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**THE BLACK SEA GRAIN INITIATIVE: THE IMPORTANCE
OF THE WTO ENGAGEMENT TO ENSURE HUMAN RIGHTS
IN THE CONTEXT OF FOOD SECURITY**

**ЧОРНОМОРСЬКА ЗЕРНОВА ІНІЦІАТИВА: ВАЖЛИВІСТЬ
ЗАЛУЧЕННЯ СОТ ДЛЯ ЗАБЕЗПЕЧЕННЯ РЕАЛІЗАЦІЇ ПРАВ
ЛЮДИНИ У КОНТЕКСТІ ПРОДОВОЛЬЧОЇ БЕЗПЕКИ**

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On October 29, 2022, the Russian Federation announced its withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative, launched on July 22, 2022, by signing two mirror agreements: between Ukraine, Turkey, and the UN and between the Russian Federation, Turkey, and the UN. The package of agreements was supposed to be valid for 120 days, and on November 22, 2022 it would be automatically extended. The aggressor state explained its actions because of a “terrorist act” committed “under the leadership of Ukraine and the United Kingdom against ships of the Black Sea Fleet and civilian vessels involved in guaranteeing the security of the “grain corridor [1].” Unilateral suspension of agreements by Russia is “the blackmail of the hungry,” as it endangers global food security.

In March 2022, in its Report, the UN World Food Program emphasized that the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has severe consequences for food security worldwide since “44 million people in 38 countries are teetering on the brink of starvation [2].” According to the UN Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance (UN GCRG), up to 323 million people will experience acute food shortages by the end of the year [3]. Following the UNCTAD calculations, food price spikes due to the armed conflict in Ukraine will affect more than 5% of the import basket of the poorest countries [4]. Thus, the aggression of the Russian Federation created threats to the realization of human rights (in particular, the right to food) not only in Ukraine but also in the world. Moreover, possible socio-

political unrest against the background of rising prices and malnutrition in the medium term will harm economic, social, and cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights.

Against the background of the existing and potentially even more threatening food situation, the Black Sea Grain Initiative was one of the most effective solutions. First of all, according to the assessment of the Spokesman for the United Nations Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric, it saved 100 million people from extreme poverty [5]. In addition, as of October 27, 2022, more than 8.5 tons of exported grain helped reduce prices on international markets and avoid a crisis of anticipation [6]. The so-called “grain agreement” was also important because it created additional storage areas for the new crop. It was and remains the only option for ensuring prompt and relatively inexpensive food supplies, considering the infrastructural limitations of the railway and river corridors [7].

At the same time, one of the negative features of the Black Sea Grain Initiative was its implementation without the World Trade Organization. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the latter began to look for ways to overcome the looming food crisis, building on the experience of the response in 2008-2009 and during the COVID-19 pandemic. On June 16, 2022, an important statement was made at the WTO Ministerial Conference on the pertinence of avoiding export bans or restrictions that conflict with WTO rules for developing countries at risk of food shortages. In addition, it was agreed to ban subsidies for overfishing while allowing subsidies to restore biodiversity. WTO member countries have encouraged the release of excess food products, as well as those products that are in stocks, to international markets. The declaration was adopted by consensus, including the participation of the Russian Federation [8].

The role of the WTO in overcoming the negative consequences for realizing human rights related to food security cannot be overestimated. In addition to those mentioned earlier, it has the material capacity and diplomatic tools to continue to advocate for peace, the rule of law, and respect for international law, including respect for the rules and norms of trade to realize the Sustainable Development Goals. The WTO can provide trade policy transparency and a forum for discussing its implications in a multipolar environment. About 75% of international trade takes place under WTO rules and procedures [9]. Compliance with the latter guarantees an uninterrupted supply of goods on fair terms, considering the difficult political circumstances and the vulnerable position of developing countries. The WTO helps member states to strengthen supply. Their disruptions have driven global food and fertilizer prices to unprecedented levels, for which Russia bears direct responsibility.

It should be emphasized that, unlike the UN, whose fundamental principles and values have been neglected by the Russian Federation many times, the

aggressor state appreciates membership in the WTO, obtained through lengthy negotiations and concessions in 2013. Any threat to membership in the organization is painfully perceived by Russia and is reflected in the development of anticipatory regulatory acts: on voluntary withdrawal or on denunciation of the Marrakesh Agreement. Therefore, linking the implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which is extremely important for food security and human rights around the world, with the participation of the Russian Federation in the WTO system is a mechanism for increasing the effectiveness of the “grain agreement.” At the same time, in the case of refusal to fulfill obligations under the latter, a legal basis will be created to implement the procedure of suspending Russia’s membership in the WTO, which in itself is a strong lever of influence on the aggressor state.

Therefore, the WTO should become an equal party to any new or continuation of existing agreements with the Russian Federation regarding the export of food from Ukraine. This international organization has the necessary experience and expertise to effectively respond in the event of further “the blackmail of the hungry,” and is governed exclusively by commercial, not political, rules.

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«GRAIN CORRIDOR» IN UKRAINE: PRINCIPLES OF OPERATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

«ЗЕРНОВИЙ КОРИДОР» В УКРАЇНІ: ЗАСАДИ ФУНКЦІОНУВАННЯ ТА РЕАЛІЗАЦІЯ ПРОЕКТУ

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З неспровокованим повторним нападом Росії на Україну 24.02.2022 року перед Україною та світом постала величезна кількість викликів. Одним з таких є продовольча безпека в умовах кризи.

Відповідно до Римської декларації від 1996 року, країни мають забезпечити право людини на повноцінне харчування [1]. Це означає