and resilience of all members of society, particularly during stabilization efforts and in ensuring a sustainable post-conflict recovery.

The global level of food insecurity today, and the likelihood of growing needs in the foreseeable future, is a flashing alarm signal for peace and security. It is time for us to come together and commit to taking concrete steps towards securing food for everyone around the world. The Security Council must indeed ensure that our response is commensurate to the global magnitude of the threat.

Mr. Muraleedharan (India): Let me begin by congratulating you, Madam President, and the United States delegation on organizing this important open debate on conflict and food security. I thank Secretary-General António Guterres, Mr. David Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, and Mr. Qu Dongyu, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization, for their useful briefings. I also thank Ms. Sara Menker, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Gro Intelligence, for sharing her perspectives on the issue.

Ensuring food security, especially for the poor and marginalized, is a challenge that preoccupies Governments in developing countries first and foremost. As the world has been struggling to find ways to emerge from the effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic, the conflict in Ukraine has had a profound impact, with spiralling energy and commodity prices and disruptions in global logistical supply chains. The global South has been adversely affected both by the conflict itself and by the various measures put in place in response. If the conflict does not give way to a meaningful path of dialogue and diplomacy

immediately, there will be severe repercussions in the global economy that will derail the efforts of the global South to secure food security and eradicate hunger in the run-up to 2030. We are already seeing economies collapse and law-and-order problems increase in some countries, and it will only get worse. It is therefore indeed time to start factoring in the multidimensional impact that this issue is having on the global South, especially in vulnerable developing countries.

The solution to those challenges lies in global collective action. On its own, no single country can handle such complex collateral ramifications. We need to work collectively, and we need to work together. In that context, let me submit the following eight points for the Security Council's consideration:

First, as I said earlier, a solution through dialogue and diplomacy to the conflict in Ukraine must be arrived at without further delay. We have been consistent in calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities and pursuing that path to resolve the issue. In that regard, we reiterate our support to the efforts of the good offices of the Secretary-General.

Secondly, the food security challenges emanating from the Ukraine conflict require us to respond creatively. The growing shortages can be addressed only by going beyond the constraints that currently bind us. In that context, we welcome the Secretary-General's call for exempting the purchases of food by the World Food Programme for humanitarian assistance from food-export restrictions, with immediate effect. But we need to go beyond that to make a real difference.

Third, energy security is also a serious concern given that it has been a key collateral fallout of the conflict. It needs to be addressed by enhancing mutual cooperative efforts, with greater sensitivity to other countries' energy mix and import requirements.

Fourth, a number of low-income societies are today confronted with the twin challenges of rising costs and difficult access to food grains. Even countries like India, which has adequate stocks, have seen an unjustified increase in food prices. It is clear that hoarding and speculation are at work. We cannot allow that to pass unchallenged. As outlined in my statement yesterday, my Government noted the sudden spike in global prices of wheat, which put our food security and that of our neighbours and other vulnerable countries at risk. We are committed to ensuring that such adverse impacts on food security are effectively mitigated and

that the vulnerable are protected from sudden changes in the global market.

In order to manage our own overall food security and support the needs of neighbouring and other vulnerable developing countries, we announced some measures regarding wheat exports on 13 May. Let me reaffirm that those measures allow for exports — once approved — to help countries meet their food security demands. That will be done upon request from the Governments concerned. The policy will ensure that we will truly respond to those most in need.

Fifth, it is necessary for all of us to fully appreciate the importance of equity, affordability and accessibility when it comes to food grains. We already saw how those principles were disregarded in the case of COVID-19 vaccines. Open markets must not become an argument to perpetuate inequity and promote discrimination.

Sixth, we need to avoid linking humanitarian and development assistance with progress in the political process. If donors were to adopt that position, it would serve only to exacerbate food insecurity in conflict situations. There is an urgent need for the donor community to scale up assistance to conflict-affected countries and to ensure that humanitarian agencies receive the necessary funding to fully execute their plans without the politicization of people's basic needs.

Seventh, food assistance alone surely cannot be a long-term sustainable solution to food insecurity. Peacebuilding and development are paramount and must include livelihood support, social-protection programmes and community-based approaches, including investment in agriculture infrastructure and capacity-building in rural development, especially in conflict areas. That calls for a multi-stakeholder approach.

Eighth, armed conflict and terrorism, combined with extreme weather, crop pests, food price volatility, exclusion and economic shocks, can devastate any fragile State, leading to food insecurity, and increase the threat of famine. It is therefore critical to support capacity-building in countries facing those issues, especially with regard to designing, implementing and monitoring policies and programmes related to food.

As the Council may be aware, India is running the world's largest food-based safety-net programme, which has seen a paradigm shift from a welfare to a rights-based approach. In order to achieve targeted

delivery during COVID-19, the Government provided food assistance to 800 million people and cash transfers to 400 million people. India's mid-day meal programme continues to tackle undernourishment in school children by ensuring the provision of healthy meals. A nutrition drive has also been launched, especially for vulnerable groups, women and children. Our farm-to-table digital initiatives include farmer's portals, farm-advisory services, online networks of agricultural commodities, price prediction and the use of blockchain technology for quality certification.

Even in the heart of the COVID-19 pandemic, India also provided food aid in the form of thousands of metric tons of wheat, rice, pulses and lentils to several countries, including in our neighbourhood and in Africa, in order to strengthen food security. In view of the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, India has commenced the donation of 50,000 metric tons of wheat to the people of Afghanistan. Similarly, India has continued its humanitarian support for Myanmar, including through a grant of 10,000 tons of rice and wheat. We are also assisting Sri Lanka, including with food aid, through its difficult times. All these initiatives are in keeping with our "neighbourhood first" foreign policy priority and our firm belief in the abiding ethos of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* — the world is one family.

