

Illegal Resource Exploitation Armed Conflict: A Resource Plunder Database

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*A project proposal prepared for the NEPAD Mapping Project
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31 March 2003*

Summary

The project is intended to contribute to ongoing efforts at the UN and in Africa to stop illegal resource exploitation linked to armed conflict in Africa. It will create a *Resource Plunder Database for Africa* that will collect together publicly available information on illegal resource exploitation linked to armed conflict in Africa, and make this information more widely available and easily accessible. The Database would:

- list all of the principal persons and enterprises that have been publicly associated with illegal resource exploitation linked to armed conflict in Africa;
- report what has been publicly alleged about the operations and activities of these persons and enterprises as they relate to illegal resource exploitation linked to armed conflict in Africa; and
- report whatever information is available on these persons and enterprises from official records, including relevant information about known partners and associates.

Project Purpose

The principal purpose of creating the database is to help facilitate ongoing efforts — currently led by the United Nations — to investigate, expose, and curtail illegal resource exploitation linked to armed conflict in Africa. As an additional benefit, the project will also help to facilitate the work of other actors, including journalists, academics, non-governmental organizations, and national authorities in their efforts to expose and/or stop resource plunder linked to armed conflict in Africa.

The link to peace and security: Efforts to stop illegal resource exploitation linked to armed conflict in Africa have necessarily become an increasingly important part of African and international efforts to promote peace and security on the continent. This is because the control and plunder of economic resources has increasingly acted as an incentive for a variety of groups — political and apolitical — to turn to armed conflict. Above and beyond this, the control of natural resources has increasingly served as the principal means by which such groups have been able to sustain, and indeed prolong, those conflicts.

The link to development: Efforts to stop illegal resource exploitation linked to armed conflict in Africa have a direct and important significance for Africa's development efforts. The plunder of Africa's natural resources by private interests robs local

populations of scarce and valuable resources that could and should be used to promote development and poverty alleviation in African countries. The value lost can amount to hundreds of millions of dollars, or even billions of dollars, as was the case in Angola.

Project Components

Information gathering: The project will draw upon information that is publicly available about persons and enterprises that have been publicly linked to illegal resource exploitation associated with armed conflict in Africa. Sources would include, but would not necessarily be limited to, Reports of the UN Panels, newspaper articles, scholarly writings, and the publications of advocacy groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Other sources of information might include official records such as court proceedings, company registration information (including registered owners and directors), and nationality and citizenship information.

Creating a database: Compiled information would be indexed, cross-referenced, and entered into the database. Wherever possible, source documents — including press articles — will be scanned into the database, and thereby made available in their original form and format. Translations or summary translations may also be provided, depending upon available resources and expertise.

Disseminating information: A project website would be created, primarily for the purpose of disseminating information that has been collected. The website would also provide an opportunity for people to recommend additional public sources that could be included in the database. Credible non-public information received through the website would be transmitted to the appropriate UN body, and/or to the appropriate national authorities. Publication and distribution to key users of a limited number of bound paper copies of the database (including a searchable CD-Rom version) is also contemplated.