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## **1603 Working Group News on Natural Resources – March 2016**

### **1. Progress for an African Mineral Governance Framework**

In 2009 African leaders adopted the African Mining Vision (AMV) which seeks to foster an African framework for a transparent, optimal and equitable exploitation of mineral resources. The exploitation and export of these resources has been troubling for many African countries, as they did not benefit from the mineral price boom and now have to deal with financial leakages and the ongoing collapse of mineral prices on the international market. Until now, very few countries have aligned their minerals policy to the reform agenda. However, on March 21-22, 2016 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, a renewed effort towards implementing the AMV brought 120 participants from various African governments, the AU, UNECA, AMDC, Pan-African institutions and civil society to a round-table to further develop and refine the African Minerals Governance Framework (AMGF). Africa working together on a framework stands in contrast to recent developments in the EU, with the position of the Council threatening a comprehensive EU regulation for conflict minerals [{LINK}](#) and with the Supreme Court in the US ruling in favour of corporations and against their involvement in a trade scheme [{LINK}](#). [Read More](#)

### **2. France Adopts Palm Oil Tax**

French MPs have approved an additional tax on palm oil. The tax was proposed as part of the biodiversity bill and puts an end to the previously advantageous tax rate that the product enjoyed. The growth of palm plantations in tropical countries has been a significant cause in the degradation of biodiversity and deforestations. The legislation will tax 30 euros per ton in 2017 and 90 euros per ton by 2020. Initially the Senate proposed a tax of 300 euro per ton, but this was watered down after protest from major exporters, Indonesia and Malaysia. Other exporters are Ivory Coast and South Africa. Unfortunately the bill only applies to palm oil for food purposes, and not biofuel, which remains a major market for palm oil. Thus it remains to be seen if the bill will make its difference on the ground. [Read More](#)

### **3. Illicit Gold trade from DRC funds Terrorist Groups**

Research from the Institute for Security Studies shows that gold smuggled from Eastern DRC is funding the terrorist group Al Shabaab. Despite efforts by African Union Mission in Somalia and the United Nations to cut off its channels of funding, findings demonstrate that Al Shabaab and the Allied Democratic Forces-National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU) have joined gold smuggling networks. These minerals are usually exported to Dubai and China and then to the rest of the world, including Europe. [Read More](#)

#### **4. University of Edinburgh UK Pioneer by Opposing Conflict Minerals**

The University of Edinburgh has become the first higher education institution in the UK to adopt a formal conflict minerals policy. The University will ask its suppliers to detail how they source their minerals. They will also link the policy with research, promote student engagement, and raise awareness amongst staff and students making small-scale purchases. Findings and best practices will be shared with other institutions, with the hope that they will also commit to such a policy. The strategy is part of a wider EU initiative, Electronics Watch, which supports fair working conditions in electronics manufacturing.

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