

DRC's natural treasures: source of conflict or key to development?

Expert meeting, 23-24 November, Brussels, Belgium

Report by Saskia Van Hoyweghen (BCAS, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Introduction: From Fatal to Fair Transactions in the DRC

Throughout history, valuable minerals have been associated with conflict, banditry and violence. Nevertheless, minerals such as gold, diamonds and coltan, as well as other natural resources like timber, can also contribute positively to the daily lives of many people all over the world. They can make their environment more beautiful and luxurious, as well as provide the raw materials for industrial products. When managed well, they play an important role in enhancing economic growth and stability.

Unfortunately, the characteristics possessed by these resources also generate the potential for negatively impacting peace, security and sustainable development. The Democratic Republic of Congo is one of the world's richest countries in terms of mineral wealth, but the vast majority of its population does not profit from this wealth. Since colonial times, the Congo has undergone a long history of plunder, culminating in what is now called 'Africa's First World War'. Over the past century, colonial powers, Cold War dictators, neighbouring states, private companies, criminal networks and rebel forces have all taken turns in pillaging the country.

Now, the war in the DRC is formally over. Elections are planned for June 2006. However, fighting in the East continues. Many exploitative networks are still in place, and still manage to enrich themselves at the expense of the population. Corruption is rampant. Due to the lack of governance in much of the country, existing rules and regulations are not implemented. Extraction takes place in a situation of anarchy. The rainforest is rapidly disappearing; the moratorium on the exploitation of timber on new concessions is being ignored. Child labour and forced labour are common, especially in the unregulated, informal mining sector. Private security forces commit human rights violations while protecting mining areas. Mining in relatively stable areas in the West threatens both the environment and the livelihoods of communities.

The international community pays little, or no, attention to any of this. Large donations of money flow into the country to facilitate its elections, which is of course a good thing. While the DRC's natural resources seem to be the key in building the future of Congo, the power held by those actors that govern the extractive sector, risks disappearance from everyone's radar screen. The ones who control the exploitation in the DRC have the power to either fuel conflict or build up sustainable peace in the country.

Fatal Transactions¹ and the Brussels Centre of African Studies believe that the way in which natural resources are governed in the DRC can make the difference between new conflict or sustainable peace and development. Therefore, they organised an expert meeting on the role of natural resources for the future of the DRC. The aim of the conference was to gather as much knowledge and experience as possible, and to facilitate the exchange of information on, and analyses of, the general situation and particular instances of resource extraction in the DRC. The organisers aimed to gain better insight into the role played by natural resources in (de)stabilising the DRC, and to a shared vision on how to come to more fair and sustainable resource extraction in the DRC.

Goals of the conference:

- ⊗ Increase comprehension amongst policy makers, private companies, donor governments, international institutions and civil society, of the role played by natural resources in (de)stabilising the DRC.
- ⊗ A shared vision on how to promote fairer and more sustainable resource extraction in the DRC.
- ⊗ A translation of this vision into clear points of action for the various stakeholders.
- ⊗ The identification of new, productive areas for research to further develop knowledge around resource-based economies in situations of weak governance, and a transformation of this knowledge into possibilities for action.
- ⊗ The emergence of a network of activists, grassroots groups, academics and other experts who, through research and action, will further develop frameworks for action that will enable Africa's resource wealth to truly contribute to sustainable development.

Day One of the conference focussed on the current state of affairs. During the plenary session, the different actors in the field gave their perspective on the role of natural resources in today's DRC. In the afternoon session, through various case studies on various resources and industries from different parts of the DRC, the participants shared examples of best and worst practices and gained a deeper understanding of the complexities of the Congolese resource-based economy.

¹The international Fatal Transactions campaign is dedicated to put a stop to the fuelling of conflicts over natural resources, and wants resources to contribute in a fair and rightful way to development and sustainable peace. In order to achieve this transformation – from Fatal Transactions towards Fair Transactions – the international Fatal Transactions campaign aims to provide a platform and act as knowledge broker for researchers and campaigners in the North and South. Its members raise the awareness of Western consumers, economic actors and policy makers regarding their responsibilities. The campaign promotes and supports initiatives that enhance the contribution of natural resources to peace and stability. Fatal Transactions is carried out by six European NGOs; Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa (NiZA, The Netherlands), Medico International (Germany), Novib (Oxfam Netherlands), Broederlijk Delen (Belgium), 11.11.11 (Belgium) and Intermon Oxfam (Spain). Associate members are; IPIS (Belgium), BICC (Germany) and Pax Christi (The Netherlands). Southern partner organisations of the FT members actively take part in the campaign.

