



Security Council

Sixty-second year

Provisional

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| <i>President:</i> | Mr. De Gucht | (Belgium) |
| <i>Members:</i> | China | Mr. Du Xiacong |
| | Congo | Mrs. Nzounza Lekaka |
| | France | Mr. Cruau |
| | Ghana | Mr. Appreku |
| | Indonesia | Mr. Budiman |
| | Italy | Mr. Mantovani |
| | Panama | Mr. Arias |
| | Peru | Mr. Gallardo |
| | Qatar | Mr. Al-Sulaiti |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Kravchenko |
| | Slovakia | Mr. Harmanovsky |
| | South Africa | Mr. Crowley |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Ms. Bennett |
| | United States of America | Mr. Hook |

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

Letter dated 6 June 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General on natural resources and conflict (S/2007/334)

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The meeting was suspended at 1.50 p.m. and resumed at 3.05 p.m.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Brazil, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): I wish to extend our warmest welcome to Your Excellency Karel De Gucht, Foreign Minister of Belgium, as President of the Council, and to acknowledge Belgium's initiative to convene an open debate to examine the sensitive issue of the interrelationship between natural resources and conflict.

The social and economic consequences of extreme events related to access to and disputes over natural resources may arguably have an impact on international security. Cases abound throughout history in which access to and exploitation of natural resources were at the root of armed disputes. Yet perhaps a much higher number of cases in the history of the use of natural resources have not ended in conflict. Competition over scarce resources and security of supply can indeed be key factors of a particular conflict. Nevertheless, utmost caution should be exercised in establishing firm causal links between natural resources, including energy, and the risk of conflict.

The determination as to whether there is such a direct link remains quite a risky challenge in any specific case. In our view, the roots of conflicts are not as a rule traceable to a single cause. Disputes are usually loaded with political connotations, which might impair objective analysis. In line with that, my delegation is convinced that there is a more relevant, stronger link between natural resources and development, as compared to security.

The Security Council's primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, as set out in the United Nations Charter, should not be invoked in general, abstract terms. The Charter foresees that issues relating to economic and social development, as is the case with natural resources, including energy, fall within the purview of the functions and powers of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council.

Brazil believes that Security Council resolution 1625 (2005), regarding its role in conflict prevention, and resolution 1653 (2006), on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, should not be

interpreted in an expansive manner, as that would undermine the roles and responsibilities of the other principal organs of the United Nations. Encroachment in areas pertaining to the area of competence of other United Nations bodies risks not only distorting the application of the Charter-based purposes and principles of the United Nations, but also reinforcing the tendency to mistrust the intentions of the Security Council.

We remain convinced that the global nature of the use of natural resources and its multiple dimensions recommend that any relevant international debate on the issue first take place at the forum of universal representation, which is the General Assembly, and then at the Economic and Social Council and their relevant subsidiary bodies, including the Commission on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and other international specialized forums.

The exploitation of natural resources falls within the purview of sovereign States, which in carrying it out will certainly be mindful of the United Nations Charter, international agreements and international law. In no way should normative decisions eventually taken in bodies of a restricted composition result in new, undue constraints to the global commodity market.

To sum up, the possible linkage between the exploitation of natural resources and conflicts should be examined by the Security Council on a case-by-case basis and inasmuch as it may be relevant to a particular decision. In such cases, the Security Council has established specific mechanisms, such as those encompassed in the sanctions committees and the mandates of peacekeeping operations.

Brazil recognizes that the strategic character of natural resources requires stronger and more effective cooperative frameworks, including through regional political mechanisms that recognize their importance for developing countries in general. Therefore, our delegation advocates the need to improve the synergy of the United Nations system in that area. In line with that, in addressing the root causes of conflicts we stress the importance of deepening the cooperation among the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council, as set out in paragraph 1.b of Article 13 and Article 65 of the Charter.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Sen (India): Let me begin by welcoming you, Sir, and by expressing appreciation for the Belgian presidency of the Security Council in the current month. India appreciates the opportunity afforded to Member States to participate in today's timely discussion on a subject of vital interest for all of us. The concept paper circulated by the Permanent Mission of Belgium earlier this month afforded us a most useful starting point for the discussion.

