

**OPEN DEBATE OF THE
SECURITY COUNCIL:
NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONFLICT**

STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. President,

We warmly welcome your initiative to hold an open debate of the Security Council on the topic before us today. We are also grateful to your delegation for providing us with a succinct and substantive concept paper to this end. This is an important initiative on a matter that has not been given sufficient attention in the past, and we hope that your initiative constitutes the first step in an ongoing involvement of the UN system thereon. Given the early stage of the debate, the consideration of this topic in other UN fora could also be useful, provided that there is the necessary coordination.

Mr. President,

The way in which the exploitation of natural resources and the financing of conflict parties is interlinked, particularly with regard to the role played by non-state actors, is well documented. Natural resources can significantly influence conflict dynamics, and they can be both a factor, among others, contributing to the outbreak of violent conflicts as well as a reason for prolonging them. As far as conflict prevention is concerned, we agree that the governance of natural resources is of crucial importance. It is worth recalling in this respect that common Article 1, paragraph 2 of the two human rights covenants of 1966 is relevant in this respect and should be taken into account in all endeavours to establish regimes dealing with the governance of natural resources. Within the UN system, the Kimberley process is the best-known of such initiatives, since it was launched in response to situations on the agenda of the Security Council. There have been other very important initiatives dealing with the subject, as outlined in your concept paper, and their endorsement by the General Assembly or perhaps the Council itself would certainly enhance their relevance and effectiveness. The Council may want to give particular attention to situations where the exploitation of a natural resource is an essential element of the national economy and may offer the risk of great revenues being generated through the trafficking of natural resources and illicit commodities in a conflict environment. Of no lesser importance are situations where a natural resource is indispensable to cover the basic needs of a population or populations involved. This is of particular relevance in connection with water, an increasingly scarce resource for which there is already competition by consumers in several parts of the world. Access to water already plays a role in various current conflict situations, and efforts of the Council to solve them must take this aspect into account.

Mr. President,

As outlined in your concept paper, the Council's action in the past has been mainly focused on the role of natural resources once a conflict has broken out, usually in the manifestation of armed conflict. Sanctions imposed by the Council with regard to certain commodities have contributed to conflict resolution in Angola, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Experience shows that such sanctions need to be tailored to the

circumstances of each individual case, to have clearly identified objectives, specified measures for implementation by Member States and conditions for their suspension or lifting. In fine-tuning future action against the background of past experience, the Council can continue to take effective measures in this respect. But we also believe that future discussions would benefit from an enhanced emphasis on aspects of prevention and early identification of situations where natural resources could contribute to the outbreak of a conflict. The debate can thus be framed in the context of relevant General Assembly resolutions as well as resolution 1622 of the Council adopted during the 2005 World Summit. Very useful work could be carried out within the UN system by establishing principles on the governance of natural resources, supporting existing initiatives and ensuring that the relevance of natural resources is taken into account in political efforts aimed at conflict prevention.

Mr. President,

The role played by natural resources in post-conflict environments is also essential. The exploitation of natural resources can have a stabilising effect by generating economic growth and thus alleviating poverty, when combined with good governance. But it can also become a subject of transnational organized crime and thereby play a part in causing war-torn societies to relapse into conflict. It is therefore crucial that the Security Council support international and regional efforts to promote assistance to post-conflict countries that are rich in natural resources. The Council should in particular explore a possible stronger role of the Peacebuilding Commission in this respect and promote increased activities of other UN agencies and programs, such as UNODC.

Mr. President,

We hope that this debate will result in a Presidential Statement that gives guidance for further discussion. The next stage of discussion would certainly benefit from a comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on the existing activities and capacities within the system and on the possibility of strengthening the civil component of peacekeeping missions in the area of good governance on natural resources management in all its aspects. In addition, such a report could elaborate on the possible relationships between specific resources and certain kind of conflicts.

I thank you.