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# Russia FM Reassures Egypt on Grain Deliveries

By AFP

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Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov (L) and Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry give a joint press conference following their meeting. **Russian Foreign Ministry / TASS**

Russia's top diplomat reassured Egyptian leaders Sunday that their orders for Russian grain would be met as he began a tour of African countries dependent on imports for their food supply.

"We confirmed the commitment of Russian exporters of cereal products to meet their orders in full," Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told a news conference after talks with Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry.

"President Vladimir Putin stressed this during a recent telephone call with Egyptian President (Abdel Fattah) al-Sisi."

Lavrov's visit comes hot on the heels of a landmark deal Russia and Ukraine signed on Friday

with the United Nations and Turkey aimed at relieving a global food crisis caused by blocked Black Sea grain deliveries.

Between 20 million and 25 million tons of grain have been blocked in Ukrainian ports since Russian troops invaded in February, as Ukraine has laid naval mines to prevent an amphibious invasion of its coast.

The deal provides for the creation of safe corridors for grain exports from three Ukrainian ports, and also seeks to facilitate Russian grain exports by removing them from the scope of Western sanctions.

"The (UN) secretary general (Antonio Guterres) took responsibility for lifting these illicit restrictions, imposed by the United States and the European Union against (Russian) financial and supply chains," Lavrov said.

Before Russia invaded Ukraine, the two countries accounted for 85% of wheat imports to Egypt, which has been heavily impacted by what Lavrov called "the so-called world food crisis" in an address to the Arab League in Cairo later Sunday.

Lavrov met Arab League head Ahmed Aboul Gheit and representatives of the 22 nations that make up the pan-Arab bloc.

The United States has sought to isolate Russia on the global stage over its invasion of Ukraine, but has faced less success in the Arab world, where many countries are hesitant to strain relations with Moscow.

Many such as Egypt have not clearly sided with either Russia or Ukraine, leading Lavrov on Sunday to praise Arab countries' and the League's "balanced, fair, responsible position."

Several member states are heavily dependent on wheat imports from Ukraine and have been reeling from food insecurity, which Lavrov said Sunday had been "bluntly, unconditionally" blamed on Russia, "as if the food crisis started on the day we launched our special military operation in Ukraine."

In addition to the coronavirus pandemic and supply chain problems, the diplomat said the crisis "was aggravated by the illegal Western sanctions against the Russian Federation."

Despite a Russian strike on Ukraine's port of Odessa Saturday, which Kyiv called a "spit in the face" to the freshly inked deal with Turkey and the UN, Lavrov lauded the agreement Sunday.

He told Arab leaders it will compel "Western countries to lift limitations and stop preventing Russian grain from being delivered to the buyers."

After Egypt, Russia's top diplomat is to visit Uganda, Ethiopia and Congo.

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