



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

9382nd meeting

Friday, 21 July 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Dame Barbara Woodward	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Mr. Hoxha
	Brazil	Mr. França Danese
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	Ecuador	Mr. Manrique
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon	Mr. Diaba
	Ghana	Ms. Osei
	Japan	Mr. Ishikane
	Malta	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique	Mr. Kumanga
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Romania, Türkiye and Ukraine to participate in this meeting.

Three other Member States also expressed interest in participating in today's meeting, namely Estonia, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Poland. They will submit their statements for publication in letters addressed to the President of the Security Council, which will be circulated.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and, as requested by the Russian Federation, Mr. Mikhail Khazin, an independent macroeconomist.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I also invite His Excellency Mr. Olof Skoog, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Ms. DiCarlo.

Ms. DiCarlo: On Monday, when speaking to the Council (see S/PV.9380), I reiterated the Secretary-General's deep regret regarding the decision by the Russian Federation to terminate its participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative, including the withdrawal of Russian security guarantees for navigation in the north-western part of the Black Sea. As a result, food prices are rising around the globe, adding to existing agricultural, energy and financial crises that are already severely affecting the world's most vulnerable people.

We have now witnessed a further blow to global food security, as Russia, for the fourth consecutive day, struck Ukraine's Black Sea ports in Odesa,

Chernomorsk and Mykolayiv with missiles and drones, destroying critical port infrastructure, facilities and grain supplies. Those attacks have also resulted in civilian casualties. Yesterday in Odesa, one person was reportedly killed, and at least eight others were injured. In Mykolayiv, Russia's attack reportedly killed two, while 19 more were injured. We strongly condemn those attacks and urge Russia to stop them immediately.

As the Secretary-General stated yesterday, the bombardment of the Black Sea ports in Ukraine contradicts Russia's commitments under the memorandum of understanding with the United Nations, which states that:

“the Russian Federation will facilitate the unimpeded export of food, sunflower oil and fertilizers from Ukrainian controlled Black Sea ports”.

The new wave of attacks on Ukrainian ports risks having a far-reaching impact on global food security, in particular in developing countries. Furthermore, as we have repeatedly stated, attacks on civilian infrastructure may constitute a violation of international humanitarian law.

Threats involving the potential targeting of civilian vessels navigating in Black Sea waters are unacceptable. We are also concerned about reports of mines laid in the Black Sea, endangering civilian navigation. We strongly urge refraining from any further rhetoric or action that could worsen an already dangerous situation. Any risk of conflict spillover as a result of a military incident in the Black Sea, whether intentional or accidental, must be avoided at all costs, as it could result in potentially catastrophic consequences for us all.

Attacks on civilians and critical civilian infrastructure are not a new trend in the conflict in Ukraine but rather its tragic pattern. The World Health Organization has documented damage to more than 1,000 health-care facilities, resulting in 101 deaths and 139 injuries. Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, UNESCO has verified damage to 270 cultural sites, including 116 religious sites, 27 museums, 95 buildings of historical significance, 19 monuments, 12 libraries and one archive. Moreover, 3,467 educational institutions have suffered from bombing and shelling, with 335 of them completely destroyed. According to UNESCO, 12 journalists and media workers have been killed since the start of the war.

Children in Ukraine also continue to be disproportionately affected by the appalling high level of grave violations in the conflict. Children are being killed and maimed by explosive weapons with wide-area impact in populated areas. Millions of Ukrainians, including nearly two thirds of Ukrainian children, have been forced to leave their homes. For those who remain, the damage and destruction of critical infrastructure continue to cause hardships, as access to basic services are disrupted.

The destruction of the Kakhovka dam on 6 June and the subsequent flooding are having far-reaching and long-term environmental and humanitarian consequences. According to Ukraine's Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food, almost 600,000 hectares of farmland no longer have access to irrigation water following the destruction of the dam. That has compounded the existing challenges that Ukrainian farmers are facing, in addition to mines and unexploded ordnance. The floods have also worsened the already volatile situation at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant. Experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency continue to closely monitor the availability of cooling water for the plant. Ensuring its safety and security remains of utmost importance not just to Ukraine but to the broader region.

Landmines will continue to pose dangers to civilians for years to come, as almost one third of the country has reportedly been contaminated with unexploded ordnance, mines and cluster munitions. We are working with the Government of Ukraine and other partners to tackle the threat of unexploded ordnance. So far, our mine-action efforts have reached almost 3.5 million people. But those figures are not the whole story. The war is having effects that are harder to measure. A generation of Ukrainian children has been traumatized, and the war's impact on their mental health and that of adults will be long-lasting.

When I briefed the Council on Ukraine earlier this week (see S/PV.9380), I did not foresee that I would be returning to this Chamber again today. The events of the past week are only the latest developments in the Russian Federation's senseless war on its neighbour — a war with consequences that can be felt around the world. Russia's termination of its participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative, coupled with its bombardment of crucial ports, will further compound the crisis. The Secretary-General has been clear. We will not cease our efforts to facilitate unimpeded access to global markets for food and fertilizers from both Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

In conclusion, let me stress that the only way to halt the catastrophe unfolding in Ukraine is to forge an end to the war based on international law and the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and in line with the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

The President: I thank Ms. DiCarlo for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Griffiths.

Mr. Griffiths: As we have discussed in this Chamber before and on many occasions, and as Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo has just outlined, the war in Ukraine has had a significant impact on the world, far beyond the country's borders — a world already reeling from an accumulation of shocks of which we are all well aware. The scale of global humanitarian needs under those circumstances is vastly outpacing the resources we have available. Just as a reminder, in my function as Emergency Relief Coordinator, I am responsible for the relationship and the representation of the humanitarian community to the now 362 million people in 69 countries who need humanitarian aid. Nothing anywhere near that number has ever been reached before, and an unprecedented \$55 billion is required to meet the priorities within their needs. Many humanitarian plans, as we have discussed, including this week, remain severely underfunded. For millions of people around the world already, the margins are fine and their capacity to withstand further shocks is limited.

Almost exactly a year ago to the day, we celebrated the signing of the Black Sea Grain Initiative and the memorandum of understanding on Russian food and fertilizer exports. Those agreements were a decisive international response to spiralling food prices that were undermining food security around the world. Their signing also represented something more. It was a demonstration that together, with goodwill and in good faith, we could achieve innovative, daring solutions that put humanity above politics, even in the most extreme of circumstances — in this case, an agreement between the two warring parties.

In the space of the 12 months since that day in Istanbul, the Black Sea Grain Initiative has enabled the safe export of close to 33 million metric tons of food from Ukrainian Black Sea ports to 45 countries, aboard more than 1,000 outbound vessels. I think that is an achievement that even on that day in Istanbul we could not have imagined. It was achieved thanks to the cooperation between the signatories to that

historic agreement in war. It has allowed the World Food Programme to transport more than 725,000 metric tons of wheat in support of food assistance operations in Afghanistan, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen, the countries that are now impacted by recent decisions. As the Secretary-General highlighted earlier this week, the memorandum of understanding has also delivered concrete results over the past year, supporting the ability of increased volumes of Russian agricultural products to reach global markets. Together, the Istanbul agreements of 22 July 2022 contributed to sustained and essential reductions in global food prices, which by last month — before the current situation — were more than 23 per cent below the record highs reached in March last year. Monday's confirmation that the Russian Federation was withdrawing from the Black Sea Grain Initiative was therefore immensely disappointing to all of us, including many far beyond this Chamber.

The developments in the four days since, as Ms. DiCarlo has said, have been alarming. The Russian strikes on port facilities in Odesa and other Ukrainian ports that she also referred to are reported to have injured civilians and damaged infrastructure essential to the export of food. Before Monday, the facilities in those ports were protected installations, owing to their alignment with the export of food and other relevant products. As we can imagine, Ukrainian farmers are watching that nightly assault with great anxiety as they now harvest the crops — crops that had a future because of the Black Sea Grain Initiative — that they nurtured and protected in the shadow of war in spite of risks from landmines and unexploded ordnance, as Ms. DiCarlo mentioned, as well as the damage to the Kakhovka dam and the consequent flooding, to storage facilities, as we saw this week, and to infrastructure. Now the food they are harvesting may no longer be able to reach the global markets that so desperately need it.

As I think we all know, global grain prices have spiked this week, threatening to undo the hard-won progress achieved over the past year, and that potentially threatens hunger — and worse — for millions of people. As of Wednesday, according to the World Food Programme, wheat and corn futures have risen by almost 9 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively, in the largest single-day increase in wheat prices since the full-scale invasion began. And that is not surprising. It was predicted, and it happened. Much of the world relies on those staples being affordable,

and that is under threat yet again. Of course, the higher prices will be most acutely felt by families in developing countries, who are already at risk and who tend to spend a much higher share of their household income on food, something that we have discussed in the context of many places in humanitarian need.

Escalatory rhetoric also threatens to further undermine the safe transportation of food through the Black Sea more broadly. And with no access to ports or world markets, farmers may have no choice but to stop farming. In addition to the global effects, that would have an immediate impact on domestic food prices and the economic stability of Ukraine. That in turn would affect food security inside Ukraine and in the region. The humanitarian catastrophe that continues to unfold in Ukraine, which we have discussed before and will again, therefore continues to reverberate around the world, and that must end. As has so often been said, civilians and civilian infrastructure must be respected. And as the Secretary-General said yesterday, the destruction of civilian infrastructure in Ukrainian ports — and we have both referred to this — may also constitute a violation of international humanitarian law.

