

CONCEPT NOTE

EU Delegation to the UN, Permanent Mission of Belgium, Permanent Mission of Germany, Permanent Mission of Switzerland, Permanent Mission of the United States of America

In collaboration with

OMCT, International Commission of Jurists, Amnesty International, Centre for Civil and Political Rights, Caritas Genève, CCIG, Fastenopfer, Food for the Hungry – Switzerland, Lutheran World Federation, World YWCA

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (25TH SESSION)

High-level side event in view of the forthcoming UPR of the DRC

“DRC: Breaking the Links between Natural Resources and Conflict”

Date and Venue:

21 March 2014, from 12:00 to 14:00, Room XXI, Palais de Nations, Geneva

Background:

For roughly 20 years, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has faced wars and conflicts that have caused killings of civilians and other massive human rights abuses. These crimes are still being committed by various armed groups, mostly in the Eastern part of the country. The cycle of violence and lack of security in the DRC is multi-factorial. Among the relevant factors, the illegal involvement of armed groups in exploitation and trade of natural resources has been acknowledged and well documented. Various UN Group of Experts on DRC reports¹ have established that the artisanal exploitation of minerals plays a central role in fuelling violence in the country.

Since 2004, several UN Security Council resolutions² address this phenomenon of ‘conflict minerals’ in the DRC and the country has become the main laboratory for State and private sector-led initiatives to improve certification and traceability. However, the links between natural resources and conflict in DRC still remain, and contribute consequently to the many violations of the local population’s human rights. The issue has been brought to the attention of the Human Rights Council (HRC) on several occasions, including the first review of the DRC under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2009. In April 2014, DRC will once again come under the scrutiny of the UN UPR mechanism. This creates momentum to discuss effective measures regarding ‘conflict minerals’ in this devastated

¹ See <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1533/egroup.shtml>.

² S/RES/1807 (2008), S/RES/1857 (2008), S/RES/1896(2009), S/RES/1952 (2010), S/RES/ 2021 (2011), S/RES/2078 (2012).

region. A strong response is needed from the Human Rights Council complementing the actions taken by the Security Council to ensure the protection of human rights, peace, and security in the DRC.

Focus and Objectives:

Overarching goal: In preparation for the second review of the DRC under the Universal Periodic Review, we seek to address the human rights situation in Eastern DRC by tackling the role of so-called ‘conflict minerals’ and the links with the security sector:

- Encourage the Human Rights Council to take stronger action and adopt concrete measures regarding the issue of ‘conflict minerals’ in the DRC as one of the main causes fuelling the conflict, and address the necessary security reform measures.
- Provide space for discussion and advocacy to ensure that the issue of ‘conflict minerals’, including its links to security issues, and its impact on the enjoyment of human rights of the local population will be subject to specific recommendations by Member States during the upcoming UPR.

Panellists:

Moderator: H.E. Mr. Bertrand de Crombrugghe, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Mission of Belgium

1. Ms. Mary Robinson, UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region of Africa
2. Ms. Signe Ratso, Director, Directorate Trade Strategy and Analysis, Market Access (DG Trade, European Commission)
3. Ms. Judith Sargentini, Member of the European Parliament
4. Mgr. Fridolin Ambongo, President, Episcopal Commission on Natural Resources (CERN)
5. Ms. Justine Masika Bihamba, Coordinator, Synergy of Women for Victims of Sexual Violence (SFVS)

For further information please contact:

Francesca Restifo, Franciscans International f.restifo@fiop.org