



# NSDS HUB

NATO STRATEGIC DIRECTION SOUTH

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## NSD-S Hub Webinar

### Conflict Minerals: Tendencies and Developments



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## ACRONYMS

AMDC	African Minerals Development Center
AMGF	African Minerals Governance Framework
AMV	African Mining Vision
ASM	Artisanal and Small-scale Mining
AU	African Union
BGR	German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
IGOs	International Governmental Organizations
MONUSCO	UN Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organization
NSD-S	NATO Strategic Direction– South HUB
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
RMI	Responsible Mineral Initiative

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*If well managed, Africa's mineral endowments can lift the continent out of poverty and catapult it to growth, development and prosperity for all (African Mining Vision, adopted by AU, 2009)*

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of October, NSD-S Hub and Three Stones International conducted a live video panel with nine global and local Conflict Minerals experts calling in from: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. Additional participants called in from: Brussels, Germany, Italy and Rwanda.

The video panel was supplemented by the participants' written advance responses to four questions. Concurrently, a chat forum was open for a week's time to garner additional perspectives from 30 participants, the vast majority from Africa.

This diverse panel of experts, advocates and practitioners discussed the trends and developments of conflict minerals and metals in Africa spanning:

- Linkages to human rights violations
- Funding of local and regional armed groups and terrorist networks
- Distortion of local economies and the growth of the informal sector
- Role of NATO

The region of the Great Lakes, and the Democratic Republic of Congo in particular, are affected by the Conflict Minerals that perpetuates underdevelopment, exacerbates armed conflicts, funds rebel armed groups, and maintains high levels of human rights violations. The nexus between minerals and conflicts is not well analyzed. Therefore, local African experts were sought by to help contextualize this nexus while exchanging views on how NATO can better contribute to security and stability.

Participants agreed that 3TG<sup>1</sup> extraction and the supply chain must be better regulated and managed in an efficient and responsible way, at a local, national, regional and global level. International actors, including NATO, can play a crucial role to defend the human rights of local communities; enforce regulations; halt armed groups involvement in mining; improve the economic development of Africa against exploitation; establish partnerships; and bring peace to the countries affected by conflicts. The future rise in the market demand for 3TG minerals will only increase exploration and extraction which will spur proceeds from its sale either to fund national development and local growth or propel armed conflicts, violate human rights and increase corruption, illegality and poverty.

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<sup>1</sup> The four most commonly mined Conflict Minerals are known as 3TGs, from their initials, are cassiterite (for tin), wolframite (for tungsten), coltan (for tantalum), and gold ore.

## INTRODUCTION

The supply chain of some minerals, which are high in global demand due to their essential role in the electronics industry, funds armed groups and intensifies conflicts and human rights violations. The four most commonly mined “Conflict Minerals”<sup>2</sup> (known as 3TGs, from their initials) are cassiterite (for tin), wolframite (for tungsten), coltan (for tantalum), and gold ore.

Due to the political, economic and security situation in the Great Lakes region of Africa, there is a link between armed conflicts and 3TG mining activities and supply chain. The exploitation of natural resources and the militarization of mining sites have led to serious human rights abuses and widespread illegal activities. Current regional and global regulatory systems have tried to devise a transparent, sustainable and responsible (conflict-free) trading environment of 3TG. However, ineffective institutions do not enforce them and foreign companies and the informal local Artisanal and Small-scale Mining (ASM) often do not adhere.

The abundance and extraction of 3TG in Africa creates a “Resource Curse,” caused when a country has many natural resources but poor economic growth, development and infrastructure as its economy depends on the exploitation of these resources<sup>3</sup>. This makes it difficult for the countries and region to economically diversify and develop a sustainable economy to help counter some of the highest inequalities in the world. 3TG extraction, refinement and transportation exacerbates conflict, disrupts the economy and perpetuates human rights violations inclusive of slave-like conditions, abundant sexual violence, and forced labor of people, in particular children. Also, the interest of new great powers in the resources exploitation in Africa, especially Russia<sup>4</sup> and China<sup>5</sup>, increased in recent years the strategic and geopolitical competition with Western powers on the continent, with analysts speaking about a “New Scramble for Africa”<sup>6</sup>.