The bottom line is very simple. Food and fertilizer exports from Ukraine and the Russian Federation remain of crucial importance to global food security today, despite the events of recent days. The United Nations will therefore continue its engagement with all involved to ensure that Russian and Ukrainian food and fertilizer can continue to reach global markets. United international support — including, I hope, from the Security Council — is essential if those efforts of advocacy and diplomacy are to be successful. And of course I want to reiterate our appreciation for the extraordinary efforts of the Government of Türkiye in supporting, hosting and overseeing so many aspects of the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

Let me conclude with a final and perhaps personal impression. We have all been so deep in the weeds in this project for so long, and this week has therefore been a week of sadness and disappointment. But for many of those 362 million people, it is not a matter of sadness or disappointment. It is a matter of a threat to their future and the future of their children and families. They are not sad. They are angry, worried and concerned. Some will go hungry, some will starve and many may die as a result of these decisions. We implore the Council and the world beyond it to help to make every effort to restore the spirit — what the Secretary-General at the

time referred to as a beacon of hope — that those two agreements represented for all of us in a world of such difficulty and tragedy.

The President: I thank Mr. Griffiths for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the briefer requested by the Russian Federation, Mr. Khazin.

Mr. Khazin (*spoke in Russian*): As an economist, I will try give a more or less objective economic picture of all the agreements on the grain deal.

First of all, it should be said that at the moment there are no objective criteria for assessing market price changes in connection with the deal. Yes, when it was made, there was a sharp drop in prices, but that was because last year there had been a unique combination of unfavourable circumstances. We also have to take into account the fact that the start of the deal coincided with the forecasts for future harvests, which were favourable, so a decline in prices was expected, and there was nothing surprising about that.

If we look at the total amount of grain supplied by Ukraine, we should note that most of it is corn and barley, which in fact are not generally shipped to poor countries or used by food programmes. If we are talking about wheat alone, of the total 30 million tons shipped, Ukraine supplied a comparable volume for export through other channels, and we should take into account that this grain was commercial. It belonged to private individuals and was already contracted for. That means that its impact on the market last year was due to the fact that it had already been accounted for in the current fiscal year.

If we look at the situation from a perspective of one or two years ago, the picture would be different. In particular, for example, grain exports from Russia have increased over the past year, and Russia has significantly increased its wheat exports, from 35 to 58 million tons. It is likely to ship approximately the same amount next year, because the drop in the harvest this year in Russia is insignificant, somewhere between 4 and 5 per cent. We should take that into account because since those grain shipments were not intended for humanitarian purposes but commercial ones, their impact on shipments to poor countries is trivial. Only 3 per cent went to the poorest countries. In that regard, a qualitative assessment of the impact of the grain deal in terms of the supplies of Ukrainian grain to global markets suggests that it is not very significant.

As I have said, it has been almost impossible to make precise assessments because in the past few years the markets have been exceedingly unbalanced. Simply in order to understand how difficult the situation in the markets is now, we should note that in the United States, inflation in the industry was above 20 per cent a year ago, and today, one year later, it is at minus-9 per cent. In other words, we are seeing a process of deflation. That makes it impossible to establish any kind of stable forecast of the situation or the market's response to various factors. That most likely represents the market's reaction to the pandemic in 2019 and 2020. But in the next few years there should be a very strong reaction.

Turning to the second part of the grain deal, Russia accounts for approximately one third of the grain exports. That is approximately 60 million tons in a total market of 160 million to 180 million tons. And for that reason, the withdrawal of Russian grain from that market will definitely result in collapse. The problem is that the effect of the sanctions policies on the financial situation and logistics is rendering Russia's production of grain for export unprofitable. We have not seen that problem yet, but next year, as a result of those policies, we could see a significant drop in Russian grain exports, which would be a real disaster for the markets, with huge price rises. An additional factor is the supply of Russian fertilizer. Russia represents more than 15 per cent of the global fertilizer market and a significant share of the market for fertilizer components, especially ammonia. Fertilizers represent future harvests. If less fertilizer goes into the ground this year, there will be a significant decline in harvests worldwide. In other words, there are decisions being made today that *de facto* restrict the Russian Federation — and the reason I say "*de facto*" is because formally, both the United Nations and the United States have repeatedly said that food is not a restricted category, but the pressure on economic actors is so great that many have refused to cooperate with the Russian Federation regarding the transportation of food and fertilizers. The inevitable result will be dire problems and huge shortages of grain on global markets a year or two from now.

We are not in a position today to say what the price increase will be, because the markets are so unbalanced. It is possible that the central global food markets will see a collapse into some collection of regional groups, something that is already being much discussed, which is extremely dangerous where the effectiveness of food supplies is concerned, especially on the humanitarian

front. In that regard, and in conclusion, I want to say that unfortunately there are indeed problems related to implementation of both the first deal, on Ukraine's participation, and the second, on Russia's participation. However, in terms of the impact, both on general global markets and on the humanitarian front, the limitations for Russia are far more dangerous than for Ukrainian exports. I just want to say one more thing, which is that the deal on Russia's participation will have far greater consequences for food market prices and the humanitarian situation than the deal with Ukraine. I think we need a greater focus on it in the discussion for it to be implemented.

The President: I take note of Mr. Khazin's briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador.

Mr. Manrique (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Madam President, I am grateful to you for convening this meeting at the request of France and Ecuador. I also appreciate the briefings by Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, and Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Peacebuilding. I also listened carefully to Mr. Khazin.

Tomorrow, 22 July, marks the first anniversary of the signing of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which the Secretary-General described as a beacon of hope. It is unfortunate that rather than fanning that flame, actions are being taken that may extinguish it. I deplore the Russian Federation's announcement that it will terminate its participation in the Initiative, which has been central to alleviating the global consequences of the food insecurity that has been exacerbated by the military aggression against Ukraine. Since the invasion began the Secretary-General has been warning about the global consequences that the conflict would have, with its harshest impact being on people with fewer resources, owing to the disruptions of the supply chain, bringing the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Food Price Index to its highest level in history.

In March 2022, a few weeks after the war began, Ecuador hosted the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean. Since then the regional and global consequences have become a major concern for

Latin America and the Caribbean. While cereal exports are not food aid operations in and of themselves, they continue to play a vital role in alleviating food insecurity and therefore in the global humanitarian situation. The implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative has saved millions of lives from hunger, particularly in the most vulnerable areas, as has been repeatedly confirmed by the FAO and even the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

To that we must add the impact that the suspension will have on the operations of the World Food Programme, which has benefited thousands of children in Afghanistan, Yemen and the Horn of Africa, to mention just a few examples. What worse way could there be to implement resolution 2417 (2018), in which the Council urged all parties five years ago to ensure the proper functioning of food systems and markets in situations of armed conflict? And what worse way could there be to accompany the decision to suspend the Grain Initiative than by bombing Ukraine's port cities and grain-loading infrastructure, specifically in Odesa? Not to mention that any threat or attack against civilian vessels in the Black Sea would be unacceptable. Ecuador stresses the importance of respecting food and water supply systems and reminds everyone of the existing prohibition on attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, including agricultural and arable goods. We are also distressed by the growing impact of the invasion on agriculture and rural livelihoods in Ukraine, with households sustaining tens of billions in losses and huge destruction of machinery and equipment, storage facilities, crops, inputs and 600,000 hectares of agricultural land, as we were just informed.

The attacks on humanitarian responders and their headquarters, including Odesa and Mykolayiv, must be stopped, and we urge the Russian Federation to allow humanitarian access to areas temporarily under its control. We insist on the need for the parties to respect without restrictions their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution.

We are concerned about contamination by mines and explosive remnants. We call on the parties to refrain from using cluster munitions given the collateral damage they cause in the immediate, medium and long

term. Ecuador, as a State party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, insists that those weapons must be banned.

Finally, we strongly urge the Security Council to reiterate its support for the work of the Secretary-General as it did in May 2022. That work will remain indispensable both on the humanitarian front and in efforts to bring us closer to a just and lasting peace based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Ms. DiCarlo and Mr. Griffiths for their briefings.

France, along with Ecuador, called for today's meeting because Russia crossed this week a new line in terms of cynicism and irresponsibility. We have all heard it claim over the past few months that it was very concerned about the situation of the poorest countries. After jeopardizing global food security and nutrition by attacking Ukraine, a few days ago it put an end to the Black Sea Grain Initiative. The Secretary-General stressed the serious impact that would have on the most vulnerable countries.

Since then, it has been bombing the ports of Odesa, Chernomorsk and Mykolayiv and their grain terminals, which are civilian infrastructure. As the Secretary-General reminded us yesterday, the destruction of civilian infrastructure is a violation of international humanitarian law.

At a time when millions of people are suffering from hunger, Russia is thought to have already destroyed more than 60,000 tons of grain. It also announced, via its Ministry of Defence, that all vessels bound for Ukrainian ports in the Black Sea will be considered, as of midnight on 20 July, to be potentially carrying military goods or equipment. With those actions, Russia is committing yet more war crimes and once again using hunger as a weapon. In so doing, Russia is making a strategic mistake.

