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The Role of the International Maritime Organization in Securing the Black Sea in the Context of the Russo-Ukrainian War

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**The Role of the International Maritime Organization in
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Russo-Ukrainian War***

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Abstract: *After the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014, maritime safety in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov became a major international challenge. After February 2022, the Russo-Ukrainian conflict disrupted maritime trade in the region, impairing shipping routes and port operations. The United Nations and International Maritime Organization provided technical support to reduce the impact of the armed conflict, especially to allow the establishment of a humanitarian corridor and a safe corridor for the transportation of grain, related foodstuff, and fertilizer from Ukraine and Russia to international markets.*

Key-words: *International Maritime Organization, Black Sea Grain Initiative, Russia-United Nations Memorandum of Understanding.*

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1. Introduction

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict that started in 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and then continued with tensions and fighting in Eastern Ukraine,¹ has several implications for the safety of the oceans, particularly in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. While the conflict itself is primarily a land-based issue, it has indirectly impacted maritime safety in several ways.

The situation has resulted in increased naval and military activity in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.² This intensified security presence could heighten the risks of maritime incidents, such as collisions of naval vessels or confrontations, thus endangering safety. The increased naval and military activity in the Black Sea has raised concerns about a possible escalation of the conflict between Russia and NATO. In recent months, there have been several close encounters between Russian and NATO warships in the Black Sea, which have accentuated the risk of accidental friction: A few of the most important moments in this regard include the following: the launching of a missile strike from the Black Sea, by Russia, in June 2022, on a Ukrainian shopping mall in Kremenchuk from the Black Sea, which killed at least 18 people and injured dozens more, the holding, in August 2022, by Russia of a large-scale military exercise in the Black Sea, involving over 150 warships and aircraft, whilst in September 2022, Turkey closed the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits to Russian warships, citing the Montreux Convention.³ This prevented Russia from reinforcing its Black Sea Fleet from the Mediterranean Sea.

The war has disrupted maritime trade in the region, compromising shipping routes and port operations. The trade through Ukrainian ports, including Mariupol and Berdiansk in the Sea of Azov, had been severely disrupted as a result of blockades,⁴ hostilities, and measures imposed by both parties. This

¹ Jeffrey Mankof, "Russia's War in Ukraine, Identity, History, and Conflict", *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, April 2022, available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russias-war-ukraine-identity-history-and-conflict>

² Luke Coffey, "Russian dominance in the Black Sea: The Sea of Azov", *Middle East Institute*, September 2020, available at: <https://www.mei.edu/publications/russian-dominance-black-sea-sea-azov>

³ Heather Mongilio, "Turkey Closes Bosphorus, Dardanelles Straits to Warships", *USNI News*, February 2022, available at: <https://news.usni.org/2022/02/28/turkey-closes-bosphorus-dardanelles-straits-to-warships>

⁴ Alexander Lott, "Russia's Blockade in the Sea of Azov: A Call for Relief Shipments for Mariupol", *European Journal of International Law*, March 2022, available at: <https://www.ejiltalk.org/russias-blockade-in-the-sea-of-azov-a-call-for-relief-shipments-for-mariupol/>

disruption could potentially result in economic losses, and delays in transportation, and safety risks for the vessels. It has also caused navigation difficulty, with mines and other explosives placed in certain areas.⁵ These dangers represent a direct issue for the ships in the area, therefore adapting the movement of these vessels is a constant preoccupation for both private persons and the maritime authorities that need to carry out minelayer-clearing operations.

The conflict also has a significant impact on seafarers, many of whom are Ukrainian or Russian nationals. There have been cases where they were stranded on ships in Ukrainian ports, and killed or wounded in attacks on the ships. The conflict has also made the seafarer's movement from and into the region more difficult.

The general atmosphere of tension and conflict could potentially increase the likelihood of at-sea accidents. Ships traveling through the area may be subject to enhanced surveillance and possible interference by military forces,⁶ thereby posing a threat to navigation safety. The conflict has increased the risk of maritime accidents in the region due to a number of factors, including the minefields in the sea, collision risks of merchant ships vs. warships, port disruption and closure, the diminished provision of maritime safety services, and increased risk of maritime pollution.⁷

International sanctions imposed on Russia and related entities have also affected sea operations.⁸ Shipping companies and other maritime traders are facing increasingly burdensome sanctions-related regulatory requirements that could undermine the safety of their businesses.