These mineral, directly or indirectly, often benefit armed groups and perpetrate civil wars in the extracting countries. Global Witness, an NGO created in 1993 to break the links between natural resource exploitation, conflict, poverty, corruption, and human rights abuses worldwide, defines Conflict Resources as “natural resources whose systematic exploitation and trade in a context of conflict contribute to, benefit from or result in the commission of serious violations of human rights, violations of international humanitarian law or violations amounting to crimes under international law”. In the past, the international community spoke about “conflict diamonds”, referring to the extraction of diamonds in Africa that were financing rebellions in Angola and Sierra Leone. But today, the shift is from “blood diamonds to blood computers”.

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<sup>2</sup> Global Witness, an NGO created in 1993 to break the link between natural resource, conflict, poverty, and human rights abuses worldwide, defines Conflict Resources as “natural resources whose systematic exploitation and trade in a context of conflict contribute to, benefit from or result in the commission of serious violations of human rights, violations of international humanitarian law or violations amounting to crimes under international [law](#)”.

<sup>3</sup> Ross, Michael, “What Have We Learned about the Resource Curse?” Annual Rev. of Pol Sc. 18 239–259, May 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Russia started to [counter China and US presence in Africa](#) with new [Summits for security and development in Africa](#).

<sup>5</sup> China has not only the [Belt and Road Initiative](#) but, like Russia, holds regular [Forums for cooperation with Africa](#).

<sup>6</sup> See on this also: “[Competition for African resources and the role of external actors](#)”, NSD-S Hub, October 2019.

## MINING AND CONFLICTS IN AFRICA AND DRC

*Children as young as six are among those risking their lives amid toxic dust to mine cobalt for the world's big electronics firms: is your phone tainted by the misery of the 35,000 children in Congo's mines? (Siddharth Kara, Harvard Kennedy School of Government, 2018)*

Africa is extremely rich in natural resources and the deposits are so abundant that many have yet to be discovered. Ore resources, from which important metals are extracted, are abundant on the continent. But, they are also connected to foreign exploitation, support to local corrupted institutions, funding of rebel groups and increased violence.

The DRC, specifically, is extremely rich in gold, diamonds, copper, uranium, coltan and other precious minerals from which the 3T metals and cobalt are extracted. For example, DRC (where the mining sector makes up 90% of its exports) has 64% of the Earth's coltan, and around 60% of the world's supply of cobalt. The majority is mined in the "copper belt" of the south-eastern provinces of DRC, the Katanga Region. Like the 3T, Cobalt is important as it is found in every lithium-ion rechargeable battery– from smartphones to laptops to electric vehicles and super alloys to manufacture jet engines, gas turbines and magnetic steel. According to some international law firms, cobalt should be added to the 3TG list as one of the new "conflict minerals", not only for supporting conflicts in the region but for the human rights violations related with its mining and refining.

Africa has the most on-going conflicts of any continent. The DRC, and in particular its regions of mining, have been tormented by many conflicts in the last 20 years, not only with the civil war (the First and Second Congo Wars) that killed five million people between 1996 and 2003, but for constant regional conflicts among different armed groups or between them and the state. These include but are not limited to the Kivu conflict that is ongoing since 2004; the Ituri conflict, ongoing since 1999; and the Allied Democratic Forces of Uganda Insurgency, ongoing since 1995. There is clear relationship between natural resources extraction and conflicts around the world<sup>7</sup>. When it comes to Conflict Minerals, DRC is ground zero.

