

Forum:	Special Political and Decolonization Committee (GA4)
Issue:	Addressing the role of natural resources in igniting conflict
Student Officer:	Melina-Foteini Drosou
Position:	Co-Chair

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates,

My name is Melina-Foteini Drosou, and I am currently attending the 11th grade at Platon School. It is an immense honor to be serving in this year's Platon School Model United Nations conference, as a Co-Chair, in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee.

Looking back to my prior conferences, I can confidently state that the MUN world is a fascinating one. As a result, one has the opportunity to cultivate important skills while socializing and enjoying the conference's intricacies as well.

This year's agenda of GA4 provides you with the chance to debate on exceedingly significant issues that require our immediate attention. It is my responsibility as the expert chair on the topic of "Tackling the exploitation of natural resources in conflict zones" to introduce you to the issue, guide you through your research, and reinforce your knowledge through this study guide.

I hope that by providing you with this study guide, you will be able to better grasp the subject at hand while also learning crucial facts about it. However, the study guide should just serve as a starting point for your preparation; you will need to conduct further research on your own to learn more about your country's policies. I wish you well with your studies and preparation, and I am looking forward to meeting and working with you. Please feel free to contact me via email if you require any additional information or have any questions.

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Yours truly,

Melina Drosou

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Natural resources, including land, water, wood, minerals, metals, and oil, are key sources of life, revenue, and influence for governments and communities all over the world. When natural resources are mismanaged or unequally distributed, or when corporate activities are carried out without adequate regard for environment and communities, tensions can rise, leading to violent conflict, or they can feed into and intensify pre-existing conflict dynamics. Furthermore, population expansion and environmental degradation are intensifying competition for already scarce resources like land and water, with climate change threatening to exacerbate the situation. It's no wonder, therefore, that many experts and governments believe natural resources will increasingly play a significant role in a rising number of conflicts, with potentially serious implications for international and regional peace and stability.

Natural resources are essential to civilization because they provide income and trade. They are commonly used as a primary source of income in many member states, and many people rely on them for their livelihoods. Half of the world's population is projected to be directly dependent on local natural resources; many rural areas rely on agriculture, fisheries, minerals, and forestry as their primary sources of income. Access to natural resources is typically a determining factor in a developing country's capacity to modernize economically. Water is necessary for both effective agriculture and industrialization; for example, a country's economic progress might be severely hampered by a shortage of clean water for its workforce. Natural resource-related conflicts and the problems of avoiding, controlling, and resolving them may possibly define global peace and security in the twenty-first century. Global trends including population growth, rising consumption, environmental degradation, and climate change are putting considerable and potentially unsustainable strains on the availability and usage of natural resources like land, water, and ecosystems. Natural resource concerns have the potential to escalate into destructive, perhaps violent conflict when they are coupled with political, economic, cultural, or social forces - with major ramifications for people's lives.

Political instability makes countries more prone to violence when resources are few or abundant. Instability affects not just the governing structure, but also all other infrastructures that rely on government monitoring and control, such as the financial system, national oil-production facilities, roadways, and ports. Increasing population, environmental deterioration, and resource disparity can all work together to impair an already insecure government's ability to provide the demands of its citizens, fueling conflict. Furthermore, the availability of natural resources may encourage increasing conflict over control of revenue-generating sources. Violent political confrontations frequently result in environmental and infrastructural devastation, increasing resource scarcity and, as a result, the possibility for violent conflicts over limited resources.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Conflict

Conflict is defined as a substantial dispute and debate over a significant issue. When two individuals, groups, or countries are at conflict, they have had a severe dispute or argument and have failed to reach an agreement.¹

Fragile State

Fragile states have qualities that make it difficult for them to succeed economically and socially. Weak governance, low administrative capacity, ongoing humanitarian problems, lingering societal tensions, and, in many cases, violence or the legacy of armed conflict and civil war are among them.²

Natural Resources

Natural resources are resources that do not require human intervention to exist. This includes valuable features including economic and industrial use.

Warlordism

A military commander exercising civil power in a region, whether in nominal allegiance to the national government or in defiance of it.³

Exploitation

Exploitation is the act of taking advantage of someone or something for the sole purpose of profiting or otherwise benefiting oneself.⁴

The exploitation of natural resources for economic development is referred to as exploitation of natural resources.