Day Two looked at the way forward for the DRC: what role natural resources do, can and will play in the country's future, and how can the various actors influence this for the best? The morning session focussed on the upcoming elections and the effects they would have, or should have, on the governance of the mining sector. The rest of the day gave the audience an opportunity to look more closely at the different instruments and actors that could enable the improvement of regulatory frameworks and their implementation in the extractive sector. This included the drafting of policy recommendations targeted at the different stakeholders (see attached document).

The participants

The group of experts participating in the conference consisted of representatives from all of the different groups that are involved in, or affected by exploitation, or the consequences of exploitation, of natural resources in the DRC (see attached participants list). This group included academics and other experts with experience on the subject; research organisations; civil society representatives from Africa and Europe (trade unions, human rights groups, environmental organisations, mining co-operatives, community-based groups, development organisations etc.); international institutions (World Bank, IMF), members of the Congolese transitional government; mining companies; donors and European policy makers. All of these have an important role to play, directly and indirectly, in determining the future of the DRC.

As a basis for the discussion, representatives of all these groups were invited to send in a paper, giving their analysis of a specific case or resource, a particular region or policy measure or of the situation in general. This resulted in a collection of studies, reports and essays that were presented during the conference². The contributions varied widely in perspective and content. They ranged from academic studies, pieces of action-research and political leaflets, to personal testimonies. Together they provide an insight into the enormous problems the DRC is currently facing, and challenge us to come up with possible solutions. The organisers have been impressed by, and are grateful for, all of these papers, both from the DRC and other parts of the world. They would like to thank the authors once more for their valuable contributions.

² All conference papers can be downloaded from our website: www.fataltransactions.org

Content of the conference³

General observations

One does not need to be an ‘expert’ to understand that Congo’s natural resources have not improved the quality of life of its people, neither have they promoted development in its broadest sense. About the precise relationship between natural resources and conflict, there is more than just academic disagreement. However, the presence of natural treasures *per se* does not have to lead to violent conflict. It might lead to disagreements or arguments about distribution and access, but more is needed to explain the extreme violence of Congo’s wars. One of the important lessons learned at this conference is that it is crucial to *understand the root causes of the instability and conflict* in the region. After all, in Rwanda and Burundi we have witnessed equally horrific strife without the presence of natural resources of any significance. We need to understand the wider economic, social and political context in which these resources are governed and managed.

When discussing the mismanagement of natural resources in the DRC, it is quite important to *understand the term ‘pillaging’ in its broadest sense* or avoid it all together. The plunder of DRC’s resources is too often seen merely in terms of illegal export by foreign armies and rebels and limited to the war zones. Many of the presentations have clearly demonstrated that the Congolese government is equally implicated in plunder, fraud and corruption with regard to its natural resources.

Despite the fact that there is a manifest red thread in all the stories about gold, oil, diamonds et cetera, *each of these resources has its own specificity*. In order to recommend measures to improve the management of each of these different resources, recommendations need to be quite specific and detailed. The same goes for the actors involved. The terms ‘companies’ or ‘international community’ have proven to be a bit vague. Lobbying and advocacy will need to target actors with quite specific strategies in order to be effective. That they can be effective has been demonstrated.

1. What is the status of natural resource management in Congo today and what are the root causes for its failure?

1.1 Different national and international context

Before the 1990s the mining sector in Congo had operated in a ‘closed system’ where mining companies were integrated into the national state administration and its informalised networks. Since the fall of Mobutu, the mining business in Congo operates in a vastly different context (both national and international). Different actors have been involved in the plunder of Congo’s natural resources. The war in Congo is not without reason called ‘Africa’s First World War’ since a great number of external parties is involved in this conflict and in the extraction of natural resources. Interventions that have started for merely legitimate reasons (like defending national borders against rebel forces

³ The content of this report is a reflection of the conference. Still it is an interpretation of the organisers.

operating from within the DRC) have in some cases become an excuse for the continuation of the illegal exploitation and export of the DRC ' s natural resources. Particularly Rwanda and Uganda come to mind. Far too often support for national development is extended to these countries disregarding their involvement across the border.

