



For Immediate Release
November 19, 2009

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STATEMENT: NGOs Welcome the Conflict Minerals Trade Act of 2009

WASHINGTON, D.C— A coalition of international nonprofit organizations - including the Enough Project at the Center for American Progress, Human Rights Watch, World Vision, Oxfam America, Global Witness, International Labor Rights Forum, Genocide Intervention Network, Resolve Uganda, Falling Whistles, Jewish World Watch, Mennonite Central Committee, As You Sow, and the United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society – today released the following joint statement regarding the introduction of the Conflict Minerals Trade Act of 2009 in the U.S. House of Representatives:

We welcome the introduction of the Conflict Minerals Trade Act of 2009 in the United States House of Representatives by Congressman Jim McDermott (D-Washington). This bill would help develop the means to ensure that the multimillion dollar trade in minerals from eastern Congo stops financing the world's deadliest conflict since World War II. It will also help raise awareness about the issue to both the public and policy makers.

The trade in the 3 T's - tin ore (cassiterite), tantalite (coltan), tungsten (a source derived from wolframite), as well as gold—that are used, among other things, in electronic devices such as cell phones and laptops—are a major source of funding for armed groups in eastern Congo who commit atrocities against civilians. If passed, this bill would create a system of audits and import declarations that would distinguish those goods imported into the United States that contain conflict minerals. The resulting transparency would be an important step forward in helping break the links between the mineral trade and human rights violations, such as killings of unarmed civilians and sexual violence—and the resulting humanitarian crises which comes from trade in conflict minerals. This legislation would also contribute to the development of mechanisms to allow the Congolese people to benefit from these resources. More broadly, the bill directs the United States government to develop a comprehensive strategy toward conflict minerals.

What would this bill do?

This bill demands greater transparency and accountability from those companies whose products contain these mineral ores or their derivatives. The U.S. government would identify those commercial goods that could contain conflict minerals, approve a list of independent monitoring groups qualified to audit the worldwide processing facilities for these minerals, and eventually restrict the importation of minerals to those from audited facilities. Importers of these goods would have to certify on their customs declaration that their goods “contain conflict minerals” or are “conflict mineral free” based upon this audit system. The audits would determine the mines of origin for processed materials, verify the chain of custody and verify information provided by suppliers through investigations in the DRC and other countries.

Importantly, the bill would also direct the State Department to support multilateral and U.S. government efforts to break the link between the trade in minerals and armed conflict in eastern Congo. Specific measures include:

- development of a U.S. government strategy to address conflict minerals;

- support for further investigations by the UN Group of Experts;
- mapping of which armed groups control key mines in eastern Congo;
- inclusion of information on the negative impact of mineral exploitation and trade on human rights in Congo in the annual human rights reports;
- guidance for companies to exercise due diligence;
- expanded U.S. efforts to improve conditions and livelihoods for communities in eastern Congo who are dependent upon mining; and,
- GAO review to evaluate adherence and effectiveness of policies

Legislation in the US alone will not end the conflict in eastern Congo, but this bill would provide a crucial step toward the creation of a practical and enforceable means to ensure that the trade in Congolese minerals contributes to peace rather than war. This bill would also serve as a useful precedent for other countries to develop legislation for holding to account companies in their jurisdiction who may be fuelling the conflict in eastern Congo.

We encourage concerned members of the public to contact their representatives and demand that they actively support this legislation to help ensure that consumer electronics and other goods imported into the US are conflict free.

Visit the Enough Project's blog, [Enough Said](#), for updates on this issue. Follow The Enough Project on Twitter; <http://twitter.com/enoughproject>.

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The [Center for American Progress](#) is a nonpartisan research and educational institute dedicated to promoting a strong, just and free America that ensures opportunity for all. We believe that Americans are bound together by a common commitment to these values and we aspire to ensure that our national policies reflect these values. We work to find progressive and pragmatic solutions to significant domestic and international problems and develop policy proposals that foster a government that is "of the people, by the people, and for the people."

[Enough](#) is a project of the Center for American Progress to end genocide and crimes against humanity. Founded in 2007, Enough focuses on crises in Sudan, Chad, eastern Congo, northern Uganda, Somalia, and Zimbabwe. Enough's strategy papers and briefings provide sharp field analysis and targeted policy recommendations based on a "3P" crisis response strategy: promoting durable peace, providing civilian protection, and punishing perpetrators of atrocities. Enough works with concerned citizens, advocates, and policy makers to prevent, mitigate, and resolve these crises. The [RAISE Hope for Congo](#) campaign aims to build a permanent and diverse constituency of activists advocating for effective change in eastern Congo, including an end to the long-running conflict and the resulting sexual violence against women and girls, and reforms to reduce trade by rebel groups in conflict minerals. To schedule an interview, please contact Eileen White Read at eread@enoughproject.org; phone 202 641 0779.

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