

Ending the grain initiative would unleash an “unprecedented wave of hunger and destitution”

Thank you, President, and I thank Under-Secretary Griffiths and Secretary-General Grynspan for their briefings today.

The Black Sea Grain initiative is vital to global food security. The UN estimates that it has indirectly prevented 100 million people from falling into extreme poverty.

Over 60% of the wheat exported under the deal has gone to low and middle-income countries, including via the World Food Programme to Ethiopia, Yemen, and Afghanistan.

Russia’s suspension of this initiative over the weekend has meant over 100 ships blocked from seeking permission to enter Ukrainian ports to load grain.

An average of 100,000 tons of grain is exported each day under the initiative. This is enough to feed 5 million people for a month. The severe impact, should Russia’s suspension of the agreement continue, is clear.

Recognising the global food crisis, the UK has not placed sanctions on food or fertiliser exports from Russia to third countries. We have worked hard, and continue to do so, to ensure there are mitigations in place to avoid indirect impacts of sanctions.

And we note that there has been no decrease in Russian grain exports since the start of Russia’s war on Ukraine.

President, Russia claims it suspended participation in the grain initiative due to an attack on its Black Sea Fleet, falsely claiming those vessels were involved in implementation of the deal.

As we heard from Under-Secretary-General Griffiths, no military vessels or assets are involved in supporting this initiative.

And what Russia neglects to mention is that Russia’s Black Sea fleet is illegally occupying Ukrainian waters and bombing Ukrainian towns.

The global impact of Russia’s war on Ukraine has already been profound. Ending the grain initiative would unleash the “unprecedented wave of hunger and destitution”, of which the Secretary-General’s Global Crisis Response Group warned in June. We therefore urge Russia to renew its cooperation under the agreement so that shipments of grain can continue as before.

We call on Russia to work with all parties to renew the Black Sea Grain Initiative this month.

Thank you.