Scarcity

The difference between finite resources and theoretically unlimited needs is referred to as scarcity in economics.⁵

¹Conflict. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/conflict>.

²"Selected Definitions and Characteristics of 'Fragile States' by Key International Actors." y FSDR/DEVINVEST. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/terminology/wcms_504528.pdf

³"Warlordism." *The Free Dictionary. The Free Dictionary*, <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/warlordism>.

⁴"Definition of Exploitation | Dictionary.Com." *Www.Dictionary.Com*, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/exploitation>.

⁵"Scarcity: What It Means in Economics." *Investopedia*, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/scarcity.asp>.

Insurgent Organizations

A group that emerges in violent opposition to legitimate authority, particularly one that engages in armed resistance to a government or the enforcement of its laws.⁶

Natural resource management (NRM)

Natural resource management (NRM) is the practice of managing natural resources such as land, water and minerals in order to ensure their long-term viability.

Environmental scarcity

Environmental scarcity refers to the declining availability of renewable natural resources.⁷

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since 1990, at least eighteen armed disputes have been fueled by the exploitation of resources (Sudan conflict, South China Sea etc) . Furthermore, according to recent research, natural resources have played a role in at least 40%⁸ of all intrastate disputes during the previous sixty years. Civil conflicts in Liberia, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have all revolved around "high-value" resources such as timber, diamonds, gold, minerals, and oil. Control of scarce resources such as agricultural land and water has contributed to other conflicts, such as those in Darfur and the Middle East. Natural resource management is one of the most pressing issues confronting developing countries today. Exploitation of non-renewable natural resources such as oil, gas, minerals, and wood has been blamed for causing, exacerbating, or prolonging violent conflicts across the world.

Furthermore, rising pressure on and competition for limited renewable resources like land, water, and fisheries — a trend worsened by degradation, population increase, and climate change – is fueling new conflicts and inhibiting the peaceful settlement of old ones. The intricate interplay between natural resources on the one hand, and economic, political, cultural, and social aspects on the other, is increasingly recognized as a source of obstacles for natural resource management (NRM). Many nations are facing significant shortages of essential renewable resources such as freshwater, farmland, rangeland, forests, fisheries, and other species as economic and population expansion raises global demand levels. Human security is threatened by the depletion of renewable natural resources, as well as environmental deterioration and climate change. They can disrupt livelihoods, have a harmful impact on ecosystems, and hinder peace and development whether used alone or in conjunction with other

⁶"Definition of Insurgent | Dictionary.Com." *Www.Dictionary.Com*, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/insurgent>.

⁷"Environmental Scarcity and the Outbreak of Conflict." *PRB*, <https://www.prb.org/resources/environmental-scarcity-and-the-outbreak-of-conflict/>.

⁸"Conflict and Natural Resources." *United Nations Peacekeeping*, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/conflict-and-natural-resources>

variables. Governments in poor nations, fragile states, and growing economies are increasingly under pressure to manage natural resources responsibly and settle disputes over their ownership, management, allocation, and control.

