



Statement on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States

174th Session of the Council of the FAO

(Rome, 4-8 December 2023)

Item 5: The situation in Gaza related to food security and related matters under the mandate of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Mr Chair,

1. I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States.
2. [XXX, XXXX, XXXX align themselves with this statement.]
3. The EU and its Member States are gravely concerned about the deepening crisis in Gaza, as humanitarian needs are rapidly increasing and food and water supplies remain scarce.
4. We reaffirm the position expressed by the European Council in its conclusions of 27 October and in the statement of the High Representative on 12 of November made on behalf of the EU.
5. The EU and its MS reiterate their condemnation in the strongest possible terms of Hamas for its brutal and indiscriminate terrorist attacks across Israel. The use of civilians as human shields by Hamas is a particularly deplorable atrocity.
6. The EU and its MS strongly emphasises Israel's right to defend itself in line with international law and international humanitarian law. It reiterates its call on Hamas to immediately release all hostages without any precondition.
7. We express our deepest concern for the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza and we call for continued, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access and aid to reach those in need through all necessary measures, including humanitarian corridors and pauses for humanitarian needs. We will continue to work closely with international partners, the UN and other agencies as well as with countries in the region to protect civilians, provide assistance and facilitate access to food, water, medical care, fuel and shelter, ensuring that such assistance is not abused by terrorist organizations. In this regard, we welcome the results of the International Humanitarian Conference for the Civilian Population of Gaza held in Paris on 9 November.

- 8 We deplore the emergence of the Palestinian Territories in the latest hunger hotspots report published by FAO and WFP as an area of highest concern. According to the report, about 1.5 million people were acutely food insecure in the Palestinian Territories in 2022, including 1.2 million in the Gaza Strip. The current hostilities result in a further and very significant deterioration, particularly in the Gaza Strip.
- 9 While recognizing Israel's right to defend itself in line with international law and international humanitarian law, we join calls for extended pauses in hostilities and the establishment of humanitarian corridors to provide access to food, water and medical supplies. This includes increasing capacities at border crossings and establishing a dedicated maritime route, so that humanitarian aid can safely reach the population of Gaza. We also call for continued, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access, so that aid can reach those in need.
- 10 In response to the ongoing emergency, the EU and its MS have announced more than EUR 360 million in contributions to address the crisis. These contributions will primarily support initiatives led by UNWRA, the WFP, the ICRC, OCHA (Response Fund), UNICEF, the IFRC, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies along with various NGOs. This substantial financial commitment comes in addition to the previously committed support of EUR 240 million to the Palestinian Territories.
- 11 Additionally, we have activated the European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC), providing aid to the population of Gaza by assisting humanitarian operations. This includes an EU Humanitarian Air Bridge (HAB) operation, bringing hundreds of tonnes of humanitarian supplies to Egypt which are then brought to civilian population in need.
- 12 The EU has also purchased and donated equipment that will increase the Egyptian Red Crescent's covered storage space in Al Arish by 3 200 square meters. This includes temperature-controlled and cold rooms for heat-sensitive food.
- 13 We call on FAO to provide such assistance as may be required to monitor the situation and assess and address its impact on food security in the region and beyond, and to prepare for providing longer term development assistance when conditions allow.
- 14 Finally, we regret the loss of lives of all civilians, including the UN personal.

Thank you, Mr Chair
