



Security Council (SC)

Topic A. Measures to counter the financing of armed groups and terrorists through illicit trafficking of natural resources

Introduction

Natural resources are key components of many economies with a growing share in world trade. Not surprisingly, they have become yet another source of illicit income. Natural resources-related illegal trade involves the illicit trafficking of non-renewable resources such as fuels and minerals, and renewable ones, such as wildlife, forestry, and fishery. The illegal trade of these resources is often identified by international organizations (such as UNEP-INTERPOL, IISD) as “environmental crimes”.

The estimated annual value of illegal trade in resources is a minimum of USD 20 billion, however, the World Bank Group estimated USD 1 to 2 trillion dollars annual worth of illegal fishing, logging, and wildlife trade in 2019.¹ The problem is particularly present in developing countries, where Governments often lack the capacity to regulate the exploitation of their natural resources. Poor management of natural resources can lead to corruption and even violent conflict.²

The magnitude of this issue cannot be overstated: it is not just the illicit nature of profiteering from resources, it is also the corrupt and unequal way that the proceeds are distributed, which harms the growth and sustainable development of communities.³ Terrorism is one of the most important threats for international security and peace, and the financing of these groups by illicit trade only increases the possibility for terrorist acts to happen.

According to United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, in the Security Council's 8372nd meeting, ever since 1990, 75% of civil wars in Africa have been partially funded by revenues from natural resources. And although the percentage is staggering, is important to notice that it is not exclusive to a continent, the illegal extraction of minerals, timber, charcoal, and wildlife has fueled violence in every region.

¹ WBG. ILLEGAL LOGGING, FISHING, AND WILDLIFE TRADE: THE COSTS AND HOW TO COMBAT IT. 2019. <https://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/482771571323560234/WBGReport1017Digital.pdf>

² UNODC. (n.d.). Environmental crime: trafficking in wildlife and timber. *Transnational Organized Crime*. <https://www.unodc.org/toc/en/crimes/environmental-crime.html>

³ Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations. *Strengthening the fight against the financing of armed groups and terrorists through the illicit trafficking of natural resources*. 2022. <https://uaeun.org/statement/unsc-peace-security-in-africa-6oct/>





Having said this, the Security Council firmly calls upon the participation and cooperation of Member States to establish measures to ensure the safety of civilians from terrorist's acts, but also for the protection of the biosphere from the exploitation of its resources to finance said groups.

Concepts and definitions:

- *Al-Qaeda*: a radical Sunni Muslim organization dedicated to the elimination of a Western presence in Arab countries and militantly opposed to Western foreign policy, founded by Osama bin Laden in 1988.
- *Armed groups*: groups that are armed and may use force to advance their political, ideological, or economic goals, but do not belong to formal military establishments of States, State alliances, or international organizations, and are not governed by the State in which they are active.
- *Displacement of populations*: the relocation of large numbers of people from their homes.
- *Illicit trafficking*: recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring, or receiving a product that is illegal through coercion, fraud, or the exploitation of vulnerability.
- *Ivory*: variety of dentin of which the tusk of the elephant is composed, and its illegal trade has links to organized crime syndicates that threaten local communities and promote corruption.
- *Non-renewable resources*: sources that will eventually run out and not be replenished.
- *Organized crime*: criminal organizations that plan and commit crime, or the crimes that are committed by such organizations
- *Poaching*: hunting, catching, or killing animals without permission in someone else's land.
- *Proceeds*: the amount of money received from a particular event or activity or when something is sold.
- *Profiteering*: the act of making an unreasonable profit at the expense of someone else.
- *Terrorism*: criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror rather to the public or to a particular group or individual for political purposes are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical,





ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them.⁴

- *Transnational organized crime*: violations of law that involve more than one country in their planning, execution, or impact.

Current problem:

Illicit trafficking of natural resources by armed groups and terrorists has received growing attention from the Security Council in recent years, in fact, it was stated by Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, in October 6 of 2022 at the Briefing on Financing of Armed Groups and Terrorists Through the Illicit Trafficking of Natural Resources, that it is in the Council's interest to prevent traffickers from using their criminal activities and their illicit wealth to fuel conflict and terrorism, and it is in the States power to prevent the environmental degradation, use of child labor, displacement of populations, human rights violations and abuses, and loss of government revenue that is a byproduct of illicit trafficking.⁵

Terrorists and armed groups need money to sustain themselves and carry out terrorist acts, and one of the financing methods is illegal trafficking of natural resources. Since the 9/11 wake, governments have taken measures to ensure that the financing for terrorist acts does not continue, such as a new coordination, international cooperation, and partnerships with the private sector that sought to pursue suspicious financial flows to their source.

