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UN "doing everything possible" for extension of Black Sea grain deal: official

ООН «робить усе можливе» для продовження угоди щодо чорноморського зерна: чиновник

Заступник Генерального секретаря ООН з гуманітарних питань, Координатор надзвичайної допомоги М. Гріффітс заявив на засіданні Ради безпеки, що всесвітня організація робить "все можливе" для забезпечення продовження Чорноморської зернової ініціативи. Він зазначив, що для глобальної продовольчої безпеки життєво важливо, щоб угода продовжувалася і виконувалась у повному обсязі.

<http://en.people.cn/n3/2023/0318/c90000-10224291.html>

UNITED NATIONS, March 17 (Xinhua) -- Martin Griffiths, the UN undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, said Friday the world body is doing "everything possible" to ensure the extension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

On July 22, 2022, Russia and Ukraine separately signed a document in Istanbul with Türkiye and the United Nations on grain and fertilizer exports from Ukraine and Russia to ensure supplies to global markets amid the Russia-Ukraine armed conflict.

The deal, initially in effect for 120 days, was extended in mid-November 2022 for another 120 days to March 18.

"Right now, the United Nations, under the leadership of our secretary-general, is doing everything possible to make sure that the Black Sea Grain Initiative can continue," Griffiths told a Security Council meeting on the situation in Ukraine, convened a day before the deal is set to expire.

"We continue to engage closely with all parties," he said via a video link.

Russia and the United Nations also signed a parallel memorandum of understanding in July 2022 to facilitate unimpeded exports of Russian food and fertilizer.

The signing of those agreements was a critical step in the broader fight against global food and security crisis, especially in developing countries, Griffiths said.

"As a result, markets have been calmed and global food prices have indeed continued to fall," he said, noting that under the Black Sea Grain Initiative, close to 25 million metric tons of foodstuffs have been safely exported from Ukraine since August.

The World Food Programme has been able to transport more than half a million metric tons of wheat to support humanitarian operations in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Yemen, Griffiths added.

Early this week, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin said Russia agreed to extend the grain export deal by 60 days, after talks with UN representatives in Geneva.

Russia "does not object to another extension of the 'Black Sea Initiative' after its second term expiration on March 18, but only for 60 days," Vershinin said in a statement.

Vershinin stressed that while the commercial export of Ukrainian products is carried out at a steady pace, bringing considerable profits to Kiev, restrictions on the Russian agricultural exporters are still in place.

"Our further stance will be determined upon the tangible progress on normalization of our agricultural exports, not in words, but in deeds," Vershinin said.

Griffiths reiterated that the UN is sparing no effort to facilitate the full implementation of the agreement with Russia, saying meaningful progress has been made but impediments remain, "notably with regard to payment systems."

Admitting "there is more to do," he said efforts to overcome the remaining impediments will continue "unabated."

"It is vital for global food security that both of these agreements continue and should be fully implemented," said Griffiths.

(Web editor: Zhang Wenjie, Liang Jun)