The issue is important because so many developing countries are crucially dependent on natural resources; for instance, a third of Africa's export income is from natural resources. At the same time, those natural resources often cause and prolong conflict, leading to growth that is sometimes lower and poverty that is sometimes higher than in natural-resource-poor countries. As in a Greek tragedy, the saviour is also the damned. That is the nature of the natural resource curse. Conflicts hold back development, but a certain kind of development also leads to conflict.

Globalization sharpens inequality and regional imbalances, often stimulating natural-resource-rich regions of a country to try to break away. Similarly, deflationary policies and the elimination of subsidies encouraged by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as trade liberalization encouraged by the World Trade Organization, have substantially reduced rural purchasing power and tipped the scales of the natural resource curse into conflict. Rotberg and Easterly have both shown that five resource-rich countries in conflict were, during the preceding 10 years, more than 65 per cent of the time — and in the case of Sierra Leone, 83 per cent — under an IMF programme.

In any treatment of the linkage between natural resources and conflict, the full and permanent sovereignty of each State over its natural resources is a key principle that is immutable. While conflict prevention through better management of the exploitation of resources is theoretically an idea worth considering, it is in practical terms fraught with legal and operational complexities. We are therefore of the view that the best method of preventing conflict prior to its outbreak lies in more comprehensively addressing the problems of inequality and economic deprivation. Creative solutions are needed to the crisis

of expectations and the disparities in economic development. Those cannot be divorced from international economic governance — making globalization fair, making the Doha Round truly development-oriented, and comprehensively reforming the IMF.

With regard to resources prolonging conflict, it appears that the international community is arriving through trial and error at a useful approach, whose contours are only now becoming visible. A judicious mixture of sanctions to prevent the illegal exploitation of natural resources and certification schemes, such as the Kimberley Process, has begun to yield some results. In the instance of rough diamonds, that approach appears to have been successful because it approaches the problem at the level of extraction and from the standpoint of processing and trading. This is also perhaps because such an approach is inclusive enough to visualize a role for the entire international community, including civil society. The Kimberley Process also has merit in its approach to the trade in diamonds by creating a certification scheme that validates and regulates the production of rough diamonds. Last, but not least, such a mechanism avoids the pitfall of treating the issue of resources fuelling conflict as a matter purely related to peace and security. As a result, major diamond trading and processing nations such as India have engaged constructively and actively with the Kimberley Process.

Apart from that, we find some useful suggestions in the concept paper, such as authorizing a role for United Nations mission and United Nations peacekeeping forces in conflict-torn countries. However, such a mandate would need to be very carefully drawn up, both to limit their role to a supporting one, at best, to prevent other forms of potential misuse, and to ensure that neither the United Nations mission nor the peacekeeping forces are diverted from their core responsibilities. Questions of capacity, training and accountability will need to be addressed at the stage of planning such a mandate. Therefore, we would urge that evolving a consensus on those aspects be an exercise carried out with the widest-possible consultations, including with troop-contributing countries.

Lastly, there is the aspect of creating a post-conflict consensus on the use of natural resources in the process of peace consolidation. To evolve

recommendations and approaches on that aspect, we could perhaps formally task the Peacebuilding Commission, as a mechanism established by all States precisely for such purposes, with that responsibility. It should suffice, therefore, to underline the fact that effective and consensual exploitation of natural resources not only brings tangible benefits to all segments of society, but also provides the intangible benefit of creating a useful and desirable habit of cooperation among former foes in a post-conflict society.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Ekanza Ezokola (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): First of all, allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this public debate on an issue whose importance and multifaceted implications and its impact upon international peace and security warrant steady and particular attention by the Security Council, as well as by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. I would like in particular to express the gratitude of my delegation to the Belgian presidency of the Council for underscoring the link between natural resources and conflict.

