

We need supply chain due diligence to stop complicity in funding conflicts

**Companies are selling products containing natural resources that fuel violence and suffering.
We, Catholic leaders throughout the world, call on the EU to put an end to this.**

As images and stories of horrors inflicted on vulnerable children, women and men in conflicts around the world strike us daily, citizens are expecting guarantees that they are not complicit. The indifference of a few, who look away from their part of responsibility for other peoples' pain, threatens our shared human dignity. To stop this, new rules are urgently needed to ensure that the bounty of God's creation does not serve unquestioning consumption while underwriting the destruction of life. **The Earth's resources must be managed wisely by good stewards, with assurances for people at both ends of today's global supply chains that join us as to the morality of our trading system.**

In certain Southern countries and especially those rich in resources (minerals, wood, gas, oil ...), the control, extraction, processing and trade of these resources are financing armed groups and security and military forces who commit serious violations of human rights, rather than contributing to human development. Everywhere in her power, the Church is at the side of the poor, working to protect those suffering from violence and to dialogue with those who can help end abuses.

We love this magnificent planet on which God has put us, and we love the human family which dwells here, with all its tragedies and struggles, its hopes and aspirations, its strengths and weaknesses. The earth is our common home and all of us are brothers and sisters. If indeed "the just ordering of society and of the state is a central responsibility of politics", the Church "cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice". (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 183)

As a major world trading power, the EU imports a significant amount of raw materials from regions affected by conflict. Through their supply chains, some European companies are complicit in abuses. This situation is intolerable. States are surely required to make every effort to ensure the conditions for peace, not only in their own territory but around the world. This is certainly the social teaching of the Catholic Church. **Governments, citizens and businesswomen and men in the European Union must therefore take it upon themselves to ensure that their companies source natural resources responsibly.**

Economy, as the very word indicates, should be the art of achieving a fitting management of our common home, which is the world as a whole. Each meaningful economic decision made in one part of the world has repercussions everywhere else; consequently, no government can act without regard for shared responsibility. (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 206)

We welcome the fact that the European Commission has proposed a draft European regulation based on "a strategy for responsible trade in minerals from conflict zones [...] intended to put an end to the use of revenues from mining to finance armed conflict" in March 2014.

We are encouraged by the progress made as a result of Members of the European Parliament championing payment transparency in the extractive industries in 2013. **It is now time to continue on this positive path, with ambitious and binding rules to promote supply chain due diligence by companies concerning natural resources sourced from high-risk or conflict-affected areas.**

Section 1502 of the U.S. Dodd Frank Act adopted in 2010 represents a milestone. Companies listed on U.S. stock markets must now undertake supply chain due diligence to check whether minerals in their products contributed to funding armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its nine neighboring countries. The European Commission's proposed regulation extends its scope to all areas of conflict and high risk in the world. This is an important and welcome development, showing the potential to continue to improve upon approaches.

We believe this European regulation will succeed in bringing tangible change to suffering communities, if it can be further strengthened in a few critical ways:

Consistency in the range of natural resources covered. In Peru, Zimbabwe, Myanmar and beyond, the suffering of people from human rights abuses and violence inflicted by armed groups and security and military forces controlling copper, diamonds and other precious resources is no different from situations related to tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold.

Shared responsibility by companies along the entire supply chain, from extractives companies to importers, suppliers and end-users that trade products containing natural resources. Including end-user companies in the scope will allow European citizens to bring positive influence to bear in setting the conditions for morality in supply chains. Their expressions of solidarity and empathy with people in situations of desperate violence will not be betrayed.

A mandatory due diligence system that follows best practices of the related OECD guidance, for undertaking and publicly reporting on efforts to source responsibly. As many of us are first-hand witnesses to the powerful dynamics in regions affected by conflict, having engaged in dialogue with all involved, we can assure that nothing less will be able to change the behavior of companies and other actors.

We, bishops and leaders of the Catholic Church, lend our support to civil society in the South and North working for peace and the responsible stewardship of creation. The EU has a unique opportunity to help end violent conflicts connected to natural resources, which have represented 40% of all conflicts globally over the last 60 years. We call on European Parliamentarians and European governments to rise up to this challenge.

The dignity of each human person and the pursuit of the common good are concerns which ought to shape all economic policies. At times, however, they seem to be a mere addendum imported from without in order to fill out a political discourse lacking in perspectives or plans for true and integral development. How many words prove irksome to this system! It is irksome when the question of ethics is raised, when global solidarity is invoked, when the distribution of goods is mentioned, when reference is made to protecting labour and defending the dignity of the powerless, when allusion is made to a God who demands a commitment to justice. At other times these issues are exploited by a rhetoric which cheapens them. Casual indifference in the face of such questions empties our lives and our words of all meaning. Business is a vocation, and a noble vocation, provided that those engaged in it see themselves challenged by a greater meaning in life; this will enable them truly to serve the common good by striving to increase the goods of this world and to make them more accessible to all. (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 203)

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