In conclusion, I would like to underscore India remains committed to working with all other Member States and international organizations, including the United Nations, to collectively strengthen global food security, particularly in countries facing conflict situations.

Mr. Brophy (Ireland): I would like to thank Secretary Blinken for organizing this debate. Ireland deeply appreciates his leadership in ensuring that conflict and hunger are situated at the heart of the Security Council's work.

Our discussion today could not be timelier. Conflict-induced hunger is present in an increasing number of country situations on the Council's agenda. It demands our urgent attention and action.

Executive Director Beasley, Ms. Menker and Director-General Qu Dongyu could not have been clearer — hunger is on the rise, and conflict is the cause. The statistics and the outlook are grim and difficult to hear. But for the Council to act, to trigger necessary and urgent action, they must be heard by us in the Chamber.

Ireland speaks to both conflict and food security from our own lived experiences, which shape our understanding and sharpen our conviction to act. It is unconscionable that, in our world of plenty, millions are on the brink of starvation. Globally, 193 million people are at crisis levels of food insecurity or worse.

We cannot avoid the difficult reality — conflict is now the biggest driver of hunger. And, by failing to prevent or resolve the conflicts on our agenda, the Council has a responsibility to bear. As members of the Council, we have a duty to look beyond short term political or strategic interests to the men, women and children who are living the reality of the often-dry reports on our agenda. More and more people are dying from avoidable, human-made, conflict induced hunger, and they are doing so on our watch.

Today's discussion is an opportunity to ask how we can meet our responsibility and how to turn our words to action. Let us rise to that opportunity. I wish to share three points.

The first is an obvious one, but it cannot be stated enough — conflict is perpetuating immense humanitarian need and driving global food insecurity. Conflict displaces people, destroys livelihoods, disrupts trade and food supplies, damages infrastructure and impinges access to vital resources.

In Somalia, famine is a terrifying imminent risk. Conflict in northern Ethiopia and a de facto humanitarian blockade has resulted in 80 per cent of Tigray's population living in food insecurity. Hundreds of thousands face starvation. Yet the Council has struggled to find the courage to address this crisis. There are emergency food insecurity levels across many conflict-affected countries, including Mali, Haiti, South Sudan and Afghanistan.

The illegal, unjustified invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation has caused immeasurable suffering in Ukraine. However, the consequences for hunger in our interconnected world will be felt far beyond Ukraine's sovereign borders. That senseless act of aggression has now forced millions into acute hunger this year. The potential impact on security and stability across multiple countries is deeply worrying.

Our response, too often, is to address the symptoms, not the disease. We provide the necessary humanitarian assistance to those trapped in conflicts but lack the will or commitment to end them. Unless we take real

steps to end the conflicts on our agenda, our actions do little more than cruelly sustain millions on the edge of survival.

Those conflicts are not unsolvable. War is not inevitable. Ireland knows that from its own experience. However, we need to use all our tools to turn those waging war from the path of violence, so that they embrace dialogue and diplomacy and take the path of peace. It is a path that we can walk with them.

My second point is that we have the tools to address conflict-related hunger, but we are failing to use them. In spite of the unanimous commitment by the Council to counter conflict-driven hunger, the promise of resolution 2417 (2018) is not being realized. We continue to see flagrant violations of international humanitarian law, including starvation brazenly used as a method of warfare, humanitarian access repeatedly impeded, vulnerable populations denied life-saving humanitarian protection and assistance, and accountability for such grievous actions absent.

The war in Ukraine has upended global food-supply chains. It has tightened the screw on already food-insecure countries such as Yemen. As Executive Director Beasley told the Council previously, the impact of this war is that it is forcing humanitarian agencies to make unconscionable choices — to take food from the mouths of those who are hungry to feed the starving.

The events of the last months have only reinforced the urgency of the call to action of resolution 2417 (2018). We must match our will to act to the severity of the food-insecurity situation deepening on our watch.

My third point is a call to do things differently. The millions upon millions suffering the consequences of conflict-induced food insecurity and the Council's inability to address the crisis shames us all. Reaching emergency and catastrophic levels of food insecurity does not happen overnight. Just how many red flags and alarm bells are needed? What level of suffering will finally spark a response from the Council?

Delivering on early action, as foreseen in resolution 2417 (2018), can prevent food insecurity and famine, especially to safeguard maternal and child health. Our efforts should support interventions to prevent malnutrition in children rather than waiting until they are on the edge of starvation, giving future generations a chance.

Early-warning systems, including data analysis, provide the international community with the means to anticipate food-insecurity crises. That can save lives, protect livelihoods and allow food systems to survive — all the more vital in conflict situations.

In closing, time is running out. Our collective and comprehensive action is needed to reverse the frightening trend of conflict-induced food insecurity. It is needed now. We need to ensure that all parties to armed conflicts comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, including in relation to humanitarian access. Those who fail to do so must be held accountable, and the Council must assume its responsibility to ensure accountability.

That is what we actually committed to when we unanimously adopted resolution 2417 (2018). We must recognize our failings and the slow pace of progress. That is why Ireland has worked as an informal focal point on conflict and hunger since joining the Council, to bring forward the provisions of the resolution and to try to make them work. Now more than ever we need to summon the political will and honour our commitments.