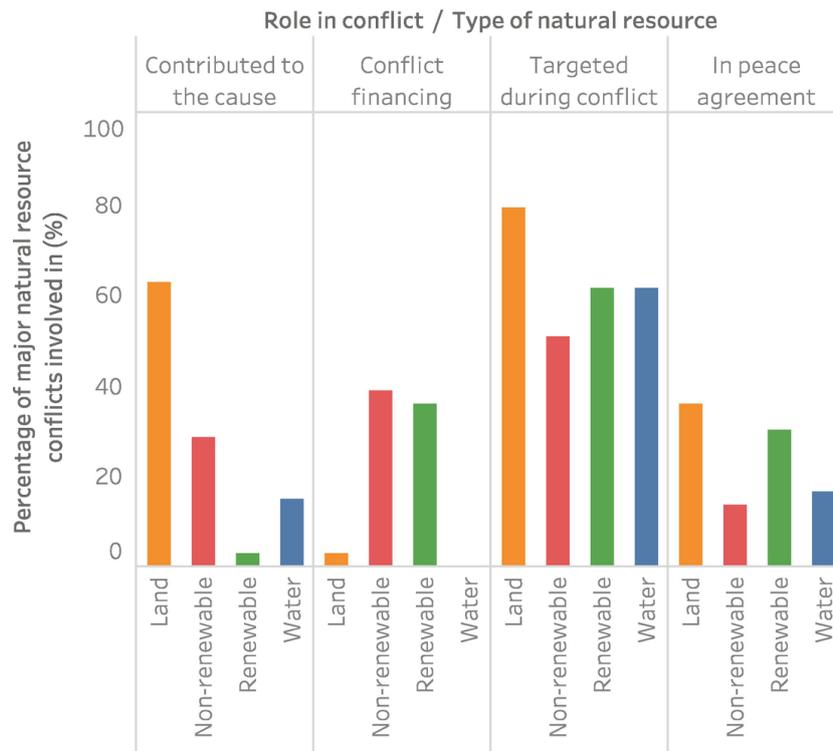


Figure 1 The role of natural resources in conflict depending on type of natural resource

The relationship between natural resources and conflict

Natural resource disputes have a range of contributing factors that are typically complicated and multi-layered. Understanding the core causes of conflicts is critical in conflict-sensitive development cooperation because it offers the foundation for assessing the potential for future conflicts, the dynamics of current conflicts, and the necessary conflict prevention and resolution initiatives.

Natural resource-related conflicts are essentially socioeconomic (violent or nonviolent) conflicts centered on how people, households, communities, and states control or obtain access to resources within certain economic and political structures. Such disputes may arise as a result of arguments about resource allocation, inequities, land rights, and maintenance difficulties. Natural resource disputes are frequent in many developing countries, and they reflect the widespread reliance on natural resources for local subsistence. Local disputes are frequently resource-related, particularly in rural regions where material conditions are inadequate.

As the world's population increases and demand for resources grows, conflicts over natural resources are likely to worsen in the coming decades. Natural resource scarcity is often at the basis of conflicts. This involves conflicts over resource control among powerful stakeholders at various levels, as well as disputes over access across different types of production systems. Excessive shortage of water and other resources, on the other hand, is often managed without serious conflict. Many

disputes boil down to how land and water resources are apportioned among stakeholders, as well as institutions' failure to manage scarce, high-value resources in a peaceful and equitable manner. Furthermore, climate change's potential effects on water supply, food security, disease frequency, coastal borders, and population dispersal may exacerbate current tensions and spark new conflicts. Droughts that last longer and longer put more strain on natural resources, resulting in new or worsened conflicts. Violent conflict is rarely, if ever, caused only by environmental circumstances. Natural resource exploitation and related environmental pressures, on the other hand, can be linked to all stages of the conflict cycle, from contributing to the onset and maintenance of violence to undercutting hopes for peace. Moreover, economic and population expansion, along with the loss of ecosystems, results in a rise in resource competition. Such circumstances can readily raise the risk of conflict, especially if additional conflict causes (such as politicized ethnicity or socioeconomic inequality) are present. In addition, many nations' political shifts, particularly in fragile circumstances, can lead to new external interests in terms of resource exploitation. In such circumstances, functioning institutions, agreements, and rules are very important.

Characteristics of areas suffering from natural resource exploitation and conflict

Armed conflict, pervasive violence, or other hazards of damage to people are all indicators of conflict-affected places. Armed conflict can take many different forms, including international or non-international conflicts involving two or more governments, as well as liberation wars, insurgencies, civil wars, and so on. Political instability or repression, institutional weakness, insecurity, the breakdown of civic infrastructure, and widespread violence are all examples of high-risk environments. Widespread human rights breaches and violations of national or international law are also common in such areas.

Political Corruption

Corruption in government is the first mechanism. There is considerable evidence that governments that rely heavily on oil, minerals, and forestry for funding are more likely to be corrupt. Part of the issue stems from the enormous volume of wealth generated by natural resources: governments can only absorb and track a certain quantity of money. Governments are frequently inundated with more income than they can adequately handle due to resource abundance. Governments also collect resource income in methods that are extremely difficult for citizens to trace – and unusually simple for unscrupulous officials to divert; as a result, some of it ends up in off-budget accounts or the pockets of government officials, never to be seen or heard from again. Other issues arise as a result of the unstable nature of resource revenues. International prices for raw commodities, such as oil and minerals,

have been more unpredictable than prices for manufactured goods throughout the last century. This volatility has been greater since 1970⁹, this means that as a nation's reliance on oil and mineral exports grows, so does its vulnerability to economic shocks. The abrupt flow of funds, according to case studies, tends to overwhelm conventional budgeting procedures, increase corruption, and diminish government agencies' capacity to remain free of political interference.