Conflict areas also often see a greater risk of environmental harm caused by incidents like oil spills resulting from damaged ships or infrastructure during

⁵ Allianz Global Corporate & Speciality, "Shipping losses hit a record low in 2022, but jump in fires, shadow tanker fleet and economic uncertainty pose new safety challenges", *Safety and Shipping Review 2023*, May 2023, available at: <https://commercial.allianz.com/news-and-insights/reports/shipping-safety.html#download>

⁶ Mark Nevitt, "The Russia-Ukraine Conflict, the Black Sea, and the Montreux Convention", February 2022, available: <https://www.justsecurity.org/80384/the-russia-ukraine-conflict-the-black-sea-and-the-montreux-convention/>

⁷ Jonathan Saul, "Floating mines in Black Sea endangering grain, oil trade, officials say", April 2022, available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/floating-mines-black-sea-endangering-grain-oil-trade-officials-2022-04-05/>

⁸ Council of the European Union, "EU sanctions against Russia explained", available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/restrictive-measures-against-russia-over-ukraine/sanctions-against-russia-explained/>

the war. Such events can have lasting ecological consequences for the oceans and coastlines in the affected areas.⁹ The increased risk of maritime pollution in the region is due to shipwrecks and sinking or damaged merchant ships and warships, oil and other noxious substances spilled into the water, disruption of the pollution, and response to the disruption of the maritime environment.¹⁰

2. The Necessity of an International Response to Regional Security Threats in the Black Sea

The international community has taken various steps to address the safety of the seas in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov region. These include both the establishment of an Emergency Task Force to coordinate efforts to address the security and safety risks to shipping, ports, and seafarers, by the International Maritime Organisation, putting into place several measures to ensure maritime safety in the region, as well as providing maritime security and safety assistance to Ukraine, by the European Union. It can be added that NATO has upped its maritime presence in the Black Sea to prevent any potential further Russian aggression and safeguard shipping interests. While these measures are important, the safety of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov is still a matter of great worry.

Even though the conflict is about territory and geopolitics, it also indirectly affects maritime safety in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. These challenges illustrate the interconnectedness of global maritime security and the importance of international cooperation in managing risks and securing the passage of ships in hotspots. In this sense, the following will analyze the role of the International Maritime Organisation in stabilising the Black Sea Area.

2.1. The Framework Standards of the International Maritime Organization

The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) is undoubtedly one of, if not the most, important institutions involved in global maritime regulation. Created by the UN in 1948 as The Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative

⁹ Sofia Sadogurskaya, “War and the Sea: How hostilities threaten the coastal and marine ecosystems of the Black and Azov Seas”, September 2022, available at: <https://uwecworkgroup.info/war-and-the-sea-how-hostilities-threaten-the-coastal-and-marine-ecosystems-of-the-black-and-azov-seas/>

¹⁰ Conflict and Environment Observatory, “Ukraine conflict environmental briefing” available at: <https://ceobs.org/ukraine-conflict-environmental-briefing-the-coastal-and-marine-environment/>

Organisation (IMCO), the organisation's name changed to its present one in 1982 as it became more important as an authority overseeing regulation and ensuring the protection of the seas.

Dedicated to safeguarding the waters of our planet with missions including safety at sea and protection of the environment under the Maritime Safety Committee and Marine Environment Protection Committee respectively, the IMO takes a lead position as the regulator for international global shipping. This opening paragraph gives only a small overview of the broad range and importance of the IMO, an organisation whose reach extends to the very heart of the interlocking network of maritime issues linking countries around the world.

The IMO develops and maintains a comprehensive regulatory framework for shipping, covering all aspects of the industry, including ship design, construction, and equipment, manning and training, operation and safety procedures, prevention of marine pollution, liabilities, and damages in case of marine incidents.¹¹ Therefore, the main activity of the IMO is the normative one, through the elaboration of international conventions. Out of the over 50 legal instruments concluded under the IMO, the organisation has developed three "key conventions":

- a) The International Convention on the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) of 1974;
- b) The International Convention on Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) of 1973, modified by the Protocols of 1978 and 1997;
- c) The International Convention on the Standards of Training, Certification/Certification and Charting of Seafarers (STCW), as amended by the 1995 Amendments and the 2010 Manila Amendments.

