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Circular Letter No.4546
5 April 2022

To: All IMO Members
Intergovernmental organizations
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status

Subject: **Communication from the Government of the Russian Federation**

The Government of the Russian Federation has sent the attached communication, dated 5 April 2022, with the request that it be circulated by the Organization.

MISSION OF
THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
TO THE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME
ORGANIZATION (IMO)



ПРЕДСТАВИТЕЛЬСТВО
РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ
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Ref. No. 003/141

The Mission of the Russian Federation to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the IMO and has the honour to inform of the following.

On several occasions during the discussions at various IMO bodies the issue of closure of maritime spaces in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov had been touched upon. The Russian side would like to stress that all such closures had been conducted in full compliance with the provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 with the aim of providing for the safety and security of merchant vessels and their crews. This was done in the view of dangerous and irresponsible steps undertaken by the Ukraine in the region. Inter alia this refers to the mine-laying activities of the Military forces of the Ukraine.

The recent communication from the Ukraine of 30 March 2022 No. 6124/23-327/2-158 struggles to shift the responsibility upon the Russian Federation for stray naval mines in the Black Sea as well as for the fact that safe evacuation of merchant vessels in the Black Sea is not progressing.

Encl.:
2 pages

H.E. Mr. Kitack Lim
Secretary-General
International Maritime Organization
4 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7SR

It should be noted that the safe evacuation of merchant vessels in the Sea of Azov is ongoing and merchant vessels under various flags are safely leaving the area. The safe maritime corridor in the Black Sea established by the Russian side is not a propaganda. It indeed exists and operates daily from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. (UTC+3) as indicated in the communication of the Russian Federation of 25 March No. 003/124.

It should also be highlighted that establishment of the said corridors had been encouraged by the IMO and is reflected in the outcomes of the 35th extraordinary session of the IMO Council. It sets no preconditions for creating such corridors describing this as “a provisional and urgent measure”.

The apparent problem is the inability of the Ukrainian side to provide for the safe departure of merchant vessels from its Black Sea ports due to naval mines placed by the Ukrainian military forces in and around the said ports. The Ukrainian authorities as well as the Ukrainian delegation at the 109th session of the IMO Legal Committee desperately tried to put forward a lame claim that the Russian side has set up all those naval mines. It is yet another falsehood. This can neither be logically verified nor factually substantiated.

On the other hand the Naval Headquarters of the Military forces of the Ukraine officially informed on 5th March 2022 that mine-laying activities along the coast of Odesa region were finished and confirmed that this posed a threat to the sea-going vessels. It should also be observed that mine-laying exercises were the focus of series of the US-Ukrainian naval exercises “Sea Breeze”.

Of particular relevance are the IMO Circular Letters of 14th March No. 4532 and No. 4534 where the Ukraine indicates the measures for the laying-up of the vessels and for the departure of their crews via mainland. There is no indication for an effort to create the blue safe maritime corridors as requested by the IMO Council.

Moreover numerous communications with the merchant vessels trapped in the Ukrainian ports confirm that the Ukrainian authorities have banned foreign merchant vessels to leave the ports under the threat of immediate sinking of

the vessels. In this regard, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation released an official statement on 31st March 2022, which is enclosed herewith.

The Russian side calls once again on competent authorities of the Ukraine to provide for the safety and security of the merchant vessels and their crews leaving the Ukrainian ports in the Black Sea.

The Russian side further seeks the support of the Secretary-General of the IMO in implementing this urgent measure as indicated by the Council at its 35th extraordinary session and kindly asks for this letter to be circulated to the Member States of the Organization.

The Mission of the Russian Federation avails itself of the opportunity to renew to the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization the assurances of its highest consideration. *J*



London, 5 April 2022

Statement of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation

During his visit to the Norwegian Parliament Storting on 30th March the President of the Ukraine Mr. Vladimir Zelensky has alleged that the Russian Federation had been involved in laying naval mines in the Black Sea and blocking merchant vessels from leaving the Ukrainian ports.

Taking into account the Mr Zelensky might not possess real information as to the situation beyond Kiev and as to the real actions of his subordinates, the following information is provided herewith.

In the period from 25th February to 4th March in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov the Military forces of the Ukraine set up approximately 420 naval mines of outdated construction type YaM-1 (ЯМ-1): in the Black Sea – 370, in the Sea of Azov – 50.

As a result of stormy sea swells in the Black Sea and due to the unsatisfactory technical condition of the bottom anchor cables approximately 10 Ukrainian naval mines had been severed off.

Since then under the influence of the wind and sea currents the Ukrainian mines had freely drifted across the western part of the Black Sea in the southerly direction.

One Ukrainian mine have been recently found and disarmed by the Turkish specialists. The second one has been disarmed in the Romanian territorial seas.

It is unknown where the rest of the naval mines are drifting. These irresponsible actions of the Kiev nationalist regime have created a real threat to merchant transport and cargo vessels of all the States in the region.

As per the falsehood articulated by the Ukrainian authorities as to the fact that nearly 100 vessels are blocked in the Ukrainian ports, the following clarifications apply.

The Ukrainian authorities are presently withholding in the ports of Chernomorsk, Nikolaev, Ochakov, Odessa and Yuzhniy 68 vessels under the flags

of Turkey, China, Switzerland, Greece, Malta, Panama, Marshall Islands, Sierra Leone, Comoro Islands, Belize, Liberia, Cayman Islands, Denmark and Syria.

At the same time the Russian Federation daily from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. (UTC+3) opens up the safe 80-mile long and 3-mile wide corridor for the exit of mentioned vessels from the Ukrainian territorial waters in the southwesterly direction.

The crews of the said vessels during the radio communications with them informed that the Ukrainian authorities have banned foreign merchant vessels to leave the ports under the threat of immediate sinking of vessels.

31 March 2022