Congolese armed forces are engaged, with the support of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), in several intra-state armed conflicts. The number of rebel groups in Congo is difficult to define, somewhere between 70 to 120, with a total of more than 20,000 fighters, active in the DRC's east, many of them formed in order to take control of land where minerals are found. The extraction of these specific minerals worsens conflicts in DRC. First, it funds the armed groups and second there is an increase in human rights violations inclusive of slave-like conditions and abundant sexual violence. Data shows that over 50% of the mines in the eastern DRC were controlled by armed groups, who demanded taxes, bribes or other payments for the minerals extracted. Armed groups extract revenues without necessarily directly managing mines. Human Rights Watch reported of financial and logistical support provided by the mining company AngloGold Ashanti in 2003-2004 to the "Nationalist and Integrationist Front", a rebel group operating in Ituri in Eastern DRC.

The forced labor of people, especially children, is rampant. According to recent research, there are more than 255,000 *creuseurs* (diggers) mining cobalt in DRC, of which 35,000 are children. Also, Gender Based Violence is prevalent in Conflict Minerals zones, with mining-related sexual violence unfortunately very common.

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<sup>7</sup> Ross, Michael, "How Do Natural Resources Influence Civil War? Evidence from Thirteen Cases", International Organization, 2004.

A major problem in mining minerals in conflict zones is that extraction process is unregulated. In a recent policy brief on Artisanal and Small Scale Mining (ASM), the African Minerals Development Center (AMDC) explains how “the informal nature of ASM made miners and communities close to ASM sites more vulnerable to armed groups”. According to Verisk Maplecroft, a global risk research firm, child labor and other human rights abuses are less likely with international mining firms due to their application of best practice in accordance with international standards. Conversely, other data shows mining-induced violence is mainly correlated with foreign ownership, even if foreign companies that comply with corporate social responsibility practices are associated with less violence. Also, according to some scholars, even the international campaign against Conflict Minerals and its implementation “on the ground” has disrupted ASM as transnational reforms have jeopardized the ASM sector, which is typically informal. In part, this might result from the tension between the state and larger companies operating in DRC. Again, according to Verisk Maplecroft, recent fiscal changes to DRC’s new mining code put the mining jurisdictions in the highest risk category in the Resource Nationalism Index, making it more difficult for the future of international mining firms in countries that want to nationalize mines.

The complexity of the situation shows that the governance and the institutional control over resource mining is very important. Unfortunately, DRC, and central African countries in general, according to the webinar participants have weak and often corrupted institutions that make it difficult to control the violation of human rights or the involvement of armed groups in the mining industry. Therefore, the international community has a role in influencing these states and the international companies to defend the human rights of the people involved.



## EXTERNAL ACTORS AND REGULATIONS ON CONFLICT MINERALS

*The OECD recommends (...) to actively promote the observance of the Guidance by companies (...) with the aim of ensuring that they respect human rights, avoid contributing to conflict and successfully contribute to sustainable, equitable and effective development (OECD Council on Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas, 2012)*

To curb the vicious cycle of mineral extraction/metal refining and the conflicts fueled by them, international actors, especially from importing countries, devised regulations. However, international regulations, unfortunately, have proven difficult to apply especially with corrupted regimes and weak states that avoid the pressure of the international community.

Ten years ago, the AU adopted the African Mining Vision (AMV) to ensure minerals contributed to the continent's economic and structural transformation and improves the governance of Africa's mineral sector. In 2011, the AU also created AMDC to coordinate the implementation of the AMV. Finally, in 2018, the AU launched the African Minerals Governance Framework (AMGF) as a monitoring tool to determine countries' progress with regard to AMV. To be noted the Framework didn't include monitoring the supply chain of Conflict Minerals. Thus, the AU doesn't have a common regulation yet to control the Conflict Minerals exploitation and is not yet clear on the definition and importance of Conflict Minerals<sup>8</sup>. At a regional level, the situation looks better. The Great Lakes Region, the intergovernmental organization "International Conference on the Great Lakes Region" developed six important tools inside the "Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources". These tools include: the implementation of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)<sup>9</sup>; the ASM formalization; the harmonization of national legislations; the creation of a regional database; a mechanism to protect whistleblowers; and finally a Regional Certification Mechanism specifically on 3TG minerals, to provide for sustainable conflict-free mineral chains<sup>10</sup>. But again, from the existence of regulations to their application, there is a long path.