The other conventions are classified by the IMO according to their scope:

- a) maritime security, ship security, and port security (such as the 1972 International Convention on the Security of Containers or the 1979 International Convention on Search and Rescue at Sea)
- b) marine pollution prevention (such as the 1990 Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Cooperation Convention)
- c) liability and compensation (such as the Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage (CLC), "replaced" by the 1992 Protocol)

¹¹Introduction to the International Maritime Organization, available at: <https://www.imo.org/en/About/Pages/Default.aspx>

d) other areas (this category includes the Convention on the Measurement of Ship's Tonnage ("TONNAGE") from 1969 and the International Convention on Salvage ("SALVAGE") from 1989.

The IMO's rules are made up of international conventions that have been agreed to by the countries of the world, implemented into national law in each member nation. The IMO offers further technical support and training to countries to enable them to implement the IMO's standards.

The IMO remains an indispensable pillar of the global maritime world. Its role is to help make sure that the shipping is safe and environmentally friendly, as well as to train the sailors properly. It is intended to reduce the nautical accident rate with pollution of the seas and the marine environment.

Some of the key achievements of the IMO¹² include the evolution of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) that has saved many lives in the ocean, the 1973 adoption of the MARPOL (International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships), which has substantially reduced marine pollution from ships, the development of an International code for safe Ship & Port Facility, the adherence to the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments (BWM Convention), which addresses the transfer of alien invasive species in ships' ballast water as they travel from port to port, the development of the ILO's International Convention on Maritime Labour Standards (Convention No.79), setting minimum requirements for decent work in shipping and its activity as a key agency in global shipping, its work being important for making sure that shipping is safe, secure and green.

2.2. The Specific Initiatives of the International Maritime Organization

The IMO has taken several measures in response to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.¹³ For instance, it strongly condemned the Russian Federation's violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and it deplored the attacks of the Russian Federation aimed at commercial vessels, their seizures, including Search-and-Rescue vessels, threatening the safety and

¹²“IMO Extraordinary Council Session held to discuss the impacts on shipping and seafarers of the situation in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov”, available at: <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/PressBriefings/pages/ECSSstatement.aspx>

¹³www.nautilusint.org/en/news-insight/news/imo-demands--safe-blue-corridor-for-ships-in-Ukraine-war-zone/

welfare of seafarers¹⁴ and the marine environment. The IMO also made demands that the Russian Federation cease its unlawful activities to ensure the safety and welfare of seafarers and the security of international shipping and the marine environment in all affected areas, whilst calling upon all parties to seek to resolve the crisis through peaceful dialogue and diplomatic channels. Further, it highlighted the paramount importance of preserving the safety and welfare of seafarers and urging member states and observer organizations to provide maximum assistance to seafarers caught up in the conflict.

The organization also established a dedicated Black Sea and Sea of Azov information hub on its website in order to provide seafarers and the shipping industry with the latest information on the situation in the region and it worked with Member States to develop and implement measures to ensure the safety and security of international shipping in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov,¹⁵ including the establishment of a safe maritime corridor for vessels to enter and leave Ukrainian ports, facilitating the safe evacuation of stranded seafarers and vessels from the conflict zone and provided humanitarian assistance to seafarers affected by the conflict, such as food, water, and medical supplies.

In addition to these, the IMO has also taken a number of steps to address the broader implications of the conflict for the maritime sector, such as the impact on food security and global supply chains. The IMO's measures in response to the Russia-Ukraine conflict are designed to protect the safety and welfare of seafarers, ensure the security of international shipping, and minimize the disruption to global trade.

As concerns the legal documents the organizations adopt, these take the form of resolutions and recommendations. The IMO's resolutions are non-binding, but they carry significant moral weight and they can help to shape the global response to the conflict. The recommendations are similarly non-binding.¹⁶ Resolutions are the final documents that contain agreements on specific

¹⁴ “IMO Extraordinary Council Session held to discuss the impacts on shipping and seafarers of the situation in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov”, available at: <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/PressBriefings/pages/ECSSstatement.aspx>

¹⁵ “Maritime Security and Safety in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov”, available at: <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/MaritimeSecurityandSafetyintheBlackSeaandSeaofAzov.aspx>

¹⁶ Lawyers responding to Climate Change, “Legal and procedural remedies in cases of non-compliance with Paris Agreement”, available at: <https://legalresponse.org/legaladvice/legal-and-procedural-remedies-in-cases-of-non-compliance-with-paris-agreement/>

matters reached by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Assembly or its main committees. The IMO has adopted the following resolutions regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict,¹⁷ as these were the initial instruments called upon to regulate the new situation at hand:

- a. MSC. 495(105) – Actions to facilitate the urgent evacuation of seafarers from the war zone area in and around the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov as a result of the Russian Federation’s aggression against Ukraine.