More importantly, we must have the courage to act to end conflicts and to break the cycle of conflict-induced food insecurity. That is our responsibility; that is our duty. The cost of further political inaction will be devastating — an avoidable and unnecessary human cost. Let us act together and act now.

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I join others, Mr. President, in thanking you for having convened the debate today, and I also thank our briefers for their very insightful remarks.

At the start of the year, the United Nations Global Humanitarian Overview warned of unprecedented levels of global food insecurity, driven by a perfect storm of the coronavirus disease, the climate crisis and conflict.

Yemen faces catastrophic levels of food insecurity for the fifth year running. Refugees across the Sahel are suffering from increased violence and reduced humanitarian access, and, in the Horn of Africa, particularly in Ethiopia and Somalia, millions of people affected by conflict are also grappling with the worst drought in 40 years.

Russia ignored that suffering in choosing to invade Ukraine, the breadbasket of the world. Ukraine's food and fertilizer exports were feeding up to 400 million

people worldwide. And now a critical part of the world's food supply chain is being throttled by Russia. Across the world, 13 million hungry children are already subsisting on a knife edge; of those, 2 million will now face starvation this year.

As our Minister explained yesterday, the United Kingdom fully supports the United States-led Road Map for Global Food Security and the Global Alliance for Food Security launched under Germany's presidency of the Group of Seven. We have the food and the means to help the most vulnerable, but we must act now.

First, the international community must enable the free movement of food. Alongside more than 50 members of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Kingdom has committed to keeping food and agricultural markets open, predictable and transparent. All WTO members must prohibit export restrictions on food bought for the World Food Programme.

Secondly, it is vital that we strengthen global resilience to prevent future famine risks. As we set out in the United Kingdom's international development strategy, which we launched this week, the United Kingdom will support the most vulnerable countries with more than \$3.5 billion of humanitarian aid in the next three years.

British International Investment — the United Kingdom's development finance institution — will scale up high-quality and sustainable investments, including in the food and agricultural sector. The World Bank must deliver swiftly on its plans to strengthen fragile economies by distributing \$170 billion over the next 15 months.

Finally, actors on the ground need to live up to their responsibilities under international humanitarian law. We will continue to pursue accountability for those using starvation as a weapon of war.

This human-made global crisis requires a collective global response. The United Kingdom stands in solidarity with vulnerable countries and will play its part. Russia must now play hers: end the conflict and the global shocks it is inflicting on the world's poorest.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation at today's meeting of the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Mr. Qu Dongyu, and the Executive Director of the World

Food Programme (WFP), Mr. David Beasley. We thank them for their briefings. We also note the participation of a great number of distinguished representatives of various States Members of the United Nations at today's meeting.

Recently, the most obvious trend in the evolution of the political culture in Western States has been the effort to blame Russia for everything. Since the beginning of our special military operation in Ukraine, we have noted almost a quantum leap in the allegations suggesting that Moscow is guilty of everything.

The stories connected with food security have been one of the main areas of accusation levelled at Russia. Today's meeting is an eloquent illustration of this. Listening to my colleagues, it would seem to be that we want to starve everyone to death and that only they and Ukraine allegedly care about how to save the lives of the hungry. The picture might be pretty, but it is an absolutely false one.

Let us recall that the threat of a world food crisis did not arise this year, and the possibility of hunger on a biblical scale and a perfect storm were mentioned by a participant in today's meeting, namely, the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Mr. David Beasley, in 2020. At that time, 155 million people in 55 countries were facing critical food-security threats, and among the reasons given for that were conflict, extreme weather events and economic turmoil.

We regret the fact that our colleagues from the Western members of the Security Council did not dare to comment on the root causes of the food and other crises in such other countries as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya or Syria.

Estimates of the number of people potentially at risk of hunger today are 193 million people. On 10 May, on behalf of the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance, the Secretary-General the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Ms. Rebeca Grynspan, said that there was no problem of physical deficit of food in the world, but that the issue was the system of distribution.

Experts on the grain markets added that a factor in this regard is also the rapid increases in price, and that is nothing new. According to data from stock markets, the year-on-year growth in the price of wheat in 2021 alone came to 25 per cent, and, by February of this year,

prices were 60 per cent higher than the average for the last five years.

Among the reasons for this situation, leading experts first and foremost indicated the consequences of the coronavirus disease pandemic in terms of disruption to the supply chains, as well as more expensive freight and insurance. There was also the issue of the anti-crisis financial investment in the economies, where the United States, the European Union (EU) and Japan spent more than \$8 trillion, which drove up demand and led to a rise in inflation.

Against this background, we also have the already existing trade wars and the long-standing conflict in the regulation of the agricultural markets. As a result, the stored stocks of food were at their lowest levels for the last 5 to 10 years, which drove up food prices as well as related costs.

Western countries, however, also arrogated to themselves all of the trade flows, which worsened a situation that was already difficult for developing countries dependent on imports. There is an important factor in this regard, and that is the very rapid transition to green energy that is being forced on the whole world instead of a thought-out gradual energy transition as well as the open politicization of energy cooperation by some countries. The outcome, then, is the unreasonable rejection of energy projects and the sharp increase in the price of energy products. The price for oil on stock markets in 2020 to 2022 increased by more than 22 per cent, and that means gas oil for agricultural machines and petrol for transporting agricultural products, and it also covers electricity for the food industry.

There was also a record increase in the price of gas. In December 2021, the spot price of gas crossed the psychological barrier of \$2,000 for 1000 cubic meters, and this is despite the fact that Russia had increased its supply. The direct consequence of this was the unprecedented increase in prices for mineral fertilizers as early as December 2021. The prices for urea and nitrates increased three-and-a-half to four-fold, and for other forms of fertilizer two-and-a-half to three-fold. An increase in the price of fertilizer means an increase in the price of grain.