My delegation associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Tunisia on behalf of the African Group.

The link between natural resources and conflict is well known. We of course know of the existence of blood diamonds, but there also exists blood gold, blood cobalt, blood coltan, blood copper and blood cassiterite, to mention only a few examples. In other words, natural resources have been used to finance armed movements. That has led to bloody conflicts and their attendant tragedy and the sombre scenario of cruelty and destruction.

Peace and security are threatened in various developing countries due to the fact that those countries possess abundant natural resources, which give rise to greed and both domestic and external predation. The illegal exploitation of resources is therefore both a cause of conflict and a factor that exacerbates existing conflicts. The report of the Secretary-General contained in document S/1998/318, which describes the various elements of conflicts, is eloquent on this issue.

The same natural resources that bring about happiness and wealth to certain people and groups of people — namely, warlords, arms merchants and those who illegally exploit resources, both domestic and foreign operators — to the great detriment of States, unfortunately also contribute to insecurity and the unhappiness of populations, who are entitled to resources that should be assets to their own development and fulfilment. The question therefore arises of whether natural resources are a blessing or a curse for those countries.

This situation is the result of several factors. In order to remedy the situation, there is a need for collective national, regional and international will to adopt approaches appropriate to each situation and that distinguish between the pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict phases. During the pre-conflict period, extending State authority throughout the whole of a country's territory, respect for human rights, transparent management, equitable distribution of natural resources, good governance and the exercise of democracy are all essential to preventing natural resources from becoming the cause of conflict.

During a conflict, the approach must involve preventing the entrenchment and spread of the conflict. In order to do so, we must prevent aggressor countries and armed groups from gaining access to and exploiting natural resources. In that regard, we welcome certain decisions taken by the Council, such as, the sending of peacekeeping missions, the establishment of sanctions regimes, the imposition of various embargoes and, of course, its support for the Kimberley Process for diamonds, which began in 2000. Processes similar to the Kimberley Process for resources other than diamonds should also be considered, including for resources that are largely exploited illegally and those which account for a high degree of funding for conflicts. That should be done by identifying and categorizing those resources by zones of conflict.

With regard to the post-conflict period, the approach should entail preventing a relapse into conflict. It is therefore important to assist countries in post-conflict situations, especially developing countries in Africa, to rebuild their destroyed infrastructure, to build local capacity in all areas and to take the steps I just described for the pre-conflict situation. We therefore call upon the international financial institutions to ease the criteria and conditions

for the granting of assistance to countries emerging from conflict, in order that we do not discourage the legitimate hopes of populations to live better lives once a conflict has come to an end.

We welcome the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission. We call upon the international community to help to consolidate the gains of regained peace. We ask our development partners to truly work in a sincere and constructive partnership with those countries in the exploitation of natural resources in the interest of all parties.

In conclusion, we call on everyone to rehabilitate natural resources in those countries so that they can play a positive role in development. That role could serve to raise the collective standard of living and to benefit the common social good.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Ritter (Liechtenstein): Liechtenstein warmly welcomes the initiative of the Belgian presidency to hold an open debate of the Security Council on the topic before us today. We are also grateful to your delegation, Mr. President, for providing us with a succinct and substantive concept paper (S/2007/334, annex) to that end. This is an important initiative on a matter that has not been given sufficient attention in the past, and we hope that your initiative constitutes the first step in the ongoing involvement of the United Nations system in this regard. Given the early stage of the debate, consideration of this topic in other United Nations forums could also be useful, provided that there is the necessary coordination.

The way in which the exploitation of natural resources and the financing of conflict parties is interlinked, particularly with regard to the role played by non-State actors, is well documented. Natural resources can significantly influence conflict dynamics. They can be both one of the factors contributing to the outbreak of violent conflicts and a reason for prolonging them.

