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Global Witness urges governments to act on findings of UN experts' report on the mineral trade in eastern Congo

UN member states should take strong action in response to new information about companies and individuals who trade in minerals from areas of the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) controlled by armed groups, Global Witness said today.

The latest report from the Group of Experts was submitted to the UN Security Council last week, and subsequently leaked to a number of news organisations. Due to be officially published in December 2009, the report provides new and detailed evidence of the international mineral trading networks which Congolese armed groups rely on as a major source of finance.

Mineral processors Thailand Smelting and Refining Company (THAISARCO) -- part of the British metals group AMC -- and Malaysian Smelting Corporation (MSC) are among the companies cited, once again, by the Group of Experts as sourcing minerals from suppliers who have links with some of the most violent armed groups.

"AMC and MSC are among the persistent offenders," said Global Witness Campaigns Director Gavin Hayman. "They have been named time and time again in reports by the Group of Experts and Global Witness, yet continue to use suppliers and middlemen who buy from mines controlled by armed groups."

The armed groups involved in the illicit mineral trade include the predominantly Rwandan Hutu *Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda* (FDLR), some of whose leaders allegedly participated in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, and the Tutsi-led *Congrès national pour la défense du peuple* (CNDP). Despite officially joining the Congolese national army in early 2009, the CNDP maintains many of its former command structures, and has extended its control over mining areas since its forces became integrated into the army. As part of the UN-backed Operation Kimia II, Congolese army units headed by former CNDP commanders have taken over and exploited mining sites previously occupied by the FDLR.

Global Witness is calling on UN member states to push for companies and individuals named in the Group of Experts' successive reports in connection with their purchases of conflict minerals to be included on the UN sanctions list. Sanctions should also be imposed on the directors of the main Congolese mineral exporters, known as *comptoirs*, cited in the report.

"There has been a shocking lack of action by member states to cut off the finance which armed groups derive from the mineral trade", said Gavin Hayman. "To date, no companies, mineral traders or processors have been put on the UN sanctions list, despite abundant evidence that their activities are contributing to keeping armed groups alive. The damning evidence in the latest Group of Experts report should now oblige states to act."

Global Witness is especially urging states where named companies or individuals are domiciled to hold these operators to account. "The UK is a case in point", said Gavin Hayman. "It is extraordinary that the UK government has still not taken any effective measures against the British companies and UK nationals involved in this trade. The new Experts' report should trigger immediate action."

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Notes to editors

- For further information on the links between the mineral trade and the conflict in eastern DRC, see Global Witness report "*Faced with a gun, what can you do? War and the militarisation of mining in eastern Congo*" (July 2009) and press release "Bisie killings show minerals at heart of Congo conflict" (18 August 2009), both available at www.globalwitness.org
- The UN sanctions system on the DRC provides for targeted sanctions, in the form of a travel ban and assets freeze, against individuals who violate the arms embargo, as well as those who support armed groups through the illicit trade of natural resources. To date, this provision on natural resources, which formed part of UN Security Council Resolution 1857 (2008) adopted in December 2008, has not been implemented.

Global Witness investigates and campaigns to prevent natural resource-related conflict and corruption and associated environmental and human rights abuses