Political Instability

Conflicts over renewable resources are fundamentally political questions about who should have access to and control over resources, whose opinions should be taken into consideration when identifying and prioritizing difficulties and problems, and what management goals and rates of usage are acceptable. Because of the opposing interests of various persons, organizations, or nations, these fundamental political concerns can become causes of friction and division. Conflicts of this nature can arise at the local, national, and transnational levels, involving a variety of stakeholders such as communities, business sector entities, civil society groups, local governments, and national governments.

Natural resources can be used to pay belligerents, non-state armed organizations, or personnel of national armies in many locations affected by conflict and violence. One of the ways these armed organizations support themselves is by direct control of natural resource extraction and trade (transport, sale, and relationships with middlemen and exporters). This oversight of all upstream supply chain operations is rather open in remote places where armed groups have long been present and where the state has little control. Natural resource money can also be created by legal commercial, or exploitation enterprises closely linked to armed organizations, like in Colombia. This is referred to as "legal criminal mining." Armed groups are frequently funded by indirect control of natural resources, such as illicit mineral or cash taxes levied on miners (to get access to mining locations), transporters (to use particular highways), or any other middleman desiring to move, buy, or sell materials.

Role of armed groups in natural resource exploitation

There are two types of belligerents in natural resource-rich country wars: those who have no overarching interest in preserving the state or its people and are only

⁹ "Toolkit and Guidance for Preventing and Managing Land and Natural Resources Conflict." The United Nations Interagency Framework Team for Preventive Action. <https://www.un.org/en/land-natural-resources-conflict/pdfs/EU-UN%20Introduction%20and%20overview.pdf>

interested in looting; and those who seize control of the state and seek to maximize their own profit by encouraging stability and growth in their new domain.

Offshore oil and alluvial diamonds, for example, allowed the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) and UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) rebels to fight for long periods of time in Angola. Oil and diamonds brought immense riches to both sides' leaders, but defenseless populations, notably women and children, were subjected to bizarre acts of brutality. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, the diversity of resources (diamonds, iron ore, rubber, and timber) and their geographical distribution resulted in the emergence of warlordism, which is characterized by a highly fragmented conflict between a weak government in charge of the capital and numerous militant groups in charge of resources in the interior. Because every rebel group needs financial backing to govern and continue its operations, the challenge becomes how to get funds. Regrettably, the apparent response is that the rebel organizations' sole competitive edge is their extensive potential for organized murder and mayhem. Because insurgent organizations are more likely to be located in rural regions for obvious military reasons, they turn to 'business operations' like extortion and the exploitation and exchange of primary resources.

It is relatively easy for belligerents to conduct rackets extracting cash by force in rural regions that generate commodities with large economic profits. Valuable resources such as diamonds were regarded as the ideal lootable resource; alluvial diamonds were particularly appropriate since they were easy to harvest and their transportation expenses were insignificant in comparison to their entire worth. As a result, the UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa (OSAA) said that natural resource profits were used to fund military as well as political support. Even though the initial instigation of the war was not always tied to concerns over natural resource exploitation, a distinct economic factor is always present in all rebellions; more precisely, the issue of resource exploitation and looting runs deep. Lootable resources have therefore been essential, or at the very least useful, in sustaining the struggle and in order for rebels to, among other things, feed themselves, but -have not been- the conflict's primary motivator.

Case studies on conflicts fueled by natural resources

Aceh, Indonesia

Indonesia is a large, rural, and resource-rich country with a history of political violence. It is unsurprising that it experienced civil war in 1989–91 and again at the start of 1999. Both of these disputes occurred in Aceh's westernmost province. Aceh's long-running separatist struggle was brought back to public notice by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. Many people, however, are unaware of the exact nature of how the various aspects of the conflict intersected with resource-related issues.

From the mid-1970s until 2005, war occurred in Indonesia's Aceh region, which was brought to an end by a peace agreement. The Free Aceh Movement (GAM) was founded in the mid-1970s, around the same time as the development of Aceh's Arun natural gas resources. In their condemnations of the Indonesian government, GAM leaders and other Acehnese rebels emphasized their exploitation, as well as exploitation of other natural resources. The scenario in Aceh shows how natural resource exploitation may lead to conflict when it becomes intertwined in larger processes of identity creation and is reinterpreted by political entrepreneurs in ways that justify violence.