This resolution was adopted in April 2022, shortly after the start of the conflict. It calls on Member States to take all necessary measures to facilitate the urgent evacuation of seafarers from the conflict zone. The resolution also urges Member States to cooperate and with the IMO to establish safe maritime corridors for evacuation vessels.¹⁸

- b. A.1120 (30) - Resolution on the safety and security of international shipping in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.

This resolution was adopted in June 2022. It condemns the Russian Federation's attacks on commercial vessels in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. The resolution also calls on the Russian Federation to cease its attacks and to ensure the safety and security of international shipping in the region. It urges Member States to take all necessary measures to protect their ships and crews from attack.

- c. A.1121 (30) - Resolution on the humanitarian assistance to seafarers affected by the conflict in Ukraine.

This resolution calls on the Russian Federation to cease its aggression against Ukraine and to ensure the safety and welfare of seafarers and the security of international shipping in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. The resolution also urges Member States to provide maximum assistance to seafarers affected by the conflict. In this sense, it requests the Member States to provide humanitarian assistance to these seafarers, including food, water, medical supplies, and shelter. The resolution also urges Member States to

¹⁷ “IMO’s Maritime Safety Committee has adopted a resolution on actions to facilitate the urgent evacuation of seafarers”, available at: <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/PressBriefings/pages/MSCResolutionActionsForSeafarerEvacuation-.aspx>

¹⁸ “IMO’s Maritime Safety Committee has adopted a resolution on actions to facilitate the urgent evacuation of seafarers”, available at: <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/PressBriefings/pages/MSCResolutionActionsForSeafarerEvacuation-.aspx>

facilitate the safe evacuation of seafarers who are stranded in the conflict zone.

The **most recent resolutions** adopted by IMO regarding Russia are:

- a. Resolution A.1125(30) on the measures to facilitate the safe evacuation of seafarers from vessels affected by the conflict in Ukraine (adopted in June 2023), which calls upon States to provide seafarers with access to information on safe evacuation options and procedures, assist seafarers with obtaining the necessary documentation and visas to evacuate, facilitate the safe passage of evacuation vessels through their waters and provide financial assistance to seafarers who are evacuated.
- b. Resolution A.1126 (30) on the implementation of the measures to ensure the safety and security of international shipping in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov (adopted in June 2023). This resolution builds on the previous resolutions that IMO adopted in response to the conflict in Ukraine. They call for further action to protect the safety and welfare of seafarers, ensure the security of international shipping, and minimize the disruption to global trade.¹⁹ The organization also urged states to implement the recommendations of the IMO's Black Sea and Sea of Azov Maritime Safety Information (MSI) Broadcasts, to establish safe maritime corridors for vessels to enter and leave Ukrainian ports and to share information with each other and with the IMO on the safety and security of international shipping in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.

The IMO has made an impact in other aspects related to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, through its resolutions on cybersecurity, maritime security, and the protection of the marine environment. It has also taken a number of other steps outside of adopting resolutions in order to address the conflict in Ukraine, such as establishing a dedicated Black Sea and Sea of Azov information hub on its website,²⁰ working with Member States to develop and implement measures to ensure the safety and security of international shipping in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov, facilitating the safe evacuation of

¹⁹ “United Nations bodies call for further action to end seafarer crisis”, available at: <https://unctad.org/isar/news/united-nations-bodies-call-further-action-end-seafarer-crisis>

²⁰ Council of the International Maritime Organization, “Black Sea and the Sea of Azov: Ensuring safe navigation and the protection of civilians during the Russo-Ukrainian War.” Available at: <https://www.thessismun.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2.-IMO-B-TOPIC-AREA-STUDY-GUIDE-THESSISMUN2023.pdf>

stranded seafarers and vessels from the conflict zone, and providing humanitarian assistance to seafarers affected by the conflict.

To sum up, the IMO's actions in response to the conflict in Ukraine are designed to protect the safety and welfare of seafarers, ensure the security of international shipping, and minimize the disruption to global trade.²¹ The IMO is also currently working with Member States to develop and implement additional measures to address the impact of the conflict in Ukraine on the maritime sector.

