

Statement of Kazakhstan on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries at the briefing of FAO/OHRLLS on COVID-19 Impacts on Food Security in LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS

New York, 7 May 2020

Madam Under-Secretary-General,
Distinguished panelists and delegates,

Without further ado, I would like to thank the previous speakers for their detailed and thought-provoking interventions on where we are and where we could end up due to the numerous negative challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. This crisis, as it was also pointed out by the Secretary-General, besides posing a dramatic health emergency, is going to have a huge socio-economic impact at global level. It also risks to become a human crisis, attacking societies at their core. It took decades to build the US food industry into an intricate system that matches supply with demand. It took only weeks for the COVID-19 pandemic to flip that on its head - just as unemployment and food insecurity are skyrocketing among many families. No country is spared from such a global crisis.

This week, FAO and other international stakeholders reminded us during the special briefing in Rome that care must be taken to minimize potential impacts on the food supply or unintended consequences on global trade and food security. There were more than 600 participants which by itself indicates the high importance and urgency of this challenge before us.

For many developing countries, agriculture - and the food system more broadly - is the backbone of the economy and of employment. It is especially true for LLDCs as well as for LDCs and SIDS. These and many other common challenges is the good basis to strengthen the cooperation between the three groups of vulnerable states on the international platform.

The LLDCs face many complex challenges due to their geographic remoteness, their lack of direct access to the sea and the high transport and trade cost. One third of the population of LLDCs still live in extreme poverty and the prevalence of moderate to severe food insecurity persists.

Costs of imported food items are relatively high in LLDCs as the high trade costs are often passed on to consumers. Domestic foods prices in LLDCs are estimated to be three times volatile than their coastal neighbors.

LLDCs are also seriously affected by climate change due to the majority of their agricultural land being located in arid and semi-arid areas, with an estimated 54 per cent of their land classified as dryland.

LLDCs are disproportionately affected by desertification along with flooding, landslides and loss of biodiversity. According to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018, the proportion of land area covered by freshwater bodies in LLDCs has declined by 4.7 per cent over the last decade (2005–2016).

Many LLDCs lack the capacity to adapt new technologies to mitigate the impact of climate change and therefore technology transfer, capacity building and experience sharing are fundamental.

According to WTO there is an increase in the use of new export prohibitions and restrictions and these cover medical supplies, pharmaceuticals and medical equipment as well as foodstuffs.

Thus, LLDCs require a holistic approach to support them which involves both humanitarian and development interventions. To achieve this in the face of COVID-19 disruption we will require innovation, resources, and new levels of regional and global collaboration and information sharing. In this vein, the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit will be a unique opportunity to come together to achieve this fundamental objective.

Dear colleagues,

The speed of change is faster than our response. The COVID-19 pandemic places LLDCs, as well as other vulnerable countries in special situation under higher risks of being left behind in these international efforts.

In this respect, we are interested, what will be the FAO's and WFP's priority areas to focus while assisting vulnerable countries to overcome the negative impact of the pandemic? Will these efforts include regional efforts or best practices?

Secondly, our delegation sees the coming two-three years as well as the Decade of Action itself as the high time to undertake necessary collective and inclusive actions to help vulnerable countries. In this regards, we are interested to learn if such international efforts will include any concrete mechanisms of assistance to increase labour productivity in the agricultural sector for the countries in need?

Thank you!