As far as conflict prevention is concerned, we agree that the governance of natural resources is of crucial importance. In that respect, it is worth recalling that common article 1, paragraph 2, of the two human rights Covenants of 1966 is relevant in that regard and should be taken into account in all endeavours to establish regimes dealing with the governance of

natural resources. Within the United Nations system, the Kimberley Process is the best-known of such initiatives, since it was launched in response to situations on the agenda of the Security Council. There have been other very important initiatives dealing with the subject, as outlined in the presidency's concept paper. Their endorsement by the General Assembly, or perhaps by the Council itself, would certainly enhance their relevance and effectiveness.

The Council may want to give particular attention to situations where the exploitation of a natural resource is an essential element of the national economy and may present the risk of great revenues being generated through the trafficking of natural resources and illicit commodities in a conflict environment. Of no lesser importance are situations where a natural resource is indispensable to cover the basic needs of a population or populations involved. That is of particular relevance in connection with water, an increasingly scarce resource for which there is already competition by consumers in several parts of the world. Access to water already plays a role in various current conflict situations. Efforts by the Council to solve them must take this aspect into account.

As outlined in the presidency's concept paper, the Council's action in the past has been focused mainly on the role of natural resources once a conflict has broken out, usually in the form of armed conflict. Sanctions imposed by the Council with regard to certain commodities have contributed to conflict resolution in Angola, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Experience shows that such sanctions need to be tailored to the circumstances of each individual case and to have clearly identified objectives, specified measures for implementation by Member States and conditions for their suspension or lifting.

In fine-tuning future action against the background of past experience, the Council can continue to take effective measures in that respect. But we also believe that future discussions would benefit from an enhanced emphasis on aspects of prevention and early identification of situations where natural resources could contribute to the outbreak of a conflict. The debate can thus be framed in the context of relevant General Assembly resolutions as well as Council resolution 1625 (2005), adopted during the 2005 World Summit. Very useful work could be carried out within the United Nations system by establishing

principles on the governance of natural resources, supporting existing initiatives and ensuring that the relevance of natural resources is taken into account in political efforts aimed at conflict prevention.

The role played by natural resources in post-conflict environments is also essential. When combined with good governance, the exploitation of natural resources can have a stabilizing effect by generating economic growth and thus alleviating poverty. But it can also become a subject of transnational organized crime and thereby play a part in causing war-torn societies to relapse into conflict. It is therefore crucial that the Security Council support international and regional efforts to promote assistance to post-conflict countries that are rich in natural resources. The Council should in particular explore a possible stronger role for the Peacebuilding Commission in this respect and promote increased activities of other United Nations agencies and programmes, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

We hope that this debate will result in a presidential statement that gives guidance for further discussion. The next stage of discussion would certainly benefit from a comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on the existing activities and capacities within the system and on the possibility of strengthening the civil component of peacekeeping missions in the area of good governance on natural resources management in all its aspects. In addition, such a report could elaborate on the possible relationships between specific resources and certain kinds of conflicts.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Mr. Minister, I would like to congratulate you and Ambassador Verbeke, as well as the Belgian delegation, on your skilful guidance of the Council's work during this month. Let me also express our appreciation to Ambassador Khalilzad and the United States delegation for a successful presidency of the Council last month.

We welcome Belgium's initiative in organizing this open debate on natural resources and conflict. The presidency's paper (S/2007/334, annex) offers an excellent analysis of the link between natural resources and conflict. This is an issue of special significance for developing countries, many of which have suffered from the exploitation of their natural resources during

and after the colonial era. The exploitation of natural resources is, at times, the cause of conflict; indeed, it is often the very objective of war. The profits of exploitation also fuel and sustain conflicts.