A significant part of the problem was the speculation on Western futures markets on food products, which also led to an increase in the prices of commodities, including wheat, maize and pulses. In addition, we also should not forget about the difficult weather situation in

recent years, for example, in the United States, Canada, Australia and France.

As you can see, Mr. President, none of these key factors were Russia's fault, and but these factors did lay the foundation for the current situation in agricultural markets. Nonetheless, we did not hear about these issues in the statements of our Western colleagues almost at all, and of course they did not mention the unilateral illegal economic sanctions that are suffocating a whole range of countries.

All that they have harped on about today is that they think that the special military operation in Ukraine by Russia is threatening the whole world with hunger, but everything that happened before that, and which I mentioned, according to the logic of our Western colleagues, simply amounts to nothing and does not play any role. It is clear that this kind of bare-faced lying and fabricating might have an effect on an unsuspecting public, but certainly not on serious experts.

The truth is that they got carried away by their futile attempts to break the back of the Russian economy at all costs and to isolate our country. I am not talking in this regard about the inevitable destructive consequences for their own economies. Ultimately, we cannot do anything about their obsessive endeavour to shoot themselves in the foot or even in both feet.

The consequences of these policies in their internal markets are something they will have to answer for to their own taxpayers and their own voters. What I am talking about in this regard is that in the context of this proxy war with Russia in Ukraine that they are actively inflating, what they are doing is they are in essence taking the whole of the developing world hostage and they are pushing it towards hunger.

Whatever they say in this Chamber, they are the only ones who can do change this situation, and I will explain why. They assert that allegedly Russia is preventing agricultural products from being taken out of Ukraine by sea. However, the truth is that it is Ukraine, and not Russia, that continues to block 75 foreign vessels from 17 countries in the ports of Mykolaiv, Kherson, Chornomorsk, Mariupol, Ochakov, Odesa and Yuzhne, and it is also Ukraine that has mined the waters of the Black Sea.

In this case, how can we talk about getting grain out of the country? Every day, the Russian armed forces open humanitarian corridors that represent a safe path

for the movement of vessels to the south-west, from the territorial waters of Ukraine. However, Kyiv continues to try and worm out of working with the representatives of foreign States that are owners of these vessels to provide a safe exit for these blockaded vessels to an assembly area. There is also a danger for navigation and infrastructure from unanchored Ukrainian mines floating along the coasts of the Black Sea States.

Russia is doing all that it can to guarantee safe civilian navigation in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. We communicate that information to the United Nations leadership every day. As you can see, Mr. President, Ukraine is not undertaking any such efforts, and it is clear that without resolving this issue, we cannot talk about exporting grain from Ukraine by sea.

Under these conditions, a positive role could be played by deliveries of agricultural products and fertilizers from Russia and Belarus.

In such conditions the deliveries of agricultural products and fertilizers from Russia and Belarus could play a positive role. However, there arose another artificial barrier in terms of our exports, which was created by the Western countries themselves — the illegal, unilateral coercive measures imposed by them on both our countries. They were damaging the agricultural sector even before the recent events in Ukraine. After 24 February this year, true mayhem started. A total of more than 10,000 sanctions have been imposed on our country alone so far. The result has been the disruption of transport routes, a logistics crisis, threats of delays and bans on Russian ships entering ports, problems with freight and insurance and restrictions on international commercial transactions, to name but a few issues. At the same time, the difficulties with bank payments hurt not only vulnerable private importers, but also humanitarian agencies. The WFP is also said to have been affected. That is to say nothing of the sanctions-related threats to our energy sector by the West, which continue to destabilize the markets.

One should not mention the so-called sanctions exemptions that appeared due to Western farmers' dependence on Russian and Belarusian fertilizers. Banks and companies intimidated by sanctioning Governments are still forced to overcomply, which delays or often scuttles transactions altogether. International experts, including FAO analysts, also see other risks from the sanctions, including potential difficulties with

deliveries of goods related to agricultural production to Russia, which could have an impact on the next harvest.

Nevertheless, I would like to affirm that our country continues to be a responsible supplier of both food and energy. Secretary of State Antony Blinken cited the Deputy Chairman of Russia's Security Council, Dmitry Medvedev, but distorted the essence of his statement. He omitted that Mr. Medvedev was talking about not delivering food to unfriendly States that imposed sanctions on us. There are no such States among those that are exposed to the risk of food insecurity. They are our friends, and we will supply food to them, just as Mr. Medvedev said. We are expecting a record wheat harvest this year. In that regard, we can offer 25 million tons of grain for export through the Novorossiysk port from 1 August until the end of the year. Other purchases can also be discussed, taking into account the fact that from June to December potential exports of fertilizers will be at least 22 million tons. But if countries do not want to lift their sanctions of their own accord, why do they blame us for the food crisis? Why should the poorest countries and regions suffer from their irresponsible geopolitical games? In such circumstances, attempts to shift the blame for this situation onto us without justification are not just absurd, but also offensive. I would like to ask David Beasley about the situation with regard to WFP procurement of Russian food and its delivery to countries in need in the context of the above-mentioned sanctions.

