



One Hundred Seventeenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
www.foreignaffairs.house.gov

July 27, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write to express our serious concern over Vladimir Putin's efforts to blame U.S. and international sanctions for the current global food crisis and urge the State Department to work with USAID to utilize emergency supplemental funding and with international partners to leverage additional donor contributions to avert widespread famine.

The U.S. cannot and should not address this crisis alone. The Administration must lead a diplomatic campaign to combat Russian propaganda blaming U.S. and international sanctions for rising food and fertilizer costs and shortages around the world, rather than the real culprit: Putin's war in Ukraine. Last week, during testimony in front of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, USAID Administrator Samantha Power and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield said that the U.S. needs to do more to combat this dangerous and false narrative. The U.S., alongside our allies and partners, must coordinate high-level messaging as well as guidance to missions and embassies to combat this narrative, get the truth out that these sanctions do not apply to food or fertilizer, and advertise that the U.S. is prepared to help countries and companies work through any impediments to trade in these vital goods.

Reports that Russia is stealing Ukrainian commodities and using them to both further its priorities in support of the Assad regime in Syria and evade sanctions through dealings with Iran, requires a forceful and immediate response from the U.S. and its allies and partners. This is yet another example of Putin exploiting the global crisis he himself has created. The Biden Administration should seriously consider the use of targeted sanctions to punish the individuals complicit in stealing Ukrainian commodities as well as those knowingly buying it.

We are hopeful the agreement reached in Istanbul on July 22nd will allow for the export of Ukraine's grain from blockaded Black Sea ports to global markets. However, the Government of Russia has a long track record of not abiding by the agreements it has signed on to, and,

therefore, the U.S. must work diligently with allies and partners to ensure the proper implementation of the deal. In your response, we ask that you detail the role the UN, Turkey, United States and other allies and partners will play in monitoring the deal's swift and full implementation.

However, Russia's reprehensible attack on the Odesa port just one day after the deal was signed shows the Putin regime's complete disregard for international agreements. We remain seriously concerned about Russia's willingness to abide by the deal's commitments. As we've warned, the Putin regime is weaponizing hunger to advance its nefarious aims in Russia's unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. This attack clearly shows it is Russian aggression, and not international sanctions, that are preventing the export of Ukraine's wheat to the world.

We recognize recent efforts led by the U.S. at the UN and the G7 to elevate these issues, as well as efforts to secure additional donor contributions. However, during the aforementioned Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing, Administrator Power, Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, and WFP Director David Beasley all said our allies and partners must do more. Currently, U.S. contributions to the World Food Program cover 86% of their total budget of programs in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is unsustainable. We must push other countries to step up to the plate and provide additional resources as the severity of the global food crisis requires a truly global response.

Moreover, the U.S. should work with allies and partners to publicize the fact that the People's Republic of China is not only providing rhetorical and economic support for Russia's war in Ukraine, but also refusing to provide contributions to the global food crisis that are commensurate with the country's means. For example, while China has only provided \$3 million to the World Food Program, while the U.S. has provided \$3.9 billion in this fiscal year alone.

The Administration has also not answered questions from the House Foreign Affairs Committee over the role of Dr. Carl Fowler, who was appointed in May to serve as the Special Envoy for Global Food Security at the Department of State. Specifically, the committee staff has inquired over his specific duties, role within the interagency, whether support staff has been obtained, plans to mobilize additional action by partner governments and international organizations to combat global food insecurity, and whether Special Envoy Fowler will have any role in foreign assistance allocations or other programmatic decision making. Additional bureaucracy will not solve this crisis, and it is critical that the Administration is speaking with one voice and coordinating efforts across all relevant Departments and agencies.

We stand ready to work with the Administration to elevate key diplomatic messaging and ensure effective and efficient use of supplemental resources to meet the needs of the Ukrainian people and help save lives around the world. This includes clearly branding and marking U.S. assistance, in line with the 2019 Branding Modernization Act, and a robust public diplomacy strategy to make sure our partners understand that these resources are being provided by the generosity of the American people. We look forward to receiving a timely response to this letter.

Sincerely,



Michael T. McCaul
Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee



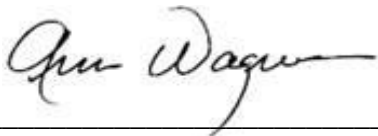
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