INVITATION

Study Day

Beyond ‘Conflict Minerals’: Artisanal Mining As Local Livelihood?

4 March 2015

Egmont Institute

Room Orange

(Entrance: 8bis Place du Petit Sablon, 1000 Brussels)

Spoken language: English and French (no translation provided)

Places are limited to 50 participants. Please register before Monday 2 March 2015 by sending an email to a.vervaeke@egmontinstitute.be.
The international community has become increasingly alarmed by the role of so-called ‘conflict minerals’ in ongoing civil strife in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Both binding and voluntary measures have been passed in recent years to address this concern at global, regional and national levels. As a result, in recent years, the DRC has become testing ground for several domestic, regional and international initiatives that have been developed to address the so-called ‘conflict minerals’ problem and the high level of informality in the DRC’s mining sector. In March 2014, the European Commission (EC) put forward a legislative initiative to regulate the sourcing of minerals originating in conflict-affected and high-risk areas. The proposed Regulation would set up a voluntary scheme for European importers of so-called 3TG – tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold – to self-certify that their operations do not contribute to financing armed conflict. By opting in, importers agree to exercise due diligence in accordance with OECD Guidance. The initiative is accompanied by a Joint Communication outlining complementary measures (“Accompanying Measures”) designed to enhance the impact of the Regulation and promote an “integrated” European Union (EU) approach.

For various civil society organisations the proposed Regulation is too weak in nature (voluntary scheme) and limited in scope (potentially covering only 400 compliant companies and with a strict focus on 3TG) to contribute to break the links between natural resources and conflict. Debates in European fora mainly concentrate on the opportunity to adopt mandatory due diligence requirements and to extend their application beyond the limited number of primary importers of covered materials to include end-user companies that place (components of) products containing ‘conflict minerals’ on the EU market. Opponents of stronger legislation, however, refer to the perceived adverse impact of section 1502 of the U.S. Dodd-Frank Act – currently the only implemented mandatory initiative impacting global market and supply chains – on DRC’s local mining economies.

The implementation of Accompanying Measures is seen at EU level as a way to incentivise companies to exercise due diligence in their supply chains. But, to be truly “comprehensive” and “integrated”, the EU approach should not overstate the contribution of minerals to conflicts and pay more attention to the contribution of the artisanal mining sector to local livelihoods. Increased efforts by the EU to address the complex root causes of the conflicts in the DRC (i.e. state fragility, regional politics, land conflicts, ethnic tension, etc.) should be undertaken. The adoption of accompanying measures is also an opportunity for the EU to contribute to a better organisation of Congolese artisanal mining and to strengthen the fight against illegal trade of natural resources in Central Africa. These efforts will help make the vital connection between policy developments and the needs of the artisanal mining communities they seek to affect.

To make its approach comprehensive and locally beneficial, the EU should not only seek to change business sourcing practices, but should in parallel directly support capacities of artisanal miners, local economic operators and authorities to comply with international standards and participate in sustainable supply chains. In supporting sustainable artisanal mining, the EU can facilitate access to international markets and to better prices for Congolese artisanal production, and increase the feasibility for importers to source responsibly in the DRC.

Given the momentum presented to design a specific EU policy on responsible mineral sourcing, the Royal Institute for International Relations (Egmont Institute), the Open Society European Policy Institute (OSEPI) and the European Network for Central Africa (EurAc) have the great pleasure to invite you to a Study Day on the artisanal mining sector. This event aims to bring together a variety of perspectives, from institutional, policy, business, academic and civil society sectors, and provide a platform to exchange views and bring clarity to the complex debate about the kinds of measures that can effectively work on the ground to support a sustainable development of the artisanal mining sector in the Great Lakes region.
8:45 – 9:15  Registration and Welcoming

9:15 – 9.30  Introduction
Koen Vlassenroot (Egmont Institute – Brussels/University of Ghent)
Frédéric Triest (EurAc – Brussels)

9:30-11:00  Panel 1: Stocktaking of current trends in DRC artisanal mining sector
Henri Muhiya (Commission Episcopale pour les Ressources Naturelles/CERN – Kinshasa/DRC)
Ken Matthysen (International Peace Information Service/IPIS – Antwerp)
Georges Mukuli (Southern Africa Resources Watch/SARWATCH – Kinshasa/DRC)
Sara Geenen (University of Antwerp)
Chair: Koen Vlassenroot (Egmont Institute – Brussels/University of Ghent)

11:00-11:15  Coffee Break

11:15-12:45  Panel 2: Assessment of mining initiatives in DRC
Eric Kajemba (Observatoire Gouvernance et Paix/OGP – Bukavu/DRC)
Jeroen Cuvelier (University of Ghent)
Christoph Vogel (University of Zurich – Switzerland)
Vincent Neussl (Misereor – Aachen)
Chair: Marta Martinelli (OSEPI – Brussels)

12:45-14:00  Lunch Break

14:00-15:30  Panel 3: Learnings from other country cases
Marc van Bosckstael (World Diamond Center – Antwerp) (still tbc)
Manar Idriss (Global Witness – London)
Danilo Urrea (CENSAT Agua Viva/Friends of the Earth – Bogotá/Colombia)
Chair: Donatella Rostagno (EurAc – Brussels)

15:30-15:45  Coffee Break

15:45-17:15  Panel 4: Assessment of the EU approach on responsible mineral sourcing from conflict affected and high risk areas
Laura E. Seay (Colby College – Waterville/US)
Nele Meyer (Amnesty International European Institutions Office – Brussels)
Arthur van Mansvelt (Triodos Bank)
Judith Sargentini (European Parliament/GREENS-EFA Group – Netherlands)
Chair: Valérie Arnould (Egmont Institute – Brussels)

17:15-17:30  Conclusion
Frédéric Triest (EurAc – Brussels)