France condemns in the strongest terms Russia's decision to terminate the Black Sea Grain Initiative. With that decision, Russia is assuming responsibility for global food insecurity and malnutrition. In the space of a year, that Initiative had enabled the export of nearly 33 million tons of grain, more than half of which went to low- and middle-income countries, and had resulted in a 23 per cent decrease in agricultural commodity prices. The World Food Programme had been able to

export 725,000 tons of grain from Ukrainian ports to the countries most affected by hunger, notably Afghanistan, Yemen and the Horn of Africa. The closing of the Black Sea will increase the cost of humanitarian operations at a time when resources are already sorely lacking. Above all, it is likely to lead to inflationary effects, which will primarily affect the agricultural and food sectors, producers and poor households in the most vulnerable countries.

Why has Russia made this choice? By blocking exports from Ukrainian ports and driving up agricultural and food prices, Russia is increasing the profits from its own exports. It increases its revenues to finance its war of aggression against Ukraine. That is the reality. Russia is seeking to play the victim and is claiming to have been cheated by the Istanbul agreements. However, as the Secretary-General pointed out in his statement of 17 July, Russian grain exports have reached particularly high levels since last summer and its fertilizer exports are almost back to where they were before the invasion of 24 February 2022.

France commends the efforts of the Secretary-General and Türkiye, which tried and continue to try, to save the Initiative. The United Nations has worked tirelessly to propose solutions. However, Russia has not even deigned to respond to their proposals.

For its part, France will continue, together with its partners, to step up its efforts to reduce the risks of food insecurity. It has provided assistance for food security, nutrition and sustainable agricultural development in the amount of €840 million in 2022. Yesterday, the Council of the European Union decided to reinforce the export capacities of the European Union's solidarity corridors, which play a crucial role and have made it possible to transport 41 million tons of grain out of Ukraine since March 2022.

Russia's decision to terminate the Black Sea Grain Initiative is amplifying the negative consequences of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Let me repeat: none of this would be happening if Russia had not invaded Ukraine in the first place. We therefore call on Russia once again to cease its aggression and withdraw its troops from Ukrainian territory.

Ms. Osei (Ghana): I thank France and Ecuador for calling for this meeting, and the briefers for their perspectives.

As Ghana understands it, until there is a fundamental shift in the position of the Russian Federation, the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which was terminated on 17 July, has no further hope of implementation. As diplomats, however, we possess, through dialogue and diplomacy, the capacity to bring hope where hope has been lost and new life when arrangements we have developed to serve our common interests are struggling to meet our expectations.

Therefore, as deeply disappointed as we were with the non-renewal of the Initiative, we encourage additional efforts by the United Nations and all countries that have had a role to play in the Initiative to help address the concerns that have consistently been expressed with regards to the ancillary memorandum of understanding, especially relating to the export of Russian ammonia to global markets and the export of agricultural products and fertilizers.

We believe that, despite any limitations that the Initiative may have had, it has played a role in the stabilization of the global food prices since July 2022, through the export of more than 32 million tons of food commodities from Ukraine, including the transportation of over 725,000 tons of wheat to countries that desperately needed food stocks under the World Food Programme. The Initiative was also a test of how we could create resilience in food supply chains during times of major crises. While we can learn from the present lessons, its termination would not serve the wider international interest and the cause of global food security.

We, however, hold that to sustainably address the knock-on effects that the termination of the Initiative could create, we need to double our efforts in finding a path of peace that is acceptable to both parties in the conflict. As we have stated before, the further militarization of the conflict is not likely to significantly change the dynamics on the ground. It would prolong the suffering on both sides and the misery of the world.

We therefore reiterate our call on Ukraine and the Russian Federation to cease hostilities and embrace dialogue and diplomacy if they have an interest in long-term peace. We believe that, as neighbours, they have no choice but to find a way they can peacefully adjust their differences. To consider the possibility of other options may not be a realistic choice.

Mr. Diaba (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths and

Under-Secretary Rosemary DiCarlo for their briefings and the information they provided. We have also listened carefully to Mr. Mikhail Khazin's statement.

Ecuador and France proposed the convening of this meeting following the suspension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. That agreement, signed in July 2022, had inspired great hope that there would be a certain degree of calm, in particular in terms of food security.

The armed conflict in Ukraine, which we have been following with great attention and apprehension for months, is about to take another turn as dangerous as the previous one. The quadripartite agreement between Russia and Ukraine, under the auspices of the United Nations and Türkiye, has guaranteed the safe export of grain via the Black Sea for a whole year, and this has made it possible to avoid, if only slightly, soaring grain prices and the risk of food insecurity in certain regions, such as the Horn of Africa, which suffers from recurrent drought.

Today, with the global economic context deeply affected by the multiplicity of crises, particularly humanitarian crises, the cost of instability could become even heavier. We therefore urge the parties to invest their efforts in dialogue to find a diplomatic and economic solution that will benefit everyone. We also urge the Secretary-General to continue his exchanges with the parties so as to break the current deadlock.

Mr. Hoxha (Albania): Let me thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for their briefings.

Before the special military aggression, Ukraine, one of the bread baskets of the world, accounted for 12 per cent of the world's corn exports and approximately 10 per cent of its wheat exports. It produced enough food to feed 400 million people per year, mainly in countries in Africa and the Middle East. Since 24 February 2022, those millions needed to have Russia's permission to get their usual food.

Last year, with the beginning of the unjustified war in Ukraine, the world went through tremor shocks because of the sudden sharp increase in food prices. Food insecurity disrupted global markets, punished households and terrified Governments. Russia scrambled to promote its narrative to a disbelieving world that it was the consequence of the sanctions imposed on it. That story made some noise but failed to convince anyone, just as almost everything related to its war has done.

Then came the Black Sea Grain Initiative, one of the few pieces of positive news and achievements on the diplomatic front, thanks to sincere the efforts of Türkiye and the Secretary-General. The Initiative suddenly eased the markets, stabilized prices and calmed the world. It was a beacon of reason in an ocean of despair.

The narrative of the sanctions disappeared and the world, especially the global South, breathed a sigh of relief. Indeed, approximately 61 per cent of the nearly 33 million tons of exported grain out of Ukraine has shipped to low- and middle-income countries, 65 per cent of which was wheat.

That was the case until the 27 July, when Russia decided it was time to gamble again. To be fair, this did not come as a surprise. Russia had long been nervous and unhappy with the deal, which it did not hide. In October last year, 10 ships were inspected per day, then 7 in November, coming down to 2 in May, while the real capacity for inspection was 40 ships a day. In contrast, Russian food exports — which are not under any sanction, it must be highlighted — have increased in the last year, and the country is exporting plenty of grain and fertilizers out of Novorossiysk.

So, what is wrong? In the course of these long months of war, we have learned that in order to understand the reality, one should not rely on what Russia says, but rather on what it omits. The Kremlin is now using any future participation in the grain deal as a bargaining chip to get European Union sanctions relief.

Russian agriculture producers have been complaining about prices in global markets for these commodities. They want to make more money, and for that they need to increase prices. In the world that we have built, by which I refer to the international rules-based order, this is done by fair competition, not brutal imposition. But this is what the Russians are trying to do with their oil, it is what they did with their gas, and now they are doing it again with food. In a war that the Russians are not winning, everything must be used as a weapon. Russia's blockade of Ukrainian ports has, since the very first day, been a deliberate effort to strangle Ukraine's economy. After more than 500 days of a disastrous war, the goal remains the same, as it continues to destroy Ukrainian infrastructure, kill its people and abduct its children.

Now, as mentioned by Under-Secretary-General and other colleagues, Russia's daily attacks are intended to destroy Ukraine's ports, including in Odesa, a city

inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. But Russia is not punishing Ukraine alone. Ending the deal would destabilize global food prices and jeopardize the most food-insecure countries and populations at a time when climate change, conflict, political instability and other factors have already caused rising levels of food insecurity. According to the United Nations Comtrade Database, imports from Ukraine account for 75 per cent of Lebanon's total wheat imports, 59 per cent of Pakistan's, 49 per cent of Libya's and 45 per cent of Ethiopia's, to mention just a few on a long list of countries.

If the loaf of bread costs more or is just missing from the usual shelves in dozens of countries, people must know who to blame, because killing the deal is tantamount to playing Russian roulette with the food of the poor and the needs of the hungry. Maybe not everyone can immediately understand that one man is ready to starve people around the world for his own political survival, to justify his terrible mistakes and excuse his horribly wrong judgment, but it is just a matter of time before everyone realizes that by trying to mimic strength at the expense of the hungry, he is only showing his weakness and his cynicism.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin not only by thanking Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo and Under-Secretary-General Martin Griffiths for their briefings, but also, on behalf of my country, Switzerland, but also by expressing our deep appreciation for their tireless work to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population.

Once again, we have come to the end of a week of grim news in connection with Russia's military aggression against Ukraine: more attacks, more civilian casualties and destruction, and more uncertainty for the people of Ukraine and of the world. According to credible reports, in Mykolayiv, near Odesa, an air strike hit houses and a nursery yesterday. These attacks are as cruel as they are unacceptable. Switzerland is extremely concerned by this apparent escalation, which is once again affecting civilians and civilian infrastructure in southern Ukraine.

We recall that international humanitarian law prohibits attacks against the civilian population and infrastructure, as well as reprisals, particularly against protected persons and property. It is imperative that the rules governing the conduct of hostilities be respected. We also join in the condemnation of the Russian strikes against the port facilities of Odesa and other Ukrainian Black Sea ports.

Those, like Russia's decision on the Black Sea Grain Initiative, have repercussions far beyond the Ukraine. The agreements signed in Istanbul a year ago have proved essential for food security worldwide, as we have heard today. The Initiative has enabled more than 32 million tons of food to be exported from Ukraine to 45 countries on three continents, helped to reduce global food prices and made it possible for the World Food Programme to ship more than 725,000 tons of wheat to support humanitarian operations.