The creation of the United Nations coincided with and contributed to the era of decolonization and independence for many of its present Member States. It soon became apparent to these nascent States that their political independence would not be complete without the exercise of full sovereignty and control over their natural resources. Yet illegal and externally orchestrated exploitation of natural resources in the developing world continues in old and new forms, especially in Africa. It has been said that Africa is rich, but its people are poor. It is no accident, therefore, that so many conflicts continue to afflict that great continent.

The Security Council has expressed its concern about this issue in the past. The report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo — Kassem report (S/2003/1027) — presented an excellent analysis of the continuing exploitation of the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Security Council's presidential statement of 19 November 2003 (S/PRST/2003/21) condemned that exploitation. In varying degrees, the analysis of the Kassem report could be applied to past and current events in several other resource-rich African and other developing countries. More specific initiatives have been undertaken — significantly outside the United Nations — including the Kimberley Process and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. Absence of specific United Nations action signals perhaps the difficulty encountered in the past in reaching agreement on meaningful measures within the Security Council and other United Nations bodies.

This reluctance was manifest in November 2003, when the Pakistan delegation in the Security Council circulated a draft resolution on the illegal exploitation of natural resources and arms trafficking in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The eventual decisions of the Council did not act on some central recommendations of the Kassem Panel, which was discontinued. The current debate in the Council offers an opportunity to initiate a broader and more comprehensive approach to the issue, covering the

whole range of conflicts and the different actions required at three stages — before, during and after a conflict. While the Security Council should undertake action within its competence and relating to the issues on its agenda, comprehensive action by the other competent organs — the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission — will also be needed.

The Pakistan delegation would strongly recommend that the Security Council establish a new task force of experts to study the exploitation of natural resources in the context of the numerous conflict situations on its agenda, especially the complex crises in Africa. The Security Council's approach of utilizing sanctions to control arms trafficking and natural resource exploitation has proved, unfortunately, to be too narrow and, at times, inappropriate in responding to various situations. More extensive measures, including border controls and wider monitoring, are required. Peacekeeping forces could be provided with the mandate and capacity for the monitoring and interdiction of illegal exploitation, transportation and trade in natural resources.

However, it is vital to address not only the supply but also the demand for natural resources. It is the demand for resources, mostly from the advanced countries, and the financing provided for exploitation and marketing of natural resources which make possible the vicious circle of commerce and conflict.

The Security Council or, if this is not possible, the General Assembly could adopt certain norms and recommendations for national laws and regulations that would help to prevent the illegal exploitation of natural resources and its contribution to conflicts. The Pakistan delegation would suggest the following, among other elements: an undertaking by all States to prevent the financing, directly or indirectly, of the illegal exploitation of natural resources; the adoption by States of national laws that would criminalize the wilful provision or collection, by any means, directly or indirectly, of funds by their nationals, or in their territories, for the illegal exploitation of natural resources; action by States to freeze funds and other financial assets or economic resources of persons or entities which are identified as having participated in the illegal exploitation of such resources; the establishment and maintenance of lists by the United Nations of individuals, entities and enterprises designated as being associated with the illegal

exploitation of natural resources; and an undertaking by Governments to take effective action against all those individuals, groups, entities and enterprises involved in the illegal exploitation of natural resources.

Beyond action by the Security Council, the United Nations and the international community can contribute to ending illegal exploitation by promoting national processing of natural resources and national control over the various stages of the value-addition and commercial process. For example, it is worth examining to what extent the diamond trade in Sierra Leone brings benefits to the Government and the people of the country. Their share of the proceeds from diamond exploitation and trade should be just and equitable. Specific mechanisms should be developed for each specific natural resource, or group of resources — gold, diamonds, minerals, forests and oil — to enhance the national share in the legitimate exploitation and trade of such resources.

The Peacebuilding Commission can play a vital role in capacity-building in the post-conflict situations that are referred to it. The Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly should promote similar measures to prevent the outbreak of conflicts by maximizing the benefits of natural resource exploitation for the countries that own them.

It is natural that the Security Council should be focused on the conflict situations in Africa. Yet the international community will, very soon, need to focus on the equitable exploitation and use of two other vital resources: oil and water.

