



# Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

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Thursday, 6 October 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Adamo/Mr. Biang . . . . .	(Gabon)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania . . . . .	Ms. Dautllari
	Brazil . . . . .	Mr. Costa Filho
	China . . . . .	Mr. Dai Bing
	France . . . . .	Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault
	Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Kan-Dapaah
	India . . . . .	Mr. Muraleedharan
	Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Mythen
	Kenya . . . . .	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico . . . . .	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Norway . . . . .	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Nebenzia/Ms. Evstigneeva
	United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Mr. Al Nahyan
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America . . . . .	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

## Agenda

### Peace and security in Africa

Strengthening the fight against the financing of armed groups and terrorists through the illicit trafficking of natural resources

Letter dated 30 September 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Gabon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2022/728)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Peace and security in Africa**

#### **Strengthening the fight against the financing of armed groups and terrorists through the illicit trafficking of natural resources**

#### **Letter dated 30 September 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Gabon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2022/728)**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Central African Republic, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Morocco and Senegal to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; His Excellency Mr. Bankole Adeoye, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security; and Mr. Paul-Simon Handy, Regional Director for East Africa and Representative of the Institute for Security Studies to the African Union.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Olof Skoog, Head of Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/728, which contains the text of a letter dated 30 September 2022 from the Permanent Representative of Gabon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept note on the item under consideration.

I wish to warmly welcome the ministers. Their presence here today underscores the importance of the subject matter under discussion.

I now give the floor to Ms. Waly.

**Ms. Waly** (*spoke in French*): I am grateful for the opportunity to address the Security Council. I would like to thank the Gabonese presidency for its invitation and to commend its commitment to the fight against poaching and the trafficking in natural resources and to protecting the environment. I also thank Gabon for being one of the first countries in Africa to promote carbon trading.

The threat of terrorism and organized crime is taking hold in Africa. Last year, there were 3,500 victims of terrorist acts in sub-Saharan Africa, which is almost half of the victims worldwide. The Sahel in particular is under assault from some of the world's most active and deadly terrorist groups, both in terms of attacks and recruitment strategy.

The Security Council has repeatedly expressed its concern about the scourge of terrorism and the activities of armed groups and criminal networks, which destabilize Africa and profit from the continent's natural resources.

It is essential to better understand the links between organized crime and terrorism in Africa through rigorous data and evidence collection and the development of appropriate programmes and policies. There is evidence that the illegal exploitation of minerals, such as gold, silver and diamonds, provides armed groups, rebel groups and terrorists with significant sources of revenue. The proceeds of such trafficking can also benefit armed groups that control the mining areas or trafficking routes.

Such sources of income, also obtained through extortion and the illegal imposition of taxes on the population, allow those groups to acquire arms and other commodities to maintain their hold on territory and conflict zones. Strategic and lucrative access to trafficking routes is also a factor of power among armed groups.

*(spoke in English)*

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) works with Member States to prevent and respond to crimes that threaten the environment, including wildlife, forest and fisheries crimes, illegal mining and trafficking in precious metals and waste. From 2019 to 2021, UNODC conducted research into the illicit trafficking of minerals into bordering areas of Gabon, Cameroon and Congo, known as the Tri-National Dja-Odzala-Minkébé area, Chad and the

Central African Republic as a source of funding for terrorist groups in the region. Based on the outcomes of that research, we established that illegally mined gold and other precious metals are being fed into the legitimate market, providing huge profits for traffickers.

In late 2020, UNODC and INTERPOL coordinated a firearms operation, which seized 40,000 sticks of dynamite and detonator cords. They were intended for illegal gold mining by armed terrorist groups in the Sahel.

Wildlife trafficking has also been reported as a possible source of funding for armed groups. The illegal trade in ivory alone generates \$400 million in illicit income each year.

With Africa's population of approximately 1.3 billion, almost 500 million Africans lived in extreme poverty last year. Such criminal exploitation strips the people of Africa of a significant source of revenue. It robs the millions of people who depend on those natural resources for their livelihoods, and it fuels conflicts and exacerbates instability.

The climate emergency and the coronavirus disease pandemic have wreaked havoc on already fragile economies. The illicit trafficking of natural resources further jeopardizes development and winds back progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, and it severely undermines Agenda 2063. It is clear that there can be no sustainable development without peace and stability, and there will be no peace and security without sustainable development.

Our work goes far beyond border seizures. UNODC is the guardian of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime — the main international instrument in the fight against such crimes. We support member countries in putting in place the policies, legislation and operational responses required to better address terrorist threats. We also work closely with our African counterparts to strengthen their capacity to investigate and prosecute crimes that affect the environment.

In 2021 alone, we implemented 25 counter-terrorism projects in sub-Saharan Africa, with over 160 activities delivered, and trained 2,500 people. As part of the efforts to combat terrorism in the Sahel, we are currently organizing training workshops with the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute to strengthen the understanding and skills

of criminal justice officials to work across agencies, share intelligence and information and bring down terrorist networks and those who fund them. UNODC also supports 10 Member States across sub-Saharan Africa in improving their frameworks to counter terrorist financing and money laundering, including in the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Niger and Somalia.

Under our West Africa counter-terrorism financing initiative, we support countries in implementing national asset-freezing mechanisms. That has already led to the first designations on a national sanctions list. This year, six nationals operating in the gold sector were designated under resolution 1373 (2001) to prevent the financing of terrorist acts.

We also work to strengthen inter-agency coordination among intelligence services, law enforcement agencies, financial intelligence units and prosecutors and to promote the financial investigation of natural resources and wildlife trafficking. We build partnerships between the private sector, including the companies involved in mineral supply chains, and public and civil society stakeholders, and help to improve understanding of national and cross-border illicit financial flows related to mineral crimes.

In a similar vein, our environment team runs specialized workshops and training for magistrates, law enforcement officers and wildlife forensic experts engaged in the fight against environmental crime to promote a coordinated and holistic response.

In the Central African region, we are also rolling out a European Union-funded €6 million project on wildlife trafficking and the illegal exploitation of natural resources to support the Economic Community of Central African States. It promotes improved national and regional cooperation and response to wildlife and timber trafficking and a better understanding of illegal mining and trafficking in precious metals. UNODC wildlife and timber trafficking programmes address the cross-border theft of natural resources. The focus is to increase the prevention, investigations and prosecutions of trafficking in those natural resources.

In Africa, conflict zones are disproportionately affected by illegal mining and trafficking in precious metals. Mineral supply chains are often linked to child abuse, human trafficking, forced labour and other human rights violations. With 60 per cent of Africa's population under 25 years of age, young people are

both the future of the continent and its most vulnerable citizens. But we also know that, when empowered, young people are powerful agents of change. They can create a better future, advocate on behalf of themselves and their communities and protect their natural resources.

I am especially proud of the UNODC youth-driven peacebuilding project. In partnership with UNESCO, we are empowering youth to become weavers of peace in the cross-border regions of Gabon, Cameroon and Chad. The aim is to create a network of 1,800 young weavers of peace, to enable them to become actors in conflict prevention and peacebuilding in cross-border regions and identify alternative livelihoods for cross-border communities.

UNODC remains fully engaged in supporting Africa's fight against the criminal trade in wildlife and natural resources. I welcome the attention of the Council to the growing concerns that those illicit revenues are financing terrorist activities and armed groups. We stand ready to assist the people of Africa in their right to peace, stability, justice and prosperity, today and for future generations, leaving no money for terrorists and leaving no one behind.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Waly for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Adeoye.

**Mr. Adeoye**: It is an established fact that terrorists and armed groups continue to execute their activities, largely dependent on their ability to adequately and sustainably finance their preparation, planning and execution of attacks. From the Sahel to the Horn of Africa and from Cabo Delgado to the Lake Chad basin, the same tactics are used by those dastardly groups. Large terrorist organizations, including small or extremist cells, as well as foreign terrorist fighters and so-called lone wolves, require stable funding to operate, with varying approaches to securing the required funding. Indeed, funding remains the biggest enabler for terrorists.

In Africa, various means of terrorist financing and equipping exist, in particular kidnapping for ransom; drug and human trafficking; the smuggling and trafficking of weapons; the illicit transfer of goods and funds to individuals; cattle rustling; the use of charitable organizations; the illegal exploitation and trafficking of natural resources; and illegal taxes, inter alia. It is also important to emphasize that extortion

and taxation systems in areas controlled by terrorists have also served to fund their operations. Natural resource-related crimes, such as the exploitation of illegal mining, as was mentioned by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in particular gold, as well as poaching and illicit trade, all contribute to terrorists' sources of funding.

There is also increasing evidence that terrorists are turning to transnational organized crime to generate funding and acquire logistical support to carry out their violent activities. Preventing terrorist financing is therefore one aspect of what must be a multifaceted approach to eliminating terrorism on the continent and, indeed, globally. By cooperating nationally, regionally and internationally, we can use the intelligence gathered in financial investigations to detect, disrupt and dismantle terrorist networks and their financing.

For its part, the African Union has been deploying a number of initiatives, including the establishment of national counter-terrorism fusion centres, national financial intelligence units and law enforcement at the national level to ensure that no forms of terrorist financing become part of their arsenal. More recently, the African Union Heads of State gathered in Malabo in May to respond to the scourge of terrorism and unconstitutional changes of Government and called for an in-depth study on the issue, to which the African Union Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security is now committed. That study will look at all sources of terrorist financing, as well as the role of foreign interests and local collaborators in exploiting those forms of financing.

Therefore, there is a need for enhanced cooperation in terms of capacity-building and the transfer of knowledge in favour of countries in post-conflict situations and still in conflict to better control their natural resources and establish national databases on the matter. Similarly, the capacities of national financial intelligence units should be enhanced. Sanctions regimes against terrorist individuals, groups or organizations need to be strengthened. We will require the cooperation of the Council in that regard. Such sanctions regimes need to target parties providing support to armed and terrorist groups involved in the illegal exploitation of natural resources.

Let me highlight the need to strengthen the existing financial control and monitoring systems, including the strict enforcement of prudential rules for financial

institutions, on-site inspections and monitoring the transfer of off-activity funds, particularly those that have been executed through stockbrokers. Such monitoring will help ensure transparency in the public collection of funds and that the proceeds are not used to finance terrorist activities. The African Union also calls for the enhancement of the exchange of information, collaboration and coordination in matters related to terrorism at the national and regional levels, as well as the need for unified typology reports on money-laundering and terrorism financing in our continent. A similar collaborative effort between the African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism and other specialized entities in the area will be critical.

As we move forward, it is imperative to highlight that terrorists are determined, with a high degree of adaptability, innovation and creativity, to continue to exploit the weaknesses in our institutional, legal and structural systems. That is why we need to step up our level of commitment. We need to step up in order to remain ahead of the terrorist groups in terms of creativity and innovation. We must think outside the box.

We require a robust policy and institutional framework to be the core of our success as the international community. The African Union stands ready to continue to work with regional mechanisms, as well as relevant research centres, on our continent, to find the best means to address this scourge. A robust criminal justice response to terrorism and its financing will also be appreciated.

Let me conclude by assuring the Council of the African Union's continued readiness to cooperate with the United Nations agencies and all concerned to ensure that we frustrate the terrorists in terms of their financing in order to reduce and eliminate their operations for the sake of peace on our continent and in the world.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Adeoye for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Handy.

**Mr. Handy** (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank the Gabonese presidency of the Security Council for having invited me to this debate. At the same time, I would like to thank the Permanent Representation of the International Organization of la Francophonie for

involving the Boutros-Ghali Peacekeeping Observatory in this discussion.

Given the time constraints, I would like to focus my briefing on three main areas. The first is the complex nature of illicit trafficking by non-State and terrorist armed groups. I will then briefly touch on the many tools available to us, the international community. I will finish with some courses of action.