We reiterate our deep regret at Russia's decision not to extend this initiative. We fear that this decision will exacerbate situations of distress and particularly affect the poorest people. We are also concerned about the risk of destabilization that food insecurity represents in many parts of the world.

Switzerland is convinced that it is in the interests of global food security for the Initiative to be renewed. We are concerned by the military escalation and the rhetoric since the Russian decision and call on all parties to refrain from any prejudicial action, particularly with regard to civilian shipping.

We welcome the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General, as well as those of Türkiye and all the actors involved, to facilitate rapid and unhindered access to world markets for food products and fertilizers from Ukraine and Russia. We continue to stand ready to support these efforts, particularly in our role as a host State.

As others have said, the signing of the agreements in Istanbul a year ago was one of the few moments of hope after the start of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. It proved that even in the darkest hours, diplomatic solutions can be found in the interests of a wider goal, which is a reminder that humanity and regard for the most vulnerable must — and can — prevail.

This week's events run counter to what we have been calling for since February 2022. The escalatory trend must stop. The longer the military aggression continues, the greater its repercussions will be. We therefore once again call on Russia — and will do so for as long as it takes — to de-escalate the situation, end its combat operations and withdraw its troops from Ukrainian territory.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for their briefings. I also listened carefully to Mr. Khazin's remarks.

The Black Sea Grain Initiative and the memorandum of understanding on Russia's food and fertilizer exports are very important to ensuring global food supplies and stabilizing the global food market. Both should be implemented in a balanced, comprehensive and effective manner, and the reasonable concerns of the parties involved should be addressed. In the past few days the Russian Federation has said repeatedly that it is willing to consider resuming its participation in the Initiative if substantive progress is made in removing obstacles to its export of grain and fertilizers. Secretary-General Guterres has also said that he will continue to make efforts to ensure that Ukraine and Russia's grain and fertilizers reach the global market.

China hopes that the parties concerned will act in the interests of maintaining international food security and alleviating the food crisis in developing countries in particular, by working with the relevant United Nations agencies to strengthen dialogue and consultations, meeting each other halfway and striving to reach a balanced solution to the legitimate concerns of all parties, so as to resume Russia and Ukraine's export of grain and fertilizers as soon as possible. The situation in Ukraine has continued to escalate for some time and has shown an ever-expanding trend, with many attacks on important civilian infrastructure. China calls on the parties to let calm prevail, exercise restraint, strictly abide by international humanitarian law and the principles of necessity, distinction and proportionality, refrain from attacking civilians and civilian infrastructure and make every effort to prevent the conflict from expanding so as to avert a larger humanitarian crisis.

The real way to solve the humanitarian situation in Ukraine lies in reaching a political settlement of the Ukrainian issue. China once again calls on the parties to the conflict to resume peace talks as soon as possible, and calls on the international community to create the necessary conditions to that end. With regard to the issue of Ukraine, China has always advocated that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be safeguarded. The purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations should be respected, and the reasonable security concerns of all parties should be taken seriously. Every effort that could help to peacefully resolve the crisis should be supported. China will continue to advocate for peace and dialogue and to work tirelessly with the international community to promote a political solution to the issue of Ukraine.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Under-Secretaries-General Griffiths and DiCarlo for their sobering briefings. I also want to express our appreciation to Ecuador and France for calling for this important meeting.

It seems that every single week, Russia stoops to a new low. Last week, Russia unilaterally blocked the compromise draft resolution (S/2023/506) that would have extended cross-border assistance to Syrians in dire need. And this week Russia suspended its participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative, an arrangement that has helped feed the world's most vulnerable, particularly people in the Middle East and Africa. We heard from one of our briefers that that is trivial. But we should ask the people who are receiving that aid if they think it is trivial. On Wednesday the Kremlin unleashed missiles and drones on Ukrainian ports, killing and wounding civilians and destroying 60,000 tons of grain — 60,000 tons — which, according to the World Food Programme, is enough to feed more than 270,000 people for a year. This week, Russia also announced that all ships proceeding to Ukrainian ports in Black Sea waters will be considered potential carriers of military cargo, which could have been avoided with the inspections that were provided for under the Initiative. And reports indicate that just last night Russia carried out yet another round of attacks in the Odesa region.

Russia is waging war on the world's food supply. It is waging war on the poor at a time when needs are so dire. As we have heard, people are angry. And people will die. The United States has information that the Russian military may expand its targeting of Ukrainian grain facilities to include attacks on civilian shipping in the Black Sea. Our information also indicates that Russia has laid additional sea mines in the approaches to Ukrainian ports. We believe that is a coordinated effort to justify any attacks on civilian ships in the Black Sea and blame Ukraine for them.

After more than 500 days of President Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, it is easy to become numb to Russia's campaign of cruelty. But we cannot become numb. This is not normal. It is not the behaviour of a responsible country and a Permanent Member of the Security Council. The Council is charged with maintaining international peace and security. But Russia has upended peace and security around the world. Its actions fly in the face of everything that the Council stands for. From the earliest days of its unprovoked illegal war against Ukraine, Russia

has weaponized food. Russian forces have turned Ukraine's rolling wheat fields into battlefields. They have spoiled fields with mines and bombs, and they have stolen and destroyed vital agricultural equipment and infrastructure. Moscow must cease its attacks on Ukraine's agricultural land and infrastructure. Even when Russia was party to the Black Sea Grain Initiative, it refused to fully implement the arrangement and often obstructed ships full of food from leaving port. But despite that, the Initiative was making a real difference. It was helping to feed the world. That is not trivial, as some may try to make us believe. The arrangement has brought stability to global food markets and lowered food prices for all. It has bolstered the World Food Programme's humanitarian work in places like Afghanistan, Somalia and Yemen. And it has facilitated the export of 32 million metric tons of Ukrainian grain and foodstuffs, which is the equivalent of 18 billion loaves of bread.

We also know that more than two thirds of the food exports through the arrangement went to developing countries. The first ship that left the Black Sea under the arrangement brought grain to Lebanon, and since then, thanks to the Black Sea Grain Initiative, ships have brought food into ports across Africa and the Middle East, from the Sudan to Ethiopia and Libya. But the very day that Russia suspended its participation in the Initiative, global grain prices rose sharply. Russian exporters are already benefiting, while millions who cannot afford higher-priced grains are suffering, especially in the Middle East and Africa. Let us be clear. Russia has zero legitimate reasons to suspend its participation in the arrangement. It would have us believe that sanctions have blocked its exports. That could not be further from the truth. It was exporting more grain than ever before and at higher prices. Russia is simply using the Black Sea as blackmail. It is playing political games and holding humankind hostage.

The United Nations and Türkiye have said publicly that they want the arrangement to continue. Ukraine has said publicly that it wants the arrangement to continue. The world clearly wants the arrangement to continue. The eyes of the world are now on Russia. It is not too late for Moscow to reverse its decision and extend, expand and fully implement the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the United Nations and Türkiye for all they have done to try to keep this arrangement alive. The Council and all Member

States must come together and urge Russia to resume negotiations in good faith and end this atrocious war in Ukraine for the good of the world's most hungry and for the good of humankind.

Mr. Kumanga (Mozambique): I wish to express Mozambique's gratitude to the presidency for convening this important meeting. I also wish to thank the briefers.

The Black Sea Grain Initiative was a life-sustaining arrangement, brokered by the Secretary-General. We praise that Initiative, which enabled nearly 32 million tons of Ukrainian grain to reach global markets, thereby mitigating the needs of people around the globe.

The Secretary-General rightly lauded the Initiative as a beacon of hope in a troubled world. Its suspension is certain to amplify global socioeconomic stresses in a world already grappling with a perfect storm of conflict, climate change and a dwindling confidence in our collective ability to negotiate and adhere to multilateral solutions. We are told that global food indexes are already showing sharp increases. Humanitarian agencies are preparing for potential food shortages and increased hunger in conflict-affected areas.

We acknowledge the concerns regarding the implementation of the twin memorandum that facilitates the export of grain and agricultural products. According to United Nations data, around 3 per cent of exports under the Black Sea deal has gone to low-income countries, with around 44 per cent going to high-income countries and the rest to middle-income States. Mozambique therefore urges all parties and guarantors of the Black Sea Grain Initiative to follow the example set by the Secretary-General, who reaffirmed his unwavering commitment to facilitating the transport of food products and fertilizers from both Ukraine and Russia to international markets.

We urge all parties to set aside their differences, bearing in mind the hardship that will likely result from the suspension of this arrangement. Once again, we are in the presence of yet one more lesson that bears testimony to the fact that humanitarian problems require a political solution. In that regard, Mozambique reiterates its call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and the resumption of direct negotiations between the parties, in full compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Under-Secretary Griffiths for their informative

briefings, and we listened carefully to Mr. Mikhail Khazin. I also welcome the participation of Ukraine in this meeting.

Earlier this week, the Council convened shortly after the news that the Black Sea Grain Initiative would not be extended (see S/PV.9380). In the short time since, wheat futures have continued to rise, portending further difficulties for developing countries in securing necessary staples. If nothing is done, this will lead to heightened hunger and food insecurity.

After a year of respite, during which the Black Sea Grain Initiative contributed to a fall in prices, the world now faces the threat of destabilized markets and food shortages — yet again for the most vulnerable. The Initiative and the memorandum of understanding on the export of Russian fertilizers and food products have indeed had a significant impact on global food security. Those agreements were not perfect by any means, yet they resulted in over 32 million metric tons of Ukrainian grain and foodstuffs being shipped to the world. As such, they fast became a lifeline for those who needed them most.