Energy resources already are part of the strategic calculations of the major Powers, almost all of whom are major importers of fossil fuels. Oil in particular has been the object and the cause of major conflicts. Energy security is most desirable, not the least for developing countries. The United Nations needs to play a more active role to advance this objective in ways that are equitable for all consumers and producers. But energy security should not emerge as a new *casus belli* for the use of force or external aggression or intervention.

Similarly, in a world with an expanding population, spreading deserts and melting glaciers, access to water — which is often shared — is likely to emerge as an existential issue for many nations and peoples. It could become the cause of a host of disputes and conflicts. It is time for the international

community to construct an international regime that ensures equitable access to and availability of water for all peoples and all States.

The President: (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Benin, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the consideration without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Zinsou (Benin) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

(*spoke in English*)

I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): History has shown us that resources can become a curse rather than a blessing for many countries. Wars are caused and conflicts are fuelled by illegal exploitation and irresponsible management of resources. This means that the issue of natural resources and conflict is highly relevant to the Security Council, and we welcome today's debate.

Managing natural resources such as diamonds, minerals, oil, natural gas and timber in a fragile State with a poor population is a difficult task. The illicit extraction of resources can be enormously profitable for militant groups and international criminal networks, and weak Governments often fall victim to these groups and their ambitions for power and influence.

The battle for control over mineral wealth is a problem that reaches far beyond national borders. It affects regional stability and international security. We, the Members of the United Nations, have not sufficiently addressed this issue and its implications for peace processes around the world.

We must recognize that the battle for natural resources is a key part of our peace efforts. This means that our peacekeepers must have clear directives and resources to respond accordingly. Today, only a few peacekeeping operations on the ground have the robust

mandate and capacity necessary to investigate, monitor and arrest those responsible for illicit exploitation of and trafficking in resources. The Council should seek to address this issue as a matter of priority when drafting future mandates.

Improved governance is crucial for better management of natural resources. This means checks and balances, anti-corruption programmes and proper legislation, as well as external financial support and sustained political will by host Governments.

We believe the peacebuilding architecture created by the Peacebuilding Commission, the Fund and the Support Office is a particularly relevant tool here as an important step towards more sustained and coherent international efforts in post-conflict situations.

Governments of resource-rich countries bear the ultimate responsibility for translating those resources into a blessing for their people. But the international community has a responsibility to support fragile States through mediation, peacekeeping, emergency assistance and technical support. We also have a responsibility to ensure that foreign companies extracting natural resources from developing countries comply with international rules and pay attention to the needs of the local population.

We have recently seen the emergence of voluntary tools that could be important safeguards, such as the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). The EITI aims to defeat the "resource curse" of poverty, corruption and conflict through transparency and accountability. This requires sound governance systems and sufficient capacity to administer and monitor the extractive industries sector.

Norway is host to the international secretariat for the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and supports the Initiative politically and financially. We welcome the implementation efforts taking place in more than 20 countries and call for additional partners to join this Initiative.

The Norwegian Oil for Development initiative is another example. This initiative assists developing countries in managing petroleum resources in a way that generates economic growth, increases living standards and promotes environmental sustainability.

Finally, Norway is also part of a group of countries, corporations and non-governmental

organizations that have initiated another approach that is relevant for our debate here today. These are the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights. These Principles aim to balance the need for safety and respect for human rights in conflict zones and other challenging environments where extractive companies operate.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Benin.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes your presence, Sir, as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, at this public meeting of the Security Council, to which it attaches particular importance. I wish also to congratulate you warmly on your assumption of the presidency of the Council and on having taken the initiative to hold this open debate on the link between natural resources and conflict. The reality of that link has been clearly demonstrated by most of the speakers who have preceded me. I endorse the statements made this morning by the representative of Tunisia on behalf of the African Group and by the representative of Congo, whose views on the matter I fully share.

