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**Letter dated 26 May 2023 from the Permanent Representative of
the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council***

Please find attached a press release by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, dated 25 May 2023, on the implementation of the Istanbul agreements.

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 24, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Vassily Nebenzia

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Annex to the letter dated 26 May 2023 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

[Original: Russian]

Press release by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on the implementation of the Istanbul agreements

25 May 2023

As is already well known, Russia has agreed to extend the Black Sea Initiative concerning the export of foodstuffs from Ukraine by two months. As a result, the agreement will remain in effect until the end of the prescribed 120-day cycle (up to and including 17 July), after which, as the text stipulates, it can be terminated if one of the parties (Russia, Türkiye or Ukraine) objects.

Almost immediately following the decision to extend the Initiative, the West and Ukraine began to call for not merely the continuation of maritime traffic, but also the scaling up and expansion of Ukrainian exports. They have routinely resorted, with the support of United Nations officials, to hackneyed talking points about ensuring food security, combating hunger and helping countries in need.

Meanwhile, Kiev has the audacity to talk openly about its purely “commercial interests, profits for Ukrainian business and important tax revenues for the war economy”, including in the context of potential food deliveries to African countries as part of Zelensky’s notorious “Grain from Ukraine” propaganda campaign.

In the same vein, the Ukrainians have been demanding “some kind of additional benefits”, including that new ports be added to the Initiative and that the range of exported goods be expanded, in exchange for potentially unblocking the Togliatti-Odessa ammonia pipeline. Furthermore, they are adamant that the transit and export of ammonia are supposedly not provided for under the existing terms of the “deal”.

However, paragraph 3 of the Black Sea Initiative clearly stipulates “to facilitate the safe navigation for the export of grain and related foodstuffs and fertilizers, including ammonia from the ports of Odessa, Chernomorsk and Yuzhny”. In formal terms, this means the export of products – namely, Ukrainian grain and Russian ammonia – that were already at the ports when the agreement was signed (24,000 tons of ammonia, which have essentially been stolen from us and whose export is being prevented by the Ukrainians, are still in storage at the Odessa port plant). The transit of ammonia, as well as the import of new shipments of grain, although not stipulated literally, is implied by the logic of the agreement. This has been and continues to be done for grain, but there has been no progress with regard to ammonia.

This gives rise to legitimate questions, such as why do Ukrainian foodstuffs continue to be successfully exported, whereas Russian ammonia has not left the port of Yuzhny? What then did the United Nations Secretary-General negotiate in Kiev on 8 March and what is the point of his related proposals if the supply of this key raw material for fertilizers continues to be impeded by endless additional requests from the Ukrainians? Where are all the advocates of food security, who are so vocal in calling for the export of Ukrainian feed corn and fodder but are silent when it comes to the blocking of Russian ammonia supplies, which are needed to produce food for 45 million people, primarily in African countries?

Meanwhile, the very same figures from Washington, Brussels and London who talk about addressing the threats of hunger and helping those in need continue to

impose sanctions, including sanctions against Russian agricultural exports. They do not hide the fact that they have no intention of helping the United Nations Secretary-General in his comprehensive efforts towards “designing and coordinating global measures for a food crisis program”, as spelled out in the Memorandum of Understanding between Russia and the United Nations on promoting Russian food products and fertilizers to the world markets.

The other day, Peter Stano, a spokesperson for the European Union External Action Service, said that Brussels was not planning to reconnect Rosselkhozbank to SWIFT. No progress has been made on the other systemic issues (in addition to ammonia and SWIFT) whose resolution is sought under the Memorandum of Understanding between Russia and the United Nations – namely, the supply of spare parts and equipment, arrangements for transport logistics and insurance, and the unfreezing of bank assets.

Furthermore, Westerners, both collectively and individually, have no aversion to lying by saying that their restrictions do not apply to Russian fertilizers and food products. We are no strangers to such hypocrisy and double standards. However, we cannot help but be surprised by such open and blatant disregard for the United Nations and personally for António Guterres, who proposed the well-known Istanbul package of agreements.

In this context, the public comments of United Nations representatives themselves, who continue, as if under orders, to call for the continuation and even the expansion of the Black Sea Initiative without expressing any alarm or criticism regarding the complete lack of progress on the Memorandum between Russia and the United Nations, are all the more paradoxical. Responding to the above comments about reconnecting Rosselkhozbank to SWIFT, an official representative of the United Nations Secretary-General dutifully said that there were other ways to carry out bank transactions.

We note that, while ammonia is not moving through Yuzhny port, there are other ports exporting Ukrainian grain with our assistance. If Rosselkhozbank is not connected to SWIFT and no progress is made on the other systemic issues that are blocking our agricultural exports, alternatives will have to be sought under the Black Sea Initiative, such as the land “solidarity corridors” promoted by the European Union, along which considerable amounts of Ukrainian products are exported, albeit at much higher internal and external costs.