With regard to the different situations and the various armed groups and terrorists, the current understanding of the nature of armed groups operating in crisis theatres across Africa suggests that the contexts are very diverse. From the Sahel to the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the borders of Somalia, non-State armed and terrorist groups vary in structure, *modus operandi* and composition.

Such diverse situations remind us of the need to avoid generalization in the kind of response needed to strengthen the fight against the income-generating activities of armed groups. While there is reason to focus on the trafficking in natural resources, it is particularly important to emphasize that it is the existence of trafficking in general that must be addressed. Natural resources are only one dimension of that trafficking, which includes human beings and cultural and monetary items, as well as drugs.

Numerous examples in the Sahel illustrate how violent extremist groups exploit transnational criminal networks and local conflicts to finance their activities and establish themselves in areas. In the Central African Republic, some non-State armed groups manage to generate millions of dollars a year just by taxing transhumance, or livestock migration, routes.

The second point that I would like to make is about the often little-used tools at our disposal. Thanks to the work of many specialized organizations, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, represented here, and research centres around the world, regional and international organizations have taken an increasing number of measures to combat the trafficking in natural resources by armed and terrorist groups.

However, to be effective, those tools need at least two things: increased State capacity — administrative, security and judicial — and international cooperation, particularly given the often-transnational nature of the organized crime that underpins the commercial

activities of armed and terrorist groups. Individual State action is necessary, but not sufficient.

What we are facing is more a crisis of inaction than a crisis of tools and other countering means, for the tools exist. They can be refined, adjusted and better adapted to changing contexts. But they certainly exist in the form of various United Nations resolutions, African Union and regional economic community protocols and various bilateral treaties between countries.

I will end with some courses of action. That leads me to share the courses of action that I think would be useful in order to strengthen the fight against the financing of non-State armed groups through the trafficking in natural resources.

The first, which was mentioned by some speakers, is to modernize sanctions regimes. It is common to criticize sanctions regimes today, but it should be noted that various United Nations sanctions regimes have greatly helped to improve understanding of the nature of non-State armed and terrorist groups and their financing and operating methods. Thanks to the investigative work of expert groups, many channels were uncovered, and their actors exposed.

But sanctions regimes would probably benefit from being modernized and made more sophisticated. I will give just one example from recent experience to illustrate that.

Assets freezes and travel bans are among the most-used tools of sanctions regimes. The ability of some actors to circumvent them should prompt new measures targeting not only individuals, but probably also networks of actors or individuals that facilitate trafficking in natural resources in different conflicts.

But — and this is the second step — criminal networks within administrations and often armed forces must also be broken up. United Nations resolutions now recognize that criminal networks clearly exist within the administrations and armed forces of countries affected by illicit trafficking in natural resources.

In many African countries, a combination of adverse factors often contributes to the formation of criminal networks within the armed forces, which are often the ones whose task it is to fight against non-State and terrorist groups. That therefore often results in competition between the armed forces and the non-State armed groups. Representatives will agree

that the presence of those criminal networks is likely to prolong the scourge.

Lastly, on improving due diligence processes, regional organizations have developed highly sophisticated certification processes. Due diligence processes, such as those of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Kimberley Process, have significantly evolved, transformed and adapted. For example, instead of embargoing entire countries, thereby depriving States of vital tax revenue, it has now been realized that embargo regimes on natural resources should be applied selectively. Their application should take into account developments on the ground, in particular expanding State authority.

It follows from what I just said that one of the key indicators for verifying which measures are being taken in combating the financing of non-State and terrorist groups is their impact on a country's tax revenue. If the implementation of the measures does not lead to a corresponding increase in revenue in a given area, then something is probably not working properly. The measures are probably less effective than they appear. Concerted action by States is therefore essential to successfully combating the financing of non-State and terrorist armed groups through the illicit trafficking in natural resources.

Holding this debate is clearly a sign that the Security Council is seized of this matter.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Handy for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister for Foreign Affairs for Gabon.

I thank the Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly; the African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Mr. Adeoye; and the Regional Director for East Africa and Representative to the African Union, Institute for Security Studies, Mr. Handy, for their informative briefings.

The mapping of armed groups attests to the clear link between their location and control over natural resources. The illicit exploitation of natural resources, be they biological or mineral, is linked to human trafficking, kidnapping for ransom and drug trafficking and is a major source of financing for armed and terrorist groups. It is indisputable that natural resources, mainly

from the soil and subsoil, fuel conflicts as a source of funding and, at the same time, are the principal goals of such conflicts.

The African continent abounds in innumerable natural resources. Those resources, which are the pride of the continent, are unfortunately at the heart of well-organized trafficking that sows terror within our villages and cities, within which the people are the indiscriminate victims of atrocities. A new illicit triangular trade is linking Africa as an exporter of raw materials to countries that export weapons and mercenaries through countries that offer parallel financial arrangements.

Furthermore, armed and terrorist groups have progressively set up supply channels for various types of resources in order to better finance themselves. Consequently, underground criminal economies have been established in certain parts of States' territories and cross-border areas. As a result of the predatory exploitation of natural resources, conflicts are self-sustaining, with mineral revenues financing the purchase of arms and the recruitment of militias. A military and criminal economy has been established based on trade in wild species of fauna and flora, coltan and gold, as well as on tin mines and child labour. That parallel economy is being run by military groups, security companies, buyers, brokers and clandestine exporters, with regional and international repercussions.

Beyond today's discussion, the Security Council must address that alarming situation, which is affecting several regions of the African continent, and find urgently needed solutions to adequately deal with the bloodshed and hardship resulting from the financing of armed and terrorist groups. The scope of the task requires a multidimensional response involving both security and development.

We must identify the grey areas of the criminal economy and its links with the official economy. Determining the links among companies, armies, transporters, arms dealers and traffickers, banks, illegal financial networks and the wide array of intermediaries, including companies that enjoy respectability via a veneer of legitimacy, is a must. In that regard, we reaffirm our support for the Kimberley Process and welcome the measures taken by African States and international organizations to regulate the mineral supply chain in order to promote transparency

and establish a certification system that ensures that mineral resources are not used to fund arms groups.

Such certification systems must include both the producers and the buyers. Moreover, it is also imperative that the assets of armed and terrorist groups overflowing in Africa be tracked with the same rigour as international terrorist groups through the use of the full range of counter-terrorism financing mechanisms, both at the supply chain level and with regard to end buyers. The strengthening of cross-border security cooperation through joint regional operations, the exchange of financial information among countries, combating environmental crime, the freezing of assets, extrajudicial cooperation, countering the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons and combating money-laundering are all measures that must be implemented in a coordinated manner at the regional and global levels.

*(spoke in English)*

It is of paramount importance that we nurture a general understanding of the complex links that exist among natural resources, their exploitation and violent conflicts through better coordination of the activities of the various peacebuilding actors. We need to initiate a positive dynamic and overcome political divisions, conflicts of interest and hidden agendas in order to build a consensus based on shared standards and actions on conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Gabon calls on the Security Council to strengthen the mechanisms available to combat the networks that plunder natural resources to finance armed groups in Africa. In addition, we seek the Council members' support, without reservation, for the efforts and advocacy of the African Peace and Security Council. At this critical moment, the African continent is plagued by the proliferation of armed groups, assaults by terrorist groups and other asymmetric threats to peace and stability.

To conclude, I would like to stress the urgent need for the Council to act with greater determination to cut off the financing of armed groups that increase instability and violence in many regions of the world. Natural resources should not be a curse for the countries in which they exist.

*(spoke in French)*

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I call on the Minister for National Security of Ghana.

**Mr. Kan-Dapaah** (Ghana): I would like to begin by commending Gabon for convening such a high-level debate aimed at deliberating on ways to strengthen the fight against the financing of terrorists via the illicit exploitation and trafficking of natural resources.

On behalf of Ghana, I also thank Ms. Ghada Waly, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, for their thought-provoking briefings.

A flip through the atlas of African history reveals that the battle for control of natural resources, which often results in civil conflicts, is a well-known phenomenon. It has served as a key driver of a number of civil wars that have occurred on the African continent, particularly in the latter decades of the twentieth century, prominent among which were the civil wars of Sierra Leone and Liberia. At the turn of the new millennium, which heralded an evolution of the security dynamics on the continent, and when terrorism and violent extremism began to gain root in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, an additional element of that phenomenon emerged.

Terrorists and violent extremists, who continue to wreak havoc on countries, particularly in the Sahel region of West Africa, are increasingly seizing areas rich in natural resources such as gold and diamonds, with the aim of exploiting those resources to generate funds to sustain their heinous crimes against humanity. To further highlight the nature of that new and emerging approach, natural resources that could have been utilized for the development of States continue to be exploited through illegal mining by terrorist groups, a development that portends adverse implications for the natural ecosystems of those States, including, but not limited to, the destruction of forest reserves and bodies of water, all of which, of course, contribute to climate change.

The funds generated from such illegal exploitation of natural resources are then used for the acquisition of arms and ammunition to perpetrate terrorist activities, leading to loss of lives and the destruction of private and public infrastructure. Currently, such a mode of terrorist financing, with its attendant implications for global peace and security, is operating in full force in countries such as Burkina Faso and Mali. Certainly,

the illegal exploitation of natural resources for terrorist financing creates a vicious cycle that threatens the territorial integrity of affected States, undermines efforts to safeguard human security and impedes actions to meet global climate change goals.

The existential threat posed by that model of terrorist financing to numerous African Member States of the United Nations therefore underscores the need for urgent concerted action by the Security Council, the wider United Nations membership and other key stakeholders. Against the backdrop of the prevailing context, we would like to highlight a number of points regarding our efforts to prevent terrorist financing through the exploitation of human resources.

First, a full understanding of the complex nature of the utilization of natural resources to finance terrorism appears to be lacking within the international community. In this regard, we believe there is the need to enhance all stakeholders' understanding, including State and non-State actors. We therefore welcome today's debate and encourage other efforts aimed at raising awareness about terrorist financing through the exploitation of natural resources.

Secondly, the illicit trafficking of natural resources for terrorist financing in Africa is sustained by the ease of cross-border movement of such resources due to challenges relating to border security management. We believe that technical, technological and human capacity-building support aimed at enhancing border security towards curtailing the illicit export and movement of natural resources is imperative. We therefore urge the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other multilateral and bilateral partners to provide continued support in the broader fight against terrorism, including for the enhancement of border security.

Thirdly, the evolving mode of terrorist financing through the exploitation of natural resources is underpinned by weak regulatory policies and enforcement mechanisms that govern their extraction. States must therefore be supported in order to aggressively pursue the building of robust natural resource policies and the implementation of measures that eradicate opportunities for terrorist financing through the exploitation of natural resources. We believe that must be accompanied by greater transparency regarding the trade of such resources within the

international supply-chain system and the promotion of new investments in Africa for the processing of natural resources in a manner that supports legitimate trade and offers better returns to the State.

Fourthly, we believe that support for regional counter-terrorism frameworks that prioritize information-sharing among nations and the conduct of joint operations aimed at curtailing the illicit trafficking of natural resources across borders is imperative. In that regard, and without violating the tenets of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, we believe that home-grown counter-terrorism frameworks such as the Accra Initiative, which is a cooperative and collaborative security mechanism between seven West African countries aimed at curbing the spread of terrorism and violent extremism from the Sahel region to coastal West Africa, must be supported to prevent terrorist financing via the illegal trafficking of natural resources. The Accra Initiative, through the joint ad hoc operations that have been undertaken under its auspices, has thus far been successful in dismantling terrorist cells and hubs for transnational organized criminal groups along the common borders of member States. We believe that with the support of the international community, the Accra Initiative can serve as a potent subregional counter-terrorism initiative that promotes multi-country collaboration to prevent terrorist financing through the exploitation of natural resources.

