

73rd session of the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board
Agenda item 3 “General debates”
(14 September 2026, Room XVI)

Madam President,

Let me start by congratulating you with successful election as the Trade and Development Board President. We wish you all success in leading this Board.

The current session of the Board is taking place at a time when the number of people facing hunger worldwide has reached already 645 million, and when trade routes are disrupted on daily basis, and the principles of freedom and safety of navigation are neglected.

The ongoing international armed conflicts, including Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine that continues for the fifth year already, have devastating impact on the world trade, contributing to the escalation of global food insecurity.

Since the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, 1,166 Ukrainian port infrastructure facilities have been damaged or destroyed, 268 merchant vessels have been targeted and substantially damaged, 334 maritime workers have been killed or injured.

At a time when more than 400 million people worldwide depend on regular supply of Ukrainian agricultural products, Russia systematically targets Ukraine’s port infrastructure and civilian shipping, creating aggravated risks for international commercial navigation in the Black Sea. Russia also deliberately targets energy infrastructure, railways, and road transport routes in Ukraine connected to export corridors. The pattern and choice of targets leave little doubt that these attacks are intended solemnly to disrupt Ukraine’s trade and exports.

Uninterrupted functioning of maritime corridors is essential for Ukraine’s economic resilience, international trade and global food security. Our main three ports of Greater Odesa have traditionally handled approximately 90% of Ukraine’s agricultural exports, supplying food products to more than 55 countries worldwide. 65% of Ukrainian agricultural products are destined for export and remain critical for countries in dire need of food.

The maritime corridors remain critically important for Ukraine’s agricultural exports, while alternative logistics routes cannot fully replace maritime transport. In this connection we call upon transit countries to reduce to the extent possible excessive administrative, customs and other barriers that may increase our transit time and costs under the war conditions.

Ukraine does not lack the agricultural products destined for external markets for the counties in need. Key limitation today is the lack of storage facilities and rising costs of logistics due to Russia’s attacks. We thank those countries and international

organizations who have already contributed to bridge the storage capacity gap and eased transit logistics.

Russian attacks against civilian merchant vessels and port infrastructure constitute a direct threat to freedom of navigation under international maritime law, including UNCLOS. Ukraine will continue to secure freedom of navigation in the Black Sea region and protect our maritime lanes, port infrastructure, civilian workers, exercising our unalienable right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter.

No need to reiterate that Russia continues its shameful practice of marauding and stealing the Ukrainian grains from the occupied territories of Ukraine. The illicit trade is facilitated through ports of the Sea of Azov and Black Sea and supported by falsified certificates and a shadow grain fleet. We will pursue accountability for all those involved in trade of stolen Ukrainian grain. Therefore, we call for stronger international monitoring and verification of grain trade flows and effective mechanisms to prevent the laundering of illegally seized Ukrainian agricultural products through international markets.

Madam President,

The on-going Russia's war constitutes a continuing threat to food security worldwide. Russia masters the use of starvation as a method of warfare. This only strengthen our determination to continue fulfilling our role of a guarantor of global food security. Access to food is an inalienable right of every human being. We call on all peace-loving nations to stand firmly in ensuring global food security by supporting safe and uninterrupted functioning of the Ukrainian Black Sea Maritime Corridor and strengthening international efforts to protect freedom of navigation in the region.

To secure uninterrupted flow of agricultural products to countries in need we have to strengthen alternative export routes, improve access to available port, transshipment, storage and railway infrastructure, and to establish emergency storage mechanisms to counter the supply chains disruptions caused by Russia's war. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has global consequences, and it requires a unified international response.

Thank you.