
Congo tin trade needs tougher regulation - Watchdog

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VOA reported that a British aid group is calling for the Congolese government to do more to regulate the country's tin industry. Global Witness said that a new industry initiative to trace the origin of tin supplies from the Democratic Republic of Congo will fail to break the link between the mineral trade and the country's ongoing armed conflict.

In the past few months a body that represents members of the tin industry, ITRI, has begun developing proposals to control its supply chain. In the new initiative, traders and middlemen will be required to complete a set of forms declaring the origin of minerals. But the Britain based watchdog Global Witness which has seen the proposals, says the initiative will not be effective in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Ms Emilie Serralta from Global Witness said that suppliers will be asked to tick a box confirming that no armed groups have been involved in the production of the minerals. Initiatives like this will be pointless if mechanisms are not in place to verify what people declare in the forms.

She said that "Now in the context of Congo, filling forms is not the answer. I mean you need spot checks to make sure that actually the situation is as the form is saying or not and it is likely it would not be."

Ms Serralta said that government troops also use force to tax miners and this is not being addressed in the ITRI proposal. She said that "For the moment ITRI as it stands does not recognize that role and that is something that we pointed out to them and said you need to make sure that the Congolese army is not benefiting, otherwise it is just shifting from one rebel group to the Congolese army."

Mr Alyson Warhurst director of the London based risk analysis group Maplecroft said that the tin industry in Congo is difficult to regulate because mining is not industrialized. According to the World Bank, there are as many as 2 million artisanal miners in Congo just one container load of ore could be sourced from as many as 10,000 miners.

Mr Warhurst said that governments and international groups need to be involved in regulating the system. The only way forward, as has been proved by addressing, for example, conflict diamonds largely successfully in West and Central Africa in the late 1990s is by businesses, governments and non governmental organizations working together to understand the chain by which businesses procure these minerals from DRC within supply chains and put in place controls."

The minerals trade has for a long time been a source of revenue for armed rebel groups in eastern Congo including the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda which is linked to the Hutu extremists involved in the genocide in neighboring Rwanda.

(Sourced from Voanews.com)

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