However, also internationally, we need to understand that the mining business operates in a different global economic climate. We should not overstate the involvement of the international mining sector in Central Africa. All experts agree that respectable international players need the rule of law and a stable investment climate in order to have guarantees for the large capital injections needed. The majority of companies operating in the DRC at this moment are the so-called 'junior' companies. From the moment stability is more or less guaranteed, the big players are expected to come back in. With the elections in sight, several companies have expressed a renewed interest in starting or restarting operations in the DRC, hoping that a new government can create a stable investment climate.

1.2 Characteristics of current exploitation

In recent decades the large-scale exploitation of certain natural resources (copper, cobalt) has witnessed a strong decline in favour of less capital intensive mining (diamond, coltan, heterogenite). The economic activities, which have currently been going on with respect to natural resources, can be classified into two categories. Firstly exploration; junior companies buy concessions with no intention to exploit them but to trade them. The mining business itself is caught up in the logic of the economy of finance. Profits are made on the stock market and not by extracting resources. Secondly, artisanal or low capital intensity extraction; alluvial diamonds, coltan and timber require no great skill or capital to be extracted. In the cobalt and copper sector, workers, including children, are scratching off the top layers of the soil for heterogenite with very primitive tools.

Artisanal mining is characterised by:

- being very labour-intensive: providing work (and income, although very low, to large masses of the population)
- exploitation in dangerous and unhealthy conditions with presence of the military
- unclear ownership and accountability
- export controlled by the military or the police
- little returns to local populations
- being very damaging for the environment and livelihood of the Congolese communities

Oil does not neatly fit into this classification, because (a) the major oil companies are no longer interested in the small scale Congolese oil industry, so junior companies are the only ones exploiting oil concessions (and they have no immediate intention to trade them); (b) oil is the only natural resource in the country that is not characterised by an artisanal exploitation. It is mainly concentrated offshore and oil production can continue despite conflicts on the mainland.

1.3 New actors

Not only have the characteristics of natural resource exploitation changed, different actors have also emerged on the scene. Militarised networks, instead of the state, have become intermediaries between local levels of extraction and global markets. They may not be engaged in direct exploitation or trade but they do control populations (i.e. labour), access, trade routes etc. Due to the criminalisation of trade in natural resources, an important side effect is the limited control international actors can exert. There are often clear links between mercenary companies and small mining companies. War and commerce have been interlinked since 1998 and neither the transition nor the elections carry any guarantee that this will change. Unless some structural changes within the sector take place, low intensity warfare risks continuing because of its profitability.

New trading partners have emerged in this context, with China playing a role that is current poorly understood. It is important to understand that several of Congo's resources are not directly exported to European markets but pass by cheap, but highly skilled, production countries before reaching European markets. This has been well documented for diamonds. *How to monitor and put pressure on these new global players is a new challenge for civil society as well as the Congolese government itself.*

The formal corporate sector has very recently shown an interest to re-engage in Congo. The last year has seen an increase in the number of major and medium players being present. Some large-scale projects have been proposed, such as reviving the Tenké Fungurume mine. Kabila senior and junior have not been able to create a climate that could attract the larger companies. Concessions were mainly given to smaller companies. There is general agreement among experts that the transitional government carries a very heavy responsibility by not providing the conditions for a return of the international corporate sector. In order to develop Congo's natural resources foreign capital is needed and the challenges are how to attract investments from legitimate companies that behave in a transparent and corporate social responsible way and how to make the sector beneficial to local populations.

1.4 Specific problems

Some experts have rightly pointed out that large-scale exploitation and extraction is not the only avenue in all cases. In the case of **forestry management**, for example, a balance needs to be struck between conservation and logging. Innovative small scale exploitation based on participatory management strategies may very well prove to have a far bigger effect on people's living standard than expecting a trickle down effect from large-scale logging. It has been proven in the past that growth and re-distribution are not necessarily linked. This often seems to be forgotten in the case of the DRC. Integrated development is important, as the mining sector can not be run from Kinshasa alone but needs to be in tune with other development initiatives as they present themselves locally.

Besides the forestry sector, the **oil** sector has, up to now, been neglected in many analyses, as other countries, such as Angola, have far bigger reserves. Nevertheless, oil

generates 20% of Congo's export revenues and developments offshore need to be closely watched as they attract new interest and can be exploited regardless of the situation on the mainland. Due to the current sky-high oil prices, the oil sector is of growing importance as a source of state income. The wish to safeguard its own oil fields also partly explains the interest of neighbouring Angola in the DRC.

