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Letter dated 2 February 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey to you an aide memoire on global food security in the context of unilateral coercive measures (see annex).

I would appreciate it if you could kindly circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 18 (a) and 26.

(Signed) Valentin **Rybakov**



Annex to the letter dated 2 February 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Aide-mémoire on global food security in the context of unilateral coercive measures

The steps taken by Western countries with regard to Belarusian potash fertilizers are a source of serious concern for Belarus. The illegal ban on the transit of fertilizers has dire implications for global food security and the elimination of hunger.

The fulfilment of the commitments to end world hunger and malnutrition by 2030 had been lagging even before the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. This goal has only become more difficult with the pandemic. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that between 720 million and 811 million people were affected by hunger in 2020, up from 161 million in 2019 (taking the upper bound of the range).

In its most recent report, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021*, FAO notes that economic downturns as a consequence of COVID-19 containment measures all over the world have contributed to one of the largest increases in world hunger in decades and could reverse gains made in nutrition.

In addition, an increase in food prices has been observed. According to FAO, in December 2021, the average value of the FAO Food Price Index was 133.7 points, which is 23.1 per cent higher than in December 2020. FAO believes that the sharp increase in the price of fertilizers, which could lead to a reduction in their use and lower crop yields in 2022, poses an additional threat to the enhancement of food security in developing countries.

Under these circumstances, the continued use of sanctions and economic coercion by Western countries is puzzling.

Belarus has always made a significant contribution to global food security. However, the sanctions pressure placed on Belarus by Western countries poses a direct threat, pushing the populations of vulnerable countries to the brink of starvation.

Given the share of Belarus in the world market of potash fertilizers (20 per cent), the ban on their export will lead, and is already leading, to higher prices of both fertilizers and food.

We also wish to draw attention to the failure of Lithuania to comply with its obligations regarding the transit of Belarusian potash fertilizers through its territory.

On 3 April 2000, the Government of the Republic of Belarus and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania signed an Agreement on the conditions for the transit of goods of the Republic of Belarus using ports and other transport infrastructure of the Republic of Lithuania.

Article 5 of the Agreement stipulates: “The Republic of Lithuania, as a transit State, shall grant the Republic of Belarus, as a landlocked State, the right to move vehicles and transport goods through the territory of the Republic of Lithuania to and from ports. The Republic of Belarus shall use the services of the ports and other transport infrastructure of the Republic of Lithuania on the basis of the principles of freedom of transit.”

The Agreement was signed by the parties in furtherance of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which has been ratified by the European Union, the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Belarus. Under article 125 of the Convention, landlocked States have the right of access to the sea for the purpose of exercising the rights provided for in the Convention. To this end, landlocked States enjoy freedom of transit through the territory of transit States by all means of transport.

According to the International Treaty Act of the Republic of Lithuania dated 22 June 1999, international agreements prevail over national Acts and decisions.

The steps taken by Lithuania with regard to fertilizers therefore constitute a gross violation of both national laws and a number of international treaties and agreements.

Meanwhile, the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the Department of the Treasury of the United States of America confirmed that the sanctions against the Belaruskaly joint-stock company are not binding on the Lithuanian State railway company Lithuanian Railways.

Belarus requests the United Nations to use its capacities to persuade Lithuania to refrain from political manipulation, economic blackmail and abuse of its position as a transit State. Lithuania must return to fulfilling its international obligations, which it assumed voluntarily. The steps taken by Lithuania not only prevent Belarus from implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but also run counter to the Charter of the United Nations and the core United Nations human rights conventions.