At the national level, the Government of Ghana continues to enforce the existing laws established to prevent terrorist financing. The anti-terrorism act, which was enacted in 2008, criminalizes terrorist financing and material support for terrorists, among others. In addition, Ghana has completed the development of a comprehensive anti-money laundering bill, which when passed into law, would criminalize uncontrolled financial transfers and illicit wealth acquisition. We have also established a Financial Intelligence Centre that has been instrumental in ensuring real-time monitoring and the flagging of suspicious transactions from banks and other financial institutions.

More important, the Government of Ghana continues to enforce laws regarding the acquisition of mining concessions by private individuals and entities, while clamping down on illegal mining. In that regard, the Government of Ghana has enhanced efforts at establishing State presence in the vast areas along the country's borders to prevent the creation of terrorist

cells for transnational organized crime, which often facilitate illegal trafficking in natural resources.

In conclusion, I must emphasize that Africa deserves the full dividends that accrue from the extraction of its abundant natural resources to enable the continent to deliver on its promise of providing sustainable development for its people. That has become even more imperative in view of the prevailing global economic challenges arising from the shocks of the coronavirus disease pandemic, among other things.

The evolving phenomenon of terrorist financing via the illicit exploitation of Africa's natural resources therefore presents a clear and present danger to the stability of African States. That phenomenon cannot be viewed solely as an African problem, because the funds that are generated from the exploitation of the natural resources in Ghana could be used to finance terrorism in other parts of the world.

Concerted efforts by all stakeholders within the international community is required — for that, we believe, is the surest path to deprive terrorist groups of the funds they so need to unleash terror on the world.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now call on the Permanent Representative of the United States of America and member of President Biden's Cabinet.

**Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield** (United States of America): I would like to thank Gabon for calling this important meeting and welcome you, Foreign Minister Adamo, to preside over it today. I also want to thank Commissioner Bankole Adeoye and Executive Director Waly for their informative briefings. I welcome the participation of Ghana's Minister for National Security, India's Minister of State for External Affairs and the United Arab Emirates' Minister of State.

We all have an interest in countering the illicit trafficking in natural resources in Africa, which amounts to stealing wealth away from the people of Africa. It is in our interests to prevent traffickers from using their criminal activities and their illicit wealth to fuel conflict and terrorism. And it is in our power to prevent the environmental degradation, the use of child labour, the displacement of populations, human rights violations and abuses and the loss of Government revenue that is a by-product of illicit trafficking.

Today I would like to focus on three core areas we believe the Security Council and the entire United Nations system should focus on to counter those

activities: first, the dangers of individuals linked to Al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) and terrorist-linked groups across Africa; secondly, the threat posed by the Wagner Group in that area; and third, the tools that we have at our disposal to weaken those who plunder natural resources to finance armed conflict and terrorism. Let me take them one by one.

First, in the African context, the presence of Al-Qaida and ISIS-linked individuals and groups warrants close monitoring and action. Those groups threaten Somalia, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, the Sahel and Sinai regions and, through ISIS financial facilitation networks in countries, including South Africa. Money continues to be the lifeblood of terrorists. We must bolster our efforts to go after financiers and financial facilitators of terrorists and terrorist organizations, and we must stymie vital resource streams that take advantage of weak regulatory oversight.

Secondly, one of the most immediate and growing concerns in Africa is the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group's strategy of exploiting the natural resources of the Central African Republic, Mali and the Sudan, as well as other countries. Those actions are thoroughly documented and irrefutable. We know those ill-gotten gains are used to fund Moscow's war machine in Africa, the Middle East and Ukraine. Rather than being a transparent partner and improving security, the Wagner Group exploits client States that pay for their heavy-handed security services in gold, diamond, timber and other natural resources. That is part of the Wagner Group's business model. Make no mistake: people across Africa are paying a heavy price for the Wagner Group's exploitative practices and human rights violations.

We have the power to go after those who exploit natural resources and fund armed conflict and terrorism, and we have to wield that power effectively and with urgency. The Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015), concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities and the Counter-Terrorism Committee, along with the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the other Counter-Terrorism Compact entities, have an essential role to play in that regard.

In the 1267 Committee, Member States must take a more proactive approach to countering Al-Qaida and ISIS in Africa. We applaud the 1267 Monitoring Team's recent reports, which keep the Committee apprised of the evolving terrorist trends in Africa. The Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) also play critical roles in working with Member States on a range of counter-terrorism practices, and in June, CTED published a trend alert on that very topic. And CTED Member States' assessments provide crucial information that can strengthen whole-of-society and whole-of-Government approaches to prevent and counter terrorism financing.

Sanctions are also integral to combating the trafficking in natural resources. The sanctions regimes of the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Somalia and South Sudan have specific sanctions designation criteria concerning the illicit trafficking of natural resources. And from a counter-terrorism perspective, the 1267 ISIL and Al-Qaida sanctions regime is an effective Security Council tool to stop the flow of resources through the designation of specific ISIS and Al-Qaida branches, members and their support entities.

Finally, I want to make clear that all counter-terrorism efforts must respect the rule of law and human rights. Failing to comply with those international obligations contributes only to increase radicalization to violence. Again, I want to thank my colleagues from Gabon for raising this vital issue at the start of their presidency. I look forward to us working together in the days, months and years ahead to cut off the funding that drives conflict and stamp out the illicit trafficking in natural resources.

**Mr. Muraleedharan** (India): Let me begin by conveying my best wishes and greetings to you, Mr. President, on Gabon's presidency of the Security Council for this month. The topic chosen for the debate is extremely important not just for Africa, but all of us in the context of the global fight against terrorism.

I thank Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, His Excellency Mr. Bankole Adeoye, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, and Mr. Paul-Simon Handy, Regional Director for East Africa and Representative to the African Union Institute

for Security Studies, for their valuable briefings that have enriched today's debate.

In recent years, terrorist and armed groups have been making deep inroads by exploiting security gaps and fragile governance institutions on the continent, particularly in the Horn of Africa, the Sahel and East and Central Africa. These regions have remained vulnerable to money-laundering and terrorist financing. Terrorist and armed groups are increasingly funding their activities through illegal exploitation of natural resources, the trafficking of wildlife, and extortion, among other well-known activities. Terrorist groups have also found new ways to finance their activities by exploiting the rapid development of information and communication technology and other technologies related to financial transactions, encryption and varied modes of transportation and delivery.

Preventing these inimical outfits from gaining access to financial resources is therefore crucial to effectively countering their violent attacks. While some States lack the legal operational frameworks and necessary capacities for countering the financing of terrorism, other States are clearly guilty of aiding and supporting terrorism and wilfully providing financial assistance and safe haven to terrorists. While we must enhance capacities of the former, the international community must collectively call out the latter and hold them accountable for such double-speak.

The global fight against terrorism cannot succeed without conscious and coordinated efforts to counter the financing of terrorism; it is the same with the global fight against armed groups. In this context, allow me to flag the following key aspects for the Security Council's consideration.

First, we need to recognize the fact that terrorism, like armed conflicts, is expanding in Africa. Al-Qaida and terrorist groups in different parts of Africa affiliated with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have gathered significant strength in recent years, thriving on the illegal mining of artisan gold, rare minerals, gemstones, uranium, coal and timber, and so on, through illegal trade networks facilitated by transnational criminal networks. Such terrorist groups as Al-Shabaab have put in place elaborate revenue-collection networks to support their terrorist activities. If left unaddressed, terrorism may seriously jeopardize peace prospects in several parts of Africa already ravaged by armed conflicts.

Secondly, as has been pointed out by our African colleagues in the Security Council, groups in Africa linked with and inspired by ISIL and Al-Qaida are embedding themselves in multiple domestic conflicts, attempting to influence and control the political agenda. Engaging them in national reconciliation will only provide legitimacy to terrorism and give them access to the necessary financial means and resources. This will be a self-defeating goal. What we need is a zero-tolerance policy towards all forms of terrorism, irrespective of their motivation.

Thirdly, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the States of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) have been playing an important role in combating the financing of terrorism. Such initiatives as the Intergovernmental Action Group against Money-Laundering in West Africa and CEMAC's regulations against money-laundering and terrorist financing have helped to create institutional frameworks in the African States. These regional and subregional measures need to be further strengthened, in line with the standards prescribed by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Fourthly, the FATF has been promoting effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money-laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system. It is important that Member States, including African States, bring their anti-money-laundering and anti-terror-financing monitoring frameworks to par with international standards, including those promoted by the FATF. We also believe that more cooperation between the FATF and various United Nations entities, including the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) will benefit Member States.

Fifthly, the international community needs to enhance assistance to African countries to strengthen capacities to fight illegal exploitation of and trade in natural resources. Furthermore, a violence-free Africa would need to be freed from the shackles of external forces driving the exploitation of natural resources on the continent. In this regard, India has been calling for a development paradigm that is Africa-led and Africa-owned and centred on the progress and development of the people of Africa. India has been contributing proactively to further international cooperation to combat the financing of terrorism at regional and international levels. In 2018, India contributed \$550,000

to the UNOCT's programmes that target capacity-building in the countries of East and Southern Africa. In 2021, too, we contributed \$1 million to further strengthen these efforts.

Sixthly, we need to support national and regional security initiatives and capacity-building efforts aimed at effective border surveillance and security. Such African security initiatives as the Multinational Joint Task Force, the South African Development Community Mission in Mozambique and the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia have proven their success in countering terrorism. These are Africa's home-grown solutions, led by African countries, which have a better understanding of their own issues. The international community should provide sustainable and adequate financial and logistical support to such regional security initiatives.

Lastly, the continuing lack of representation of Africa in the permanent category of membership of the Security Council is a historical injustice that needs to be corrected sooner rather than later. Given that more than half the Security Council's work is focused on Africa, India has been consistently calling for greater representation of the continent, through an increase in seats in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership of the Council, in line with the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration.

India has been at the forefront of the global fight against terrorism. As a country that itself has been a victim of State-sponsored cross-border terrorism for the past nearly three decades, India is acutely aware of the socioeconomic and human cost of terrorism. In 1996, long before the adoption of resolution 1373 (2001), India took the initiative to pilot the draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism with the objective of providing a comprehensive legal framework for combating terrorism. We have signed and ratified all the major conventions and protocols on terrorism adopted by the United Nations, and we are part of all major global initiatives including the FATF.

As the Chair of the Counter-Terrorism Committee this year, India will be hosting a special meeting of the Committee in Mumbai and New Delhi later this month, on 28 and 29 October. I reiterate our invitation to Member States to participate in this meeting and hope that it will contribute positively towards creating a global architecture that is fit for purpose and effectively responds to the new tech tools deployed by

terrorists and their backers against open, diverse and pluralistic societies.

**Sheikh Al Nahyan** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank Your Excellency Mr. Moussa Adamo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Gabon, for convening this important and timely debate. I welcome the participation of the African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Ms. Ghada Waly, and thank them for their valuable briefings. I join others in welcoming the participation in this meeting of the representatives of the Central African Republic, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Kingdom of Morocco and Senegal, as well as the Head of the European Union Delegation to the United Nations.

The United Arab Emirates is deeply concerned about the consequences of the illegal exploitation of natural resources on the peoples meant to be the first to benefit from those resources. As they plunder resources, armed groups, organized criminal networks as well as terrorist groups operating transnationally, are inflicting unprecedented levels of violence and depriving entire communities from enjoying their basic rights, sense of security and economic well-being, hence turning those resources into a curse.

