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russia, UN to talk Ukraine grain deal as renewal doubts grow

росія та ООН обговорять угоду щодо зерна України, оскільки сумніви щодо продовження зростають

Президент України В. Зеленський та генеральний секретар ООН А. Гутерреш провели у Києві переговори. Основною темою зустрічі стала "зернова угода", термін якої спливає 19 березня і за продовження якої виступає ООН. кремль заявив, що не планує прямих переговорів між А. Гутеррешем та президентом росії в.путіним. міністр оборони Туреччини Х. Акар заявив, що Анкара веде переговори з усіма сторонами та намагається продовжити угоду.

<https://www.dailysabah.com/business/transportation/russia-un-to-talk-ukraine-grain-deal-as-renewal-doubts-grow>

Russia is set to discuss the renewal of the Ukraine grain deal with United Nations representatives in Geneva next week, an official said Thursday, after Moscow cast doubt over its extension.

The Black Sea Grain Initiative, brokered by the U.N. and Türkiye last July, aimed to prevent a global food crisis by allowing Ukrainian grain blockaded by Russia's invasion to be safely exported from three ports.

The deal was extended for 120 days in November and will renew on March 18 if no party objects. However, Moscow has already signaled it will only agree to an extension if restrictions affecting its exports are lifted.

"The next rounds of consultations are scheduled for March 13 in Geneva. The Russian interdepartmental delegation will take part ... First, the deal will be discussed," Russia's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Vladimirovna Zakharova told reporters during a regularly scheduled briefing on Thursday.

Talks are expected to be held with top U.N. trade official Rebeca Grynspan.

The West has not explicitly targeted Russia's agricultural exports. Still, Moscow says sanctions on its payments, logistics, and insurance industries hinder exporting grains and fertilizers.

"There are still a lot of questions about the final recipients and where most of the grain is going. And of course, questions about the second part of the agreements are well known to all," Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Thursday.

Russia has complained that Ukrainian grain exported under the deal is going to wealthy countries. The "second part" refers to a memorandum of understanding with the U.N. facilitating Russian food and fertilizer exports.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Thursday that extending the deal was becoming "complicated" as he claimed it was not being correctly implemented.

Lavrov stressed the "two parts" of the deal were "inextricably linked."

"The first part is being implemented, and we are fulfilling all our obligations in this regard together with our Turkish colleagues," he noted.

"The second part is not being implemented at all."

"If we're talking about a deal, it's a package deal. So you can only extend what is already being implemented, and if the package is half-implemented, then the extension issue becomes quite complicated," Lavrov said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres held talks in Kyiv on Wednesday on extending the deal, which the latter said was of "critical importance."

The Kremlin said there are no plans for direct talks between Guterres and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

On Thursday, Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said Ankara was in talks with all parties and was trying to extend the accord.

"Ukraine expressed a positive opinion on a second extension of the initiative. Similarly, Russia has a positive attitude towards the extension of the initiative. We also hope and expect that the grain initiative will continue with the contribution of all parties. We continue our efforts in this direction," Akar said.

Ukraine has so far exported more than 23 million tons of mainly corn and wheat under the deal, according to the U.N. The top primary destinations for shipments have been China, Spain, Türkiye, Italy and the Netherlands.

"Exports of Ukrainian – as well as Russian – food and fertilizers are essential to global food security and prices," Guterres told reporters on Wednesday.