What is typical for the sectors of **gold, coltan, diamonds and heterogenite** is the fact that they employ a relatively large workforce. There seems to be disagreement over the strategies to employ *vis à vis* these sectors which either operate in war zones or which are to a high extent militarised and criminalised. Human Rights Watch has been successful in convincing the Swiss company Metalor to stop purchasing 'Ugandan' gold being generated by the war economies of eastern DRC. Similar campaigns have created reluctance on the world market to purchase Congolese coltan. It was pointed out that despite the fact that the major coltan boom is over (there were some minor increases in prices from 2003-05) artisanal extraction continues. Many local people have no other sources of revenue and the fact that coltan from the DRC is treated with suspicion on world markets has not benefited local populations as the same practices continue, often in even worse circumstances. *Forcing companies to disengage from the DRC or not to buy from the DRC is not the right strategy. The point is to orient them towards more sustainable and responsible practices* so that the population can actually profit from its wealth.

A related problem poses itself in the **heterogenite** sectors. What to do with all the artisanal miners that are illegally digging on mining concessions. How can local labour be valorised and what alternatives can be offered to those that cannot be 'recycled'? It is clear that the broader social picture needs to be taken into account when discussing the relaunch of extraction.

2. What have been the views and strategies from the different actors (governmental and non-governmental) in tackling various resource related problems? To what extent have these strategies been implemented and what has been their impact on the ground?

2.1 Transition government and Congolese elites

The transition period has not resulted in better governance. This can not be explained away by claiming there was lack of time, management capabilities or financial capacities. There are fundamental and structural problems with the way Congo is governed by its elite. Neither the end of the war nor the elections will automatically lead to better practices. Abundant documentation has been presented illustrating that it is currently near impossible to conduct business in Congo in a clean and honest way. The lack of transparency seems to be one of the biggest problems.

Some examples:

- The Mining Registry was set up as an independent body to register concessions and stop the confusion over competing claims. In reality, it could not escape the control of the Ministry of Mining. The whole operation turned into a disaster due to bad management,

fraud and corruption. This happened despite the close supervision by the World Bank, despite sufficient means and managerial and technical capacities. The activities of the Mining Registry had to be suspended within the year.

There seems to be agreement amongst experts however, that we do not need more audits. Several inquiries and audits have already been made about the awarding of concessions. It is important that these audits are made public, and that action is taken upon them.

- The moratorium on awarding logging concessions has not been respected by the government itself. What we see on the ground is companies pouring in, in order to create the '*fait accompli*'.

The report of the Congolese Parliamentary Commission set up to examine the validity of economic and financial contracts signed during the 1996 and 1998 wars, has still not been published, thereby making it impossible to take action upon it.

Many experts share the view that the transition government is trying hard to squeeze as much out of the Treasury as it can. For example, the losses from the smuggling of diamonds, fraud and corruption surrounding the trade are massive. The fact that there have been four Ministers of Mines in the past 3 years is a sign. Anti-corruption measures are often viewed as intra-elite struggles for political power. State officials themselves are responsible for the dwindling revenues of the Treasury.

One of the key issues to be solved is both improving national governance in the DRC and strengthening state capacities at all levels (national and local). Merely reinforcing institutions will not change the 'governing mentality'.

2.2 International organisations

The World Bank resumed lending to the DRC in 2001. It has adopted a TSS approach (transitional support strategy), thus claiming that it only helps to create the environment in which money is spent without directly financing projects. The focus of the Bank is on quick macro-economic recovery through logging and revival of the mining sector. Growth is considered the best strategy to achieve the MDGs. The Bank has little consideration for the link between mining sector re-activation and political stability. It ignores Congo's persistent structural economic and political problems. Despite the end of armed conflict as such, it is premature to talk about stability and peace. Interestingly enough the Bank has a 'conflict unit'. Its aim is to study the political context in which the Bank intervenes, yet it does not seem to influence WB policy and attitudes.

The TSS approach has pushed for new legislation for natural resource management. As a result several new Codes have been adopted, among which the Mining- and Forestry code. These codes have been developed by a transitional government without a popular mandate. There has been no popular debate about them. Participatory management is rhetorical if codes are drafted without debate. The implementation decrees are currently being developed in the same top down fashion.

