

## Security Council

*"If we destroy Human Rights and Rule of Law in response to terrorism, they have won."*

Joichi Ito - activist

### **Topic B: "Peace and Security in Africa: Financing of Armed Groups and Terrorists Through Illicit Trafficking of Natural Resources."**

The illicit trafficking of natural resources by armed groups and terrorists is a fundamental problem in Africa. This practice involves the exploitation and trading of natural resources, such as minerals and precious metals to finance armed groups and terrorist enterprises. The profits from these illicit occupations are used to finance their operations, market weapons and maintain their activities.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Executive Director, Ghada Fathi Waly, stated that organized crime and terrorism represent a serious threat to Africa, especially in the Sahel, which is seriously affected by the occupations of active and deadly terrorist groups. When summarizing the UNODC investigation, carried out between 2019 and 2022 in the area in the border regions of Gabon, Cameroon and Congo, as well as Chad and the Central African Republic, on illicit mineral trafficking as a source of financing for terrorist groups, established that illegally mined gold and other valuable metals continue to enter the legitimate market, providing large profits to traffickers.

Weak regulatory oversight in several areas allows the illicit business of natural resources to flourish. This lack of regulation creates opportunities for armed organizations and terrorists to take advantage of resources and generate funds. Environmental crimes are frequently given low priority by governments, courts, and legislators due to inadequate resources for enforcement, investigation, and prosecution.

The illegal trading of natural resources in Africa has been reported in incidents involving armed groups and people. For instance, the Wagner Group has been abusing the natural resources of territories such as the Central African Republic, Mali, Sudan, and others. The war machine in different nations is financed by the earnings from these illicit enterprises. This international crime affects multiple parties and it is not exclusive to any specific community or area; main actors in this illegal trade can be individuals, companies, or even governments. To profit from the illicit trade, businesses—both domestic and international—may operate in conflict-affected areas, in order to take advantage of deficient governance frameworks, or embrace corruption.

According to Brian E. Nelson, Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, "armed organizations in eastern DRC where they control mines and exploit miners" mostly profit from conflict gold. Over 90% of the gold produced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is trafficked to neighboring countries like Uganda and Rwanda, where it is frequently processed and sold to foreign markets, most notably the United Arab Emirates. Conflict is mostly caused by the gold trade in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where there are over 130 active armed groups. Through forced labor, smuggling, or extorting payments from miners, a network of armed groups, smugglers, and businesses makes illegal money from the gold industry.

In accordance with the research, traffickers profit substantially from the illegal extraction of gold and other precious metals, which are funneled into the legal market. 40,000 sticks of dynamite and detonator cords were found during a firearms operation conducted in late 2020 by UNODC and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). The assets were meant to be used for illicit gold mining by armed terrorist organizations operating in the Sahel. Wildlife trafficking is also purportedly a source of funding for armed groups; the illegal ivory trade alone brings approximately \$400 million a year in revenue. A significant source of income is taken away from the people of Africa—nearly 500 million of whom live in utter poverty—by such illegal exploitation.

The impacts of this illegitimate funding are significant. It hinders peace and security efforts, delays development and economic expansion, and prolongs conflict and instability in the impacted areas. Addressing these issues and upending the financial systems is essential to advancing peace and security in Africa.

During the subsequent conversation, representatives from the Council and other nations highlighted the importance of continuing cooperation in combating the financing of armed groups and terrorist organizations. In order to minimize violence and instability and promote growth and development in Africa, effective resource management is called for; natural resources should be a source of regional development instead of becoming a problem.

International efforts are underway, including by the UN Security Council, to prevent this financing and interfere with the relevant networks. Addressing this issue and advancing peace and security in Africa can be accomplished through adjusting listing criteria and assessing their efficacy as well as promoting peace and security in Africa.

The Security Council extends an invitation to member nations to deliberate on several measures aimed at combating the illicit trade of natural resources in Africa. These initiatives include:

- Enhance illegal trade in natural resources, strengthen enforcement policies and regulatory frameworks.
- Enhance financial oversight and guidelines to stop the flow of resources that are not authorized.
- Integrating financial crime investigations alongside investigations looking into crimes against wildlife and natural resources.

- Increasing the use of financial investigation methods in the study and prosecution of armed groups and criminal networks engaged in the illegal trafficking of natural resources.
- Strengthening capabilities of national institutions while providing law enforcement agencies tasked with combating terrorism financing and money laundering enough manpower to investigate and track down assets linked to environmental crimes.
- Encouraging regional and global collaboration in order to facilitate the gathering, share, and exchange data, analysis, or evidence.

#### **GUIDING QUESTIONS:**

- How to counter this financing?
- What would be the possible action plans to carry out to face the issue?
- Have real actions been taken regarding the illicit traffic and financing?
- What objectives of the 2030 agenda are linked to this problem?
- Which could be inclusive and equitable public policies for the protection of all people in Africa and its surroundings?
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the existing listing criteria relating to illicit trafficking of natural resources

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