The United Arab Emirates deeply regrets that the Initiative has not been extended. That said, we commend the ongoing efforts of the Secretary-General and the United Nations to facilitate the continued transport of food products and fertilizers from both Ukraine and Russia to international markets.

The Black Sea Grain Initiative was born out of extensive diplomatic efforts and dialogue, one of very few positive developments amid the shadow of war in Ukraine throughout the past 18 months. Now is not the time to walk away. On the contrary, it is time to build on any positive steps to secure a new way forward.

This conflict is not the sole reason for the food insecurity crisis we face. The World Food Programme's increasingly dire warnings about rising food prices precede the war, but the events of the past year and a half have significantly exacerbated that trend. Most Member States continue to call for an end to this war — a war that has visited immense suffering upon Ukrainians, compounded hardships for hundreds of millions of people around the world and strained the multilateral system.

While it is vital that Ukrainian and Russian food and fertilizer return to global markets, we must not let that issue obscure the wider context. Ultimately, only

peace, just and sustainable, will help rectify the turmoil we are seeing both within and beyond Ukraine. That is what the overwhelming majority of States Members of the United Nations have called for — a peace that is in line with the Charter of the United Nations and respects Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for their briefings.

Malta strongly condemns Russia's unilateral decision to terminate the Black Sea Grain Initiative. We see that decision for what it is — yet another regrettable example of the politicization of humanitarian needs that will only exacerbate the global food security crisis. It is evident to all that the onus of this development lies squarely on the Russian Federation.

The weaponization of food is completely unacceptable and unconscionable. It is essential to restore the Black Sea Grain Initiative, rebalance the global food market and contribute to Ukraine's export of grains to the countries that need it the most.

Since its creation, the Black Sea Grain Initiative played a vital role in facilitating Ukraine's grain export to international markets. Since its implementation, the Initiative ensured the safe passage of over 32 million metric tons of food commodities from Ukrainian ports. The Initiative also enabled the shipment of a significant quantity of grain through vessels chartered by the World Food Programme, providing essential support to its humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, the Sudan, Somalia and Yemen.

Despite the Russian Federation's claims to the contrary, over half of the grain and two thirds of the wheat from the Initiative went to developing countries, including some of the most food-insecure regions of the globe like the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, Yemen and Afghanistan. The Initiative helped lower food prices by almost a quarter since March 2022. Every shipment contributed to reducing hardship in the world's poorest countries, since bringing grain to world markets lowers food prices for all.

Malta strongly condemns the recent Russian attacks on the southern Ukrainian port of Chernomorsk, which destroyed 60,000 tons of wheat destined for China, as well as grain export infrastructure. We also condemn the continued night-time bombings in and around the

ports of Odesa and Mykolayiv. Those deplorable acts are designed to degrade the functioning of infrastructure essential to Ukrainian exports. We are also deeply concerned about official Russian statements indicating that all ships sailing to the Ukrainian Black Sea ports will be seen as potential military targets. Russia must cease illegally blocking Ukrainian seaports and allow freedom of navigation on the Black Sea. Closing the Black Sea humanitarian corridor will affect crops for the upcoming season, because farmers in Ukraine will be reluctant to plant if there is no viable way to get their crops to market. That will be felt by the most vulnerable populations, who will have no choice but to pay higher prices for food. In that regard, I can confirm that the European Union's solidarity lanes will continue to assist Ukraine in various ways to facilitate the export of its agricultural goods worldwide.

Food security all over the globe is now at great risk. By persisting in its instrumentalization of food resources, Russia is responsible for widespread disturbances in global grain shipments and for exacerbating inflation in food prices on an international scale. Reduced food supplies will have knock-on effects on the lives of millions, hitting them hard in the areas of health, education and social cohesion. Malta urges Russia to change course on its decision and immediately resume its implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. Cooperation and stability where food products and fertilizer are concerned are vital to ensuring food security and alleviating the suffering of vulnerable populations in regions heavily reliant on those supplies.

Today's meeting once again illustrates the far-reaching consequences of this senseless, illegal and unprovoked war. It is another stark reminder of its devastating repercussions not just on the region but the rest of the world as well. We can only reiterate in the strongest possible terms the need for Russia to end its aggression and to immediately and completely withdraw all its forces and military equipment from the entire territory of Ukraine, within its internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): I thank Mr. Griffiths, Ms. DiCarlo and the civil-society briefer for their statements.

The global food supply, already compromised by various factors, has been further exacerbated by Russia's aggression against Ukraine for more than 500

days now. Sadly, the situation has just deteriorated even further, following Russia's decision on 17 July to terminate the Black Sea Grain Initiative. Japan condemns Russia's deplorable action and notes that Russia had already been a significant impediment to the proper functioning of the Initiative for several months.

Since it was launched last year, the Initiative has played a pivotal role in ensuring global food security. Through it more than 32 million tons of grain and other commodities have been transported from Ukrainian ports. Furthermore, more than 725,000 tons of grain have been distributed through the World Food Programme, aiding humanitarian operations in some of the most severely impacted areas of the world, such as Afghanistan, Yemen and the Horn of Africa. Remarkably, despite the significant challenges posed by conflict, climate change and escalating energy prices, the Initiative has led to a drop in food prices of more than 23 per cent since March of last year.

Japan is gravely concerned about the adverse effects that Russia's decision could have on global food supplies, particularly for vulnerable people. Indeed, it has been alarming to witness higher volatility in global wheat prices immediately following Russia's various actions, starting with its termination of the Initiative. Russia is also threatening to treat civilian vessels bound for Ukrainian ports as potential military targets. It is Russia alone that must take responsibility for all the repercussions resulting from its decision. Japan categorically condemns Russia's attacks on Ukrainian port areas on the Black Sea, which have resulted in numerous civilian casualties and the reported destruction of at least 60,000 tons of essential grains destined for export. It is crucial to remember that the attacks on civilian infrastructure may constitute a violation of international humanitarian law.

We commend the painstaking efforts of the United Nations and the Government of Türkiye in the extension and implementation of the Initiative. I would also like to remind the Council of the Hiroshima Action Statement for Resilient Global Food Security, issued in May, which advocated for the maximum and continued implementation of the Initiative. Japan strongly urges Russia to cease its weaponization of food, which will never help to legitimize its heinous act of violence, and to return immediately to the international framework to resume grain exports.

Our collective commitment to mitigating global hunger and maintaining stable food prices worldwide must not falter. In that context, Japan supports the European Union's solidarity lanes initiative for transporting Ukrainian grain and food by land. For its part, Japan has committed more than \$250 million to facilitate Ukraine's grain exports and provide food-related assistance to vulnerable people in regions such as the Middle East and Africa. We have also backed the restoration of Ukraine's agricultural production capacity, which has been so severely compromised by Russia's aggression. Earlier this year, in March, Japan supplied sunflower and corn seeds to 400 smallholding farmers in Kharkiv — with a particular focus on women and young farmers — where war has significantly reduced agricultural productivity and income.

Japan will continue its efforts to secure the global food supply, thereby contributing to the stabilization of global markets in partnership with the international community. Today we have heard some so-called objective analysis and arguments aimed at minimizing the importance of the Initiative. But we also heard voices of concern around the Council table, especially from countries that could be directly affected, and we are witnessing actions that obstruct Ukrainian agricultural exports and production. The truth is simple. All of these concerns and hardships have been unnecessarily caused or at least hugely exacerbated by the unprovoked war. The most effective and straightforward solution to all of them would be Russia's immediate and unconditional withdrawal of its forces from Ukraine to end the war.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank you, Madam President, for inviting the briefer we proposed and for your rational approach to the number of delegations that were allowed to participate in today's meeting under rule 37.

We listened carefully to our colleagues' statements and are once again struck by the degree of cynicism on the part of the Western members of the Security Council and by their desire to conceal the truth and engage in wishful thinking rather than with reality. To one degree or another, most of them have expressed concern about the termination of the so-called Black Sea Grain Initiative, which allowed Ukrainian grain to be supplied to world markets. I have a question for them. What did they expect? Almost from the very beginning, we drew everyone's attention to the fact that the Initiative no longer reflected the initial goal and was becoming overtly commercial in nature. The

fact is that developed countries took the lead as food buyers from Ukraine from the very beginning, and yet no steps were taken to correct that trend. During the period that the Black Sea Grain Initiative functioned, a total of 32.8 million tons of goods were exported, of which more than 70 per cent went to high- and upper-middle-income countries, including European Union (EU) members. The poorest countries, in particular Ethiopia, Yemen, Afghanistan, the Sudan and Somalia, accounted for less than 3 per cent.

The geography and commercialization of an originally humanitarian initiative becomes understandable if we take into account the fact that the owners of significant areas of Ukrainian arable land — more than 17 million hectares — were the Western corporations Cargill, DuPont and Monsanto. They bought up Ukrainian land after Kyiv lifted a 20-year moratorium on its sale at the request of the International Monetary Fund and became the main beneficiaries of Ukrainian grain exports. Meanwhile, Europeans have been buying Ukrainian food at fire-sale prices, processing it domestically and reselling it as finished goods with at a high added value. In other words, they make money on it twice over. Tell me, what does that have to do with the task of providing food for the poorest countries, which we heard about yet again today?