When we look at the forestry sector for example, the political and social environment is not taken into account at all. The Forest Code (2002) mentions the division of the forest into different zones and designating them for a certain activity. It is unclear how this zoning will be done and if social realities on the ground will be taken into account. There has been no local community and interest group consultation. No talk about preservation. No talk about indigenous rights as all land has become state property.

Although an improvement to the former code, there is a lot of ground for criticism on the Mining Code. Critics say the Mining Code has been developed without the participation of civil society and it has therefore no mandate. Another critique to mention is that the new Code is mainly designed for attracting new foreign investors, instead of supporting local industry. The Mining Code can not be changed for another 10 years in order to secure these investments. The state owned companies MIBA (diamond), Gécamines (copper, cobalt), OKIMO (gold) and Sominki (coltan) ought to be reformed but this has not been done. They are being dismantled while suffering from multiple contracts that have been concluded in the early war years by Kabila senior and no one knows all the details.

The major problem is that the content of the Codes is hardly known by the population. A major awareness raising campaign is needed to make people aware of their rights. The Congolese civil society has been making a major effort to accomplish this, but much more is needed.

On the other hand, since the Codes are hardly applied and there is no rule of law, to what extent should we put too much hope in the development of good legislation? Moreover, much of the legislation deals with large-scale activities, which may take up to a decade before producing economic results that can be locally felt. *In order to address large-scale suffering and displacement in the short term, more innovative and more people-centred initiatives are needed.* NGOs could invest their energy in this niche sector.

Thus, when discussing natural resource management it is important to take at the same time:

- a sector specific approach
- a locally integrated approach

2.3 Donor community

The donor community at large can not be accused of being totally passive, although they have done very little to address the specific problems related to resource extraction in the DRC. Nevertheless, there are several initiatives and several avenues for holding governments and companies accountable.

Some examples:

The OECD guidelines for Multinational Enterprises can be used to hold companies coming from an OECD country accountable if they behave in a non-socially responsible way in a country like the DRC. In that case, individuals or organisations can file a complaint at a National Contact Point (NCP). These contact points are responsible for the promotion of observance of the Guidelines in a national context and for mediation in case

of non-observance in specific instances. NGOs have tried to file complaints against various companies involved in the natural resource sector in the DRC, with mixed results⁴. Since guidelines are to be observed on a voluntary basis and in the absence of sanctions, there seems to be too little incentive on behalf of the Member State to actively investigate complaints and take action upon its outcomes.

EITI (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative) aims to improve governance in resource-rich countries by publishing the financial trade flows surrounding trade in oil, gas and mining sectors. In March 2005 the DRC first stated its commitment to the EITI principles at the second international conference in London. In May 2005 the first EITI meeting took place in the DRC and a temporary committee consisting of members from government, industry and civil society was established. The committee worked towards forming a Standing Permanent Committee and developing a Work Plan for EITI implementation that was proposed and adopted by the council of ministers at the end of 2005. This development of EITI could be an important step for the DRC though it still is a long-term strategy and urgent drastic structural reforms are needed in the short term. A group of members of the Congolese civil society present at the conference is actively involved in the EITI process. They need support and capacity for this. Also, we should be careful not to confuse government rhetoric with real improvements in governance. It seems that currently there is only more transparency with respect to oil revenues. The active involvement of international and state-owned companies is desperately needed to make the Process in the DRC a success.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has launched its investigation into the crimes against humanity committed in the DRC. Although the Statute of the ICC does not explicitly provide the authority to address the plundering of natural resources in its jurisdiction, the ICC could play a role in the prosecution of perpetrators of illegal exploitation of natural resources. Illegal exploitation (constituted by destruction and pillaging) could be qualified as "war crimes". Referring to the statute of the ICC that has initiated investigation into the crimes committed into the DRC, political and military perpetrators would be prosecuted for their role in the illegal exploitation. Following this, parties accused of resources plunder would be obliged to make reparation by financing macro-economic development projects under the control of the UN Security Council and the World Bank. The international donor community should demand the ICC to start prosecution of the presumed perpetrators of war crimes, including corruption and pillaging of natural resources, if the Congolese state and judicial systems fail to do so.

2.4 Congolese media and local organisations

It is clear that we can not rely on the above mechanisms (alone) to achieve any changes on the ground. The media and civil society have a key role to play here. Congolese civil society and media have an important role when it comes to data gathering about ongoing practices as they ought to be closer to local populations and developments on the ground. Within the DRC media and civil society have a hard time in their role as watchdog when they are harassed, imprisoned, even killed, and their publications censored etc. The independence of media and civil society is fragile due to lack of resources. Media can be easily abused to incite populations, misinform etc.