Natural resources are an essential factor for the prosperity of States. The course of human history has been constantly influenced by the quest to control natural resources, which are an important driving force in international relations. Globalization has encouraged the illegal exploitation of natural resources, in all its forms, both in the context of actions by non-State armed groups and as part of the informal economy, as is the case of panning for gold. The illegal exploitation of natural resources leads to the deterioration of the environment. It promotes international organized crime, in particular the trafficking of children who are used as labour in quarries. Annually, it deprives African economies of billions of dollars, money that is used to finance, depending on the circumstances, illegal trafficking of arms or the influence peddling and corruption that undermine State structures and jeopardize their ability to function.

From the standpoint of the principles and purposes of the Charter, it is fortunate that the link between natural resources and conflict is fully taken into account in the activities assigned to the Security Council as part of its mandated responsibilities. It is crucial that the Council be able to resolutely fight the illegal exploitation of natural resources, as it set about

doing in resolution 1625 (2005) on conflict prevention, in particular in Africa. In order to do that, it must continue to make appropriate use of the powers conferred upon it by the Charter whenever situations emerge that could pose a threat to international peace and security with respect to natural resources.

Beyond the management of specific situations, it is incumbent upon the Security Council to consider systemic measures that could be taken to fight practices that are harmful to the maintenance of international peace and security as it relates to natural resources. Within that framework, the Security Council could commission studies on the trafficking of natural resources and high-value commodities that could or do contribute to the outbreak, escalation or continuation of conflict. Such studies could be aimed at identifying the mechanisms by which such trafficking develops and measures that could be recommended to States — both nationally and within the framework of multilateral cooperation — taking into account all of the relevant actors.

In managing certain armed conflicts linked to the control of natural resources, the Security Council has often made use of sanctions, in particular embargoes targeting the products in question. It is clear that the effectiveness of such measures depends on compliance and on their consistent application by all States. However, when an internal conflict is caused by the monopolization of natural resources by a minority, sanctions may not be the only valid option. If the circumstances so require, such measures need to be imposed as long as necessary in order to be able to establish legitimate mechanisms for exploiting resources, so that the countries involved can mobilize their domestic resources to finance reconstruction and development.

That concern should be taken into account in defining the mandates of peacekeeping operations, so that the international community possess the means to use its authority to contribute to replacing an economy of war, spawned by conflict, with an economy of peace. That means that assistance to countries emerging from conflict to establish solid and sustainable national institutions must be supported by assistance towards national ownership of the natural resources that are in dispute, and towards their transparent management. In the final analysis, that is a key aspect of the rule of law and good governance.

Consolidating the mechanisms established to that end will ensure the lasting stabilization of countries. The equitable distribution of income is key in that regard. The Security Council needs to support the parties to a conflict in defining the standards for peaceful relations between them — ensuring respect for the United Nations Charter and the general principles of international law — and to ensure that all parties comply with agreements reached.

In conclusion, my delegation welcomes the proposal made this morning by the President of the Economic and Social Council to establish a forum between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council on the link between natural resources and conflict. My delegation believes that that proposal could form part of the institutionalization of conflict prevention within the United Nations, something which my country is urging.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no further speakers on my list.

Following consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council.

“The Security Council recalls the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and in particular the Security Council's primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. In this respect, the Security Council recognizes the role that natural resources can play in armed conflict and post-conflict situations.

“The Security Council reaffirms that every State has the full and inherent sovereign right to control and exploit its own natural resources in accordance with the Charter and the principles of international law.

“The Security Council stresses that natural resources are a crucial factor in contributing to long-term economic growth and sustainable development.

“The Security Council recalls resolution 1625 (2005) whereby the Council adopted the declaration on strengthening the effectiveness of the Security Council's role in conflict prevention, particularly in Africa, in which it reaffirmed its determination to take action against illegal exploitation and trafficking of natural resources

and high-value commodities in areas where it contributes to the outbreak, escalation or continuation of armed conflict.