The illegal exploitation of natural resources is a challenge with a long history of negative impacts on peace and security, both in Africa and elsewhere in the world. According to the United Nations, the exploitation of natural resources has fuelled at least 18 violent conflicts since 1990. The magnitude of that challenge cannot be overstated. The problem is not just the illegal nature of resource exploitation, it is also the corruption and unequal distribution of revenues that negatively affects the growth and sustainable development of communities. Indeed, the illegal exploitation of natural resources has been supporting activities undertaken by terrorists and criminal groups that use resource revenues to fund their operations and spread their influence, at the expense of peoples and States that are supposed to benefit from them.

This problem is not limited to national or regional borders; it also affects countries that act as centres for processing and trading in raw materials, developed countries that consume and increase demand for those resources and all countries whose security is threatened

by cross-border terrorist groups and organized criminal networks. In addition to those consequences, the irresponsible exploitation of those resources and the unsustainable practices by those groups lead to environmental degradation that exacerbates one of the most difficult and most dangerous global challenges in our era, namely, climate change. There is an undeniable correlation between the illegal exploitation of resources, climate change and the spread of terrorism. As the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, reported to the Council in December 2021 (see S/PV.8923), environmental degradation contributes to enabling non-State armed groups to exert influence and manipulate resources to their advantage. As we have seen in the Sahel, the regions that are most vulnerable to climate change tend to also be vulnerable to the scourge of terrorism.

We note that there continue to be signs indicating that, across Africa and beyond, transnational terrorist groups are diversifying their revenue streams through involvement in the illicit exploitation of, and trafficking in, natural resources. They take advantage of the lack of sufficient understanding within the international community of the growing links between the illicit use of natural resources and terrorism financing. At a time when terrorist groups are using more new and emerging technologies to achieve their goals, existing regulatory frameworks are struggling to keep up with those developments, which may prevent them from achieving desired results. Accordingly, the United Arab Emirates calls on the international community to hold accountable all those individuals and entities, including terrorist groups, corporations and other actors, who partake in the illegal exploitation of natural resources. Furthermore, we call on the international community be unrelenting in its joint efforts to ensure that the proceeds of natural resources are not used to kill innocent people, including women and children, and instead to ensure that those proceeds are used to serve communities across the continent, to advance them, sustain their development and support their safety and stability.

In addition to being a legal obligation, the United Arab Emirates believes that working in earnest to counter the illegal exploitation of African natural resources is a moral imperative and a strategic investment that directly benefits the entire world. Having chaired the Kimberley Process in 2016, we have demonstrated our endorsement of strong regulatory frameworks as

well as the necessity for coordination among different mechanisms in order to ensure community protection across Africa, especially for women and children. The United Arab Emirates has ensured that its regulations are in line with international standards to counter illegal trading of natural resources. We have also put in place an infrastructure to achieve those goals, and we continue to develop and improve best practices in that regard.

While reaffirming the need to strengthen cooperation among States, we also stress the need to devise a stronger collective response to that threat, as called for by the Council in its resolution 2482 (2019), which underlined the link between organized crime and terrorism, as well as recognizing the benefits that terrorist groups derive from organized crime. The United Arab Emirates will continue to work with our African partners to counter terrorist groups and criminal networks, including those that smuggle weapons between our two regions and help terrorist groups such as Al-Shabaab and the Houthi militias to build up their deadly arsenals.

In the context of today's discussion, I suggest that we promote our efforts in the following areas.

First, we must continue discussions such as this one and reflect further on how to devise mechanisms that allow for engaging key relevant actors on this issue, including other international organizations and the private sector. In that regard, we can benefit from the role played by the African Union and other regional actors that have a better understanding of the complex ramifications of the problem before us today. That should help us to take joint preventive measures and move from a reactive approach to a proactive one.

Secondly, the Council must remain ready to use the various tools available to counter the illicit exploitation of natural resources when it affects international peace and security, including through sanctions and peacekeeping mandates.

Thirdly, there is a great need for building the capacity of States in the sustainable management of natural resources, upon their request and with full respect for their sovereignty. Developing an inclusive and complete response by the United Nations means increasing capacity-building support for Governments — especially those dealing with conflict and in post-conflict situations — as well as directly affected communities.

In conclusion, I thank you once again, Mr. President, for your efforts and leadership role in bringing this matter to the attention of the Council. I reaffirm the commitment of the United Arab Emirates to continue working with other members and partners to address challenges to peace, stability and prosperity in Africa.

**Mr. Dai Bing** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation once again congratulates Gabon on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council. We welcome you, Mr. Foreign Minister, to preside over this meeting. State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi asked me to convey his warm greetings to Your Excellency and reiterate China's full support for Gabon's presidency. I believe that, under Gabon's leadership, the Council will have a very productive month. China will continue to strengthen its collaboration with Gabon and all the other African members of the Security Council to see that the Council plays its due role in resolving hotspot issues and addressing common challenges in Africa. I thank Executive Director Waly and Commissioner Adeoye for their valuable briefings just now. I also listened carefully to Mr. Handy's briefing.

Africa is a continent with rich natural resources and great development potential. In recent years, many African countries have formulated policies on resource development appropriate to their national conditions, developed energy and mining industries in an orderly manner, advanced industrialization and made remarkable achievements in sustainable development. At the same time, in some conflict areas, the illegal exploitation of, and trafficking in, natural resources, including wildlife resources, is rampant, benefiting armed groups and terrorist forces and becoming an important trigger and enabler of conflict.

As the Foreign Minister said, natural resources should not become a curse to the peace and development of African countries. The international community should pay close attention to the issue and support and assist African countries in devising effective responses. In that connection, I would like to make the following points.

First, we should help African Governments to strengthen their capacity to manage natural resources. It is a country's sovereign right to appropriately protect, use and manage their natural sources, but that is based on the premise that national Governments are able to exercise effective control over territories with such

resources. Without that, development is out of the question, and armed groups and terrorist organizations are free to profit from illegal trafficking.

Enhanced governance capacity can effectively reduce opportunities for the illegal trafficking of resources for illicit gains. As we have seen, the Government of Mozambique has recovered territories in the north of the country from terrorist groups with the help of the Southern African Development Community. By creating a favourable environment for oil and gas development, the Government of the Central African Republic has expanded its exercise of State power and subjected the diamond trade and export to regulations.

The international community should give its full support to African Governments' leading role in resource management and help Governments of conflict-affected countries to improve their capacities in industrial planning, financial oversight and secure enforcement, to transform their resource advantage into development gains.

Secondly, we should support African countries in deepening regional cooperation and jointly tackling challenges. In recent years, through the cross-border activities of armed groups and criminal organizations, Al-Shabaab has frequently operated in Somalia's neighbouring countries, in particular Ethiopia and Kenya. Terrorist forces in the Sahel have spilled over to countries along the Gulf of Guinea. In Central Africa and the Great Lakes region, armed groups are deeply involved in the cross-border trafficking of natural resources.

To solve those problems, the countries in the region need to work together to strengthen cooperation in joint law enforcement and border control to crack down on illegal trafficking in natural resources. Equally important is the need to develop legal trade, leverage comparative advantages and build regional industrial supply chains to unlock regional development potential.

In that regard, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region has made great efforts to promote the transparent and sustainable development of natural resources in the region. The African Union and other regional and subregional organizations have supported African countries in strengthening resource management and fostering regional cooperation and have made positive progress in that regard. The international community

should lend strong support to such efforts so that natural resources can truly benefit regional development.

Thirdly, we should focus on systematic and underlying issues and promote sustainable development. Armed groups and terrorist forces tend to thrive in underdeveloped regions. Local populations' involvement in illegal trafficking is often driven by poverty, unemployment and other livelihood concerns. That situation is exacerbated by the severe inadequacy of international development aid and humanitarian assistance to Africa. In the final analysis, sustainable and inclusive development is the key to achieving long-term stability and lasting peace.

China hosted the ministerial meeting of the group of friends of the Global Development Initiative during the high-level week of the General Assembly and announced seven major actions to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a view to promoting the alignment of development strategies among countries and regional organizations and garnering more resources and means for the maintenance of international peace and security. We hope that the international community, in particular developed countries, will honour their commitments, step up efforts to help Africa to eradicate poverty, ensure food security, accelerate infrastructure development, promote education and employment and provide more substantive development assistance.

Fourthly, we should work to establish a more fair and equitable global resource value system. In some African countries, we have observed peculiar situations in the development of natural sources. Some have rich mineral resources but are financially strapped as a country. Some have outrageously high gasoline and diesel prices while being large producers of crude oil. While some Western energy and mining businesses reap windfalls in Africa, local populations are getting poorer. The underlying cause of those peculiarities is the unfair and inequitable international economic order, which has chronically trapped African countries at the low end of the global industrial chain. The situation should be rectified as soon as possible.

The international community should support African efforts to derive more added value from their natural resources and elevate their position in the global value chain. Those countries that have imposed unilateral sanctions should lift them in order to reduce

their negative impacts on the exploitation of natural resources and export revenue generation in Africa.

China has always supported African countries in the sound development and utilization of natural resources, under the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and Belt and Road Initiative frameworks, by adhering to the principles of equity, equality, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation. In China's friendly cooperation with Africa, we attach great importance to the coordinated development of economic, social and environmental aspects and strive to help African countries to achieve sustainable development and improve the well-being of local populations.

China will continue to work with the international community to support African countries in harnessing their natural resource dividends and making a greater contribution to maintaining peace and stability and achieving common development.

**Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome you, Mr. Minister, as you preside over the Security Council today. We thank the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly; the African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Mr. Bankole Adeoye; and the Regional Director for East Africa and Representative to the African Union at the Institute for Security Studies, Mr. Paul-Simon Handy, for the assessments they have shared with us. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Gabonese presidency for convening this meeting on such an important topic and greet all of the high-level representatives participating today.

Natural resources are an extremely important factor for sustainable development and are often the basis of the economies of many developed and developing countries, and States have inalienable sovereignty over them. In that regard, the fight against illegal mining activities is also the prerogative and duty, first and foremost, of the Governments of the countries with such resources. It is our view that the natural resources found in African soils belong to the peoples of those countries and it is they who should be the main beneficiaries of such wealth. African countries have not yet recovered from the damage inflicted by the colonial Powers, who transformed them into one big quarry. The local population gained next to nothing, while the Western metropolises profited at their expense. This continues to date, with the majority

of profits from natural resources going straight into the pockets of multinational corporations in certain well-known countries and to the banks.

Given the significant resource potential of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the broadening influence of illegal armed groups in conflict-affected African countries — such as Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Congo, Somalia, the Central African Republic and Mozambique — results in them gaining control over mineral deposits to obtain additional sources of financing.

We note the efforts undertaken by national Governments to combat illegal armed groups in order to ensure security, stability and control over natural resources in the interests of the socioeconomic development of their own countries. We consider it fundamentally important to ensure that the leading role in that process is played by Africans themselves. We welcome the approach taken by States facing challenges in that regard to collectively resolve issues, including the issue of combatting illegal armed groups, ensuring border control, supporting small domestic mining businesses and compiling joint registries.

Resolution 2482 (2019) is aimed at countering the nexus between terrorism and organized crime. Implementing the goals of the resolution will require a package of measures aimed at, inter alia, strengthening cooperation between national judicial and law enforcement agencies. It is also important to improve the system of international treaties on extradition and legal assistance in criminal cases. Another important step in this respect involves the comprehensive criminalization of participation in organized criminal groups, as provided for by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, while also establishing severe penalties for such participation.

We advocate the provision of comprehensive assistance in strengthening relevant national mechanisms through the United Nations. At the same time, we believe that such assistance should be provided at the request of the States concerned, while fully taking into account their national priorities and specific needs. A one-size-fits-all approach to providing assistance is unacceptable and creates more problems than it resolves. We note the readiness of the African Union and regional organizations to provide the needed assistance.