Natural gas production and exports peaked in 1994 and have been steadily declining since then. For decades, the Acehnese have seen a disparity between the lifestyles of white-collar employees in the enclaves of PT Arun, Mobil Oil, and downstream industries around Lhokseumawe and the slums that surround them. The conflict has been fueled by natural resources and the unfair distribution of them and their benefits. Export-oriented natural resource extraction did not provide enough jobs for lower-skilled individuals, and in most cases, only a few downstream industrial links were established. Aceh earned a 70% share of oil and natural gas profits in 2002, when the last special autonomy law took effect. For many years before 2002, the gas dollars were totally controlled by a centralized body in Jakarta, with just around 3% of total income from Aceh's oil and natural gas – including all related taxes – being returned to the destitute province in the form of central government payments. Aceh's infrastructure was and continues to be inadequate, with a quarter of the population being poor.

Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire was originally recognized for its flourishing ivory trade, but it is now more known for its wealth of other natural resources. Diamonds are a valuable natural resource, but their extraction has resulted in several conflicts. Côte d'Ivoire is a Kimberley Process (KP) member, which means it must have internal controls to ensure that the extraction of its rough diamonds is conflict-free.

Following the Forces Nouvelles (FN) failed coup attempt in September 2002, the country was divided into a rebel-held north and a government-controlled south, separated by a neutral zone managed by the French army Licorne. As a result, the rebels gained control of the northern and central diamond resources and the government of Côte d'Ivoire issued a Ministerial Decree on November 19, 2002, suspending all diamond exploration and sales. Séguéla and Tortiya, Côte d'Ivoire's two biggest diamond mining sites, are located in the north, under rebel-controlled territory.

Since December 2005, Côte d'Ivoire has been the sole nation subject to a United Nations prohibition on the export of conflict diamonds. Both the military and the FN rebels have profited from the fighting and years of "no war,

no peace," crippling the peace process. Diamonds, along with other natural resources (such as cocoa, lumber, cotton, oil, and gold), helped to fund the military as well as the FN rebels in the north. However, since the signing of the Ouagadougou Political Accord (OPA) in March 2007 between rebel leader Guillaume Soro and Ivorian president Laurent Gbagbo, there has been some progress in the main areas of the agreement: population identification, preparation for the first round of presidential elections (now scheduled for 30 November 2008), restoration of state authority and unity, and army reform, including disarmament. Conflict prevention measures include the establishment and application of penalties on important natural resources, as well as international "import-export control systems" like the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS). The real scenario of conflict diamonds being smuggled out of Côte d'Ivoire, however, poses a severe obstacle to the implementation of diamond restrictions.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Mining and natural resource exploitation have supported a particularly vicious conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's east (the provinces of Katanga, Maniema, and North and South Kivu) for over fifteen years, resulting in over 3.5 million deaths. Numerous armed organizations have flourished in the region as a result of the protracted period of political instability during the 1990s (a civil war that led to the fall of the State of Zaire, a civil war in Burundi, and genocide in Rwanda). The richness under the surface has prompted them to position themselves in vital parts of the nation, such as mines and along transportation routes, and to battle on. Miners and locals are the first victims of this race for natural resources to directly sustain war, and they are held captive and subjected to constant brutality. Armed organizations have taken control of a portion of the Congolese government's resources, depriving it of a significant source of revenue and adding to the destabilization of an already weak state.

Nigeria

In the instance of Zamfara State in Nigeria's northwest, illicit gold mining has been recognized as one of the region's underlying causes of war. Officials claim that a clear link has been established between bandit activity and illegal mining. According to UN data, over 97 tons of gold worth over \$3 billion was smuggled out of Nigeria between 2012 and 2018. Furthermore, reports show, the outbreak of rural banditry is the product of a fiefdom of lethal gangs fighting for a "piece of the pie". To offer the required cover to continue exploiting these mineral riches, criminal networks drive communal conflict. They work with traditional authorities, politicians, and foreign opportunists to accomplish this.