Conflicts in affected regions may make matters worse in the presence of terrorism or violent extremism conducive to terrorism. Groups who benefit from transnational organized crime may contribute to undermining affected States, specifically their security, stability, governance, social and economic development⁶. Thus, organized criminal groups and terrorists benefiting from organized crime, can, in some cases and in some regions, complicate conflict prevention and resolution efforts.

Although poaching affects several countries around the world, some are affected much more than others, such as Central Africa, which is the main source of elephant ivory, and Southern Africa which is used as a source of rhino horn. The trafficking of wildlife from Africa

⁴ Article 3 of the 2010 UN Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism

⁵ United States Mission to the United Nations. (2022, October 6). Remarks at a UN Security Council Briefing on Financing of Armed Groups and Terrorists Through the Illicit Trafficking of Natural Resources. <https://usun.usmission.gov/remarks-at-a-un-security-council-briefing-on-financing-of-armed-groups-and-terrorists-through-the-illicit-trafficking-of-natural-resources/>

⁶ Security Council Resolution S/RES/2195 (2014) p.12

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/PRO/N18/322/36/PDF/N1832236.pdf?OpenElement>





and South-East Asia to the European Union is caused by organized criminal groups that encourage and inflict poaching of endangered and protected species, such as tigers, elephants and rhinos, which are the most affected by the trafficking.

Ivory, for example, comes from the elephant, and while the price of ivory varies between countries, the annual, overall gross illicit income generated by ivory was estimated to be US\$400 million and the income generated by rhino horn US\$230 million between 2016 and 2018⁷. So illegal supply chains for rhino horn and ivory have grown to be diversified and complex, and trafficking routes from Africa to Asia now pass through many nations. Traffickers utilize land, sea, and air to smuggle rhino horn and ivory. Wilderness areas that are within the borders of two countries are being used to make transnational trafficking easier by the help of corrupt authorities that cause criminal networks to transport poached animals.

Initiatives taken by the international community:

The implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) –which is the main international instrument in the fight against transnational organized crime, and it is determined to fight against corruption, money-laundering, and terrorist financing– represents a major step forward in the fight against transnational organized crime and shows that Member States are aware of the serious problems it poses.

One of the international conservation agreements is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), to which 175 States are parties. Under the Convention, States that do not take measures to protect endangered species are subject to escalating international pressure, which can ultimately result in trade sanctions.

Also, according to Security Council's 2482 resolution, in point 14, it encourages all States to continue efforts to end the illicit trade in natural resources, particularly in the gold sector, and to hold those complicit in the illicit trade accountable, as part of broader efforts to ensure that the illicit trade in natural resources is not benefiting sanctioned entities, terrorist groups, armed groups or criminal networks.

There are also the Sustainable Development Goals for the 2030 Agenda that aim to solve environmental, political and economic challenges that we face as humanity; goal 15 is

⁷ UNODOC. *Supply and value chains and illicit financial flows in: Value chains and illicit financial flows from the trade in ivory and rhino horn Results from the World Wildlife Crime Report 2020*. P.115
https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/wildlife/2020/WWLC20_Chapter_8_Value_chains.pdf





looking for ways to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss, and goal 16 is working towards promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Furthermore, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) encourages the public to take part in the international and national initiatives to eradicate the financing of terrorist and armed groups by demanding a reduction, eco-tourism, publicity, and awareness spreading, providing alternatives and sustainable livelihoods, and encouraging businesses to check the legal origin of raw materials.

Guiding questions:

1. Why is it important to solve this topic as soon as possible?
2. What has your delegation done to prevent the illicit trade of natural resources from happening?
3. Are there any active armed groups or terrorists in your country?
4. Has there been any armed conflict in your delegation regarding natural resources trade?
5. How is your delegation affected by the financing of armed groups through the trade of natural resources, and how it impacts the environment and the population?
6. How can your delegation help this problem to be solved in short, medium and long terms?

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