If we are really going to talk about the saturation of the global food market and about global food security, the focus should be on Russia, not Ukraine. If we compare Russia and Ukraine's grain production figures for last year, Ukraine produced approximately 55 million tons of grain, of which 47 million tons were exported. However, of that, only 17 million tons was wheat. Russia harvested 156 million tons of grain was harvested, of which we exported 60 million tons, including 48 million tons of wheat. And I should point out immediately that they were exported not thanks to the Black Sea Grain Initiative but in spite of the obstacles created to hinder us. Simple arithmetic therefore clearly shows that Russia is producing 20 per cent of wheat on the world market versus Ukraine's less than 5 per cent. So who is playing the bigger role in global food security?

Add to the wheat the fertilizers that Russia produces, and the picture becomes even clearer. And the experts understand that perfectly well. That is why the memorandum of understanding between Russia and the United Nations on Russia's agricultural and

fertilizer exports became an integral part of the deal, but in practice none of its provisions were implemented in the past year. Given Russia's indisputable role among the world's leading grain exporters, it was clear that in agreeing to the package deal and heeding the calls for uniting our efforts in support of global food security, we expected to be exempt from the Western States' discriminatory approach to us through their imposition of unprecedented sanctions that in effect were an attempt to organize a blockade of our producers. That was important not for our own interests but for those of the poor States in need around the world. The fact that the sanctions imposed by the United States, London and the EU do not formally extend to food and fertilizers means nothing in practice. We are talking about major barriers to our export activities, which no one had any intention of removing or at least proposing working exemptions for. As a result of those barriers, Russia has lost as customers a number of countries that could not adapt their banking systems to the new realities. However, we now have new markets where we have been able to resolve our logistical and payment issues, which has been done by our suppliers, unfortunately without the assistance of the United Nations.

The Russia-United Nations memorandum of understanding, which was supposed to help us, has not actually worked. One of our key demands, the reintegration of the Russian Agricultural Bank into the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) system — has been officially rejected by the EU and the United States. One-off transactions with the permission of Washington or Brussels cannot ensure uninterrupted cross-border transactions or enable long-term planning for agricultural supplies, while notions of establishing subsidiaries of the bank are not feasible.

None of the people lamenting and claiming today that Russia is starving the entire world have lifted a finger to even help Russia provide supplies of its mineral fertilizers free of charge — free of charge — under the auspices of the United Nations. Since that purely humanitarian initiative to supply 262,000 tons was announced in September 2022 and blocked in Latvia, Estonia, Belgium and the Netherlands, only two shipments have been delivered, and with great difficulty — 20,000 tons to Malawi and 34,000 tons to Kenya. And we just heard about the role that fertilizer plays in ensuring food security from Mr. Khazin.

The importation of parts and equipment for agricultural production and fertilizers into Russia is banned because they are so-called dual-use goods. Our entire territory has been declared a war-risk zone, with insurance rates ranging from unaffordable to prohibitive, while foreign ports are closed to our ships and cargoes. The foreign accounts of domestic agricultural companies have been frozen. Partially unblocked funds have been transferred to the pockets of those same Westerners for loan repayments and the free delivery of our fertilizers. We nonetheless patiently awaited the fulfilment of our agreement with the United Nations. We twice agreed to extending the deal despite the outrageous problems created by the Black Sea Grain Initiative. We waited for an entire year without results, and for that year our food and fertilizer producers and exporters were frankly operating at a loss. Russian farmers sustained losses of \$1.2 billion thanks to a 30 to 40 per cent drop in the value of our grain on world markets. Thanks to the cargo shipping issues and the cost of international transactions, the profits from shipments were halved. The cost to our farmers of importing agricultural equipment and parts has gone up by 40 per cent and the fees for financial transactions by 10 per cent. Our fertilizer producers are experiencing similar problems, with losses now in the region of \$1.6 billion.

For months we were fed promises about a restoration of the functioning of the Togliatti-Odesa ammonia pipeline. In its attempts to bargain for additional benefits under the Black Sea Grain Initiative, Kyiv has simply blocked it for almost a year, despite the fact that ammonia supplies are stipulated in both Istanbul agreements and should have begun concurrently with Ukraine's food exports. I want to make it clear that the ammonia exports had significant economic benefits, including for Kyiv. The pluses on the humanitarian front speak for themselves. Consider that the pipeline annually supplied approximately 2 million tons of raw materials for fertilizer production, enough to feed 45 million people. However, on 5 June, the Kyiv regime simply blew it up. We are now facing a situation in which world ammonia exports are down 70 per cent. Why is no one, including at the United Nations, condemning this crime or sounding the alarm about these wasted opportunities and the long-term consequences of the Kyiv regime's irresponsible actions? On top of all that, we have also encountered situations in which the Zelenskyy regime and its Western sponsors, despite the agreements they have made, have not hesitated to

use humanitarian corridors to attack Russian military and civilian targets, actions that have not received due attention from the United Nations or the countries of the West. Are we supposed to tolerate that?

Considering these facts, I do not think anyone should have been surprised by our decision to terminate the Black Sea Grain Initiative after 17 July and to close the maritime humanitarian corridor as of midnight, Moscow time, on 20 July. We will now consider all vessels sailing in Black Sea waters to Ukrainian ports to be potential carriers of military cargo. Consequently, the flag States of such vessels will be considered to be involved in the Ukrainian conflict on the side of the Kyiv regime. In addition, a number of maritime areas in the north-western and south-eastern parts of the Black Sea's international waters have been declared temporarily dangerous for navigation. The relevant information alerts on the withdrawal of safety guarantees for seafarers have been issued in accordance with the established procedure.

We should also point out that during the year in which the deal was in force, the Kyiv regime has used it as cover to accumulate significant military-industrial, fuel and storage capacities around its Black Sea ports. Large numbers of human resources of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and foreign mercenaries have also been stationed there. With the termination of the deal, we have an opportunity to correct that situation, and we consider Ukraine's entire Black Sea port infrastructure to be a site for the deployment and restocking of the Armed Forces of Ukraine with Western weapons, which Kyiv is using against Russia. As of 19 July, Russian Federation armed forces have been conducting multiple high-precision sea- and air-based strikes on military industry facilities, fuel infrastructure and munitions depots of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the Odesa area, on production and storage facilities for uncrewed boats in the Odesa and Chornomorsk areas and on fuel infrastructure facilities and munitions storage depots in the Mykolayiv area. All of those objects are being successfully hit.

Against that backdrop, we have familiarized ourselves with yesterday's reaction of the Secretary-General to our military actions. In that connection, we would like to ask only one question: where can we read a similar condemnation by Mr. António Guterres of Kyiv's sabotage bombing of the Togliatti-Odesa ammonia pipeline, the potential of which for global food security we already mentioned today?

Nevertheless, we pay tribute to the efforts of the Secretary-General and his team, who sincerely sought to fulfil all the promises made by the West, but failed to achieve anything. Our former so-called partners in the West, however, spared no effort to disrupt the agreements and derail the Black Sea Grain Initiative. Besides, we all remember very well how the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France blocked attempts to adopt a Security Council document mentioning the United Nations-Russia memorandum of understanding in July and November of last year. Now we all know why: they never intended to implement the United Nations-Russia memorandum, nor were they ever going to implement the Minsk agreements. They demanded the unconditional implementation of the Istanbul agreements only from us, and to our detriment. And today they are deceitfully trying to blame Russia for derailing the grain deal and, in general, for almost all the misfortunes of the populations of Africa and other countries — the very countries from which the West itself, in the past, squeezed all the juices and resources, the countries that it pushed into the abyss of wars, hunger and poverty, and now continues to shamelessly rob within the framework of its neocolonial system.

Moreover, today some of the European countries that pay lip service to the need to give Ukraine the opportunity to export agricultural products are themselves prohibiting the import of Ukrainian grain into their territory, prioritizing the interests of their own commodity producers, thus stooping to new lows of cynicism and hypocrisy.

I would like to emphasize that we are not against the grain deal as such, especially given its importance for the global food market and for many countries of the world, and we are ready to consider the possibility of returning to it, but only on one condition: that all the previously agreed principles of Russia's participation in the deal be fully taken into account and, most importantly, implemented. For the Council's convenience, let me remind members what we are talking about.

The first is the principle of the real — and not theoretical — lifting of sanctions on the supply of Russian grain and fertilizers to world markets.

Second, all obstacles should be removed for Russian banks and financial institutions that service the deliveries of food and fertilizer, including by immediately reconnecting them to the SWIFT

international banking system. We will not be satisfied with any new promises or ideas in that regard. We need only for these conditions to be met.

Third, deliveries to Russia of spare parts and components for agricultural machinery and the fertilizer industry must be resumed. The cost of imported spare parts for equipment and machinery for our producers has increased on average by 40 per cent. The costs of financial transactions have increased by approximately 10 per cent. The total losses have amounted to approximately \$1.6 billion.

Fourth, all issues related to freight charges and the insurance of Russian food exports must be resolved, and all logistics of food supplies must be ensured. The increase in the cost of sea vessels for cargo transportation and of international financial transactions and other transactions has led to a two-fold drop in profitability.

Fifth, all obstacles must be lifted for the expanded provision of Russian fertilizers and the raw materials for their production, including the restoration of the functioning of the Togliatti-Odesa ammonia pipeline.

Sixth, Russian assets related to the agricultural sector must be unfrozen.

Seventh and finally, the grain deal should be restored to its original humanitarian nature. It should work for the benefit of the countries in need, and not to make wealthy countries even wealthier.

