

Russia cannot be allowed to hold world's food supply to ransom: UK statement to the OSCE

OSCE Economic and Environmental Committee on "The Benefits of Scientific and Technological Co-operation in Promoting Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security"

Last week, the UN Secretary General's [Global Crisis Response Group's](#) report confirmed an unprecedented crisis. It is now a crisis of lack of access to available food, but in six to twelve months' time it may well turn into the first global food availability disaster in over 70 years, because of factors including Russia's war in Ukraine.

The UN estimates that up to 25 million tonnes of grain destined for export remains in storage in Ukraine, with its Black Sea ports blocked and road and rail capacity severely limited.

The World Food Programme has made repeated calls for Russia to allow the re-opening of the ports at Odesa and allow food to flow freely. But they won't.

Responsible not only for the deaths of thousands of Ukrainians and suffocating a vibrant economy, President Putin, through his war of choice and territorial ambition, is choosing to level misery and starvation on millions of vulnerable people around the world. Putin cannot be allowed to hold the world's food supply to ransom, in an attempt to secure the lifting of sanctions that are critical to stopping his brutal war on the innocent people of Ukraine.

Reports from places like Bucha and Irpin revealed evidence that soldiers in the Russian army committed war crimes. We now know that soldiers in the Russian Army are also common thieves – as we heard earlier, there are multiple reports describing how Russia is stealing thousands of tonnes of grain in temporarily-Russian-controlled areas and destroying silos and agricultural equipment.

The UK, working with international partners, is determined to support countries to mitigate the impact on their economies and their people of rising food prices due to Russia's imperialistic aggression, including by helping Ukraine export its food and play its role as the breadbasket of the world. We are calling on all countries, including in the WTO, to keep food trade flowing. Our sanctions against Russia do not target exports of food supplies for developing countries.

Mr Chair, the situation needs a coherent international response. We must avoid competing initiatives that dilute the collective impact. In this regard, we are fully committed to the [US Call to Action](#) and Germany's [G7](#)

[Global Alliance](#) as ways to achieve this. We must stand united against Putin's actions, and with the people of Ukraine who are so bravely standing firm in defence of their own sovereignty.