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STATEMENT: NGOs Welcome the Congo Conflict Minerals Act of 2009

WASHINGTON, D.C., and LONDON – Enough, the anti-genocide project at the Center for American Progress, and Global Witness, a campaign to halt the abusive exploitation of natural resources, today released the following joint statement regarding U.S. Senate Bill S. 819, the Congo Conflict Minerals Act of 2009:

We welcome the introduction of the Congo Conflict Minerals Act of 2009 in the United States Senate. Senators Brownback, Durbin, and Feingold, the original co-sponsors of the bill, have demonstrated important leadership and welcome dedication to the cause of peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and should be congratulated for their efforts. This bill would bring the resources of the U.S. government to bear on a critical driver of war in eastern Congo: the multi-million dollar trade in conflict minerals.

Conflict minerals—cassiterite (tin ore), gold, coltan and wolframite (a source of tungsten) that are used in electronic devices such as cell phones and laptops—are a major source of funding for armed groups in eastern Congo, including the Congolese national army and an array of rebel groups who regularly commit horrific atrocities against civilians. If passed, this bill would provide the authority and direction for the United States government to help ensure that the mineral trade stops contributing to human rights violations, including killings of unarmed civilians and sexual violence, while at the same time developing mechanisms to allow the Congolese people to benefit from these resources.

This bill is an important first step, and we strongly recommend that members of the House incorporate even stronger enforcement provisions when a House version of this bill is introduced.

What would this bill do?

The bill directs the State Department to support multilateral and U.S. government efforts to break the link between the trade in minerals and armed conflict in eastern Congo. Specific measures include:

- *support for further investigations by the UN Group of Experts on Congo;*
- *mapping of which armed groups control key mines in eastern Congo;*
- *development of a U.S. government strategy to address conflict minerals;*
- *inclusion of information on the negative impact of mineral exploitation and trade on human rights in Congo in the annual human rights reports; and,*
- *guidance for companies to exercise due diligence.*

In a further positive direction, the bill demands greater transparency and accountability from companies: all companies listed on U.S. stock exchanges – including major electronics companies which are among the largest end-buyers of some of these minerals would have to disclose the origin of their supplies to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. For those minerals coming from Congo or neighboring countries, companies would need to disclose the precise mine of origin. Finally, the bill calls for expanded U.S. efforts to improve conditions and livelihoods for communities in eastern Congo who are dependent upon mining.

What improvements are needed?

This bill is an important step in the right direction, but there are a number of critical details that should be addressed to ensure its effectiveness. Companies should be required to have an independent audit conducted of their supply chains in order to demonstrate the chain of custody through which the metals passed and ensure that armed groups were not involved. The bill should also require as complete and truthful disclosure as possible, and this information must be made accessible to investors and the wider public. The mine-of-origin disclosure requirements should be effectively enforced through random government spot checks and civil and criminal penalties should apply for those that fail to comply. The SEC should be required to work collaboratively with other government agencies, such as the Department of Homeland Security, to enforce these provisions.

We encourage concerned members of the public to contact their representatives and demand that they act to help ensure our consumer electronics are conflict free.

Visit the Enough Project's blog, [Enough Said](#), for updates on this issue.

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The [Center for American Progress](#) is a nonpartisan research and educational institute dedicated to promoting a strong, just and free America that ensures opportunity for all. We believe that Americans are bound together by a common commitment to these values and we aspire to ensure that our national policies reflect these values. [Enough](#) is a project of the Center for American Progress to end genocide and crimes against humanity. Founded in 2007, Enough focuses on crises in Sudan, Chad, eastern Congo, northern Uganda, Somalia, and Zimbabwe. Enough's strategy papers and briefings provide sharp field analysis and targeted policy recommendations based on a "3P" crisis response strategy: promoting durable peace, providing civilian protection, and punishing perpetrators of atrocities. Enough works with concerned citizens, advocates, and policy makers to prevent, mitigate, and resolve these crises.

Global Witness exposes the corrupt exploitation of natural resources and international trade systems, to drive campaigns that end impunity, resource-linked conflict, and human rights and environmental abuses. Global Witness was co-nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 for its work to combat the trade in conflict diamonds. In 2007 Global Witness won the Center for Global Development/Foreign Policy Magazine Commitment to Development Award. www.globalwitness.org