

CIDSE Press Release, Brussels, 19 February 2015

125 Church leaders ask the EU to put a stop to conflict minerals ahead of crucial votes

Laptops, mobile phones, and many other electronic devices used by most people daily and sold by European companies often may contain **natural resources whose extraction and trade fuel violence and suffering**. To respond to this, 125 Church leaders from 37 countries on 5 continents have signed a statement asking the EU to **stop conflict minerals**.

The joint [statement](#), first released in October 2014, has continued to gain support among European and other bishops, especially now ahead of crucial votes at the European Parliament. On 23-24 February the European Parliament Committee on International Trade (INTA) will hold an exchange of views on its draft report on responsible mineral sourcing, and other important votes will follow soon (see the political timeline in the Notes to the editors for more details).

“Since I know the misery our people are living in, and how the anarchic, non-coordinated and even illegal exploitation of natural resources contributed to the impoverishment of our people, we didn’t hesitate to sign,” said the Congolese Bishop Fridolin Ambongo, President of the Episcopal Commission on Natural Resources. He added: *“Our hope is that there will be a clear law regulating the exploitation of natural resources and that this will oblige big companies to follow the rules and to be transparent”*.

The signatories warn that European citizens expect guarantees that they are not complicit in funding conflicts when buying products of daily use. People at both ends of today’s global supply chains need assurances as to the **morality of our trading systems**. And the European Parliament, reflecting the conscience of the European people, should rise up to this challenge.

A **new legislation** that would regulate the sourcing of conflict minerals into the EU has been proposed in March 2014 by the European Commission and is currently being considered by the European Parliament. But the [draft report](#) just released by the rapporteur MEP **Iuliu Winkler** can still be improved, as it does not propose strict enough rules to regulate an issue such as conflict minerals.

Church leaders through their statement ask for the legislation to:

- **Introduce mandatory requirements for companies** to guarantee the respect of human rights, rather than pursuing a voluntary approach as currently proposed.
- **Cover a wider range of companies:** not only the importers of raw minerals, as currently proposed, should be affected by the law, since this would exclude the large amount of minerals processed abroad and imported into the EU markets already inside finished products.
- **Cover more natural resources:** the proposed legislation only affects tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold. But the exploitation of other natural resources such as copper and diamonds also can be linked to human rights abuses.

According to Bernd Nilles, CIDSE Secretary General: *“The Bishops’ signatures are a powerful call to take into account the urgency of communities affected by violence connected with natural resources”. This is a concrete opportunity to heed the Pope’s words to the European Parliament last November when he said: “[T]he time has come to work together in building a Europe which revolves not around the economy, but around the sacredness of the human person, around inalienable values.”*

In this [video](#), two bishops from the Democratic Republic of Congo, signatories to the Church leaders’ statement - Mgr **Fridolin Ambongo**- President of the Episcopal Commission on Natural Resources and Bishop of Bokungu-Ikela, and Mgr **Fulgence Muteba**, Bishop of Kilwa-Kasenga in – explain why a stronger EU regulation is needed if it is to bring tangible change to suffering communities.

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Notes to the editors:

CIDSE is part of a greater coalition of NGOs behind the conflict minerals [campaign](#)

-About CIDSE

CIDSE is an international alliance of Catholic development agencies. Its members share a common strategy in their efforts to eradicate poverty and establish global justice. www.cidse.org

CIDSE members are: Broederlijk Delen (Belgium), CAFOD (England and Wales), CCFD - Terre Solidaire (France), Center of Concern (USA), Cordaid (the Netherlands), Development & Peace (Canada), Entraide et Fraternité (Belgium), eRko (Slovakia), Fastenopfer (Switzerland), FEC (Portugal), FOCSIV (Italy), Fondation Briddelerch Deelen (Luxembourg), KOO (Austria), Manos Unidas (Spain), MISEREOR (Germany), SCIAF (Scotland), Trócaire (Ireland)

-Political timeline on “conflict minerals”:

23-24/02/2015: European Parliament Committee on International Trade (INTA)- exchange of view with text on responsible mineral sourcing

18-19/03/2015: INTA vote on responsible mineral sourcing

27/04/2015: vote in European Parliament plenary on responsible mineral sourcing

-Data on major EU importers

The table shows the top five importers of laptops and mobile phones into the EU. Both these products contain tin, tantalum, tungsten, and gold. Currently, it is impossible for consumers to tell whether the minerals contained in these products have funded conflict and human rights abuses overseas.