We consider the Kimberley Process as an important international mechanism in preventing illegal armed groups from profiting from the illegal trade in natural resources in Africa. Russia is a responsible member of that multilateral format, and its work is aimed at preventing the fuelling of conflicts through the proceeds of illegal mining and trade in rough diamonds. Russia's 2021 chairmanship of the Kimberly Process made a significant contribution to the substantive implementation of the Process' current goals. At the same time, we believe that attempts to politicize the activities of the Kimberly Process are counterproductive. Its mechanisms should help gain effective control over resources, not lead to their misuse by which the authorities are limited in exporting diamonds and armed groups profit from their sale. That is unfortunately the situation in the Central African Republic.

The illegal trafficking in natural resources financing terrorists and illegal armed groups has another equally important side. Who is buying those resources? After all, it is common knowledge that illicit trafficking in natural resources is a long-established way of financing terrorism. Who provides the illegal armed groups with the funds, weapons and explosives to carry out terrorist acts and attacks? We regularly draw attention to the violations of the arms embargoes against terrorist organizations in various regions of the world, including the African continent.

We are convinced that the problem of the provision of military goods to terrorists cannot be silenced. It is important to monitor the channels that sustain terrorists and take measures to cut them off. We cannot ignore the imbalance in the sanctions regimes imposed on a number of African States, which do not correspond to the actual situation, interfere with the State-building plans of national Governments and prevent them from effectively establishing control over their territory.

At the same time, the same sanctions and arms embargoes are unable to curb the process of arming illegal armed and terrorist groups, which only continue to strengthen their positions, including with the proceeds from the exploitation of natural resources. As a result, non-State entities are often better armed than Government troops, as was the case in the Central African Republic. The arms embargo prevents the Sudanese authorities from adequately training and forming its military contingent to ensure peace

and security in Darfur and resolve the issue of its porous borders.

In Somalia, the Federal Government has been asking for years for the heavy weaponry needed to effectively fight Al-Shabaab, which, at the same time, has been expanding its own supply chains and profiting from smuggling charcoal. In order to facilitate the training of joint armed forces and State security structures, we believe that considering the possibility of relaxing the sanctions regime imposed on South Sudan is justifiable. Illegally exploiting and smuggling minerals and timber is an acute problem in that country, including in the Equatoria states.

In conclusion, we would like to express our regret that, in its anti-Russian rage, the representative of the United States has gone so far as to put the issue of assistance to African partners through Russian companies at the centre of his country's statement. That reveals their real plans and objectives in terms of what they truly need from African countries. The words of the representative of the United States concerning "client" States are surprising. Clearly, that is the language and the category that only the United States uses. We do not use such terminology. For us, African countries are not clients, but partners. Besides, let us recall that, in Syria, under the guise of counter-terrorism, the United States is stealing Syrian oil. In the beginning, a company with an obscure past was designated for that purpose; then, when the situation seemed scandalous, even to Washington's allies, the American side returned to stealing Syria's natural resources through other means — its military.

**Dame Barbara Woodward** (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate. I thank our briefers, as well, for their insights. I would like to highlight three considerations.

First, as today's briefers and previous speakers underlined, we recognize the clear link between the illicit trading in natural resources and conflict. From Somalia to the Sudan, to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the illicit trade in natural resources of charcoal, timber and gold has helped fund conflict and the activities of armed groups. And we should bear in mind that the increased global demand for critical minerals essential to decarbonization and our green growth goals risks exacerbating the illegal sourcing of natural resources, if appropriate action is not taken.

We therefore need a concerted and coordinated effort to tackle illicit trafficking as a root cause of conflict. In that context, I welcome the African Union's efforts in conflict prevention, including the work of Commissioner Bankole Adeoye and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. As the Security Council too, we should look at ways to strengthen the Council's sanctions regimes against individuals and entities that illegally exploit natural resources to fund, prolong or provoke conflict. The Council acted in Somalia by banning the export of charcoal to inhibit Al-Shabaab's revenue streams. We can and should do more across other mandates.

Secondly, we need stronger regulation and governance efforts to tackle the illicit trafficking in natural resources, including stringent certification and verification processes. In that context, the United Kingdom is proud to support a number of international mechanisms that deliver in that regard, including the Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Kimberley Process, which helps stop the flow of conflict diamonds.

Lastly, we share the view of previous speakers on the dangerous consequences of the exploitation of Africa's natural resources by private military companies. There is significant independent reporting outlining the exploitation of gold resources in the Sudan and the Central African Republic through Wagner Group subsidiaries like Meroe Gold. Gold extraction and smuggling operations risk undermining local stability, present significant ecological and human rights risks and are a significant loss to the Sudan. The United Kingdom reiterates its concerns about the Wagner Group's activities in Africa, which undermine effective resource governance and offer no sustainable solutions to Africa's security challenges.

In conclusion, I once again thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate during Gabon's presidency of the Security Council.

**Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. President, I would like welcome you and the other senior ministers who are here in the Security Council today. First of all, I appreciate the timely initiative of your country, Gabon, in convening this debate. I also thank the briefers for their statements.

Mexico maintains that in order to effectively combat terrorism and armed groups' activity, it is essential to draw a clear distinction between the two. That is precisely why we have different legal frameworks in this area, each with its own corresponding institutional framework. Strategies for combating terrorism and armed groups active in Africa certainly have to consider the links between the exploitation and illicit trafficking of natural resources, among other variables. However, it is vital to understand that the criminal activity perpetrated under the general umbrella of this phenomenon is extremely varied. There are differences, both in terms of organization and the scope of the commercial networks, between the exploitation and trafficking of diamonds by armed groups in the Central African Republic and the theft of livestock on transhumance routes in the Sahel. And there are differences between those two practices and the illegal collection of taxes on agriculture and livestock or Al-Shabaab's exports of Somali charcoal.

What all those illicit practices have in common is that they thrive where State institutions are absent or unable to perform their functions. We are concerned about the possibility that groups such as Al-Shabaab may even supplant State authority by acting as providers of services in communities that receive little support from their Governments. I would like to point out three issues based on those considerations that I feel are relevant to today's discussion.

First, we call for combating the financing of terrorism and other armed-group activities on a basis of objective and specific conclusions, with the aim of identifying the causes of violence as well as the legal instruments and public policies needed for effective action. Mexico believes that the reports of the panels of experts of the subsidiary bodies of the Security Council can provide valuable information on the ways that certain illicit activities contribute to financing armed and terrorist groups. We therefore urge all Member States to support their work and use their reports in decision-making. Some of those reports, such as those on the Central African Republic or the Democratic Republic of the Congo, show that illicit transfers of small arms and light weapons are financed by revenues from the exploitation of natural resources. Those weapons are involved in many of the attacks on civilians and humanitarian and peacekeeping personnel. In order to specifically combat that scourge, my country supported

resolution 2616 (2021), whose implementation must be ensured.

Secondly, regional coordination is indispensable, given the transnational nature of natural-resource exploitation and trafficking networks. To that end, it will be essential to strengthen judicial cooperation measures to investigate and punish those involved in such activities. Legislation in the area should also be harmonized and judicial and fiscal systems strengthened. It should also be recognized that predominantly military solutions are inadequate and can help to spread conflict. The geographic expansion of violence in the Sahel is a clear example of that.

For that reason, thirdly, my country urges for greater attention to the causes that lead young people to join the ranks of terrorist organizations and armed groups. The international community must come up with new strategies and greater support resources, for example through the peacebuilding architecture, in order to promote the creation of economic, labour and comprehensive training opportunities for young people. Mexico has contributed to implementing those types of programmes in some countries in our region, with positive results. It would be good to deepen our exchanges on those experiences because they are tools for preventing violence and building sustainable development.

Finally, Mexico stresses that combating terrorism and armed groups should be done in strict compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. A failure to do so runs counter to the obligations of States and compromises the legitimacy and effectiveness of combating such threats.

**Mr. Mythen** (Ireland): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's very important meeting, and to express my best wishes for your country's presidency of the Security Council. I also thank Executive Director Waly, Commissioner Adeoye and Mr. Handy for their briefings today.

As previous speakers have noted, Africa possesses an abundance of natural wealth. Yet for far too long the illegal exploitation of those resources has hampered growth and contributed to instability. Across the continent, armed groups and terrorist organizations are engaging in the illicit exploitation and trafficking of natural resources, which sustain and fund their activities while acting as a clear obstacle to sustainable development. This prevents local communities from

benefiting from their environment, diverts income and exacerbates vulnerabilities, and particularly affects the lives of women, girls and marginalized groups. In the Lake Chad basin, cattle rustling and livestock raids have funded Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army. In the Horn of Africa, Al-Shabaab generates funds through illicit taxes on agriculture, livestock, wildlife and charcoal. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, revenue from timber, cocoa, coffee and gold has been linked to terrorism funding. In northern Mozambique, the illicit trade in gold, rubies and other resources is helping to finance the ongoing insurgency.

The Secretary-General has noted that environmental degradation enables non-State armed groups to extend their influence and manipulate resources to their advantage. The situation is being exacerbated by growing climate-related security risks and conflict-related hunger, which are driving displacement, creating vulnerability and increasing tensions owing to competition over scarce resources. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is home to many of the world's most valuable resources, including cobalt, tantalum and lithium, which power our phones and laptops and are essential to the green transition. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is also home to more than 100 armed groups, including some affiliated with sanctioned entities and terrorist organizations. There are transparency and governance issues to address as well, and when they go unresolved, they benefit those who continue to have access to these valuable resources.

Ireland echoes the calls to encourage all States to continue efforts to end those illegal activities and to hold to account all who are complicit in that illicit trade. Lack of accountability is a problem that goes beyond national borders. We would welcome stronger legislative and regulatory frameworks and greater investigative and institutional capacities so as to better understand, prevent and counter crimes related to the illegal trafficking in natural resources and illicit financial flows. Achieving that requires the cooperation of all relevant stakeholders.

Ireland commends the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate. The Kimberley and Nairobi Processes are some of the mechanisms that illustrate how the issue can be tackled. The implementation of the recommendations from the 2021 high-level regional workshop on natural resources in the Great Lakes region in Khartoum could also have

an important impact. Ireland served as a co-lead for the Financial Action Task Force's study on money-laundering arising from environmental crime. The Task Force's 2021 report showed that those engaging in environmental crime are generating significant profits by using front companies to mix legal and illegal goods and payments early on in their resource supply chains. Ireland fully supports the report's conclusions and recommendations.

We reiterate the importance of good governance and engaging with Member States and regional and subregional organizations and entities, and we encourage the effective implementation of all the relevant Security Council resolutions and key United Nations conventions. We recognize the implementation of the Financial Action Task Force standards as an effective tool for combating money-laundering from environmental crime, and we support the mandated sanctions regimes and the work conducted by their respective Panels of Experts. It is imperative that they be given the tools they need to carry out their investigations and reporting on this urgent matter.

**Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Waly, Mr. Adeoye and Mr. Handy for their briefings. I would like to stress several points.

First, it will be crucial to strengthen our knowledge of the financing of armed and terrorist groups in Africa through the direct exploitation of natural resources. There is still a lack of data, especially on terrorist groups, but the work being done within the framework of the United Nations and the African Union is particularly useful in that regard. The Panels of Experts also have an important role to play, and I would like to cite as an example the Panel of Experts on Somalia, which this year, in cooperation with the Somali authorities and those of several States in the region, managed to prevent an export of charcoal that violated the embargo, a practice that has been a major source of funding for Al-Shabaab in the past.

Peace operations could also give greater consideration to these factors in the implementation of their mandates. The illegal exploitation of natural resources enables some armed groups to remain outside peace processes, such as in the Sudan and South Sudan. We must continue cooperating on efforts to counter such issues, which are destabilizing the continent.

