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Agriculture development, food security and nutrition

Letter dated 20 March 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey to you an information note highlighting the issue of the risk of global hunger due to the blockade of the Belarusian potash supply (see annex).

I would appreciate it if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 24.

(Signed) Valentin **Rybakov**



Annex to the letter dated 20 March 2023 from the Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Risk of global hunger due to the blockade of the Belarusian potash supply

The issue of global food security is currently of particular concern. For millions of people around the world, food insecurity and hunger become more likely and more severe as fertilizer shortages continue.

According to the World Food Programme, about 345 million people across 82 countries are now facing acute food insecurity (282 million at the end of 2021). Up to 50 million people in 45 countries are on the edge of famine.

Fertilizers are essential to achieving global food security. However, we are currently witnessing the unfolding global fertilizer crisis, not seen since the 1970s. Potassium, in particular, is one of the three nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium) the use of which is crucial for maximizing crop yields. Half the world's population gets food as a result of fertilizers, and removing fertilizers from the field will significantly reduce the yield of crops – for some crops the yield will drop by as much as 50 per cent.

JSC Belaruskali is the only producer of potash fertilizers in Belarus and the world's second largest producer of potash. Before the illegal termination of Belarusian potassium transit through the ports of the Baltic Sea (violating, among other things, the landlocked country's right to access to the sea), the share of Belarus in global potash trade amounted to about 20 per cent.

However, owing to illegal bans and restrictions (their authors call them "sanctions"), imposed on Belarusian potash and its only producer JSC Belaruskali by the United States, the European Union and some European Union members in violation of several international multilateral and bilateral treaties, the share of JSC Belaruskali product in global production and export had dropped to 10 per cent by the end of the first half of 2022. This decrease in the production and export of Belarusian potash fertilizers has led to a 16.3 per cent drop in the global output of potash fertilizers, or 5.9 million tons, and a 20.2 per cent drop in global exports, or 5.8 million tons, compared with the same period in 2021.

Fertilizers from other countries, including Russia, given the humanitarian nature of the commodity, are exempted from these coercive measures.

Meanwhile, the demand for potash continues to grow as the world's population grows. Owing to the life cycle of potash ore production, possible increase in potash capacity is at best possible in Canada, and not before 2025. Therefore, although Canada remains the largest potash producer, neither Canada nor any other country will be able to compensate in 2023 or 2024 for the volume of Belarusian potash withdrawn from the market as a result of restrictive measures.

Furthermore, as global food security deteriorates and potash shortages develop in the global market, other global suppliers are taking advantage of the situation to raise potash prices and generate additional profits. An increase in fertilizer prices, however, means higher costs for farmers and a reduction in yields, as well as an even greater rise in food prices.

In view of the real risk to global food security, the Belarussian side appeals to the international community for assistance in the matter of exempting Belarussian

potash from voluntaristic bans and restrictions and restoring the unhindered transit of Belarusian fertilizers to the global market, including Latin America, Asia and Africa.

In view of the matter of global food security, the Belarusian side is also ready to provide its territory without any precondition for the transit of Ukrainian grain to the Baltic Sea ports.

Belarus proceeds from the approach that the interest of ensuring global food security will become a priority for all global actors, including for European countries.
