



United States Mission to the OSCE

The Russian Federation's Ongoing Aggression Against Ukraine

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Katherine Brucker
to the Special Permanent Council, Vienna
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Thank you for convening this important Special Permanent Council meeting. To start, I want to point out that the Black Sea Grain Initiative, or BSGI, never should have been necessary. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine forced the Initiative's creation. Having undermined the initiative, Russia has increased its attacks on Ukraine's ports, including the city of Odesa, which exports wheat, grain, and other food products to international markets.

Despite Russia continually undermining the BSGI through dragged out ship inspections, the initiative allowed 35 million tons of food product from Ukraine to feed the world. More than 19 million tons, or 57 percent, went to developing countries, including those getting relief from the World Food Program. Russia's repeated claim that "only three percent" went to these countries is simply not true.

In fact, this is only one example of Russia's blatant disregard for the truth. After complaining that it was pulling out of the BSGI because of sanctions on Russian food exports, it now says it will single handedly make up for Ukrainian world exports. Of course, the United States has never sanctioned Russian food exports. And of course, Russia does not care what story it puts forth. And of course, as the Russian proverb has it, its many stories are "sewn with white thread." The rest of the world can plainly see that Russia is not even trying.

Thanks to Ukraine's agricultural products, people in urgent need were getting food, leading to less hunger in the world. Even countries that weren't directly receiving these exports benefitted from lower prices. So, when Russia claims, as it did in this room last week, that discussions linking its actions to a global food crisis are not serious, well, Russia is just dissimulating. And we all know it.

So, what have we seen since Russia unilaterally withdrew from the BSGI last week? Unrelenting Russian Federation missile and drone attacks against Ukraine and its critical grain export infrastructure. Last week, the Russian Federation reportedly launched 74 cruise missiles and 92 Iranian kamikaze drones against Odesa and the region. This included attacks last Sunday night that killed one and injured 22 people, including four children. Yesterday, the Russian Federation destroyed a grain storage facility located at one of Ukraine's ports on the Danube River, close to Romania. I join UN Secretary General António Guterres and many others in strongly condemning these attacks against Odesa and other Ukrainian ports.

These attacks destroyed huge amounts of food that could otherwise have nourished those in need. Russian Federation cruise missiles hit a granary, starting a fire which incinerated 110 tons of peas and 22 tons of barley. As Ukraine's first responders raced to put out the fire, a third missile hit, damaging their rescue equipment and further complicating their efforts to

save the granary. Separately, in the city of Chornomorsk, Russia's attacks destroyed sixty thousand tons of grain.

These missile and drone attacks also damaged at least 29 historic landmarks, including Odesa's Transfiguration Cathedral of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church canonically subordinate to the Moscow Patriarchate, the very church that Russia purports to be defending. A preliminary UNESCO assessment last week revealed damage to several museums inside Odesa's World Heritage property, including the Odesa Archaeological Museum, the Odesa Maritime Museum, and the Odesa Literature Museum. All had been marked with a Blue Shield by UNESCO and local authorities to spare them from Russia's attack. Clearly, Moscow didn't care. Let me remind you that the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict prohibits acts of hostility directed against cultural property unless military necessity imperatively requires such acts. Now ask yourself, what possible military necessity would Russia have for attacking churches and museums far from the front lines?

Mr. Chair, last week, the United States shared information with the international community warning that Russia was looking to expand its targeting of Ukrainian grain facilities. Russia did just that. We believe its targeting might also include attacks against civilian shipping in the Black Sea. Our information indicates Russia laid additional sea mines in the approaches to Ukrainian ports. We believe this is a coordinated effort by Russia to justify any attacks against civilian ships in the Black Sea and then blame Ukraine. As we condemn Russia for its bombardment of Ukraine's port cities and export infrastructure, we must remain vigilant to ways in which Russia looks to expand the conflict and continue to blame others for its unconscionable actions.

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