

Joint Civil Society Public Statement

European Parliament's Trade Committee wastes ground-breaking opportunity on conflict minerals

Today the European Parliament's Committee on International Trade (INTA) wasted a ground-breaking opportunity to tackle the deadly trade in conflict minerals. The Committee voted in favour of a weak and ineffective law that, if passed, would undermine global attempts to clean up the trade. It would require only a tiny number of companies importing four key minerals into Europe to source them responsibly and transparently.

INTA has failed to extend the legal requirements to the vast majority of companies involved in the trade, such as manufacturers, traders and companies importing products that contain these minerals. It also fails to regulate foreign actors that supply to European companies. Although we welcome a mandatory approach, this excessively narrow scope will likely fail to make a meaningful and lasting impact on a trade that fuels conflict and human rights abuses in countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia, and Zimbabwe.

Civil society is calling on the European Parliament to strengthen the law when it votes in mid-May.

Despite millions of euro worth of tin, tungsten, tantalum and gold entering the EU every year from high-risk and conflict-affected areas, the EU has so far put no legislation in place to ensure these minerals are sourced responsibly.

Today's vote in INTA follows a [weak legislative proposal](#) put forward by the European Commission in March last year. Under this proposal, responsible sourcing by importers of tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold would be entirely *optional*. The Commission's proposed voluntary self-certification scheme would be open to approximately 300-400 companies—just 0.05% of companies using and trading these minerals in the EU, and would have virtually no impact on companies' sourcing behaviour.

[Investors](#), [religious leaders](#), and [civil society](#) have all criticised the Commission's approach, and have called on the EU to make sure that companies placing minerals on the EU market, whether in their raw form or as part of products, are legally required to source responsibly. Last month, the European Parliament's Development Committee (DEVE) voted overwhelmingly in favour of such a mandatory regime. This year's Sakharov Prize Laureate, Dr. Denis Mukwege, used his acceptance speech to urge the Parliament to do the same.

INTA has failed to respond to these calls for effective legislation and has instead favoured a largely voluntary scheme that further weakens the Commission's proposal on a number of points. Under INTA's scheme only a handful of European smelters and refiners that import tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold into the EU in their raw forms will be legally required to source those minerals responsibly. The regime will be entirely voluntary for other importers of these raw materials, and for companies that import or manufacture products containing them.

The law must be strengthened to make responsible sourcing a **legal requirement for all companies that place these minerals on the European market—in any form**. This 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

existing international standards on responsible sourcing, and complement mandatory requirements in the US and in twelve African countries.

The Committee charged with tackling this issue has missed a critical opportunity. As a result, Parliament now risks taking a major step backwards in attempts to confront the trade in conflict minerals. We are calling on all Parliamentarians to listen to those who have spoken out on this pressing issue, and to vote for a regulation that compels all companies participating in the European market to source their minerals responsibly and transparently—a regulation of which Europe can be proud.

The INTA Committee has been designated to lead the European Parliament's response to the conflict minerals proposal. It is expected that the Plenary of the European Parliament will vote on the conflict minerals regulation in mid-May. The result will define the Parliament's mandate for negotiations with the Council of the European Union.

