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Circular Letter No.4544
31 March 2022

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

Subject: **Communication from the Government of Ukraine**

The Government of Ukraine has sent the attached communication, dated 30 March 2022, with the request that it be circulated by the Organization.



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Nr. 6124/23-327/2- 158

The Embassy of Ukraine in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the International Maritime Organisation and has the honour to inform of the following.

A recent communication from the Mission of the Russian Federation to the IMO dated 25 March 2022 No. 003/124 on the unilateral establishment of a “blue safe maritime corridor” to allow safe evacuation of seafarers and ships from Ukrainian seaports in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, released by the IMO Circular Letter Nr. 4543, is just a new sign of Russian propaganda, an attempt of the aggressor state, which is the only source of the dire security situation in the region, to “whitewash” its name, by manipulating on the fate of peaceful seafarers and the ships blocked and repeatedly shelled by the Russian navy.

Such a unilateral decision of the Russian Federation was not negotiated with Ukraine nor approved by the IMO, which is tasked with facilitating the process of establishment of blue maritime corridors. Any boundaries of the corridor weren't agreed upon with the Ukrainian side.

Due to the ongoing aggression against Ukraine and Russian mine-laying activities at sea, international shipping safety in this region cannot be guaranteed. In this regard, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine has released an official statement dated 29 March 2022, which is annexed to this Note verbal.

The preconditions for the safe evacuation of ships, outlined by Ukraine during the 35th extraordinary session of the IMO Council as well as the 109th session of the Legal Committee, are clear: Russia must fully stop the hostilities, withdraw its troops and ensure the freedom and safety of navigation in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, including by carrying out mine-sweeping activities with the involvement of Black Sea littoral states.

International Maritime Organization
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The Embassy of Ukraine would appreciate if this Note Verbal is urgently circulated among IMO Member States to all IMO Member States, international organizations which have concluded agreements of cooperation with the IMO and non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the IMO.

The Embassy of Ukraine to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Secretariat of the International Maritime Organisation the assurances of its highest consideration.

Encl.

London, 30 March 2022



Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on the illegal activities of the Russia's Navy in the Black Sea

29/03/2022

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine states that since the beginning of a large-scale aggressive war against Ukraine, the Russian Federation has been increasing the illegal activities of its naval forces in the Black Sea.

In addition to capturing and destroying civil maritime vessels, bombing the territory of Ukraine from the sea, Russia has come up with a new way of sea robbery, which is the use of naval mines as an uncontrolled drifting ammunition. It was these drifting mines that were found March 26-28, 2022 off the coasts of Turkey and Romania.

According to the results of the identification, it was established that these were sea mines, which, as of the beginning of 2022, were not registered with the Naval Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

These mines were seized by the Russian armed forces in 2014 during the military invasion and temporary occupation of the Ukrainian city of Sevastopol. Therefore, Russia, using sea mines seized in 2014, deliberately provokes and discredits Ukraine to international partners.

Thus, using naval mines seized from Russia's military depots in 2014, the aggressor is trying to hide its illegal activities in the Black Sea, contrary to the principles and norms of international maritime and humanitarian law, and to evade responsibility for war crimes and piracy.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine emphasizes that the deliberate use by Russia of drifting sea mines turns them into a de facto weapon of indiscriminate action, which threatens, first of all, civil navigation and human life at sea in the whole waters not only of the Black and Azov Seas, but also of the Kerch and Black Sea Straits.

The responsibility for the use of drifting sea mines, as well as for their unpredictable consequences, lies solely with the Russian Federation and its naval forces.

Ukraine insists on bringing Russia to international responsibility for illegal activities in the Black Sea, war crimes and, in particular, the use of sea mines as indiscriminate weapons spread uncontrollably in the Black Sea.

On the use of drifting mines by Russia in the Black Sea, Ukraine, adhering to its international obligations, Ukraine has notified the International Maritime Organization during an extraordinary session of the Council and within the framework of IMO Legal Committee, as well as international partners through the channels the International automated service (NAVTEX).
