

Remarks by State Minister for Foreign Affairs, ODAWARA Kiyoshi

Global Food Security Call to Action

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First of all, I would like to express my sincere respect to Secretary Blinken for hosting this meeting at this critical moment.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine challenges the very foundations of the international order, which prohibits unilateral changes to the status quo by force, and Japan condemns this aggression in the strongest possible terms. Russia's aggression has caused severe disruptions in the production and distribution of food in Ukraine, hampering secure food supplies to people around the world and creating humanitarian crises. The current crises are in no way caused by the international community's sanctions against Russia.

The number of hungry people will further increase due to the spread of COVID-19, soaring food prices, and the crisis in Ukraine. In addition, the shortage of food is a serious problem that could trigger political instability in countries in the Middle East, Africa, and other regions that especially depend on wheat produced in Russia and Ukraine. Through FAO, Japan has decided to provide agricultural assistance to Ukraine, particularly for the most recent wheat planting season, as well as emergency humanitarian assistance totaling of US\$10million to Yemen where the food crisis has become even more serious due to the recent crisis in Ukraine. Also, at the request of the Ukrainian government, we have provided 15 tons of packaged rice and other foodstuffs to Ukraine as emergency supplies.

Three initiatives are critical to mitigate the current global food security crisis and to build resilience for the future.

First, I would like to call on the countries concerned, including Russia, to restore the international flow of food from Ukraine as an urgent priority. I would like to call for treating the ensuring of grain exports as a humanitarian issue and implementing a "humanitarian passage for food," which would enable smooth exports of food to those in need.

To ensure smooth exports, it is necessary to recover damaged infrastructure in

Ukraine, and I would like to call for further support from the international community in this regard.

Second, I would like to call for new investments to improve agricultural productivity and increase the efficient use and production of fertilizers. It is critical to keep on top of the tight supply and demand balance, given how essential they are to farming activities. The lack of fertilizers could negatively impact farmers production worldwide and weaken their operating foundation, making it necessary to provide extensive assistance to reduce their burden and encourage its efficient use, especially for small- and medium-scale producers. It is also imperative to establish a mechanism to incentivize the private and financial sectors to attract new investment to this field.

Third, I would like to call on the international community to issue strong messages to ensure that trade will not be hindered by measures to restrict exports or buy excessive stockpiles of food that adversely affect food security. This should be discussed at the upcoming WTO Ministerial meeting next month, with the expectation that concrete results will be achieved through the discussion.

Going forward, Japan is committed to even closer cooperation with the countries participating in this meeting.