⁴ for more detailed information about filed complaints in relation to the DRC, see www.oecdwatch.org

The recent regional and national co-operation of civil society within the DRC on issues of natural resource management is a hopeful sign. But they need to link up with external partners in order to influence all actors involved. International NGOs can use the documentation of local NGOs as leverage on their own governments and western companies.

3. What is the link with the upcoming elections and what can and should be done before and after the elections to ensure that natural resource management contributes to sustainable peace and development?

The elections are in many respects an historical opportunity and there is a strong and genuine popular desire to elect a new head of state. Nevertheless, too much focus and hope placed on the elections ignores that current malpractices already undermine hope for improvement. The “Global and all-inclusive Agreement” between belligerent parties was very inclusive indeed, legitimising the power of people involved in looting, plunder and corruption. That this had a disastrous impact on governance has been amply demonstrated above. The result is a continuing climate of insecurity (legal, fiscal, economic, political) that turns away investments when they are most needed. Contracts are mainly based on exploration and short-term activity. To relaunch serious activity several years of investment and planning are needed. The new government however, will have to work with empty Treasury coffers.

Among the experts there seems to be disagreement on the approach to be adopted. Some argue that nothing can be done until we can work with a government, which has a popular mandate. Many others argue that the momentum for change may be lost after the elections. The period running up to the elections is crucial and several papers have confirmed this. The current elite believe they need to grab what they can while still in power. The many reshuffles in the Ministry of Mines can be explained this way. Also with respect to the forestry sector, logging companies are now taking advantage of the disorder to install themselves.

The awareness in the international community is there, yet donors have been reluctant to discuss sensitive topics or challenge the legitimacy and accountability of those currently in government. Congo itself is, rightly so, hesitant to allow infringement of its sovereignty. As a result there is a general tendency to wait until after the elections and then put pressure on the elected government. It is hoped that if elections can be held without too much disruption or fraud, then the road is open to discuss other issues such as the reform of the natural resources management. Some donors however, will find it an excuse to disengage from the region altogether. This explains why the bulk of foreign aid has gone into the preparations for elections and MONUC.

It remains to be seen whether inquiries, such as that of the UN Panel on Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources, will be followed up after the elections. There is the same fear with respect to other audits. This currently creates a very dangerous climate of impunity that will be difficult to reverse.

There are thus many sound arguments why donors should be pressured to adopt a more pro-active role now, before the elections.

What can be done after the elections remains unclear. It is very likely that there will be initial hope and enthusiasm, just like in the early days of Kabila senior. The donor community, however, was less enthusiastic to support its government financially. This is even more the case today. Donor support towards an elected government should be combined with clear benchmarking and donors should co-ordinate their efforts.

4. What are the main research gaps and how can civil society, media and research groups work more effectively together?

Several research gaps have been identified:

- The role played by new trading and investment partners (such as India or China) and how they can be influenced.
- More knowledge of local developments and situations is needed in order to suggest concrete, innovative systems of management of natural resources that directly affect the lives of local people. (rather than relying on macro projects to create growth that may eventually benefit local people).
- Better understanding is needed of the impact of artisanal mining on living conditions and livelihoods. To what extent can artisanal mining be structured/formalised into a system that has a quicker and more direct positive effect on living conditions and livelihoods (given the very poor labour conditions at the moment)?

Next steps/follow up

The experts' meeting has in itself brought together a variety of informed people concerned with the way natural resources are managed within the DRC. This is already an important step forward in the sharing of information and building bridges between different networks and communities. As listed above, there is a lot to be done. Fatal Transactions will come up with concrete suggestions on how to fill in these gaps.

Many of the participants have expressed interest in continuing the exchange of experience, idea and information. This conference has therefore not been a stand-alone event. It has been a first step in a process. Fatal Transactions, together with the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, wishes to continue its investigations, in order to accomplish more fair transactions in the DRC.

The findings of the conference will be brought back to the DRC. The participating Congolese organisations, media as well as NGOs, will discuss how to organise a follow up event in the DRC, at their meeting in March. At this event, the main findings and recommendations of this conference will be presented to the Congolese government and other stakeholders.

Fatal Transactions intends to base its lobby/advocacy activities of the coming years on the recommendations formulated at this conference.