I also have to mention the situation with regard to Ukrainian grain. According to Ukrainian media even before the Russian special military operation in that country began, Ukraine fulfilled between 60 and 90 per cent of its export potential for the 2021-2022 marketing year, depending on the type of crop. At the same time, most of the available food-grade wheat — about 13 million tons — had been exported as early as by the end of 2021, which, according to the Ukrainian press, caused a shortage and an increase in bread prices. There should be more corn reserves. However, its main buyers are not at all susceptible to food security risks; rather, it is countries of the European Union that buy more than a third of the supplies. In that context, the appeals that we have heard from a number of Western officials for the accelerated export of grain from Ukraine are frankly bewildering.

I will not address the obvious prospect of starvation in that country. It is up to the Kyiv authorities to think about that. Another reasonable question arises: where do

these supplies go and what do they have to do with food security in the world? I would again like to ask David Beasley if there have been any humanitarian shipments of Ukrainian grain through WFP since February? As far as we know, there have not. Yet, if we believe the statements of Western politicians and the media, grain is actively being shipped out of the country, both by train and by barge on the Danube. Where is it going? We have a reasonable suspicion that the grain is not going to the starving people of the global South but is being poured into the granaries of European countries. That, we understand, is how Ukraine is paying for weapons supplied by the West. Something similar has already happened in the history of Ukraine. In February 1918, German and Austrian troops entered Ukrainian territory, ostensibly for protection against Soviet Russia, in agreement with the Government of its Central Council. In return, Kyiv undertook to supply Berlin and Vienna with food, resulting in 37,000 wagons of provisions being dispatched.

I would appreciate it if our Western colleagues, in particular the United States of America and the EU, would publicly refute the theory about grain in exchange for weapons, put forward by many experts today, and, at the same time, explain in what way these supplies actually help to strengthen the global food security that they claim to be so concerned about.

In conclusion, I would like to comment on two statements by the Secretary of State, who accused Russia of blockading Mariupol and starving people there and compared it with the blockade of Leningrad. There is a great deal of evidence from Mariupol residents themselves that the Azov fighters were taking food away from them in the well-known Nazi tradition. Our military was supplying humanitarian aid at great personal risk, but our opponents remain deaf to those testimonies.

Finally, the United States is calling for collective action and mentioned yesterday's meeting of some ministers on the food crisis. That is very indicative of the United States desire to foster coalitions of interests instead of multilateralism, where decisions can be made that the United States needs, instead of seeking the compromises that everyone needs.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Beasley, Mr. Qu Dongyu and Ms. Menker for their briefings.

The figures speak for themselves: the year 2022 will mark a dark record in terms of the number of people who are food insecure due to conflict, the coronavirus disease pandemic and climate change. The Sahel and Lake Chad regions, South Sudan, the Horn of Africa, Yemen, Syria and Afghanistan are the most affected.

However, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is also a war against global food security. It is contributing to the increased risk of famine in the world.

Russia tries to make us believe, again just now, that it is the sanctions adopted against it that are destabilizing global food security. But let us be clear: there are no sanctions against the food sector. Russia is solely responsible.

It is Russia's unjustified and unjustifiable war that is preventing Ukraine from exporting its agricultural output, disrupting global supply chains and driving up prices, jeopardizing the accessibility of agricultural products for the most vulnerable. It is the continuation of the fighting that threatens farming in Ukraine and the upcoming harvests.

The most urgent and effective response to the global food crisis is an immediate cessation of hostilities and of the Russian aggression, as well as the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukrainian territory.

Food exports by sea must resume from Ukrainian ports, which are today blocked due to the war. We call on Russia to provide the necessary guarantees to that effect. France supports the efforts of the Secretary-General to allow the export of such goods, as well as the initiatives of the European Union to allow their transport by land.

International cooperation must be strengthened in order to counter the risks of famine and prevent the disastrous effects of this war. That is why France fully supports the initiative launched by the Secretary-General through the United Nations Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance.

That is also why, in its capacity as President of the Council of the European Union, France launched the Food and Agriculture Resilience Mission initiative, endorsed by the European Council. It aims to better regulate markets, guarantee the delivery of aid to the most vulnerable countries and promote sustainable food systems. We call on all interested public and private stakeholders to join the initiative.

France continues to increase its financial contribution to food aid, which this year has amounted to €114 million and represents a 241 per cent increase since 2018. Through its contributions to international organizations, France is also supporting projects led by civil society and the activities of the French Development Agency.

France will continue to act to counter the negative repercussions of Russia's war against Ukraine on global food security.

Mr. Costa Filho (Brazil): I would like to start by thanking the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the Chief Executive Officer of Gro Intelligence for the eloquent and stark briefings presented, which all attest to the urgency of the issue. I therefore thank the United States for facilitating this high-level debate today.

Armed conflict and hunger interact in complex and multiple forms. Conflict disrupts supply chains and food markets, impacts essential infrastructure for trade and distribution and generates displacement from otherwise productive lands; whereas hunger may increase disputes for available resources and worsen political and social instability.

It is no coincidence, therefore, that the majority of chronically undernourished people live in countries affected by conflict, or that people facing acute hunger owing to conflict represent about three-quarters of all those affected by it. Many of those countries, such as Yemen and the Sudan, which were already at the forefront of global food insecurity, face increasing risks in ensuring an affordable supply of wheat, maize, other staples and fertilizers.

The international food supply and production chains were already stressed to the breaking point by the pandemic. The situation has now been exacerbated by the conflict in Ukraine. The conflict involves States that significantly contribute to the global supply of food, fuel and other critical inputs, such as fertilizers, all of which have direct impacts on inflation. The conflict is also affecting critical infrastructure and raising the price of insurance.

