

Open Letter to Members of the European Parliament

The European Union is the world's largest economy, the world's largest trading block, and home to 500 million consumers. Every year, millions of euro worth of minerals flow into the EU from some of the poorest places on earth. No questions are asked about how they are extracted, or whether their trade fuels conflict in local communities. The EU has no legislation in place to ensure companies source their minerals responsibly. Now is the time for change.

The trade in resources – such as gold, diamonds, tantalum, tin and coal – continues to perpetuate a cycle of conflict and human rights abuses in many fragile areas of the world. These resources enter global supply chains and end up in products that we use every day, such as aeroplanes, cars, mobile phones and laptops. These goods connect us to the hundreds of thousands who have been displaced by conflict in the Central African Republic and Colombia. They connect us also to the thousands who have endured years of violence and abuse in parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and to the unknown victims of shadowy intelligence organisations in Zimbabwe.

In March 2014, the European Commission put forward a draft regulation to address the trade in conflict minerals that, if passed, would fail to have a meaningful impact. It covers just four minerals: tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold. It is entirely voluntary, giving 300-400 importers of those minerals the *option* of sourcing responsibly and reporting publicly on their efforts to do so, through a process known as “supply chain due diligence”. The law would only cover a tiny proportion of EU companies involved in the trade, and leaves out the tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold that enter the EU in products that we use every day.

The European Parliament's International Trade Committee has since proposed some mandatory requirements – but these also apply to just a small fraction of the industry. The vast majority of companies involved – including some of those importing directly from conflict-affected and high-risk areas – would have no obligation to source responsibly. Companies importing products containing these minerals would be left entirely off the hook.

This is a landmark opportunity for progress. But the weak proposals on the table would leave Europe lagging behind global efforts, including mandatory requirements endorsed by the US and by twelve African countries.

You, as a Member of the Parliament, can make a difference. We are calling on you to vote on [XX] May for a law that:

* Requires all companies bringing minerals into the EU – whether in their raw form or contained in products – to carry out supply chain due diligence and publicly report in line with international standards.

* Is flexible enough to cover, in the future, other resources that may be linked to conflict, human rights abuses and corruption.

Tackling the highly lucrative trade in conflict minerals will not, on its own, put an end to conflict, corruption or abuse. However, it is critical to securing long-term peace and stability in some of the most fragile and resource-rich areas of the world. As long as an illicit industry can flourish unchecked, the trade in conflict minerals will supply funds and motivation to violent and abusive actors. Those bearing the cost of our weak efforts to regulate this trade will be some of the poorest and most vulnerable citizens of the world. For them, inaction and irresponsible business comes at a serious cost.

Yours sincerely

1. Amnesty International
2. Global Witness
3. Berne Declaration
4. Business & Human Rights Resource Centre
5. Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF)

6. Global Policy Forum
7. Jesuit Missions
8. PowerShift e.V. (Germany)