



Press Release

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## **International Community urged to Refocus on Security Sector Reform in Eastern Congo; Interventions in the Mineral Trade not Enough to Stop the Conflict in Eastern DRC**

A report released today by the multi-donor Communities and Small Scale Mining initiative, the Crisis States Research Centre at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences (LSE), and the Crisis Research Group at Ghent University, challenges recent suggestions that mineral trading in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is the main cause of the ongoing conflict. Rather, the primary reason for insecurity in the Eastern DRC is the inability of the Congolese state to control the monopoly of violence and protect its citizens. The widely reported military predation on the minerals trade is another symptom of insecurity and thus intervening in the trade is not enough to solve the crisis.

The report, researched and written by Harrison Mitchell and Nicholas Garrett of London-based specialist consultancy Resource Consulting Services urges policy makers to refocus on consolidating the security sector to solve issues of insecurity in Eastern DRC. It suggests donors, the private sector and development NGOs should engage with, formalize and empower the minerals trade, which forms the main foreign exchange earner for Eastern DRC and basis for the livelihood of over one million people. In the DRC's import-dependent economy it is imperative to utilise the full potential of the trade to contribute to peace building and poverty reduction.

The failure of the Congolese state to control the security sector has resulted in the presence of a number of armed groups, including the Rwandese FDLR-FOCA rebel group (responsible for the 1994 genocide in neighbouring Rwanda). These groups, as well as the Congolese national army (FARDC) act with impunity and cause high levels of violence, including sexual violence, and derive benefits from various parts of the economy, including the mineral trade. The slow progress of a joint MONUC-FARDC operation against the FDLR in the second quarter of 2009 and continuing human rights abuses have increased the urgency with which the international community must act to end the conflict in Eastern DRC. Though the report acknowledges deep-seated problems with the minerals trade, it refutes that the popular notion that issues of insecurity are best solved by the application of economic sticks, such as targeted sanctions and due diligence mechanisms.

Most significant of such measures is suggested legislation by the US Senate to place a due diligence requirement on electronics companies that source tin and other metals from Eastern DRC. The report examines the likely outcomes of these control measures in the context of Eastern DRC and suggests that, while they may add to the overall professionalization of the minerals trade, they will *fail* to solve the issue of insecurity in the region:

1. The control measures are presently *impossible* to implement effectively on the sub-national level, given the very weak sub-national capacity to oversee and safeguard the credibility of these schemes.

2. The schemes can target the minerals exporters in the formal economy, but rather than stopping the militarised trade, this may well drive the entire trade deeper into criminality and informality, making reform and control even harder – with further adverse consequences for the artisanal miners.

3. The gold trade, which is the principal revenue source of the FDLR, is impossible to trace and control in the context of Eastern DRC. Gold is, given its very low volume and high value nature, very easy to smuggle. It is highly unlikely that the FDLR rebel group can be separated from the gold mines under its control unless a security strategy is chosen to disband the FDLR.

The authors suggest the consolidation of the security sector must be tackled head on and complemented by a separate but complementary and sustained strategy to formalise and professionalise Eastern DRC's mining sector. In order to make this strategy sustainable, it must include investment into the development and improvement of Congolese institutions, including the establishment of accountability mechanisms and training. This combination of communicating short-term and longer-term engagement strategies will reduce military gain and allow the trade to contribute more positively to domestic and regional economic growth.

Harrison Mitchell said “Interventions in the economic domain, such as due diligence measures in the mineral trade, will not in themselves solve the issue of insecurity in the Eastern DRC. Instead actors should focus on consolidating the security sector and commit to long term development of Eastern DRC's mining sector.”

Nicholas Garrett said “Excessive one-sided advocacy around ‘conflict minerals’ is paradoxically increasingly standing in the way of conflict resolution attempts. It diverts policy makers’ attention away from the single most important need to consolidate the security sector and it undermines efforts to engage responsible private actors and development NGOs in immediate minerals trade reform measures. The risk of negative press exposure is increasingly too high for these actors, who would be crucial to successful engagement, reform and professionalization of the minerals sector.”

Professor James Putzel, Director of the CSRC said “This report demonstrates that the international community - both governments and NGOs – is involved in misguided efforts to curb violence in the Eastern DRC through curbing trade in minerals, which will only serve to wreck the livelihoods of poor people. Instead, aid to the Kinshasa government should be made conditional on it making a serious new effort to establish disciplined, effective and accountable security forces. Secondly, donors need to increase assistance directly to the improvement of agricultural production and the diversification of productive activity to create alternative possibilities for wealth creation and job creation, if ordinary people are to become less dependent on regional violence brokers”.

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