Brazil is among the countries that have also drawn attention to the risk that unilateral economic measures adopted by a number of countries contribute to further

distorting the flow of foodstuffs. We do so in a manner consistent with our approach since the beginning of the conflict, in the sense that our efforts would best be spent on working on joint solutions to problems rather than to pointing fingers.

While acknowledging that sanctions have not been applied to food and fertilizer, our point is that it is undeniable that the unilateral economic measures imposed have a secondary impact on the operation of markets through sanctions on the financial and logistical aspects of agricultural trade, thereby increasing costs and hampering the availability of foodstuffs and fertilizers. It seems somewhat futile to seek to address the current difficulties while denying those secondary impacts. It is also critical to remind ourselves that it is developing countries that are most affected, especially the most vulnerable ones, and are losing access to vital food markets and suppliers.

As repeatedly pointed out by FAO and the WFP, food insecurity is not a by-product of food scarcity, but rather a lack of affordability and access. In the short term, international donors must mobilize additional resources to support countries most affected. Countries must also refrain from the unnecessary accumulation of food stocks, avoid trade-restrictive barriers, such as quantitative export restrictions or prohibitions, and abstain from imposing unilateral measures that may endanger a country's capacity to participate in free international agricultural markets.

Brazil is concerned about the exponential growth in agricultural subsidies in developed and developing countries that are already major agricultural powerhouses. As demonstrated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, market price support policies generally result in lower real incomes and reduced access to food. Poor consumers are disproportionately burdened.

In the longer term, we must ensure a truly universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable trade system. We must also redouble our efforts to invest in innovation and technology, which are key for sustainable, science-based intensification of agriculture and livestock rearing. We are therefore glad to be part of the Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate initiative, focused on promoting innovation and investments in sustainable agriculture for the coming years.

On the humanitarian front, we must ensure that international agencies are adequately equipped and financed so that food supplies can reach those who most need it, especially in conflict situations. For more than 50 years, the WFP has been providing direct assistance to many countries, and yet it faces budgetary and supply constraints owing to rising food prices and the increasing number of people in need of assistance. We reiterate our call on donor countries to increase funding and in-kind donations to the Rome-based agencies in support of countries in armed-conflict situations.

However, emergency-food aid cannot be a permanent solution. At some point, countries affected by conflicts will need to return to international markets and organize their food systems and supply chains in order to avoid the repetition of the hunger-conflict cycle. In order to do that, they will need adequate and targeted financing to bring their national supply back to order, as well as capacity-building and technology transfers. We are very proud of our long-standing partnership with WFP and the FAO to promote trilateral South-South cooperation, including in countries affected by conflict.

Parties involved in conflicts must respect resolution 2417 (2018) and uphold international humanitarian law. That means condemning and refraining from the use of starvation as a tool of warfare, as well as protecting critical infrastructure for the production, storage and transport of food and agricultural assets. Civilians must not only be protected, but also be able to access food supplies, in line with article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with article 54 (2) of the 1977 Protocol Additional I and article 14 of the 1977 Protocol Additional II to the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

It is clear that food security needs a whole-of-society approach. In many instances, civil society organizations are the ones capable of bridging the gap between Governments and people forced into precarious situations. Furthermore, we believe that the private sector, including small- and medium-sized enterprises and smallholder farmers, can be a catalyst for investment and innovation.

We must break the vicious cycle of food insecurity and armed conflict and step up our efforts in order to meet our goal of zero hunger by 2030.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Secretary-General Guterres, Director-General

Qu Dongyu and Executive Director Beasley for their briefings. I also listened carefully to Ms. Menker's remarks. In the briefings, we were presented with the current very troubling and disturbing state of food security. The recommendations provided should therefore be taken seriously.

Food security is a top priority, as it relates to people's well-being and livelihoods. It is also a long-standing challenge facing the international community. The coronavirus disease pandemic, extreme weather events, economic recession and geopolitical conflicts are factors in play that have contributed to the sharp increase in food prices, further accentuating the imbalance between supply and demand. As a result, developing countries are being hit the hardest.

We need to remain calm and objective and take practical measures to consider the food security issue holistically. We need to tackle, in a timely fashion, the bottlenecks and breakpoints of food production and supply chains and jointly address the challenge of global food security.

First, we need to strengthen coordination in order to stabilize the global food market. The current food crisis is caused by reduced supply, disruption in logistics and, in particular, rising prices. In order to fill the supply gap, the international community needs to work together to seek diversified food supplies and maintain the smooth operation of the international trade in agricultural commodities. It is important to bring agricultural products and fertilizers from Ukraine, Russia and Belarus back to the international market. We welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General in that regard.

In the context of globalization, any slight disruption in the supply chain is quickly transmitted, generating a ripple effect. Weaponizing economic interdependence will only introduce artificially created difficulties and amplify local risks. We call for a speedy removal of the restrictions on food production and exportation imposed by unilateral sanctions, so as to allow for steady and unobstructed food production and supply operation. The World Bank estimates that, for every 1 percentage point increase in food prices, 10 million people worldwide will fall into extreme poverty. Major food exporting countries and countries with major food enterprises have a shared responsibility to combat hoarding for profiteering purposes, to limit financial speculation, to instil stability and confidence in the

market and to bring the steady rise in food prices under control.

Secondly, we must scale up emergency assistance to help vulnerable countries weather the storm. In the past year, some 193 million people in 53 countries have faced food insecurity — the situation this year will only worsen. When people do not have enough to eat, social, and indeed even security, problems will arise. At present, a number of countries are already experiencing food-related social unrest, which is a troubling development. Afghanistan, Syria, Lebanon and countries in the Horn of Africa and Sahel regions are highly dependent on food imports. The international community — and developed countries in particular — should increase the provision of emergency food supplies and assistance while providing timely and targeted help to vulnerable groups such as women and children.