We should strengthen tracing and certification processes for natural resources such as the Kimberley

Process and combat impunity for crimes linked to natural resources. In that regard, we encourage Kimberley Process partners to work together to redefine conflict diamonds in a way that is adapted to new patterns of conflict, which will also help to foster the economic prosperity of the States in the region. Progress has been made. I welcome the work of the Regional Committee of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in combating the illegal exploitation of natural resources, which was held in April in Kinshasa and has made it possible to make progress on implementing a strategy for artisanal gold. France is fully engaged in those efforts as a member of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. In 2021 we also joined the European Partnership for Responsible Minerals, which has a number of projects aimed at improving the sustainability of mineral supply chains, including in the Great Lakes region. France continues to support the African Legal Support Facility, which helps strengthen financial and administrative governance in the extractive sector.

Finally, the international community must be clear-sighted in the face of the predatory strategy deployed by the Wagner Group's mercenaries on the continent. There is no doubt that the Wagner Group's involvement in the sovereign activities of several countries, while supposedly for security reasons, is partly aimed at controlling their gold and diamond mines. That involvement has been accompanied by a decline in democracy, the weakening of the sovereignty of the host States and the closure of public space, and has led to massive human rights violations and to colossal payments that could otherwise have been aimed at benefiting the local populations. In particular, we encourage the African Union to include the exploitation of natural resources in the planned discussions on the review of the 1977 Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa.

**Ms. Juul** (Norway): I thank you, Mr. President, for putting this important topic on the agenda, and Ms. Waly, Mr. Adeoye and Mr. Handy for their insightful briefings.

Conflict over the management of natural resources is one of the key drivers of violence against civilians, and crimes related to such resources have given rise to one of the largest illicit economies in the world. It is closely linked to terrorism, organized crime, corruption, human rights violations, financial crime and other threats to peace and security. In many African countries,

illicit trafficking in natural resources constitutes a significant source of revenue for armed groups. Gold, minerals, timber, charcoal and wildlife products are all exploited and smuggled illegally out of conflict zones. Those activities fuel violence and other conflict drivers locally and in the region. Indeed, recent analysis by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate describes this method of financing as strategically important for a range of affiliates on the African continent of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Al-Qaida. We therefore clearly need a collaborative and holistic approach to ending illegal exploitation, strengthening natural resources management and addressing systematic weaknesses that enable illicit flows and economic corruption. Let me explore three lines of work that should be taken up towards that end.

First, institutional weaknesses need to be tackled at the national level. It is important to create robust governance mechanisms and strengthen core institutions and democratic oversight. Domestic regulatory frameworks are crucial, including licensing regimes, monitoring practices and enforcement mechanisms such as law enforcement. In that regard, technical assistance remains important.

Secondly, regional cooperation is vital to support for both national and global efforts. The African Union's High-Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa and its report demonstrated important leadership. Regional bodies are often best placed to promote effective knowledge-sharing. Furthermore, the Financial Action Task Force is the global standard-setter for combating money-laundering and terrorist financing. Its global network with regional bodies is important to ensuring effective implementation of the standards.

That brings me to my third point, which is that global and multilateral cooperation is key. Illicit flows do not respect national borders. Norway and the United States recently launched the Nature Crime Alliance. We hope that will encourage political will, mobilize financial commitment and bolster operational capacity. The recommendations of the High-level Panel on International Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity for Achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also provide important food for thought on addressing the limitations of current financial systems. Increased transparency and global anti-corruption standards are among its recommendations.

Security Council sanctions are also an important contribution to ending illicit trafficking. They could be strengthened by adopting further designations, not just of direct perpetrators but also of entities and actors benefiting from the illicit trade in natural resources further down the supply chain. And we would like to see better synergy among United Nations efforts, including through the creation of a closer link between the work of the Panels of Experts, peacekeeping missions and the relevant national Governments and of dedicated focal points to exchange information related to the exploitation of natural resources.

The Security Council itself has already recognized the negative impact that the illegal exploitation and trafficking of natural resources has on conflict prevention, post-conflict peacebuilding and the consolidation of peace. To meet the scale of the threat, we need broad-ranging and targeted national, regional and multilateral efforts.

**Mr. Kimani** (Kenya): I congratulate you, Mr. President, and through you, His Excellency Mr. Michael Moussa Adamo, Minister for Foreign Affairs, on Gabon's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October. Kenya holds Gabon's principled and cooperative efforts in the Council in high regard. We therefore have every reason to anticipate, Sir, that your presidency will be exemplary, and, to that end, our delegation will provide with you every support.

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's important debate, and I also thank Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, Ms. Ghada Waly and Mr. Paul-Simon Handy for their briefings. I further welcome the participation of the representatives of the Central African Republic, Egypt, the European Union, Morocco and Senegal in today's meeting.

Terrorist groups affiliated with Al-Qaida and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant are a dire threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of — and human rights in — far too many countries in Africa. Their militant campaigns begin with real or imagined grievances that are shaped by fascist ideologies into violent demands for political and social change. In time, even as the poverty of their ideas and the political impossibility of their positions become clear, sustaining their campaigns becomes an end in itself. Their need for financing, smuggling and other criminal capabilities tips the scales as their ideological

commitment falls. The motivation for personal financial gain and corruption among their leaders and financiers takes deep root. Groups that started claiming the moral prestige of a just cause eventually become thinly veiled brutal criminal enterprises. We fear that if they are not defeated in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes and elsewhere, the promises of security, development and human rights that bind the United Nations will remain unmet.

Unfortunately, Africa is filled with opportunities for these malign actors. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, the continent possesses 30 per cent of the world's mineral reserves, 8 per cent of the world's natural gas and 12 per cent of the world's oil reserves. It has 40 per cent of the world's gold and up to 90 per cent of its chromium and platinum. The largest reserves of cobalt, diamonds, platinum and uranium in the world are in Africa. And, in most African countries, natural capital accounts for between 30 per cent and 50 per cent of total wealth.

Africa's immense riches are at the core of the world's industrial production and wealth creation. But the fact that they originate in countries with limited criminal justice systems makes them an irresistible opportunity to terrorists and insurgents. They dominate and hold territory to trade in illicitly acquired natural resources.

Counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency efforts are being undertaken by States, regional forces and international partners. They are necessary and must continue, but by now we can all agree that they are insufficient because the groups are able to financially replenish themselves. We can also agree that African States making heroic efforts are doing so with limited financial means, significantly because they cannot stop or tax illicit revenues. When the wealth is instead claimed by criminal actors, the State cannot meet its obligations, citizens become disillusioned, and grievances grow and feed into terrorist recruitment. To truly come to grips with the challenge, we need to grant that militants are not the only ones partaking of this destructive exploitation.

By recognizing the fundamental underpinnings of today's debate, we are led by logic to conclude that the protection of peace and security in Africa is impossible if the continent's natural resources are not reclaimed for the people. For real development to be achieved, we must break with the inhumane approaches used in the last few centuries, in which African natural and human

resources have been an important part of international trade and production. We therefore propose that the bottom line of our debate be that law and order must prevail in the extraction, transport, sale and utilization of Africa's natural resources, and that law and order must reflect fairness and equity to Africa. To deliver peace and security, we must minimize illegality and immorality in relation to Africa's natural resources at the local, national, regional and international levels.

During our presidency of the Security Council in October 2021, we convened a high-level debate on the Great Lakes Region about utilizing the region's natural resources lawfully to promote peace (see S/PV.8884). By consensus, the Council, in a presidential statement adopted at that meeting (S/PRST/2021/19), renewed its commitment to support countries in the Great Lakes to address the root causes and drivers of conflict by harnessing the region's natural resources for social and economic transformation. Our urgent task now is to build on this promise and extend it to all other regions suffering from illicit extraction. We must then go beyond the statements and practically support the following measures if security is to prevail in Africa.

First, the main changes must be directed at the private sector. All companies globally importing and processing African natural resources should have in place conflict-minerals-awareness and conflict-minerals-monitoring systems. Governments in countries receiving these resources should deliver the necessary regulation and compliance oversight as a way of contributing to peace and security. Transparency to enable pro-peace advocacy will help ensure that offending companies deal with reputational and market consequences.

Secondly, on the global nature of illicit trade, we have to close the gaps that enable illicit financial flows from natural resource sales in Africa. This needs effective legislation, sectoral risk assessments and rules against conflicts of interest. Corporate structures must be made more transparent. Trade invoice fraud must be punished. Supply chains must be analysed for weaknesses, and countermeasures must be deployed. Providing expertise and funding in these areas is a win for peace and security.

Thirdly, with regard to supporting States in the fight, support for national and regional military actions must be accompanied by campaigns to strengthen States in accordance with national priorities. We also urge

that the Council consider additional ways of supporting affected countries to ensure that under-governed spaces are properly controlled by States. This will require either changing the nature of United Nations peacekeeping or providing predictable and adequate financing, including from assessed contributions, for regional forces. The Peacebuilding Commission has a valuable role to play as well.

Fourthly, with regard to action at the regional and continental level, Africa's peace and security architecture should incorporate the tools we have recommended. Further, the implementation of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area should account for conflict minerals so that the Area strongly supports countering terrorist and insurgent groups.

Fifthly and finally, the Security Council must be more committed to dismantling terrorism networks in Africa. As we have stated often, the Council must apply in an equal manner its counter-terrorism architecture against terrorist groups and their affiliates, including those in Africa, such as the Al-Qaida-linked Al-Shabaab. This should include sanctions against dealing in what we want to call "terrorist minerals".

It is time for Africa's natural resources to fully benefit the African people. Our common efforts to this noble end will determine the human condition in the twenty-first century. It is our determination to change the old ways of doing business that will deal the greatest blows to terrorist groups and their cruel assaults on the innocent.

**Ms. Dautllari** (Albania): Let me begin by echoing others in thanking the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Ms. Waly, African Union Commissioner Adeoye and Regional Director Handy for their insightful remarks and recommendations. Albania commends the achievements and commitments already made by the African Union and UNODC on this matter.

We attach great importance to today's discussion, as insecurity across Africa creates a breeding ground for terrorists and non-State armed groups to benefit from the illicit trafficking in natural resources. As we heard from other speakers, terrorist groups and private military companies are using the natural resources in Africa as a key source of funding. We regret that instead of natural resources being positive agents of growth, they have brought more misery, displacement and violence to local populations. The misuse of

natural resources has a direct and vast impact on the security and development of a State. Weak States with inadequate legal and regulatory frameworks are particularly vulnerable to mismanagement, corruption and the unfair distribution of natural resources.

Albania strongly condemns the illegal exploitation of, and trafficking in, natural resources. Responses to those illicit activities cannot focus on national and military solutions alone — they require robust regional and international action. Natural resources are widely used in complex international supply chains, and we urge all actors to play their role in ensuring that the local populations reap the benefits of their use.

As previous Council resolutions have called for, a deeper understanding of the nexus between terrorism and organized crime using natural resources is required to formulate effective policies. Governments must strengthen their legal frameworks in order to better address the threat and ensure that terrorist and armed groups are held accountable, as well as foster greater coordination between regional and international actors in order to end this illicit business.

Albania calls on the States of the Great Lakes region to engage in the effective implementation of the Protocol against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources in the Great Lakes Region. We strongly support structures such as the Regional Certification Mechanism and Kimberley Process certification so as to better monitor and control the exploitation of, and trade in, natural resources. We encourage the support of international partners to implement commitments from the Lusaka Declaration to Fight Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources in the Great Lakes Region.

In conclusion, we believe that improving the traceability and disruption of illicit financial flows is key to countering terrorism and organized crime. We encourage all actors to strengthen information-sharing and adopt a global policy response in order to identify illicit financial flows. A holistic approach is required to disrupt criminal and terrorist networks, and it must be complemented with programmes that incorporate socioeconomic growth, particularly those that create opportunities for youth, as they bear the greatest cost.

