

Remarks by HAYASHI Yoshimasa, Minister for Foreign Affairs, at Ministerial Conference: Uniting for Global Food Security

I would like to, first of all, pay my respect to the German government for hosting this timely meeting.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has caused serious disruptions to the production of food in Ukraine and its distribution to global markets. This has given rise to humanitarian crises by hampering stable supplies of food to people around the world.

Sanctions against Russia by the international community are aimed at stopping Russian aggression, and not targeted at food products. Trading in food and fertilizers remains fully possible, and the sanctions are not the cause of the current food crisis. In fact, wheat export from Russia has increased. According to its own statistics, Russia's wheat export in May this year has doubled year-on-year.

Despite this, Russia is spreading disinformation to the contrary.

Furthermore, Russia is using food supplies for political purposes and trying to make the occupation a fait accompli by suggesting that it would export Ukrainian grains from Mariupol and other occupied areas. Japan strongly opposes all such attempts by Russia.

I am committed to food security, having formerly served as Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, as well as currently acting as Chairperson of the Japan-FAO Parliamentary Association. In these capacities, and as Foreign Minister, I have been working with the international community to realize stable food supplies.

Situations surrounding food security is rapidly deteriorating by the spread of COVID-19 and soaring food prices, aggravated by the current Russia's aggression against Ukraine. We are deeply concerned that the world's population in hunger will increase even further. In particular, the current situation poses a severe problem for the Middle East, Africa, and other regions that depend on Russian and Ukrainian wheat. This could undermine the stability of the regions and their societies.

Japan has been providing emergency humanitarian assistance through WFP to Yemen and Sri Lanka, both of which face increasingly serious food crises due to Russia's aggression. Japan has also been providing agricultural assistance to Ukraine through FAO, especially for the most recent wheat planting. I have heard that 80% of spring wheat planting will be finished compared to the previous year, even during this war time.

We are also currently looking into providing further assistance in cooperation with the international community and international organizations. We will continue to provide robust support that meets the needs of countries affected by the current crisis.

In this regard, Japan welcomes initiatives by the UN Global Crisis Response Group and other countries concerned, and we will cooperate in this endeavor.

In addressing the current global food crisis, it is of paramount importance to stop Russia's aggression as soon as possible. At this juncture, however, it is imperative to resume grain exports from Ukraine by resolving the current situation which hinders export by sea from Ukraine.

In this connection, Japan supports the efforts by the United Nations to reopen the grain export via the Black Sea route.

We also highly appreciate EU's initiative of "Solidarity Lanes" to transport Ukrainian grain by land to EU sea ports for export, as an essential alternative route in the short term. As for Japan, we will contribute to supporting the grain export from Ukraine.

I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing my sincere hope for realizing a society where stable global food supplies are ensured, hunger is eradicated, and everyone in the world can live with dignity. To this end, Japan will continue working closely with the countries and international organizations participating in this meeting.