As soon as all those conditions are met, we will return to the grain deal immediately. The fulfilment of those conditions will represent Western States' contribution to ensuring international food security. For now, everything that we have seen and heard is merely demagoguery and hypocrisy.

Mr. França Danese (Brazil): I thank Ecuador and France for their initiative to convene this meeting. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for their updates on the situation on the ground and Mr. Khazin for his briefing.

Brazil has watched with great concern the attacks of recent days against facilities on the Black Sea coast. The destruction of civilian infrastructure is against international humanitarian law and should not be used as a tool by any party to conflict. While we deeply regret the discontinuation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, we encourage the parties involved in that particular negotiation process to continue to seek

mutually beneficial solutions that could prevent the further aggravation of food insecurity in the world. The conflict in Ukraine has caused considerable human suffering, not only in the fighting zone but also in distant regions. Since it began, we have warned of its impact on developing countries, which are more vulnerable to rising food, fertilizer and energy prices.

Throughout the dozens of meetings already held by the Security Council since the start of the hostilities, we have heard repeated demands for developing countries to take a position on one side of the war. However, those who make those demands do not seem to listen carefully to the positions that have been presented here and elsewhere on the complex causes and worldwide consequences of the conflict. Earlier this week, during the General Assembly debate on the situation in Ukraine (see A/77/PV.88 and A/77/PV.89), the representative of a Member State rightly observed that the voices of the global South must be heard. Amid the diversity of views among the Member States of our Organization, there is a message consistently being repeated: it is high time to put an end to the war and limit as much as possible its collateral effects.

We encourage all the parties to resume negotiations on the Black Sea Grain Initiative and urge those parties to refrain from actions that could disrupt the unimpeded flow of food and fertilizers. Brazil expresses its sincere appreciation and support for the mediation efforts of the Secretary-General and the Government of Türkiye and hopes that the parties will show the necessary flexibility to revive the spirit of the Istanbul agreements. We reiterate our call for the de-escalation of hostilities and the opening of peace negotiations based on respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the recognition of the legitimate security concerns of all. Achieving that goal is our common responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

I would like to start by thanking Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for their briefings.

My Foreign Secretary said on Monday in the Chamber (see S/PV.9380) that Russia's termination of the Black Sea Grain Initiative was taking food out of the mouths of the poorest people across the world. A total of 64 per cent of the 34 million tons of grain exported under the deal went to low- and middle-income countries. Unsurprisingly, Kenya called Russia's

withdrawal a stab in the back to countries in the Horn of Africa already affected by drought. Russian missile attacks on Odesa, Chernomorsk and Mykolayiv have destroyed more than 60,000 tons of grain. That is enough to feed 270,000 people for a year or to double the World Food Programme shipments under the Black Sea Grain Initiative to the Sudan and Somalia. Russia has destroyed dock equipment, making it harder to load grain on ships. And now Russia has gone further, burning food at the dockside and making threats to murder civilian sailors. There is no possible justification for those punitive acts.

Moreover, Russia has benefited from the deal. Russian food exports are significantly above pre-war levels. Russian food and fertilizer exports have never been subjected to sanctions. The United Kingdom has worked with its banking and insurance sectors to facilitate transactions, and the United Nations has worked tirelessly to address Russian concerns. We know that Russia's so-called reasons for ending the deal are nonsense.

Ukraine has made no demands. As Foreign Minister Kuleba said in this room, Ukraine wants nothing more than to make its food available to the world. Up to 24 million tons of Ukrainian food may now not reach world markets because of Russia. Russia's actions have already raised prices, with immediate impact on the world's poorest and hungriest people, and Russia's latest demands are tantamount to holding the world's starving hostage. We thank Türkiye, the United Nations and Ukraine for their efforts to protect the deal. We call on Russia to rejoin it and to end the war. Food is not a weapon.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Kyslytsya (Ukraine): I thank Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for their insightful and comprehensive briefings. I would also like to express my particular gratitude to the delegation of Ecuador for the personal participation in this meeting of His Excellency Foreign Minister Gustavo Manrique and for his principled statement. I also recognize the representative of the person on the International Criminal Court's wanted list in the permanent seat of the Soviet Union.

The first days following the undermining of the Black Sea Grain Initiative have unequivocally testified to the Russian rationale behind that insidious step.

Not bothering to fabricate any plausible explanation, Russia has proceeded to deliberately destroy Ukrainian capabilities for grain export. Since Monday, the barrage of Russian missile and drone strikes has mainly targeted the infrastructure and storage facilities of Ukrainian ports. From 18 to 20 July alone, Russia attacked Ukraine with 56 cruise missiles and 87 drones of Iranian origin. The list of missiles included Kalibr, Onyx, Kh-22, Iskander and Kh-59 missiles. In the port of Chernomorsk alone, Russian strikes destroyed 60,000 tons of grain. For a long time, that cargo was intended to be loaded onto a large-tonnage vessel. The vessel, however, spent over 60 days in the queue of the grain corridor owing to inspections being sabotaged by Russia. The missile attacks also destroyed grain terminals, reservoirs and berths of the ports of Odesa and Chernomorsk. Last night, Russia continued its missile terror, targeting grain warehouses. As a result of the strike by Kalibr missiles, 100 tons of peas and 20 tons of barley were destroyed, as reported by Odesa regional authorities.

Putin's envoy has tried to invent arguments as to why Russia is so persistently undermining global food security by destroying Ukrainian grain and other foodstuffs. The sly purpose, however, was revealed by Russia itself at the beginning of June at the so-called Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum. The head of the infamous Russia Today state propaganda factory, Margarita Simonyan, in the presence of Putin, openly stated:

“All our hope is for the famine — here is what it means. It means that the famine will start now, and they will lift the sanctions and be friends with us, because they will realize it is necessary”.

In fact, since Russia has already brought to this Chamber many oddballs, allow me to play back the original in Russian.

I am sorry for the technical difficulties. I will send the original video to the Council later on.

As for the intervention of a certain self-proclaimed microeconomist, Mr. Khazin, I would like to refer him to the famous lecture of Professor Harry Frankfurt on humbug: “He does not reject the authority of the truth, as the liar does [...] He pays no attention to it at all”. By virtue of this, Mr. Khazin's statement is a greater enemy of the truth than lies are.

The current actions of Russia only serve to confirm that Ms. Simonyan was indeed heard.

According to expert assessments, further attacks on Ukrainian ports, increased risk to industrial complexes and the inability to export grains by sea routes will lead to further increases in corn and wheat prices in the short run. There is also a risk of the suspension of operations at several Ukrainian oilseed processing plants and a reduction in the processing pace of sunflower seeds and rapeseed, which will have a significantly impact on global prices for sunflower oil.

The terrorist nature of the shelling is aggravated by the fact that missiles such as the Onyx and Kh-22 are designed as anti-ship missiles to be launched from the Bastion-P ground-based coastal defence system. They have low precision against ground targets. At the same time, it is difficult for Ukrainian air defence to detect and shoot down such missiles, as they approach targets at high speed and low altitude. The low accuracy of anti-ship missiles leads to tragedies such as the one that occurred on 20 July in Mykolayiv, in which a Russian missile hit a residential building, killing a married couple in their apartment and wounding another 19 civilians, including five children. Fatalities among civilians were also recorded in Odesa, which sustained heavy missile shelling in recent days.

On 19 July 2023, the ministry of war of Russia declared that the Russian Federation would attack all merchant vessels in Black Sea waters headed to Ukrainian ports. In fact, the representative of Putin's regime has already repeated the same statement here at today's meeting. Russia's threats to use force against civilian vessels, regardless of their flag, merits strong condemnation. Those threats are an attack on freedom of navigation throughout the world. Russia's intention to consider foreign vessels as military targets grossly violates its obligations under international law towards all States that conduct peaceful navigation in the Black Sea.

According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, merchant vessels of States not involved in an armed conflict have the right to free and peaceful navigation, which is not considered an act of aggression. Norms of international humanitarian law prohibit any attacks against vessels of neutral States if they do not engage in belligerent acts or do not support military efforts. There is no basis to believe that merchant vessels of foreign nations are supporting military efforts simply by exporting grain to other countries that need it in order to avert the threat of hunger.

Russia's actions cannot be justified by any norms of international law, including the belligerent's right to blockade. Russia's declaration has no legitimate direct military objective. Instead, it is intended to intimidate neutral States. Russia's declaration covers the entire Black Sea, not just an area immediately around Ukrainian ports, and moreover, does not make exceptions for medical and other humanitarian considerations, as is required by the laws of naval warfare.

Lacking any credible argument to justify what could not be justified, its attacks on the right to food of people throughout the world, Russia continues to cynically claim that the Black Sea Grain Initiative was a commercial endeavour, not a humanitarian one. I am not going to focus on the moral aspects of such claims from a State that increases its revenues by stealing Ukrainian grain from the occupied territories, which then ends up on the global markets. At the same time, I will remind the Council of the figures mentioned by the Secretary-General in his statement of 17 July. The Initiative has ensured the safe passage of over 32 million tons of food commodities from Ukrainian ports and helped to reduce food prices by over 23 per cent since March last year. The World Food Programme has shipped more than 725,000 tons to support humanitarian operations, relieving hunger in Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa and Yemen. Russia's withdrawal from the Grain Initiative and its constant cynical attacks on Ukrainian port infrastructure, means of navigation and grain terminals are nothing but its attempts to eliminate a market competitor, deliberately raise world food prices and profit at the expense of millions of people around the world.