The internationally recognized Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) "Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas", since its adoption in May 2011, has become the leading industry standard and has been followed by many other government regulations (in US, EU, China etc.). The Guidance affirms that businesses and corporations have a responsibility to carry out "due diligence" on their mineral supply chains, being able to trace minerals back to the smelters and refiners and obliging them to publish their assessments<sup>11</sup>. Also, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, adopted in June 2011 (implementing the UN "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework of 2008), is a fundamental reference for authoritative global standard to prevent human rights violations related to business activity. Referring specifically to the respect of human rights in

<sup>8</sup> The [AMDC](#) argues for example that "diamonds are not listed amongst conflict minerals but influenced civil wars, displaced people, and funded armed conflicts in Africa for many years...and research shows the strong implication of gold compared to the 3Ts towards conflict-financing in parts of the Great Lakes region".

<sup>9</sup> Recently the [Carter Center congratulated the DRC](#) because EITI declared that DRC made "significant progress" in improving the extracting sector.

<sup>10</sup> The RCM comprises: (1) Mine Site Inspection and Certification; (2) Mineral Chain of Custody (CoC) Tracking; (3) Mineral Export and Certification; (4) Mineral Tracking Database; (5) Third Party Audits (TPA) and (6) the Independent Mineral Chain Auditor (IMCA).

<sup>11</sup> OECD developed specifically 5 steps: establish company management systems, identify and assess risks in the supply chain, design and implement a strategy to respond to risks, carry out independent third-party audit of supply chain due diligence and report annually on it.



conflict affected areas, the UN Guiding Principles state, “Because the risk of gross human rights abuses is heightened in conflict affected areas, states should help ensure that business enterprises operating in those contexts are not involved with such abuses”.

The EU is also developing new regulations. For example, in 2017, the EU started an Action Program for the Great Lakes region, called “Promoting responsible supply chain in the area of conflict minerals (3TG)”<sup>12</sup> to focus on the sustainable development of local ASM. Nevertheless, the lack of development on the ground caused by little visible government spending of mineral wealth does not provide incentives for miners to formalize (or be persuaded to pay taxes). Most importantly, since May 2017, the EU has a “Conflict Minerals Regulation” that will come into full force on 1 January 2021. This new law means that the EU importers of these minerals need to comply with, and report on, supply chain due diligence obligations if the minerals originate (even potentially) from conflict-affected areas. The European regulation has been inspired by the US Dodd-Frank Act (2010, entered into force in 2014) which requires US listed companies to disclose whether their products contained any 3TG from the DRC region - and perform due diligence. In this Act, the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) was mandated to create rules that addressed potential Conflict Minerals and to assess whether materials originating in or near DRC were benefiting armed groups in the area.

China also made efforts to address conflict minerals establishing; the Chinese Due Diligence Guidelines for Responsible Mineral Supply Chains, based on the OECD Guidance, were adopted in December 2015. The Chinese regulations provide guidance to companies “to identify, prevent and mitigate their risks of directly or indirectly contributing to conflict, serious human rights abuses and risks of serious misconduct”. Finally the London Metal Exchange will ban suppliers of metals that are not responsibly sourced by 2025.

Besides governments, some private companies also started to develop their own system to trace the source of minerals. The “Responsible Mineral Initiative” (RMI) established by the Responsible Business Alliance, with 380 member companies, is one of the most utilized resources for addressing responsible mineral sourcing inclusive with a code of conduct and several tools like the Responsible Minerals Assurance Process. Other companies started new systems, like RCS Global for example, a company in Berlin that audits supply chains. RCS recently created a new tool at Societe Miniere de Bisunzu’s mine near Rubaya in DRC. The tool utilizes GPS and blockchain technology to create a tamper-proof record, scanning bar codes of the products and uploading data on their origin. The problem is that the funding for this comes mostly from the local members including miners, smelters and traders, while the big multinationals have not yet contributed. In this sense, the pressure by the international mining community could have a significant impact.

