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Donors must hold Rwandan government to account for supporting new rebellion in eastern Congo

Rwanda's two main donors, the United Kingdom and United States, must use their influence to end Kigali's support of armed groups operating in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Global Witness said today.

A leaked UN document seen by Global Witness reveals how the Rwandan government has breached international sanctions by providing soldiers, weapons, ammunition and financial support to a new rebellion in eastern DRC.

The briefing is a confidential annex to a new report by the UN's Group of Experts. It is based on official documents, intercepts of radio communications, eye-witness accounts and photographs that show how Rwandan officials directly facilitated the creation of a new revolt, known as the M23, against Congo's government. The rebellion's most high-ranking commander is notorious warlord General Bosco Ntaganda, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court on war crimes charges.

"The UK and US governments are the two largest bilateral donors to Rwanda, committing over US\$350 million of tax-payers' money to the country in 2011. This gives them significant influence and in cases like this they have a responsibility to use it," said Sophia Pickles, a Campaigner at Global Witness. "They cannot stand by and watch a regime they bankroll orchestrating a new war in Congo. The lives of thousands of Congolese civilians, as well as the stability of the region, are on the line."

International donors have long shown a reluctance to challenge Kigali over its predatory role in the DRC. The Congolese government has publicly stated that the US government has sought to delay the publication of the new UN report annex – a claim also made to Global Witness by some others in the diplomatic community. The United States, meanwhile, has said that it wanted to give the Rwandan government time to respond.

One of the most disturbing aspects of the UN report annex findings is how the M23 insurgency enjoys direct support from senior levels of the Rwandan government. Officials named include the Rwandan Minister of Defence, General James Kabarebe, and the country's Chief of Defence staff, General Charles Kayonga. The annex details how Kabarebe, Kayonga and others breached international sanctions by providing sustained political and military support to the rebels, whose leader, General Ntaganda, is subject to an asset freeze and a travel ban imposed by the UN Security Council.

Global Witness has gathered evidence that in the months leading to the rebellion, General Ntaganda and other senior members of the M23 amassed huge sums of money through the trade in conflict minerals. Ntaganda has personally made millions of dollars by smuggling Congolese coltan and tin ore across the border into Rwanda through property he owns in the city of Goma. From there the minerals have been marketed internationally as Rwandan goods – while the authorities in Kigali have turned a blind eye.

"The Rwandan government has been orchestrating armed violence in Congo for political and economic gain for over a decade, causing countless deaths and massive displacement of ordinary Congolese in the process," said Pickles. "The increasingly flimsy denials have been sustained only by international apathy. It is time Rwanda's international backers called time on this game. Will the UK and the US now step up?"

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Notes to editors:

1. Over the past decade UN investigators and NGOs reports have published detailed evidence of grave human rights abuses committed by Rwandan forces occupying Congolese territory, as well as Rwandan pillage of its neighbour's natural resource wealth, See for example the 2010 UN Mapping Report that can be downloaded from

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?Cr1=congo&NewsID=36306&Cr=democratic>. See also UN DRC Group of Expert reports available at <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1533/egroup.shtml>.

2. Global Witness' most recent report on eastern DRC, *Coming Clean – How supply chain controls can stop Congo's minerals trade fuelling conflict*, can be downloaded from <http://www.globalwitness.org/library/renewed-fighting-eastern-congo-highlights-urgent-need-end-conflict-minerals-trade>. The report highlights the role and responsibilities of the Congolese government, as well as those of companies and the governments of neighbouring countries, with regards to the conflict minerals trade, and presents a series of detailed recommendations.

3. The UK has committed £75 million to Rwanda for 2012. Figures for UK development assistance commitments to Rwanda between 2011 and 2012 are available at <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/op/rwanda-2011.pdf>. Figures for US development assistance to Rwanda in 2012 are not currently available on the USAID website. In 2011 the US requested over US\$240 million in foreign assistance appropriations to Rwanda. A breakdown of US spending in Rwanda is available at http://transition.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/rwanda/rwanda_fs.pdf.

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