Palestine

Natural resources have long been abundant in historic Palestine, including arable land, and, more recently, oil and natural gas. These resources have been undermined and misused in the seven decades since Israel's formation through a number of methods. For the nearly five million Palestinians living under occupation, the degradation and alienation of their water supply, the exploitation of their natural resources, and the desecration of their environment are all symptomatic of their lack of meaningful control over their daily lives as Israel, the occupying power, exercises its military administrative powers in a sovereign-like manner, with vastly discriminatory consequences.

Global Witness

Exploitation of natural resources and corruption in the global political and economic system are at the root of many of the world's greatest environmental and human rights violations. Global Witness conducts in-depth investigations, uncover injustices, and advocate for reform. It is a non-profit organization that works with partners all around the world to fight for justice. For more than two decades, the organization has fought for total transparency in the mining, logging, oil, and gas sectors, so that locals who own those resources may profit correctly today and in the future. They came to the conclusion that the best way to safeguard people's rights to land, livelihoods, and a fair share of their country's wealth is to demand complete transparency in the resource sector, as well as sustainable and equitable resource management, and to stop the international financial system from supporting resource-related corruption.

Kimberley Process (KP)

The Kimberley Process (KP) is a multi-stakeholder worldwide initiative aimed at increasing transparency and supervision in the diamond industry in order to eliminate the trade in conflict diamonds, or rough diamonds sold by rebel groups or their allies to fund conflict against legitimate governments. The KP, which started operating in 2003, regulates rough diamond traffic between participating nations by enforcing a local certification mechanism that makes the transaction more open and secure, as well as prohibiting trade with non-participants. Rough diamonds must be carried in sealed containers and exported with a Kimberley Process Certificate stating that the rough diamonds were not used to aid rebel movements.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

EVENT	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
July 26 th 1956	Following Britain's withdrawal from Egypt, the president seized control of the country's resources, and nationalized the Suez Canal, thereby controlling oil exports from the Middle East to Europe, leading to the invasion of Egypt by Britain, France, and Israel

September 23 rd 1980	The war between Iran and Iraq began with the primary goal of obtaining one of the most vital commodities, oil, by attacking oil installations on land and oil tankers in the Persian Gulf
August 2 nd 1990	Iraq attacked Kuwait, claiming that Kuwait was depleting both nations' oil deposits
March 19 th 2003	The United States attacked Iraq with the purpose of removing Iraq's potential to utilize "weapons of mass destruction," but their real objective was to gain control of Iraq's oil reserves
May 2007	Liberia joined the Kimberley Process after three years of experts visiting the country to advise on how to put effective restrictions on diamond production and trading to prevent conflict diamonds
October 16 th 2018	The Secretary General urges for approved extraction and fair trading methods with an emphasis on assisting local people and channeling earnings to the national benefit

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Strengthening Capacities for Conflict-Sensitive Natural Resource Management

The 'Strengthening Capacities for Conflict-Sensitive Natural Resource Management' Guidance Note created by the UN, emphasizes the need of assisting governments and civil society actors in managing natural resources in a responsible, transparent, equitable, and non-violent way. This necessitates not just the development of scientific and technological capabilities, but also the development of peacebuilding capabilities. The "soft skills" of negotiation, mediation, and discussion; the capacity to communicate effectively; a culture of responsibility, inclusion, and responsiveness to the public; and a readiness to share power with other stakeholders are all examples of these capabilities. Moreover, a conflict-sensitive natural resource management system can resist stakeholder contestation of key resource choices in a constructive manner, avoiding the possibility of complaints devolving into destructive conflict and violence.

UN Security Council sanctions

Sanctions imposed by the United Nations are intended to limit its targets' capacity to defy Security Council decisions, or at the very least to increase the costs of non-compliance. Their immediate goal is to stop the flow of resources. Commodity sanctions are one of the most potent tools available to the Security Council. Their success in dealing with conflict resource instances in Angola, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, for example, has been highly acknowledged. They send a clear signal to governments,

business, and consumers about what not to buy by attempting to remove specific commodities from global markets from a specified origin. They also show how economic decisions may have an impact on international peace and security, as well as human rights. However, commodity sanctions have proven to be brutal tools in the past. Some have been improperly targeted and timed, or have been too rigid to match the agility of their targets, who may have other sources of money. Other design and execution issues have occurred in countries such as Iraq, where a system of oil trade embargo exemptions was misused to enrich the country's political elite, while regular populations were subjected to the sanctions' punishing impact.