There are several regulations and procedures in place around the world to block the funding of armed groups and the inhumane practices caused by unregulated or illegal minerals exploitation. But, their application is not yet realized and many gaps persist. In 2016, for example, Amnesty International compiled a report disclosing that seven of the world’s leading electric vehicle manufacturers failed to carry out due diligence in line with OECD guidance over their cobalt supply chain. Other data revealed that in 2016 almost 80% of corporations reporting to US SEC were unable to determine even the country of origin of such materials. And, very few were able to certify themselves “conflict-free”. Global Witness recently demonstrated that companies exporting and trading minerals from the African Great Lakes region have

<sup>12</sup> The program has 10 million Euro in support to the EU Conflict Minerals Regulation (2017/8212) following also UN SDGs n. 8 “Decent Work and Economic Growth”, 10 “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions” and 12 “Responsible Consumption and Production”. The program promotes the progressive formalization of the ASM sector with the “European Partnership for Responsible Minerals”, a partnership between the local ASM operators and other private operators in the supply chain, with participation and involvement of donors, national governments and civil society.

made some progress on responsible sourcing though must do more: less than half of companies officially recorded as exporting minerals in 2015 from eastern DRC; Rwanda and Uganda published due diligence reports for that year. As discussed in the recent annual conference of RMI, companies' due diligence systems need to meet new expectations for responsible mineral production and sourcing. It is important to gauge how practices are translated into business and how companies work with customers and suppliers to address challenges.

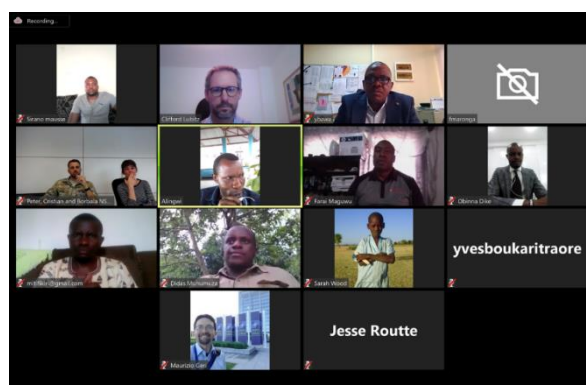
How to make these international and regional regulations binding to states and companies and how to monitor the processes to avoid corruption and violations remains a challenge. As responsible sourcing is becoming internationally expected by companies and states that are involved in supply chain, the role of the international community will continue to grow. And also how to make more equal access to resources for the local communities and economies.

## ANALYSIS

On 29 October 2019, NSD-S Hub and Three Stones International facilitated a video panel. Experts, practitioners, and advocates from seven African countries assembled to discuss issues related to Conflict Minerals and the possible role of NATO to address the challenges. The panel discussion was supplemented by the participants' written advance responses to four questions. Concurrently, a chat forum platform was open for one week to garner additional perspectives.

The participants explored four main questions for the webinar:

- 1) **What impact does 3TG extraction have on the Great Lakes local regional economies?**
- 2) **The current working environment in the mines and possible future human rights changes have an important impact on socioeconomic conditions, especially for those working in small scale and artisanal mining. How is it possible to improve these conditions and fight the illegal activities connected to the conflict minerals?**
- 3) **What can be done differently by industry extracting 3TG to better respect human rights and communities?**
- 4) **How can NATO counter the impacts of conflict minerals on the stability and progress of the region and help prevent conflict minerals funding local and regional armed groups and terrorist networks?**



Regarding the first question, participants stated the significance of the impact of 3TG extraction on the local communities, with both positive and negative effects. Positively, a significant number of the local workforce is directly impacted by 3TG extraction in the Great Lakes region, either by large mining corporations or ASM<sup>13</sup>. Also, entrepreneurship efforts, community development activities, and public-private partnerships that have been established are considered positive results when factoring the entire supply chain of 3TG.

