Joint Letter

Conflict minerals in the DRC: Dr. Mukwege and a group of 34 NGOs call on the European Parliament to make a difference!

On 20th May, the European Parliament will vote on a proposed regulation to tackle the trade in conflict minerals. This trade in tin, tungsten, tantalum and gold (3TG) is fuelling conflict which has had devastating consequences for people in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Colombia.

We are gravely concerned that the regulation proposed by the European Commission does not envision any real change. It makes it merely optional for importers to source these minerals responsibly. The proposed voluntary scheme would cover just 0.05% of companies using these minerals within the EU. No companies would be legally obliged to check whether they are complicit in financing conflict or human rights abuses.

We regret that the proposal in April 2015 by the European Parliament’s committee on International Trade on recommending binding “due diligence” requirements for approximately only 20 smelters and refiners based in Europe will not solve the problem. There must be legal requirements governing all companies that place these minerals on the European market—in any form, not just 3TG imported by a handful of smelters.

Extending the binding requirement to tackle the entire trade effectively – not just one part of it - would put the European Union at the forefront of global efforts to create more transparent, responsible and sustainable business practices. It would also better align Europe with OECD standards on responsible sourcing and complement existing binding rules adopted by the US and several African countries, including DRC.

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have an historic opportunity to help break the links between the minerals trade, conflict and human rights abuses—such as the large-scale sexual violence in eastern DRC, which Panzi Hospital is dedicated to healing. We call on them to ensure that in line with its fundamental principles, the European Parliament demands additional binding rules that put respect for human rights above narrow economic interests.

Yours,

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Christine Allen, Director of Policy at Christian Aid
Patrick Alley, Co-founder and Director of Global Witness
Gesine Ames, Coordinator of the Ecumenical Network Central Africa (OENZ)
Guido Barbera, President of the Coordination of Popular Initiatives of International Solidarity (CIPSI)
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Oliver Buston, Director of the Walk Free Movement
Gérard Callé, President of Forum réfugiés-Cosi
Jérome Chaplier, Coordinator of the European Coalition for Corporate Justice (ECCJ)
María del Mar Magallón, Director of the Alboan Foundation
Brigitte Dufour, Director of the International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR)
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Mathieu Flammarion, President of Info Birmanie
Bo Forsberg, Secretary General of Diakonia
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José Henríquez, Secretary General of Pax Christi International
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Niclas Lindgren, Director of the Swedish Pentecostal Relief and Development Organisation (PMU InterLife)
Matteo Marastoni, Member of Rete Pace per il Congo
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