It is important that international relief agencies be guaranteed humanitarian access. Many countries are under pressure in relation to the balance of payments due to rising food prices. International financial institutions and developed economies should strengthen policy and financial support to developing countries in particular difficulty. A certain country should adopt responsible monetary policies fully taking into account the spillover effects of its own interest rate adjustments in order to avoid adding to the debt service burden of the developing countries concerned, thereby weakening their food purchasing power.

Thirdly, we need to promote profound transformation and enhance the resilience of the global food system. As with the many food crises that have erupted since the twentieth century, the current crisis has once again shed light on the structural problems of the global food system. The world's food supply-and-demand pattern is categorized by food production that is highly concentrated in a few countries, while consumer countries are geographically dispersed. That makes the balance in food supply and demand highly vulnerable to extreme weather events, pandemics, armed conflicts and other emergency and unforeseen factors.

In order to strengthen the resilience of the global food system so that it may better withstand risks, it is crucial to have a long-term strategic perspective and help developing countries enhance their self-sustaining capacity, increase agricultural and rural inputs, accelerate progress in agricultural science and

technology, improve agricultural infrastructure and expand food availability.

The three Rome-based United Nations agencies and the international financial institutions should leverage their respective strengths and play an active role in situational analysis, policy advice and aid coordination in order to provide greater support to developing countries. Developed countries should reduce trade and technical barriers and offer greater help to developing countries in terms of capital, technology, market access and capacity-building, thereby fulfilling their dutiful role in building a fair, open and efficient global food supply system.

Developed countries' long-standing practice of providing large agricultural subsidies have exacerbated the uneven development of the international food market, which de-incentivizes developing countries in terms of grain production. That is an issue to which we need to pay greater attention and find a solution. In addition, in order to achieve the energy transition, developed countries are engaging in large-scale corn- and soybean-based biofuel development. Objectively, that also competes with global food demand. We need to develop a more integrated and balanced strategy on that issue.

China has always made food provision for its population a top priority in its national governance. Home to 9 per cent of the world's arable land, we feed nearly a fifth of the total global population. We have eliminated the absolute poverty that plagued our country for thousands of years. We have also helped other developing countries to improve their agricultural production capacity through our foreign aid programmes and South-South cooperation. China has put forward the Global Development Initiative, making food security a key area of cooperation. That will make a positive contribution to the response to the challenge of global food security.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that the world today is facing multiple crises. There is no greater crisis than the prevalence of hegemony and power politics, which poses serious challenges to international equity and justice. China's President, Xi Jinping, has pointed out that the futures of all countries are closely interlinked. We should choose dialogue over confrontation and tear down walls rather than build them. We should pursue integration instead of decoupling and opt for inclusiveness, not exclusion, while guiding the reform

of the global governance system based on the principles of fairness and justice.

In this era plagued with risks and crises, initiating a new Cold War, provoking bloc confrontation and seeking decoupling in the economic, scientific and technological domains will not solve any problems. On the contrary, that would only bring more trouble to the world. What the world needs most is true multilateralism, with consistent, exemplary and responsible actions by major Powers and equal and inclusive global cooperation where we all work and share together.

The President: I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Flashing lights on the collars of the microphones will prompt speakers to bring their remarks to a close after four minutes.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan.

Mr. Zardari (Pakistan): I am honoured and humbled to represent my country as Foreign Minister at this forum. Pakistan welcomes today's timely debate on global food security and conflict.

Throughout history, hunger and war have been grim handmaidens. Although the world has progressed in promoting prosperity, the systemic causes of conflict and poverty have yet to be overcome. Inequality and insecurity are the hallmarks of our era. In this decade of action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we have instead confronted a series of disasters — the coronavirus disease pandemic, economic recession, spiralling prices and the escalating impacts of climate change. Those disasters have reversed global growth and, for the first time in 30 years, increased poverty and hunger.

Meanwhile, with rising great Power rivalries, political dialogue has frequently frozen, and the Security Council has often been paralysed. Old conflicts have festered, and new conflicts have emerged, eroding the edifice of the world order established 76 years ago by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Indeed, the United Nations was founded for that very purpose — to resolve conflicts, end wars, make peace and battle hunger, poverty and desperation. Some 80 per cent of the 800 million undernourished people and the 40 million facing famine inhabit countries riven

by conflict or emerging from conflict. Just yesterday, we participated in the ministerial meeting on the Global Food Security Call to Action. That initiative will go a long way in addressing the immediate crises of food security, and the leadership behind such humanitarian efforts must be appreciated. The Call to Action will help ramp up food production, help keep supply chains open and address blockages, mobilize financial and agricultural resources to where they are needed, help poor farmers expand local production and much more. Pakistan looks forward to playing its active part in this bold Call to Action. We also look to the United Nations to provide the leadership to address the root causes of food insecurity and conflict.

The people of Ukraine go hungry due to the ongoing conflict. Some 95 per cent of the people of Afghanistan are under the threat of poverty as a direct result of conflict. The people in the occupied territories in Palestine and Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir are constantly imprisoned by perpetual conflict. They are arbitrarily and inhumanely suffering immense misery, including hunger. Kashmir has become a symbol of the dysfunction of this institution and the Council. The actions on 5 August 2019 and 5 May 2022 by India in illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir are not only an assault on the people of Kashmir, but an assault on the United Nations, the Security Council and its resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention. They highlight the inaction of this body as the internationally recognized disputed status of the region is undermined, and as the Muslim majority of Kashmir are being turned into a minority on their own land, in their own home. It leads the youth of Kashmir to ask the question who will resolve the conflict. Who will deliver the peace they were promised? We challenge those who worry about food security to resolve the Kashmir dispute, open the doors to peace in South Asia and watch how the farmers of Pakistan and India can feed the world.

