



PRESS RELEASE

Athens, 26 May 2026

Round-table Discussion

The environmental impact of the war on the Black Sea

On Friday 22 May 2026, the **International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS)** in cooperation with the **Research Service of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine**, organised successfully the Round-Table Discussion **“The environmental impact of the war on the Black Sea”**, held in a hybrid format, in Athens, Greece.

On the occasion of the official visit of the delegation of the Research Service of the Verkhovna Rada in Athens, the event aimed to raise awareness on the direct and indirect environmental impact of military activities and mobilise stakeholders in efforts to safeguard the ecological value and economic resilience of the Black Sea. The event gathered 50 online and onsite participants, mainly from policy and academia.

On behalf of the organisers, opening speeches were delivered by **Dr. Lesia A. VAOLEVSKA**, Head of the Research Service and **Mr. Georgios MITRAKOS**, ICBSS Director General. In his speech, Mr. Mitrakos noted that protecting the already fragile Black Sea basin requires cooperation, scientific expertise, and commitment. As he stressed, effective efforts demand listening to experts, fostering international cooperation, and developing strategies that prioritise environmental recovery alongside humanitarian and political solutions.

Keynote speaker, **Dr. Viktor KOMORIN**, Deputy Director for Science at the Ukrainian Scientific Center of Ecology of the Sea (UkrSCES), presented **‘The war threatens marine ecosystems: the impact of Russia's aggression on the Black Sea’** (2025), a report on the environmental crisis extending beyond Ukraine’s borders to affect the entire Black Sea region and waterways linking the Mediterranean Sea and the Danube. As Dr. Komorin underlined, the ongoing military activities pose an environmental pressure that affects the ecosystems both directly, through ammunition, and indirectly, through infrastructure destruction and industrial pollution. As he noted, while ten years ago projections indicated lower-risk future scenarios for the Black Sea, these have already shifted to higher-risk since 2023.

Dr. Komorin stressed the need to act now, identifying **three key priorities for action**: a) creation of an up-to-date regional environmental database to facilitate continuous monitoring, b) development of advanced tools, such as digital twins, to understand the impact, and c) science advocacy to help the decision-makers understand where action is most needed. Concluding, he

emphasised the significance of continuous cooperation among scientific communities, giving the example of the Baltic Sea countries and HELCOM that demonstrate advanced knowledge and expertise in war-related pollution.

Opening the round-table discussion on '**Enhanced Stakeholder Collaboration for Mitigation and Recovery**', **Dr. Iryna SAVELIEVA**, Acting Rector at the Odesa National Maritime University (ONMU), noted that *"the environmental crisis is not only an ecological issue, but a socioeconomic too"*. As she pointed out, the Black Sea coastal communities suffer already the consequences of the war environmental crisis, facing declined tourism, food insecurity and brain drain as a result of lost jobs. Based on research conducted by ONMU, Dr. Savelieva outlined three plausible scenarios for the Black Sea by 2035: a) frozen conflict, b) recovery without coordination, c) joint regional cooperation, with the third providing a more result-oriented response for recovery in the Black Sea basin.

From Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University, **Dr. Serhii KADURIN**, Head of the Department of Marine Geology, Hydrogeology, Engineering Geology and Paleontology, noted that among the biggest environmental challenges for the Black Sea coastline have always been coastal erosion and sedimentation, highlighting the importance of monitoring and data analysis to address such environmental challenges. As Dr. Kadurin stressed however, among the most crucial war implications is the suspension of systematic research along the Black Sea coast, that severely limits coastal protection measures and intensifies destructive coastal processes.

Concluding the session on behalf of the organisers, **Dr. Anna KONDRATOVA**, Head of the Department for Economic Development and Financial Policy of the Research Service of Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, emphasized three priorities to facilitate joint coordination actions in the Black Sea: a) cross-border cooperation of researchers to support evidence-based policies and decisions, b) stronger cooperation among institutions, i.e. parliaments, governments, academia, international organisations, and c) adoption of a common vision for the Black Sea region; a new model for sustainable regional development in the post-war period, based on Blue Economy as a key economic driver.

Key takeaways:

- The Black Sea basin faces a war-induced environmental crisis with both ecological and socioeconomic implications.
- The environmental impact of the war extends beyond the Ukrainian borders, to affect the entire Black Sea region and waterways linking the Mediterranean Sea and the Danube River.
- War-related environmental pressures aggravate existing stressors in the Black Sea. The full extent of the consequences is not entirely visible yet and is likely to affect future generations.

- Indirect implications include the weakening, or even suspension, of systematic research and analysis, as well as of monitoring systems, resulting in limited responsive measures and enforcement of safety regulations.
- A collective response that prioritises environmental recovery alongside humanitarian and political solutions is already needed.
- Priority should be given on facilitating continuous cooperation and knowledge exchange among the scientific communities within the Black Sea, as well as with other regions, such as the Baltic Sea.
- Science advocacy will support policy and decision-makers to focus efforts where are most needed.
- Institutional engagement and cross-border synergies are pivotal for effective recovery and mitigation actions to have measurable results.

In the sidelines of the event, the Director General of the International Centre for Black Sea Studies and the Head of the Research Service of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine officially signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** between the two institutions, following the online ceremony held in December 2025. The renewed collaboration reaffirms the commitment of both organisations to advancing understanding, dialogue, and regional cooperation in the Black Sea area.

Watch the video of the event, here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lx6qdWEpB0U>

For more information about the event, please visit <https://icbss.org/event/round-table-discussion-the-environmental-impact-of-the-war-on-the-black-sea/>

For more information about the ICBSS, please visit <https://icbss.org/>

About the ICBSS: The International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) was founded in 1998 as a non-profit organisation. It has since fulfilled a dual function. On the one hand, it is an independent research and training institution focusing on the wider Black Sea region. On the other hand, it is a related body of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), and its think-tank. Thus, the ICBSS pursues applied, policy-oriented research, promotes knowledge on the Black Sea region both within and outside its boundaries, and offers policy advice with the aim of fostering multilateral cooperation among the BSEC member states as well as with their international partners.