



United States Mission to the OSCE

The Russian Federation's Ongoing Aggression Against Ukraine

As delivered by Ambassador Michael Carpenter
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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Over the past week, Russia has continued its barbaric attacks on Ukraine. Russia's vicious June 6 attack on Lviv killed ten and destroyed an apartment building hundreds of kilometers from the front lines. Earlier this morning, Russia reportedly launched 20 Shahed drones and two cruise missiles against Ukraine, killing one and injuring more in Kyiv, yet again inflicting unconscionable pain on civilians for no reason other than to further the Kremlin's craven lust for land and power. I say this was a pointless effort because this is a war that Russia is losing and will lose, and yet with every war crime Russia's leadership stoops lower and lower and isolates itself further and further from the community of freedom-loving nations. Accountability for crimes against humanity is critical, a fact we are reminded of on this week's anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre.

In my statement today, I would like to focus on the wider implications of Russia's war of aggression, particularly on the Global South. On July 17, the Black Sea Grain Initiative is due to expire unless Russia agrees to extend it. Throughout its brutal war, Russia has claimed false concern for global food security just as it has blocked Ukraine's export routes, mined or contaminated Ukraine's agricultural lands, destroyed Ukraine's food distribution infrastructure, attacked merchant shipping vessels and ports, and – according to the Kremlin's own proxy authorities – stolen Ukraine's grain for its own profit. Now, once again and just before the summer harvest, Russia would have you believe it is being forced to end a deal that, in fact, it benefits from – a deal designed to alleviate some of the global consequences of its war of choice.

The United States supports the Black Sea Grain Initiative brokered by the United Nations and Türkiye. The Initiative is critical in alleviating the devastating consequences of Russia's war for people around the world who suffer from food insecurity. The Initiative is working and the world needs it to continue working. So far, over 32 million tons of grain and food have reached global markets thanks to the BSGI.

This year, Ukraine's harvest could well be over 40 million tons of grain. When it comes to food security, Russian and Ukrainian grain – and, indeed, Russian fertilizer – must reach global markets at the most affordable price possible.

However, Russia has tried to manipulate its framing of this Initiative to further its years-long efforts to sow disinformation and falsely accuse others of doing what Russia is in fact doing. Foreign Minister Lavrov has thus sought to justify Russia's threat to end the Initiative

as supposedly an action that would be in the best interests of the developing world. But this is sheer nonsense.

Russia is already damaging the deal's effectiveness. In June, Russia began completely restricting the registration of new ships entering the Black Sea under this deal. Statements by Russia indicating it sees no basis for renewing the Initiative further damage the confidence of insurers and commercial shippers and creates greater uncertainty for global farmers and consumers.

Over the past year, Russian disinformation has targeted food security. Russia falsely claims that sanctions target food exports. In fact, the United States and its partners and allies have taken steps to carve out agricultural trade from sanctions. U.S. sanctions in response to Russia's war explicitly authorize transactions involving agricultural products and fertilizer because we want to ensure that consumers and farmers have the food and fertilizer they need. At the same time, Russia has restricted its own exports and imposed export quotas on certain fertilizers, engaging in brazen profiteering while pointing the finger at others.

Russia continues to sabotage the Black Sea Grain Initiative through falsehoods, asking who benefits, and offering its own fabricated replies. President Putin has spread lies about the beneficiaries of the Initiative, claiming the exports have gone to the developed world. But this is false, and journalists citing UN data have exposed certain claims by Putin to be "false by a factor of at least 10." According to UN data up until March, developing countries have received approximately 65 percent of Ukrainian wheat under the initiative. Additionally, much of the Ukrainian grain shipped to Türkiye is reprocessed and exported as flour to Africa and the Middle East. The initiative has also enabled the World Food Programme to deliver humanitarian food assistance to Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, and Yemen.

Russia's regular impeding of the Initiative only increases the cost of food globally. Those who can least afford it pay an exorbitant price while Russia extracts maximum profit. Despite Kremlin claims, import data from around the world show that Russia has benefited from the Initiative, with near record-level agricultural exports that in some cases exceed pre-February 2022 levels.

Russia's officials have also made open calls to weaponize hunger. In April 2022, Dmitri Medvedev threatened to use Russia's foodstuffs to influence global food markets, while Margarita Simonyan, editor-in-chief of Russia's state-directed propaganda outlets RT and Rossiya Segodnya, has implied Russia could use food as leverage to force countries that oppose its invasion to change their views.

While Kremlin-affiliates speak openly about weaponizing global food security to blackmail Ukraine and its partners, many of us around this table have worked to reduce hunger around the world. As part of our commitment under the UN Roadmap for Food Security-Call to the Action, the United States has for example provided over \$14 billion to food security efforts globally and provided half of all funding to the World Food Programme.

To conclude, extending the Black Sea Grain Initiative is critical to supporting the international community's efforts to provide grain to those who need it most, especially now as the new grain harvest begins in Ukraine. The Initiative has helped stabilize and lower global food prices, and we should not need to remind Moscow every few weeks of its commitments not to use hunger as a weapon.

Russia's now-regular brinksmanship surrounding its renewal of the Black Sea Grain Initiative is irresponsible and unacceptable. As with any common blackmailer, the Kremlin has an ever-increasing list of concessions it claims it needs to extend this Initiative. As noted, even with a renewal, the Kremlin's constant malign threats to suspend the Initiative have deterred shippers, insurers, and traders.

We now know who benefits from the Kremlin-exacerbated global food crisis, but it is the world's neediest who pay the price.

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