3. The Role of IMO in Securing the Global Supply Chains

As mentioned above, on March 11, 2022, a Decision of the IMO Council was adopted in an extraordinary session. It condemned the violation by the Russian Federation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, in a way incompatible with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the objectives of the IMO. It was also highlighted that the Russian aggression against Ukraine represented a serious danger to life and a serious risk to the safety of navigation and the marine environment. Moreover, the various IMO committees have examined the consequences of this crisis in their respective fields. For example, the Legal Committee, which met from March 21 to 25, 2022²² adopted recommendations regarding the impact of the situation in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov on insurance certificates and other financial guarantees. It appeared that the introduction of economic sanctions had, in certain cases, the effect of preventing insurers or other financial guarantee providers from processing claims for compensation or prohibiting the payment of claims arising from these agreements.

At the beginning of the conflict, IMO reported 86 commercial vessels stranded in Ukrainian ports and waters, with approximately 2,000 seafarers.²³ The IMO Secretariat made efforts to facilitate the safe departure of ships and their crews, mediating the dialogue between Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Mandated by the Council at its 35th extraordinary session (C/ES 35), the IMO Secretary-General made efforts to initiate and support the establishment of a secure maritime corridor in the Black Sea and the Sea of

²¹ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, "Maritime Trade Disrupted: The war in Ukraine and its effects on maritime trade logistics", available at: <https://unctad.org/es/isar/publication/maritime-trade-disrupted-war-ukraine-and-its-effects-maritime-trade-logistics>

²²<https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/MeetingSummaries/Pages/LEG-109th-session.aspx>

²³ The statement of IMO's Secretary-General statement Kitack Lim of 24 February 2023

Azov together with relevant state parties. However, the establishment of such a corridor has been a permanent challenge, due to major security risks.²⁴

The parties to the conflict did not easily agree to establish a humanitarian corridor within the conflict zone. Surprisingly, Ukraine was the one who rejected the IMO's Secretary-General proposal to create a "blue corridor", meaning a maritime traffic lane from 6 major Ukrainian ports in order to allow access to international waters. Even though the Russian Federation had accepted the IMO recommendation,²⁵ Ukraine, without explicitly indicating the reasons, might have questioned Russia's real intention to guarantee the right to safe passage, taking into account Russian attacks on neutral ships at the outset of the hostilities and the important number of drifting sea mines in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.²⁶

Furthermore, IMO has provided support towards UN-wide initiatives to find solutions for facilitating the access of the stranded ships and seafarers and guarantee the free passage of neutral commercial vessels through the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. One of the major results, as IMO's Secretary-General Kitack Lim stated, was the agreement on the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which "*established a maritime corridor that allowed ships to export grain and related foodstuffs from Ukraine, with the aim of addressing global food insecurity*".

The Black Sea Grain Initiative was the result of almost 3 months of negotiations between Ukraine, the Russian Federation, and Turkey, with the mediation of the UN, starting with the UN's Secretary-General visit to Kyiv and Moscow in April 2022.²⁷ Inspired by the first IMO initiative for creating a humanitarian corridor in the Black Sea, this new agreement that established

²⁴ Raul (Pete) Pedrozo, "The Black Sea Grain Initiative: Russia's Strategic Blunder or Diplomatic Coup?", *International Law Studies, US Naval War College*, Vol.100, No. 421 (2023), p. 426

²⁵ IMO Circular letter 4543, 28.03.2022, available at: [https://www.wcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Documents/Black%20Sea%20and%20Sea%20of%20Azov%20-%20Member%20States%20and%20Associate%20Members%20Communications/Circular%20Letter%20No.4543%20-%20Communication%20From%20The%20Government%20Of%20The%20Russian%20Federation%20\(Secretariat\).pdf](https://www.wcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Documents/Black%20Sea%20and%20Sea%20of%20Azov%20-%20Member%20States%20and%20Associate%20Members%20Communications/Circular%20Letter%20No.4543%20-%20Communication%20From%20The%20Government%20Of%20The%20Russian%20Federation%20(Secretariat).pdf); the Russian Federation was also obliged, under international humanitarian law, not to unreasonably interfere with neutral commercial vessels within the conflict zone

²⁶ Raul (Pete) Pedrozo, *supra*, p. 428

²⁷ UN News, "UN Secretary-General to meet separately next week with Putin and Zelensky" available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/04/1116742>

a mechanism for maritime transportation of grain, related foodstuff, and fertilizers from Ukraine was signed on July 22, 2022, in Istanbul by Ukraine, Russia, and Turkey.²⁸

First of all, it is important to note that non-food exports from Ukraine and exports from other countries were not within the scope of the agreement. A Joint Coordination Centre was established in Istanbul, in order to survey the implementation of the agreement, with experts from Ukraine, Russia, and Turkey, but also with UN experts. Secondly, it is also important to mention that, at the same time with the Black Sea Grain Initiative, a connected agreement was concluded between the Russian Federation and the UN.²⁹ The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding was to facilitate the exports to international markets of Russian food and agriculture fertilizers, meaning that the UN sanctions imposed on Russia were not applicable to those categories of products.