**Mr. Costa Filho** (Brazil): At the outset, I take the liberty of saying that I am honoured to participate in this debate. The presence of Minister Michael Moussa Adamo is a clear demonstration of the Gabonese Republic's commitment to the maintenance of

international peace and security. I am also appreciative of the valuable inputs provided to the Security Council by the briefers.

The recourse to the illicit trafficking in natural resources, including wildlife, for pursuing other criminal enterprises is a concerning trend in Africa. The link between natural resources and conflict prevention remains relevant, and the Council must make its contribution, within its mandate, to the fight against illegal trafficking in natural resources, where they relate to armed conflict.

Almost four years ago, the Secretary-General was invited to brief the Council and highlighted how the control and exploitation of, and access to, natural resources had been a catalyst for armed conflicts (see S/PV.8372). In June 2022, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate issued a worrisome trend alert on the use of proceeds from the exploitation, trade and trafficking of natural resources for the purposes of terrorism financing, a phenomenon about which the Security Council already expressed its concerns in resolutions 2195 (2014), 2462 (2019) and 2482 (2019).

Precious metals, such as gold and silver, as well as copper and diamonds, along with other natural resources, like timber, charcoal and wildlife, have been a source of financing for terrorist groups. For instance, Da'esh has profited from its control of large swaths of territory in Syria and Iraq in order to generate income from oil and natural gas. Al-Shabaab has been imposing taxes on agriculture and livestock and, therefore, maintaining its resilience against the efforts to curb its action. It is also fresh in our memories how Boko Haram resorted to illegal trafficking in fish products in the Lake Chad basin. Reports allude to gold mining as a source of funds for terrorist groups in the Sahel and Central Africa. Creative and diversified illegal means of financing enable armed groups of all sorts to have far-reaching clout.

There are open avenues for a constructive role by the Council, within the scope of its mandate, to address this issue. Capacity-building is a central element. Exploring how peacekeeping operations, for instance, could contribute to strengthening local institutional capacities management and regulation of extractive resources could be an avenue. One example was the authorization for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the

Congo to support the regulation of mining resources in that country.

The Security Council may also have a role in encouraging capacity-building initiatives for domestic and international actors to curb the illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources in conflict-affected countries. One way to do so is in partnership with the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). Given its unique composition and bridging mandate, the PBC is well placed to put forward coordinated efforts within the United Nations system, with a view to creating sustainable cycles of peace and development.

The Council has also already imposed sanctions on the trade in natural resources, with the aim of preventing it from fuelling armed conflicts. The sanctions regimes in Somalia and South Sudan are examples of that approach. It remains imperative, however, that all precautions be taken in order to avoid indirect harm to local populations.

Supporting compliance with the legal framework provided by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora is also essential in order to counter illicit trafficking. In that regard, police cooperation, including within multilateral initiatives, is a particularly useful tool. Police operations conducted worldwide have resulted in significant seizures and arrests, underscoring the relevance of intelligence-sharing among agencies and States. Initiatives that, for instance, increase certified extraction of natural resources, promote fair-trade practices and support the development of local communities in conflict-affected areas are also key. Those projects not only reduce the lawlessness that afflict extractive industries in many countries, but they also help Governments to combat the corruption schemes that lubricate links between illicit production and armed activity. In fact, the Kimberley Process has revealed how cooperative arrangements involving civil society, Governments and international organizations may lead to sound regulation. Trade in conflict diamonds has sharply decreased as a result.

Terrorism and organized crime are different phenomena. The fight against them requires distinct approaches and legal remedies. Equating one with the other runs counter to the goal of finding an effective solution to the different challenges that they present. In order to address the issue, the Security Council should tailor its approach to each case in a

case-by-case manner, taking the specificities of each situation into account.

As is widely recognized, there are no necessary or mechanical linkages between the exploitation of natural resources and armed conflict. On the contrary, such resources are generally a significant source of prosperity and stability, and they must be seen as such.

Brazil condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. The repudiation of terrorism is a constitutional principle, which guides our international relations. Brazil is also firmly committed to the fight against organized crime and takes its responsibility to protect the environment and promote sustainable development seriously. We pledge unwavering support for the international efforts against the illicit traffic in natural resources and its use as a source of funding by any armed group.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

**Ms. Evstigneeva** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I just wanted to note that, at the very beginning of her statement, the representative of France said that we needed to collect data and numbers and find out more about the illicit exploitation of resources by illegal armed and terrorist groups and how to combat it. We fully support that, and it is fully in line with the topic of today's meeting. However, because of some statements made by colleagues, including our French colleague, our meeting is also taking on a new topic, which we already mentioned earlier in our statement, relating to Russian assistance to African countries.

In that regard, I would like to pose the following question. It would probably be a good idea to find and calculate the data on how many hundreds of billions of dollars were received by France under agreements with French-speaking States on providing them with independence. How much money was made by France in exploiting the resources of countries that used to be under their colonial yoke and in the context of what followed that, namely, colonialism under contract, much of which is still continuing? Once we know that, we will be ready to talk about predatory strategies and policies.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The representative of France has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

**Mrs. Jaraud-Darnault** (France) (*spoke in French*): Council members will understand that I wish to again take the floor after the statement by the representative of the Russian Federation. I want to specify that, in my statement, I did not mention relations between Russia and Africa. I am therefore quite surprised to hear this statement by the representative of the Russian Federation. I just mentioned the case of mercenaries of the Wagner Group. That is the end of my statement.

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

**Mr. Nzessioue** (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): The Central African Republic is very honoured to participate in this important debate. We are glad to see light being shed at a very high level, under the Gabonese presidency, on an issue that is important, if not crucial, to international peace and security, and which, in our view, represents a not insignificant pathway for resolving long-standing conflicts.

The link between the exploitation of resources, security and the financing of conflicts is clear. For us, it is therefore important to find the best and most effective ways and means to overcome that challenge and prioritize actions to combat both the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the illicit financial flows from such trafficking and transnational criminal networks.

In that context, we think that State capacity-building in terms of security, criminal justice and strengthening international and regional cooperation to better secure borders is essential. The same applies to the need for effectiveness and consistency in international actions and decisions.

Against that backdrop, I would like to talk about my country, the Central African Republic. We have been dealing with repeated conflicts, in which the illegal exploitation of resources has been widespread since 2013 with the emergence of the Séléka coalition and perpetuated today by the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement, supported by the remaining mercenaries from the border conflict zones. Armed groups, through the full or partial control that they have over certain strategic trade routes, such as the livestock migration routes in the northern and western parts of the Central African Republic and the trade route towards the north-east, impose all kinds of taxes, customs duties and mandatory escorts to fund themselves and equip themselves with weapons. The same routes are used for trafficking in basic goods, livestock and minerals,

mainly gold and diamonds, coming from areas under their control.

In 2007, a study by the International Peace Information Service showed that the trade route towards the far north-eastern part of the Central African Republic alone generated approximately €2.5 million annually for the benefit of armed groups. That is a considerable amount in the Central African Republic, and it is enough to sustain the conflict and ensure their continued plundering of the economy.

We are not trying to shift the primary responsibility for that state of affairs from the Central African Republic. The inherent weaknesses of the State, combined with a chronic lack of governance for decades, largely contributed to that. The Central African Republic has repeatedly tried to deal with that through grass-roots talks in 2014, the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation in 2015 and, recently, in March, a national dialogue, which resulted in strong recommendations for better control and redistribution of resources, which we are striving to implement.

I would like to commend and pay tribute to the international community, which has consistently supported the Central African Republic in that task. Nevertheless, I would like to highlight some decisions taken by the international community, which, instead of helping to resolve or ease the problem, exacerbated it from our viewpoint and experience.

I would first of all like to talk about the sanctions under the Kimberley Process, introduced in 2013 at the height of the crisis, which had an adverse impact. The total suspension of diamond exports from the Central African Republic completely disrupted the sector and encouraged an upsurge in illegal activities, fraud and the development of criminal networks. Easing the sanctions regime and implementing an operational framework, with areas that are considered to be in line with various Government initiatives, would enable us to resume some activities today. In our experience, the sanctions under the Kimberley Process are applicable only to areas under State control, leaving entire areas under the control of armed groups without a solution. We therefore need to now think about how the Kimberley Process sanctions could be more effective in those areas beyond Government control.

Another important point that needs to be underscored here, as we mentioned, is the need to restore State authority throughout the country's entire

territory. That objective must be prioritized in any strategy aimed at fighting criminal and illicit activities.

However, the introduction of the arms embargo on the Central African Republic has completely prevented the State from exercising its full authority and has allowed armed groups to take root across the country. Due to the absence of State authorities, those armed groups have been able to spread across the Central African Republic's territory and conduct their activities without any resistance from, or counteraction by, the international forces entrusted with the mandate to prevent that scenario.

We commend the considerable progress made in the context of resolution 2648 (2022), which affords the Central African armed forces the opportunity to equip themselves. We will nevertheless continue to ask that the arms embargo imposed on the Central African Republic be fully lifted in order to enable the State to exercise full control over its territory.

The counter-offensive led by the Central African Republic against the backdrop of the attack by the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement in December 2020, aided by the Russian Federation, Rwanda and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, contributed to weakening the hold of those armed groups on Central African Republic territory. Control over certain strategic roads and mining areas was regained, considerably diminishing the capacity of the armed groups to conduct their activities and inflict damage.

In that context, we believe that we will be able to make progress in that regard, namely, by taking coherent decisions that will not undermine the capacity of States but rather help States to restore their authority over their entire territory and build their capacity to combat cross-border organized criminal networks. We believe that is the path that will lead us to jointly achieve those goals in the interest of sustainable peace.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): The representative of Kenya has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

**Mr. Kimani** (Kenya): I apologize for taking the floor again, but I was tempted by other members doing the same.

The resources in Africa have been key to its vicious oppression since at least the Berlin Conference. We

can debate today over who is most to blame, but what is important is the future. That is a future of African ownership, where Africans benefit from our resources. They should be protected, including through changes to the permanent membership of the Security Council, so we have Africans able to sustain a campaign for fairness, justice and sustainability.

We have heard the appetite for reform from the membership of the Council. Let us now act on it so that Africa is not just a subject of conversations about who is responsible for what, but rather an empowered, respected and included participant.

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

**Mr. Mahmoud** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Mr. President, I should like to congratulate the sisterly Republic of Gabon for presiding over the Security Council for this month. I wish you a successful and distinguished presidency. We commend you on your choice of the important topic under consideration. We also thank Ms. Ghada Waly, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Mr. Bankole Adeoye and Mr. Paul-Simon Handy for their valuable briefings today.

The illicit exploitation by criminal and armed groups as well as terrorist organizations of the abundant economic resources of our African continent constitutes a major challenge that requires stepping up efforts to address it as an essential pillar of our comprehensive efforts to combat those illegal outlaw groups. In that regard, I should like to focus on the following few points.

First, it is important to bolster the legal national and international laws that address the exploitation of natural resources so that they do not fall into the hands of criminal groups. That should be done by acceding to various relevant regional and international conventions as well as developing the necessary national laws.

Secondly, we reiterate the pivotal and irreplaceable role of a strong nation state in addressing all criminal and outlaw acts perpetrated by terrorists and armed groups that attempt to benefit from the vacuum caused by weak national institutions in some States. The international community should provide all forms of necessary support to those States upon their request so as to promote their capacity and allow them to gain full

control over their territories, impose the rule of law and prevent any attempt to exploit State resources.

Thirdly, believing in African solutions to African problems, it is important to promote the efforts led by the African Union and the regional economic communities, which adopt practical approaches that take into account the specific circumstances of every region.