Even those not directly involved in a conflict pay the price of war. The conflict in Ukraine means that many across the world will become food insecure and risk going hungry. Pakistan relied heavily on wheat and fertilizer from the region. Our farmers are suffering, and so are our people. The price of such conflicts is paid at the petrol pump and at the grocery store. For everyone who finds it difficult to make ends meet, things just became much more difficult.

We are in the middle of the deadliest pandemic of our time. Millions have died; people continue to die.

The health and economic toll of the pandemic will outlast the pandemic itself. Our continents are sinking. Our planet is under threat. Is it not the time to rise above the conflicts of man and face the threats to humankind?

They say history repeats itself — first, as tragedy and then as farce. They say that when new wars end, old wars return. At the end of the Cold War, we saw the beginning of what was to become the new war. Afghanistan was abandoned, and out of the wreckage emerged the Taliban, Al-Qaida, extremism and terrorism. Today Afghanistan runs the risk of being abandoned yet again, and we find ourselves at the precipice of what many fear may be a new era of great Power conflict.

Pakistan has seen the costs of war up close. We are exhausted by conflict. We just witnessed how, after decades of conflict, ultimately dialogue and diplomacy were the path to a conclusion. From our own experience, we most humbly and respectfully appeal to the Council to deploy dialogue and diplomacy in the pursuit of peace before, and not after, the next great war.

Save another generation of humankind from the misery of conflict, and then watch as a new generation unlocks its true potential. We can rise to the challenges of our time. We can be the generation that ends hunger. We can be the generation that saves our planet. We can be the generation that breaks the cycle, if the Council allows us to do so.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania.

Mr. Aureescu (Romania): Romania commends the initiative of the United States to convene an open debate on this timely topic, especially in the current dire circumstances generated by the brutal, unjustified and unprovoked illegal military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

Romania is the NATO and European Union member State that shares the longest border with Ukraine. We have been on the front line, responding to the humanitarian crisis caused by the invasion. Since the beginning of the war, more than 1 million refugees have crossed the Ukrainian-Romanian border, and the humanitarian support offered by Romania has been very consistent. The humanitarian hub for the collection and distribution of international humanitarian aid has been functioning since March, near the Romanian-Ukrainian border. We have also responded to international

requests to facilitate aid to Ukraine. For example, we promptly responded to the request of the World Food Programme to establish a presence in Romania to facilitate emergency aid to Ukraine.

The consequences of this irrational war are multidimensional, and the need for ensuring food security becomes clearer every day. We already face production and export challenges and rising prices. Food and energy import bills are already at record levels. In an environment reeling from high levels of socioeconomic stress, the increase in food prices might generate effects such as social unrest, as it primarily affects people with low income.

There is no better time for considerable action to be taken to address food insecurity. It is crucial to stress the importance of food systems for progress to be made on issues related to climate development, finance and other global priorities. The grain market is already severely affected following the Russian aggression against Ukraine, given the market share of the two countries in world trade in grain and seeds. The response of the United Nations and international financial institutions is essential for ensuring global food security.

As an immediate response to this challenge, Romanian authorities are facilitating the transit of products from Ukraine through the ports of Galati, on the Danube River, and Constanța, the largest port on the Black Sea coast. Romania is in one of the best geographic positions to act as a transit and export hub in that context.

We are looking at all possible solutions in order to ensure better access to Romanian ports on the Danube River and the Constanța port. Since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Constanța has become the main gateway for Ukrainian grain shipments to the outside world. So far, over 240,000 tons of grain have been exported from Ukraine through the port of Constanța.

I use this opportunity to stress the need for wider international efforts, such as a coalition of the willing, to mobilize as much support as possible for the creation of a transport corridor, including maritime access, for Ukrainian products, especially grain, to third destinations, including by using routes through Romania such as the port of Constanța.

Among other measures of support, Romanian authorities have also liberalized transport conditions for Ukrainian exports, especially for agricultural products. Therefore, Romania is a relevant contributor to regional and global stability and food security by supporting the export of the Ukrainian grains to those in need.

As an example of our further engagement, starting in 2023, Romania will host a regional agrometeorological centre for Europe, as approved by the World Meteorological Organization. The main goal of the centre is to support sustainable agricultural production, and it will play an important role in the regional efforts for climate change adaptation.

With regard to Russia's allegations, which we just heard in this Chamber, that there is a so-called "deal" between the West and Ukraine to deliver weapons for grain, let me recall that this is not the first time that Russia is making such totally false accusations. For instance, on 1 May, the Russian Defence Ministry stated that Ukraine was massively exporting grain through

Romanian roads, rail and on the Danube in exchange for weapons and ammunition. The Romanian Ministry of Defence promptly dismissed those statements as false and a gross distortion of reality.

Our future decisions and actions need to be aimed at building safe, secure, accessible and sustainable food systems at the global level. It is crucial that all of us make an enhanced global commitment towards the One Health approach. We believe that only through a strong commitment to action from world Governments, the private sector and civil society can we achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and create a more resilient and sustainable world.

The President: There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting.

Given the lateness of the hour, with the concurrence of the members of the Security Council, I intend to suspend the meeting until 3.15 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 2.15 p.m.