The two arrangements were interconnected, but the difference between them is that the UN-Russia Memorandum of Understanding is effective for three years, while the Black Sea Grain Initiative was established for a period of 120 days, with a self-renewal clause. The first renewal of the Grain Initiative operated automatically, according to the clause. Nevertheless, on October 30, the Russian Federation announced its intention to suspend its participation in the Grain Initiative, following a massive Ukrainian drone attack against the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol.³⁰ The Parties finally agreed to extend the agreement.³¹

In March 2023 Russia announced that the new extension of the agreement would not operate for 120 days, but only for 60 days.³² Consequently, it was

²⁸ https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/black_sea_grain_initiative_full_text.pdf

²⁹ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2022-07-22/note-correspondents-today%E2%80%99s-agreements>

³⁰ United Nations Black Sea Grain Initiative Joint Coordination Centre, "Information note from the United Nations Secretariat at the Joint Coordination Centre", available at: <https://www.un.org/en/black-sea-grain-initiative/information-note-30-october-2022>

³¹ United Nations Secretary-General, "Statement of the Secretary-General – on the renewal of the Black Sea Grain Initiative", available at: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2022-11-17/statement%C2%A0of%C2%A0the-secretary-general-%E2%80%93-the-renewal-of-the-black-sea-grain-initiative%C2%A0>

³² United Nations Secretary-General, "Note to Correspondents - on today's talks in Geneva on the Black Sea Grain Initiative and the Memorandum of Understanding with the Russian Federation", available at: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2023->

not clear how long the extension was made for. The UN did not mention the period of the extension,³³ Ukraine declared that the agreement was extended for 120 days, while Russian officials declared that the extension period was strongly dependent on the removal of some Western sanctions which generated difficulties in shipments of Russian foods and fertilizers.³⁴ Nevertheless, by agreeing to renew the grain deal despite the drone attack in October 2022, Russia was able „to portray itself as a benevolent actor concerned with resolving the global food crisis, particularly in developing and the least developed nations”.³⁵

The Initiative was not renewed after its third term, which expired on 17 July 2023.³⁶ Since then, efforts have been made to reroute transport across the Danube, but also across road and rail links to Europe, with the disadvantages of much higher transportation costs and the diminution of volumes, as Danube ports have limited capacities. An interim corridor in the Black Sea, which Kyiv has asked the International Maritime Organization to secure, was opened on August 10, 2023.³⁷

03-13/note-correspondents-todays-talks-geneva-the-black-sea-grain-initiative-and-the-memorandum-of-understanding-the-russian-federation-0

³³ United Nations Secretary-General, "Note to Correspondents - on the extension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative", available at: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2023-03-18/note-correspondents-the-extension-of-the-black-sea-grain-initiative>

³⁴ Reuters, "Ukraine Black Sea grain deal extended for at least 60 days", available at: <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/black-sea-grain-deal-extended-turkey-ukraine-say-2023-03-18/>

³⁵ Raul (Pete) Pedrozo, *supra*, p. 438

³⁶ United Nations, Black Sea Grain Initiative Joint Coordination Centre Website, available at: <https://www.un.org/en/black-sea-grain-initiative>

³⁷ IMO Circular Letters 4611 and 4611/Add.1, available at: <https://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Pages/MaritimeSecurityandSafetyintheBlackSeaandSeaofAzov.aspx>

4. Conclusion

It seems that throughout its work, the IMO has maintained its aim to provide humanitarian aid to those placed in difficult positions regarding the Russian-Ukrainian War, but has also taken important steps to implement measures regarding the economic safety of the area. Despite the profoundly unjust consequences this international situation has created, the IMO has managed to at least limit the negative worldwide impact of the conflict. It is clear that the imbalance that was struck at the debut of the war has steadily been corrected through means of international law, which can only represent a key element to reestablish order and peace from all standpoints.

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