Kimberley Process Certification Scheme

Other international discussions and treaties have given avenues for resolving natural resource problems and fostering peace. North and South Korea have recently begun discussions to establish a combined fishing zone in response to Blood Diamonds and the Kimberley Process. After witnessing terrible crimes and human rights violations related to diamond extraction in Sierra Leone and Angola in the 1990s, important actors (NGOs, governments, and the diamond business) initiated discussions to reform diamond wealth management. As a result of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, a voluntary self-regulation mechanism to promote international standards on the import, export, and sale of diamonds, dangerous military standoffs on disputed waters on the western sea border, which was not clearly divided at the end of the Korean War conflict, were avoided. Oceans and their limits may be a source of conflict even among industrialized nations because of the enormous economic effect of maritime activities such as fishing and oil exploitation. For example, Japan and Russia's disagreement over the Kuril Islands has stopped the countries from signing a peace treaty to formally conclude World War II, and this issue has hampered their political and commercial relations.

EU-UN Partnership on Land, Natural Resources and Conflict Prevention

In his statement on the International Day for Preventing Environmental Exploitation in War and Armed Conflict, former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon highlighted that "Natural resource exploitation, such as lumber, minerals, oil, and gas, has fueled at least 18 violent conflicts since 1990. Environmental damage and marginalization of local communities who do not gain economically from natural resource exploitation are sometimes responsible."¹⁰ In 2008, the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) created a partnership to enhance capacity in land, natural resources, and conflict prevention in response to these problems and threats. The partnership's goal was to create and implement a comprehensive multi-agency initiative aimed at strengthening governmental stakeholders', the UN system's, and the EU's capacity to prevent land and natural resources from fueling violent conflict. The partnership also

¹⁰*Land, Natural Resources and Conflict: From Curse to Opportunity. An UN-EU Partnership in Action.*
<https://www.un.org/en/land-natural-resources-conflict/>.

published a report called Capacity Inventory, which examined the UN system's existing capacity for collaborative and sustainable land and natural resource #management.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Exploitation and disputes should be a priority to nations

Where natural resources have been the primary engine of violent conflict, they must be regarded as critical components of conflict prevention, sustainable development, and peacebuilding. Failure to do so risks jeopardizing the fragile peace, increasing the likelihood of a return into violent conflict, and threatening post-war reconstruction efforts. According to Grundel, "improving natural resource governance and addressing land ownership and control are vital components of successful peace consolidation strategies, and while addressing them is likely to be complex in a conflict-affected environment, they are essential for long-term peace and development."¹¹

Transparency and accountability

The government's management of natural riches and the money it produces must be transparent and accountable. Civil society, particularly local communities, especially indigenous and marginalized groups, must be included in the development and execution of road maps for better natural resource governance and management. To consolidate a resource-based development and industrialisation strategy for nations, it is critical to develop a continent-wide shared strategic vision, articulate purposeful and proactive government-led collective action, and develop appropriate interventions and harmonisation of public, private, and community interests at local, national, and regional echelons. This also entails selecting anchor initiatives that will serve as the foundation for national, regional, and continental links.

Supervision and regulation of mining

By establishing a strict legal framework for the mining industry, investment projects would be required to respect people's free, prior, and informed consent as well as be preceded by political dialogue with all project stakeholders, including representatives of ethnic groups in the affected areas; and be accompanied by impact studies to assess the projects' impact on the environment, human rights, and health, among other issues.

Engage in local and regional mediation mechanisms

In many cases, customary methods for resolving land disputes already exist or are capable of doing so. Local actors frequently see such methods as legitimate. To develop a hybrid system, local and customary methods might be connected to the

¹¹ Maphosa, Sylvester Bongani. "Unlocking the Economic Dimension of Peace-Building in Africa." AFRICA INSTITUTE OF SOUTH AFRICA, Mar. 2021.

<https://media.africaportal.org/documents/No.-74.-Natural-Resources-and-Conflict..pdf>

required legislative procedures. This should be done in a way that does not jeopardize local structures and procedures while maintaining national coherence. Local procedures may require certain checks and balances to maintain a level of due process or to defend against certain sorts of prejudice. As a result, processes may be required to guarantee that locally attained decisions are safeguarded within the larger national system. In any case, local and customary systems should be strongly regarded as a valid and possibly extremely successful way of resolving vast numbers of local land disputes.

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