Fourthly, it is also important to combat illicit trafficking networks of natural resources. In the absence of demand, there will be no supply. In that regard, we need to undertake inclusive and collective efforts based on political, ethical and legal commitment by States receiving those resources. That should be implemented through partnerships with the private sector, including transport, insurance and industrial companies and so on, so as to ensure that they never deal with any African natural resource if there is any suspicion that it is the subject of illicit trafficking by outlaw groups.

Egypt is implementing all Security Council resolutions related to addressing money laundering and terrorist financing. We have therefore implemented our national strategy to address money laundry and the financing terrorism, while integrating the concept of risks at the national level with all relevant national authorities and the private and public sectors, as well as civil society. Egypt continues to support peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts at the international and African levels, including contributing military troops and police to peacekeeping operations. In addition, we provide our African brothers with technical support and capacity-building pursuant to their national priorities, especially in capacity-building for armed forces, law-enforcement and police troops. In that context, Egypt stresses the importance for the Security Council to respond and support Africa's fair request to provide African peace operations with the necessary funding and resources through the United Nations budget.

As a country with deep roots in African, Egypt will continue to support the efforts of its African brothers in maintaining peace and security throughout the African continent so as to tackle the underlying causes of conflicts and address criminal outlaw groups.

Finally, I would like to align myself with the valuable statement just made by Mr. Kimani, Permanent Representative of Kenya, before I took the floor.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Mr. Skoog.

**Mr. Skoog:** First of all, we want to thank Gabon for putting this important topic on the agenda of the Security Council. We congratulate Gabon on assuming its Security Council presidency for the month of October, and we are very grateful for the possibility to participate in this high-level debate. I also want to thank the briefers for their insights on this topic.

There is indeed an urgent need to understand how armed groups and terrorists finance their activities through the illicit trafficking in natural resources, as well as to identify the tools that can be used to tackle the problem.

In conflict-affected countries, especially in Africa, terrorist and insurgent groups often exploit the control of areas and key transit and trade hubs to profit from illicit trafficking and environmental crime. The management of natural resources can unfortunately fuel conflict and radicalization. Insurgents are able to exploit the lack of governance to benefit from black markets and illicit trafficking. That criminal activity is problematic on many levels. Not only does it sustain terrorists and armed groups, enabling them to establish themselves and expand their activities, it also deprives the population of precious resources that should be used for its own development. It can also lead to significant environmental damage or the over-exploitation of timber and wildlife, for example, as we heard earlier.

Let me express our appreciation for the efforts of Gabon and other African countries in fighting terrorism and preventing terrorists and armed groups from gaining control over natural resources. The European Union (EU) is contributing to those efforts through its training and capacity-building missions on the African continent in the Sahel, Somalia, the Central African Republic and Mozambique. The EU Naval Force Operation ATALANTA, off the coast of Somalia, fights piracy and armed robbery at sea, but it has also responded to the illicit trade in charcoal that finances terrorism in Somalia.

The fight against the financing of terrorism and money-laundering is a priority for us. The EU is also committed to providing capacity-building to third countries in order to build their anti-money-laundering capability. We support several projects in West Africa and the Horn of Africa aimed at strengthening the anti-money-laundering and financial investigation capacity of the countries concerned. We also have counter-terrorism experts in five of our EU delegations

in Africa who help build partnerships between the EU and Africa in that crucial area — very much in the spirit that our colleague from Kenya just referred to regarding African ownership.

The problem, however, is not only technical, it is political. That is the reason why trafficking and natural resources are at the heart of the European Union Great Lakes strategy, which is currently being discussed with EU member States and will hopefully be adopted before the end of the year. We are also working to prevent terrorist groups from gaining access to international money and natural resources markets. That means tackling money-laundering at the international level. The EU has developed a solid regulatory framework for preventing and combating money-laundering and terrorist financing threats.

In addition to targeting the financial flows directly, we also have to target the natural resources that are being traded. In that regard, I would like to mention the Kimberley Process, in which the EU has been actively engaged from the beginning. We have learned a lot from the Process. The traffic in conflict diamonds has virtually stopped. We have also managed to change attitudes, reinforcing the idea that natural resources belong to their communities, not to militias. We have sparked a debate on responsibility in sourcing natural resources. The EU's Conflict Minerals Regulation requires all EU importers of tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold to carry out due diligence on their supply chain.

Africa is a continent incredibly rich in natural resources, from forests and wildlife to minerals and precious stones. Whenever terrorist groups take control of those resources to enrich themselves and sustain their criminal activities, it means that development opportunities are lost for local communities. It means that profits and livelihoods that should belong to the people are stolen. It means that tax revenues that should have funded schools and hospitals are lost. Instead, the exploitation fuels violent conflict and leaves environmental destruction in its wake. We all share the responsibility to combat it together. The European Union remains committed to partnering with African countries to fight the financing of armed groups and terrorists through the illicit trafficking of natural resources.

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

**Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, let me once again warmly congratulate our brother country of Gabon and you personally, Sir, on your presidency of the Security Council for the month of October. I want to assure you of the Kingdom of Morocco's full support. I also welcomed the presence of His Excellency Mr. Michael Moussa Adamo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Gabon, who presided over the start of meeting. And I want to thank Ms. Ghada Waly, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Mr. Bankole Adeoye, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, and the civil-society briefer.

Today's debate is extremely important, as it is unfortunately taking place in a context in which the African continent continues to suffer from the plight visited on it by armed terrorist and separatist groups, which are hindering Africa's development, prosperity, stability and integration. Transnational organized crime, terrorism and separatism are intertwined. They threaten regional and international peace and security and undermine the stability and territorial integrity of States. Illicit trafficking in fish stocks, wildlife resources, oil and gas products, precious stones and rare-earth metals and the illicit exploitation of forests and charcoal have become widespread means of financing terrorism and armed groups in Africa. In that regard, the international community should commit more urgently than ever to preventing and combating such activities and eradicating the groups that are placing international and regional peace and security in peril.

The Kingdom of Morocco welcomed the adoption of resolutions 2195 (2014), 2462 (2019) and 2482 (2019), which not only acknowledge the exploitation of natural resources as a source of financing for organized crime and terrorism but also encourage Member States to pursue efforts to ensure the accountability of all those responsible for and complicit in illicit trafficking. My country would like to pay heartfelt tribute to the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts in support of our collective action against organized crime and terrorism. In that regard, I commend the important achievements of the Office of Counter-Terrorism and UNODC in combating those scourges and definitively drying up their illicit sources of financing. Similarly, the commitment of the international community and the consensus reached by the Security Council in line with its primary responsibility for maintaining international

peace and security, as well as the role of regional and subregional organizations, have been fundamental and decisive in blocking armed and terrorist groups from illicitly exploiting natural resources, particularly in Africa.

In upholding its international obligations, Morocco, which is a State party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, considers the financing of terrorism a serious crime in its national legislation and regulations. In that context, I should like to outline some of the measures my country has taken to combat the financing of terrorism, including through the illicit exploitation of natural resources.

First, we have implemented a multidimensional and proactive strategy combining both a holistic approach and cutting-edge initiatives, integrating legal, institutional, financial and security aspects.

Second, we have upgraded the national mechanism responsible for this area with the establishment in 2021 of a national commission under the aegis of the National Financial Intelligence Authority, which is responsible for monitoring and implementing the sanctions imposed by the relevant Council resolutions, that is, resolutions 1373 (2001), 1267 (1999) and 1540 (2004).

Third, in 2022, among other things, the presidency of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force prioritized pursuing the implementation of the action plan agreed on with the Financial Action Task Force, consolidating the governance foundations within the group, improving evaluation processes and monitoring and strengthening the group's role in various international bodies and activities.

Fourth, in May Morocco hosted the ninth ministerial meeting of the Global Coalition against Da'esh, the first to be convened in Africa, bringing together 84 countries, with a session dedicated to Africa, including on aspects related to financing.

Fifth, the Security Council sanctions regimes for the financing of terrorist activities and armed groups have been rigorously implemented.

Sixth, there has been full cooperation with international bodies in strengthening our national system for combating money-laundering and terrorist financing and bringing it into line with the provisions of international conventions.

Seventh, we have ramped up information-sharing and financial intelligence at the regional and international levels.

Lastly, we have provided assistance to and cooperated and shared our expertise with countries of the region and all others wanting to do so.

In conclusion, the Kingdom of Morocco reaffirms its firm commitment to combating and pursuing regional and international cooperation with a view to eliminating the sources of financing of armed, terrorist and separatist groups and promoting peace and stability in Africa and throughout the world.

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

**Mr. Ndong Mba** (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): As I take the floor in this very important debate, I would first of all like to congratulate the Republic of Gabon on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October, commend it for preparing an excellent programme of work, wish it every success this month and convey our pleasure that it has included today's topic — such an important and relevant topic for our African region — in its programme of work. I would say, as Ambassador Tommo Monthe of Cameroon has said, that October is the month of Africa in the Security Council, since all the topics on the very important programme of work have to do with our African region.

I would also like to welcome the presence here today of Mr. Michael Moussa Adamo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Gabon; Mr. Bankole Adeoye, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs; Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; and Mr. Paul-Simon Handy, Regional Director for East Africa and Representative to the African Union Institute for Security Studies, and I commend and recognize their work in their respective roles.

Natural resources are a meaningful factor in the economic development of a country, as they provide tangible value that has a positive impact on its economic and social development. However, the exploitation and illicit trafficking of such natural resources is one of the factors that leads to conflict, as they are used to finance armed groups and terrorists. Despite the fact that, ultimately, a country's natural resources should be used to improve the standard of living and well-

being of its people, unfortunately, the exploitation and illicit trafficking of those resources is connected to the acquisition, use and proliferation of weapons by armed groups, which gives rise to war and conflict, as we have seen and continue to see in many of the conflicts in our region.

It is well-known that natural resources, while they are not the only cause, are at the origin of most of the conflicts in the world in general and more particularly on the African continent, where they lead to violence, desolation, the destabilization of Governments, loss of innocent human lives, famine and poverty. In short, all types of development are halted in areas where such resources are exploited and traded to finance armed groups and terrorists.

Agents and companies operating in those areas directly or through their subsidiaries that by and large acquire such resources through illicit activities by means of illegal trafficking are supporting and contribute to fuelling those conflicts without taking into account the consequences that their actions may have on the affected communities.

In the light of everything I have just mentioned, and in order to address this desperate situation, my delegation believes that the following issues should be taken into account.

First, we should further strengthen the cooperation between the Security Council, the African Union Peace and Security Council and the regional and subregional communities, strengthen the frameworks for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict and find practical and efficient solutions to be implemented in combating the financing of armed and terrorist groups through the trade and illicit traffic of natural resources.

Secondly, we should establish a mechanism that requires companies operating directly or through subsidiaries in conflict zones to identify themselves, and require them to carry out due diligence in their commercial operations to ensure that they are not trading in conflict resources. Not complying with due diligence or directly or indirectly supporting or contributing to conflict for the ultimate purpose of gaining profit should be sufficient grounds for such national or multinational companies to be placed on a sanctions list, which in many cases does not happen. That is because, up to this point, only groups, legal entities and facilities physically present in the countries in question have been sanctioned, but never the companies or third parties involved in the illicit exploitation, transformation and commercialization of the resources that are used to finance armed and terrorist groups and fuel conflict.

Thirdly, we should envisage the possibility of developing traceable systems to monitor the origins, transport routes and destinations of illicitly traded resources. As we understand it, there are mechanisms already in place, such as the African Peace and Security Architecture, the African governance architecture and the regional economic communities, but they must work more closely together.

In conclusion, our delegation hopes that the Security Council, in close collaboration with the African Union Peace and Security Council and in consultation with the countries concerned, will intervene more forcefully to protect the human lives that have fallen victim to the atrocities perpetrated by armed and terrorist groups.

*The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.*