<sup>13</sup> For example, according to BGR, THE German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources, 18% of the Congolese population depend on ASM of diamonds, 3TGs and other minerals. An estimated 2 million people are directly involved and the minor sector represent 56% of its GDP and 77% of its total exports. In Rwanda, the ASM sector employs 35,000 miners in total, with more than 200,000 livelihoods dependent (2% of the population). The sector represents the most important Rwandan export product.

Conversely, participants discussed how the 3TG supply chain has created “Conflict Economies,” with considerable human and financial resources allocated to conflicts over land and resource access. Furthermore, 3TG extraction produces an illicit financial system, which undermines a legitimate supply chain flow of revenue and goods. Finally, most mining revenue doesn’t stay local and primarily benefits international corporations and transit/processing countries. Thus, local economies, and the countries where the minerals are mined, do not have long-term financial benefits, sustainable growth and progress, and therefore have to deal with perpetual conflict and human rights violations caused by the mines.

On the second point, to improve the socioeconomic conditions, human rights abuses, violence and underdevelopment caused by Conflict Minerals, participants stated the two key components that need to be addressed are to 1) enhance regulations and 2) promote good governance. Participants generally agreed that the extraction and supply chain must be better regulated and managed in a more efficient and responsible way, starting at local, national, regional and then global levels. The regulations should be accompanied by good governance inclusive of monitoring gaps and positive impacts. Progress should be openly disseminating to the local communities and governments. To achieve this, the link between governments and civil society needs to strengthen; thinking needs to transition from short to long-term gains regarding land and resource use; partnerships among stakeholders and communities need to form for improved oversight; and investments in new technologies and mining safety needs to be enforced. To address the root causes of conflicts, countries should promote peacebuilding and conflict resolution programs. This can be done by investing in economic growth programs which operate through a human rights lens to increase the cooperation between institutions and civil society and the relationship between local and regional-international actors. To break the conflict-extraction nexus, State authorities need to take back control of the lands under rebel groups. However, this would require considerable support including addressing the cross-border control of illegal trafficking and the provision of opportunities to ex-combatants, including investments into Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs. Pact (Development organization that works in 40 countries) provided an example of an effective DDR initiative which benefited the local mining industry and provided employment to ex-combatants. Stronger institutions, stricter regulations and ways to provide ex-combatants with alternative employment are needed in the Great Lakes region to curb the vicious cycle of Conflict Minerals where extraction increases conflicts and conflicts condition extraction.

In answer to the third question, participants argued that industries should improve their respect for regulations and their own internal governance. For example, industries should clean their supply chain and enforce international and regional certification systems (following the likes of OECD Due Diligence Guidance) to verify origin, due diligence and ethical quality of mineral extraction, production and trade. Also, there needs to be better controls on financial flows. This would need to be done in consultation with the banking sector. From a contractual standpoint, improvements in transparency in the disclosure of commercial contracts for mining access need to be established. For better governance, the industries should take improved ownership of their in-country operations and address internal corruption and institutionalize and apply global best practices inclusive of possibly hiring expertise in human rights, international law, community developments etc. Currently, rent seeking behaviors<sup>14</sup> is pervasive in the mining industry. As such, valuable resources to communities and the resource-rich country, exit the region. To help counter this, mining industries should be expected to invest in local economies and coordinate with local civil society organizations. Some examples could include: reduce environmental impact of the mining techniques and require companies to invest in land repurposing; invest in local infrastructure including refining minerals locally instead of exporting in the raw form and establishing schools and medical care for mining workers and their children. As well, companies should be held accountable to support cross-border governance

<sup>14</sup> [Rent Seeking Behavior](#) is seeking to increase one’s share of existing wealth without creating new wealth, as economic wealth obtained through shrewd or potentially manipulative use of resources.

programs and compensate victims of human rights abuses and communities impacted by environmental harm. In short, it was felt the mining industries should take on more responsibility as committed stakeholders for the economic development of the region.