Germany	Germany is the third largest importer of laptops and mobile phones in the world, and the largest in the EU. Germany imported 64 million mobile phones and 15 million laptops, worth €14.4bn (US\$18.7bn), in 2013. In 2013, Germany imported €7.6bn (US\$9.8bn), or 52 per cent, of its mobile phones and laptops, from China. (See the section on China's imports below).
UK	The UK is the fourth largest importer of laptops and mobile phones in the world, and the second largest in the EU. The UK imported 20 million laptops and over 44.5 million mobile phones, worth £11.2bn (US\$18.2bn), in 2013. In 2013, the UK imported £4.4bn (US\$7.2bn), or 40%, of its mobile phones and laptops, from China. (See the section on China's imports below).
Netherlands	The Netherlands is the fifth largest importer of laptops and mobile phones in the world, and the third largest in the EU. The Netherlands imported 14.8 million mobile phones and 20 million laptops, worth €9.5bn (US\$12.3bn), in 2013. In 2013, the Netherlands imported €7.1bn (US\$9.2bn), or 74 per cent of its mobile phones and laptops, from China. (See the section on China's imports below).
France	France is the sixth largest importer of laptops and mobile phones in the world, and the fourth largest in the EU. France imported 16 million laptops and almost 36 million mobile phones, worth €9bn (\$11.6bn), in 2013. In 2013, France imported €6.2bn (US\$8bn), or 69 per cent, of its mobile phones and laptops from China. (See the section on China's imports below).
Italy	Italy is the 11th largest importer of laptops and mobile phones in the world, and the fifth largest in the EU. Italy imported 9.6 million laptops and 28.6 million mobile phones, worth €6.1bn (US\$7.9bn), in 2013. In 2013, Italy imported €1.9bn (US\$2.5bn), or 33 per cent, of its mobile phones and laptops from China. (See the section on China's imports below).
China's imports	A significant proportion of the EU's mobile phone and laptop imports come from China, as detailed above. China imports significant quantities of ores and metals for use in the manufacture of these products. In 2013, China imported over 4,000 tons of tin, tungsten, tantalum and gold ores and concentrates, worth in excess of €106.6m (US\$138m), from Colombia, the DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi. This is equivalent in weight to importing 333 double-decker buses that, if sourced without proper checks from high-risk areas, could have funded war. In 2013 China sourced 23 per cent of its tantalum ores and concentrates (by weight) from these four countries.

All data from UN Comtrade: <http://comtrade.un.org/>

Data on tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold ores, concentrates, and metals captures EU trade in the HS codes listed in the table on p.78 of the Commission's Impact Assessment, available at: http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2014/march/tradoc_152229.pdf

-CIDSE has published extensively on Human Rights Due Diligence:

- [Human Rights Due Diligence: Policy measures for effective implementation](#)
- [Taking stock of international efforts to end HR abuses caused by business activity](#)

-For more information, see also key references from our member organisations:

Action de Carême/Fastenopfer: Classement des marques du high-tech / High Tech Ranking
<http://www.hightech-rating.ch/>

CCFD-Terre Solidaire: Natural resources at the heart of conflict http://ccfd-terresolidaire.org/IMG/pdf/rapport_anglais_bdsc.pdf

Commission Justice et Paix Belgique francophone: [Composition de nos appareils électroniques : des entreprises en crise... de moralité ?](#)