“Moreover, the Security Council notes that, in specific armed conflict situations, the exploitation, trafficking and illicit trade of natural resources have played a role in areas where they have contributed to the outbreak, escalation or continuation of armed conflict. The Security Council, through its various resolutions, has taken measures on this issue, more specifically to prevent illegal exploitation of natural resources, especially diamonds and timber, from fuelling armed conflicts and to encourage transparent and lawful management of natural resources, including the clarification of the responsibility of management of natural resources, and has established sanctions committees and groups and panels of experts to oversee the implementation of those measures.

“The Security Council emphasizes the importance of improving the work of and strengthening the contributions made by existing sanctions committees and the various expert groups and panels established by the Council in dealing with the impact of illegal exploitation of natural resources on conflicts in the countries under its consideration. The Security Council also recalls the work done by the Security Council Informal Working Group on General Issues of Sanctions (2006) and refers in this regard to its report (S/2006/997).

“The Security Council recognizes that United Nations missions and peacekeeping operations deployed in resource-endowed countries experiencing armed conflict could play a role in helping the Governments concerned, with full respect for their sovereignty over their natural resources, to prevent the illegal exploitation of those resources from further fuelling the conflict. The Security Council underlines the importance of taking this dimension of conflict into account, where appropriate, in the mandates of United Nations and regional peacekeeping operations, within their capabilities, including by making provision for assisting Governments, upon their request, in preventing the illegal exploitation of natural resources by the parties to the conflict, in

particular, where appropriate, by developing adequate observation and policing capacities to that end.

“The Security Council recognizes, in conflict and post-conflict situations, the importance of cooperation, in shared responsibility, among source, transit and destination countries in preventing and combating trafficking, illicit trade and illegal exploitation of natural resources. The Security Council also emphasizes the important contribution of commodity monitoring and certification schemes such as the Kimberley Process.

“The Security Council acknowledges the crucial role that the Peacebuilding Commission, together with other United Nations and non-United Nations actors, can play in post-conflict situations in assisting Governments, upon their request, in ensuring that natural resources become an engine for sustainable development. In this regard, the Security Council recognizes the role of voluntary initiatives aimed at improving revenue transparency such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). The Security Council also stresses that the use, disposal and management of natural resources is a multifaceted and cross-sector issue that involves various United Nations organizations. In this regard, the Security Council acknowledges the valuable contribution of various United Nations organizations in promoting lawful, transparent and sustainable management and exploitation of natural resources.

“The Security Council recognizes the need for the private sector to contribute to the good governance and avoidance of illegal exploitation of natural resources in countries in conflict. In this regard, the Council also notes the important contribution voluntary principles and standards play in encouraging multinational enterprises to adopt a responsible business conduct such as provided for by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the OECD Risk Awareness Tool for Multinational Enterprises in Weak Governance Zones and the United Nations Global Compact.

“The Security Council stresses the important role, in the context of security sector reform in the post-conflict environment, of transparent and effective national security and customs structures for the effective control and management of natural resources by preventing the illegal access to and the trade and exploitation of those resources.

“The Security Council emphasizes that, in countries emerging from conflict, lawful, transparent and sustainable management — at local, national and international levels — and exploitation of natural resources is a critical factor in maintaining stability and in preventing a relapse into conflict. The Council recalls in this respect that it has welcomed country-specific initiatives such as the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP) in Liberia — resolution 1626 (2005) — and related efforts such as the Liberia Forest Initiative.

“The Security Council reiterates the important role of regional organizations in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations as well as its relevant resolutions 1625 (2005) and 1631 (2005), S/PRST/2006/39 and S/PRST/2007/7. In this regard, the Security Council recognizes, in armed conflict and post-conflict situations, the need for a more coordinated approach by the United Nations, regional organizations and Governments concerned, in particular the empowerment of Governments in post-conflict situations to better manage their resources.”

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2007/22.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.05 p.m.