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Statement submitted by the Association for Supporting SDGs for the United Nations, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council¹

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

¹ The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Partnerships of sustainable development with private sector and corporations in response to the resulting food shortage from COVID-19

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals, an urgent call for action by all countries, has become a greater challenge amid the COVID-19 crisis.

The International Labour Organization reported approximately 500 million job losses worldwide from this April to June alone when the pandemic had been most pervasive. The World Bank has also analysed that the population living in extreme poverty, struggling to survive on an average of \$1.90 a day or less per person, has increased by 8.8 million–14 million since the beginning of COVID-19. The World Food Programme also expressed concern that 265 million people worldwide could suffer serious food shortages due to the pandemic.

The economic crisis caused by COVID-19 has led to a serious food crisis. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization recently reported that the food price index has been on the rise for five consecutive months, from 91.0 in May to 100.9 in October. Grain, sugar, and dairy prices increased exponentially, with the grain price index increasing up to a record number of 111.6, displaying a 16.6 per cent rise since the previous year. Due to the border restriction policies all around the globe in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, grain, fruits, and seafood products were not sufficiently supplied, and distribution channels too were mostly shut down. Furthermore, pesticides such as insecticides, which are important for agricultural production, were not supplied in time. Border restriction policies made it difficult to secure agricultural workers in production sites, increased transportation costs, and ultimately led to an increase in food prices.

Climate change has been a large contributing factor to the global food shortage as well. Since the autumn of last year, there has been a significant temperature difference in the eastern and western sea levels of the Indian Ocean. To the west of the Indian Ocean, there was a flood in the Middle East and East Africa; to the east, there were droughts and heatwaves in Australia. Climate change reduced winter wheat exports in Europe, North America, and the Black Sea region. Under these circumstances, nations did not lift border restrictions and took protective measures on locally produced products (grain, meat, dairy products, etc.) in the case of a food shortage. While supply is scarce, the demand from developing nations has been on the rise, leading to a significant food shortage and therefore strengthening closed food security policies. Also, the closed food security policy has been strengthened due to the decrease in supply while the demand in emerging economies has increased significantly and food shortages have occurred. 22 countries have restricted or banned food exports since the COVID-19 outbreak. In response to this situation, the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization warned that there is a possibility of 20 countries facing food crises within the next six months.

The Association for Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals for the United Nations, established in 2011, is an international non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. The association is spreading the implementation of sustainable development goals with more than 40 global business partners. Specifically, various projects are being promoted to help private sectors actively respond to difficulties in population shifts and food shortages caused by COVID-19. Global corporations have production bases, distribution channels, and vehicles across the world and are responsible for employment. Thus, corporations are capable of handling the aforementioned current

global issues including the economic crisis, containment, transportation difficulties, and food shortages. The Association for Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals for the United Nations has announced the Sustainable Development Goals Business Index since 2016 and is supporting private sectors to implement the Sustainable Development Goals through the detailed targets under different situations of corporations. The index provides guidelines divided into environmental, social, and corporate governance so that global corporations can deal with various crises such as COVID-19. Now, 500 global corporations are included in the Sustainable Development Goals Business Index groups. These companies demonstrated the most exemplary responses to the pandemic outbreak. The Sustainable Development Goals Business Index has been introduced as one of the ‘Sustainable Business Tools and Methodologies’ by the Sustainable Development Goals Help Desk of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

The unfortunate circumstances of COVID-19 have been impacted by climate change and environmental pollution. The Association for Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals for the United Nations authorizes certification of the Guidelines for Reducing Plastic Waste as an eco-friendly guideline of international standards in partnership with global corporations to reduce plastic waste and accelerate sustainable ocean and climate action.

The Guidelines for Reducing Plastic Waste are published annually on the Sustainable Development Goals Help Desk managed by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific as Best Practice in Mainstreaming Sustainable Development Goals. The contents cover 30 main backgrounds and 30 global guidelines including comprehensive information on global environmental issues such as plastic usage reduction, marine environment protection, and climate change adaptation based on location, scale, socioeconomic environment, corporate opportunity, system, the effectiveness of implementation, innovation, future vision, etc.

Most notably, the food industry has responded with innovative changes to the COVID-19 outbreak. Such is due to the more health-conscious and eco-conscious standards of consumers living amidst the pandemic. As a result, consumers have been showing an increased interest in the distribution of information on processed foods (such as places of origin, the process of manufacture, and additives) as well as increased demand for sustainability in the manufacturing and distribution process, environmental certification, and packaging materials. The Association for Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals for the United Nations encourages corporate efforts in response to the consumer’s demands with much enthusiasm.

In the case of CJ Cheiljedang – Asia’s biggest food company – a partnered corporation of the association has been highly recognized for its corporate social responsibility with its Global Amino-Acid Research and Eco-friendly Bio-Projects. The project aimed to reduce the number of grain resources in the livestock industry, suggesting a solution to world hunger and food security. Along with multiple kinds of bio-research in the prevention of desertification around the world, the association has certified the corporation with a high evaluation.

The representative food brand “bibigo” of CJ Cheiljedang has received much attention as a sustainable global brand at the association’s exhibition at the United Nations Headquarters during the High-Level Political Forum in July 2019. The Association for Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals for the United Nations has selected “bibigo” as the world’s most sustainable brand since this food company is praised for responsible production considering safe, healthy food and environment. The association is working with these global food companies to develop sustainable food supply programs, and to make this a good alternative in the current

crisis like COVID-19. CJ Cheiljedang runs a COVID-19 response food program in the United States and major regions in Asia.

The best practices of corporations announced in the Sustainable Development Goals Business Index and the Guidelines for Reducing Plastic Waste Group will be presented to the government and the National Assembly in future collaborative efforts in response to COVID-19. Case studies will be presented as ideal models for finding solutions to the movement of population, food crisis, and economic crisis. This process represents a great contribution to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals about population, food security, and nutrition.