Lastly, participants agreed that international actors could play a crucial role to defend the human rights of local communities; block rebel armed groups' hands in the 3TG supply chain; improve the economic development of the region; and bring peace to the countries affected by conflicts funded by the 3TG revenues. But, first, NATO needs to continue to better understand the realities on the ground. To do this, participants mentioned NATO could include relevant internal leadership in the discussions, enable a more reciprocal exchange with experts, host additional technical working groups, or even "hotlines" for real time information exchange with civil society in Africa. Gaining knowledge based on extensive contact with local, national and regional experts, practitioners, advocates and industry representatives will provide a more contextualized understanding. NATO could work more with governments and the AU (and other regional efforts), using its technological resources and training military and local police to fight against rebel groups, intercept small arms shipments and help in the cross-border 3TG control. A Kialo participant wrote, *"International partners like NATO can greatly help through devising partnerships and collaborations with actors in the Great Lakes region to ensure proper enforcement of various protocols and frameworks like the ICGLR<sup>15</sup> traceability mechanism among others to ensure compliance and protection of value for the benefit of the majority. The partnerships should also consider security management systems with a focus on de-linking exploitation of 3TG from the conflicts on the ground."* As an influential voice representing 29 NATO member countries, NATO could lobby and advocate for more regulations at an international, regional and local level. Furthermore, to better predict and prevent instability, NATO could support civil society and vulnerable groups, working on peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities as well as provide training in human and environmental rights. Being an active partner and advocate will strengthen relationships and NATO's reputation in the region.

Participants encouraged NATO and NATO countries to take action especially given the significant impact Conflict Minerals has had on the people, communities and economies of the countries and region. This should include upholding and enforcing regulations on global mining industries and sanctioning them or corrupt individuals that do not respect due diligence procedures and/or, are involved in illegal trafficking or money laundering. NATO nations, with their technical and civil society partners, could support the Great Lakes Region with the aim of increasing transparency in the sector, also reinforcing work by organizations such as the German Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR), in Burundi, Rwanda, and DRC.

A participant stated, *"This discussion is very timely and has also been happening for two and half decades... It is not only an African problem, or a state problem, it is a global problem. The suffering, human casualties, trillions lost in revenues globally and in billions for those governments is a mess."* Experts, practitioners and advocates from the Great Lakes region have openly shared their concerns and perspectives but it is up to the affected African countries, the International community, and the corporations that extract and use the minerals as well as the end users to each do their part to address the complex challenges posed by Conflict Minerals.

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<sup>15</sup> Mineral tracking & Certification Scheme made by a range of African countries and Canada.

## CONCLUSION

According to the participants NATO could support a positive development within the field by organizing conferences and host working groups on Conflict Minerals, including with NATO COE on Energy Security or other NATO offices, to sensitize on the topic. These events would show the commitment with senior leadership and relevant internal experts, and the genuine interest in order to increase trust and foster mutual partnerships.

NATO could work with AU, or the regional AU organizations on capacity building programs, following NATO best practices on building integrity, child protection, human rights protections and others, which could reduce human rights violations in the sector.

NATO could work with African governments by training local security forces to expand their capacities to enforce demilitarized mineral zones. NATO could also conduct training to local security forces in how to counter illegal cross-border trafficking of minerals, weapons and small arms, using the latest technologies.

NATO Nations could increase the pressure on the international corporations to push the companies to be freer from exploitation, cruelty, slavery, and child labor, as well as being “conflict-free”.

NATO Nations could work within their own law framework to hold accountable the large corporations for their sub-contractors transgressions, and cooperate with their own technical organizations and NGOs to get more information and register these transgressions.

NATO Nations could increase the awareness between their Bi-Lateral partners of EU Regulation (EU) 2017/821 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 and The Dodd Franks ACT Section 1502 on Conflict Minerals, to make sure all mineral supply chains in the region become “conflict-free” resources.

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