We call on our partners to fully support Ukraine's initiative to establish a humanitarian maritime corridor in the Black Sea. The humanitarian corridor will restore vital food supply routes to the regions that need them the most.

We call on the international community to condemn Russia's actions and take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of navigation in the Black Sea as a guarantee of food security around the world.

In the words of my President,

“Russian terrorists want to become exemplary in the way they destroy life. We will become exemplary in the way we protect life and in the way life then responds — justly and inevitably — to every blow inflicted on every terrorist.”

Before I conclude, I would like to use this opportunity to make a formal request to the representatives of the Secretary-General present in this Chamber. I ask them to draw the attention of the relevant United Nations officials, in particular the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, to the public confession of the officials of the Belarus Red Cross, in which they admit to their involvement in the illegal mass removal by force of children from the occupied territories of Ukraine. I also ask them to properly monitor and report on that shocking situation.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Türkiye.

Mrs. Özgür (Türkiye): We thank you, Madam President, for organizing this meeting, and we also thank Under-Secretary-General Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo for their briefings.

In addition to the loss of thousands of civilian lives, millions of displaced people and billions of dollars in material damage, the ongoing war in Ukraine also continues to have negative repercussions on energy prices, supply chain disruptions and global food insecurity. The Black Sea Grain Initiative has had a stabilizing effect on the prices of grain and contributed to global food security for almost one year. That Initiative has allowed more than 32.8 million tons of various grain products to reach world markets since 22 August 2022. It has helped avert a major food shortage and eased the lowest income countries' access to food products. The World Food Programme also has benefited from the reduced prices in its operations.

Therefore, the resumption of the Black Sea Initiative remains crucial as part of our common endeavours to fight global hunger and ensure stable food prices for consumers everywhere.

The permanent termination of the Black Sea Grain Initiative will be harmful to the global food market. The countries that depend on the price stability provided by the Initiative will suffer the most.

Both the Black Sea Grain Initiative and the memorandum of understanding between the United Nations and the Russian Federation are crucial for vulnerable people around the world. That is why we need to combine our efforts and find a way to implement the two components of the deal simultaneously. To that end, we commend the efforts of the Secretary-General to facilitate the export of Russian food and fertilizer products. We recognize that there is still room for

improvement. This also requires further steps from all relevant stakeholders. We must be mindful that the world's most vulnerable communities are depending on us to devise a compromise to revive the Initiative.

We hope that the current suspension will be temporary and that the operations will be resumed as soon as possible by addressing the needs and expectations of all stakeholders. We will continue our efforts in coordination with the United Nations and the two sides. In the meantime, we urge all sides to remain calm, exercise restraint and avoid taking any unilateral steps that might jeopardize prospects for the resumption of the Initiative.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Romania.

Ms. Mocanu (Romania): I would like to thank France and Ecuador for calling for this meeting, Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo and Under-Secretary-General Griffiths for their briefings, as well as the United Kingdom presidency for allowing my delegation to take the floor.

Yesterday, Secretary-General António Guterres spoke about trust, solidarity and universality when launching his policy brief on the New Agenda for Peace. In his policy brief, he also mentions that the war is a choice.

A year and a half since its invasion of Ukraine, Russia is still waging a war of choice. Defying in a similar way the needs of developing countries, Russia's decision to denounce the Black Sea Grain Initiative is a matter of choice. But Russia's decision has multidimensional effects around the world. We have yet to anticipate them all. But we will stand in solidarity with those in need.

Romania joins previous speakers in commending the efforts of the United Nations and others, in particular Türkiye, on being constructive with a view to alleviating the tensions on the food market. We also call on Russia to reconsider its decision and make the right choice in returning to the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

The Black Sea Grain Initiative remains a good example of multilateralism at work. But all players need to be constructive and abide by the rules — the Charter of the United Nations, international law and international humanitarian law.

Out of the 41 million tons of grain from Ukraine that were exported through the European Union solidarity lanes, over 20 million transited Romania. Together with the 32 million tons of grain exported via the Black

Sea Grain Initiative, the total amount that left from the Black Sea shores and was exported to the world is over 50 million tons of grain. That means a choice was made to uphold trust, solidarity and universality.

My country will continue to uphold its promise to the world and to make its own contribution in mitigating the risks of a global food crisis, both in its national capacity as a direct neighbour of Ukraine and as a member of the European Union.

Together with the United Nations, the European Union did everything in its power to deal with the challenges posed by an actor that had undermined international law. The pragmatic choice was favoured, one that made every effort so that developing countries could benefit from the Black Sea Grain Initiative and the grain exported through it.

The Black Sea Grain Initiative is a win for all those participating in it and for all those benefiting from it. The Initiative is a clear expression of leaving no one behind. It is imperative that it be restored.

We continue to be appalled by the high number of attacks targeting schools and hospitals in Ukraine. Again, attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure are strictly prohibited under international law and must cease immediately. This includes the ongoing missile and drone strikes against the Ukrainian ports of Odesa, Chernomorsk and Mykolayiv.

Upholding international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter is paramount. Otherwise, we become an accessory to impunity. That is not the image of ourselves we want to project for future generations.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Skoog.

Mr. Skoog: I thank Under-Secretaries-General DiCarlo and Griffiths for their briefings and for their relentless efforts under the leadership of the Secretary-General over the last year or so.

A permanent member of the Security Council is threatening to attack any ship, regardless of its cargo or its flag, that enters part of the Black Sea. So now we are all potential targets of the Russian aggression. It is bombing grain warehouses and infrastructure in Ukrainian ports key to food security globally, and it has torpedoed the Black Sea Grain Initiative. And yet it claims to care about global food security.

The European Union (EU) condemns Russia's choice to terminate the Black Sea Grain Initiative. It further aggravates the global food crisis and causes price

increases for foodstuffs globally. Hundreds of millions of already vulnerable people, in particular in Africa, will pay the price.

We commend the efforts of the United Nations and Türkiye to continue engaging in a constructive dialogue, and we call on Russia to reconsider its withdrawal. Any arrangements have to include Ukraine.

Since withdrawing, Russia has bombed port infrastructure in Odesa, Chernomorsk and Mykolayiv, causing civilian casualties, including children. According to reports, more than 60,000 tons of grain destined for export were destroyed on Wednesday. Russia has threatened to attack grain shipments passing through the Black Sea. This is completely unacceptable.

The inconvenient truth that Russia wishes to hide is that it is benefiting from higher global food prices. Publicly available data demonstrate that Russian grain exports have reached record volumes. From 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023, Russia's wheat exports reached 44.7 million tons, more than 10 per cent higher than the average in previous years. Its fertilizer exports are nearing full recovery.

Contrary to claims by Russian disinformation, the Black Sea Grain Initiative benefited all food importing countries by contributing to lower global prices. The export of almost 33 million tons of grain and foodstuffs from Ukraine to 45 different countries reduced prices by over 23 per cent since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Half of the grain, including two thirds of the wheat, went to developing countries. Half of the total World Food Programme (WFP) grain procurement, in support of its humanitarian operations in the most food-insecure countries, comes from Ukraine. Without the Black Sea route, the WFP will have to source its assistance elsewhere at a higher cost.

The Black Sea Grain Initiative is a major deliverable of effective multilateralism and, in the words of the Secretary-General, a beacon of hope in a world that desperately needs it. Since Russia's withdrawal, prices on wheat and corn have surged. The simple truth is that Russia has made a cynical calculation: by blocking exports from Ukraine, it will make higher profits on its own exports.

The Secretary-General clearly demonstrated that Russia gained important benefits from the memorandum of understanding on food and fertilizer exports. The United Nations has worked relentlessly to unblock

assets, facilitate regulatory frameworks and engage with the private sector to find dedicated solutions across the banking and insurance sectors. These efforts were conducted in close collaboration with the EU.

While Russia spreads disinformation and maintains its own export restrictions on food and fertilizer to drive up prices, the EU has spared no effort to prevent our sanctions from affecting the food security of third countries. We provided extensive guidance to economic operators on the implementation of sanctions, clarifying that the transfer of Russian food and fertilizers to third countries by EU operators on our territory is permitted. We introduced a legislative derogation in December authorizing transactions with sanctioned individuals to facilitate such trade. We have worked with the United Nations to build a bespoke payments mechanism for the Russian Agricultural Bank through JP Morgan outside of SWIFT, to allow food- and fertilizer-related payments. And we are working closely with the United Nations and partners to address any specific bottlenecks and facilitate the access of food and fertilizers originating from Russia. Russia knows all this.

The EU and its member States remain committed to addressing the needs of countries vulnerable to food insecurity. The Food Systems Summit in Rome next week will call for accelerated action in this regard. In addition to the Black Sea Grain Initiative, the EU's solidarity lanes have allowed the export of more than 41 million tons of Ukraine's food and agricultural goods. We are also providing €8 billion to address food-security needs, focusing on the most vulnerable regions, and we reiterate our call on all countries to step up their own humanitarian assistance in this regard.

We call on Russia to stop using food as a weapon and rejoin the Black Sea Grain Initiative. The EU will continue to act to fight food insecurity. Food cannot be used as a political tool. We remain open to exploring solutions with the United Nations that would contribute to the resumption of the grain deal.

In conclusion, I remind the Security Council that the Black Sea Grain Initiative would not have been necessary if Russia had not waged a war of aggression against its neighbour and blocked Ukrainian ports for exporting grain. And I reiterate the EU's unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders and its inherent right to self-defence.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.