

Concept Note

Arria Formula Meeting on the Global Race for Critical Minerals: Addressing Resource-Driven Insecurity in Africa

Date: 9th July 2025; **Time** 3:00 – 6:00 PM; **Venue:** ECOSOC Chamber

Convened by: Sierra Leone

Co-sponsors: Guyana; Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia (Incoming Members)

Background and Rationale

Natural resources, particularly high-value minerals, have long played a central role in driving and sustaining conflicts in Africa. In specific regions of Africa, the illicit exploitation and trade of tin, tantalum, tungsten, gold, and other minerals continue to finance both armed groups and rogue elements of national armed forces, thereby prolonging cycles of violence and widespread human rights abuses.

The UN Security Council has acknowledged the nexus between “the systematic illicit exploitation and trafficking of natural resources and conflicts and has urged concerted action by relevant stakeholders to curb the destabilizing dynamics. The UN Secretary-General has highlighted the centrality of resource competition in driving instability, urging States and corporations to implement recommendations of the UN Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals to ensure that justice, equity, and human rights are upheld throughout the value chain and that African countries derive maximum benefit.¹

The illegal exploitation of minerals undermines state authority, fuels organized crime, displaces communities, and damages fragile ecosystems. These risks are intensified by the surging global demand for “critical minerals,” fuelled by the clean energy transition. The UN Environment Programme forecasts that demand for such minerals will “almost triple by 2030.” Without transparent and equitable

¹ Remarks by UNSG at the Africa Dialogue Series High Level Policy Dialogue 2025.

governance, this global race could deepen corruption, inequality, and conflict in mineral-rich regions.

Several governance frameworks exist to address these concerns. The Kimberley Process (KP) provides a certification scheme to prevent the circulation of conflict diamonds. Regionally, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), for example, has adopted a Regional Certification Mechanism (RCM) mandating conflict-free certification of tin, tantalum, tungsten, and gold, aligned with the OECD Due Diligence Guidance. The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) also supports open governance of natural resources and now incorporates standards that address the energy transition's implications.

Despite these mechanisms, enforcement gaps remain. Private companies and financiers must be held accountable. UN resolutions call on Member States to ensure that entities sourcing minerals conduct supply chain due diligence. Companies that breach these standards may face sanctions, including asset freezes and travel bans. Enhanced corporate transparency, such as mandatory traceability and reporting on mining and trading practices, is critical to redirect resource revenues toward peacebuilding and development.

Objectives of the Meeting

This Arria-formula meeting seeks to:

1. Examine the evolving geopolitical and security implications of the global race for critical minerals in Africa, including in the Great Lakes region;
2. Assess the impact of mineral exploitation on peace, governance, stability, and human rights;
3. Review the effectiveness of governance mechanisms, such as the Kimberley Process, ICGLR RCM, EITI, and OECD Guidance, and identify key implementation gaps and areas for reform;
4. Promote the strengthening and harmonized implementation of regional and international frameworks for traceability, certification, and responsible sourcing across entire supply chains;

5. Explore avenues to enhance support for regional efforts, including third-party audits and digital tracking systems, to increase transparency and deter mineral smuggling;
6. Discuss options to enhance the UN Security Council's role in monitoring illicit mineral flows, including through briefings, expert panels, and closer collaboration with Member States and regional bodies;
7. Encourage expanded international support for national and regional capacity-building, particularly in areas such as border security, environmental regulation, and artisanal mining formalization; and
8. Foster dialogue among governments, the private sector, civil society, and regional bodies to ensure that mineral wealth becomes a driver of inclusive development rather than a source of conflict.

Guiding Questions

Participants may consider the following questions:

1. How has competition over critical minerals contributed to conflict and instability in Africa? What lessons can be drawn from recent and ongoing crises?
2. Are current governance mechanisms (e.g., KP, ICGLR RCM, EITI, OECD Guidance) adequate to manage today's mineral-driven security challenges? What reforms or innovations are needed?
3. What practical steps can be taken to improve corporate due diligence, traceability, and certification? How can the UN assist in meeting conflict-free sourcing obligations?
4. How can UN peace operations and political missions incorporate mineral governance into their mandates? What best practices exist for sanctions implementation to disrupt mineral-financed violence?
5. What role can technology, private sector initiatives, and civil society monitoring play in improving transparency and accountability in mineral supply chains?
6. How should multinational corporations be engaged or held accountable to ensure responsible sourcing? Are new international policies or agreements needed?

Format and Participation

The meeting will be held in an Arria-formula format and will be open to all UN Member States, Permanent Observers, and representatives from relevant UN

entities, regional organizations (including the African Union and ICGLR), civil society, academia, and the private sector. Details on invited briefers will be circulated in due course.

Expected Outcome

This meeting aims to reinforce international awareness of the link between critical minerals and insecurity in Africa, while identifying actionable policy measures. It is expected to inform future Council deliberations and strengthen cooperation among national governments, regional mechanisms, the private sector, and international partners to promote peace, security, and responsible mineral governance.

A **Chair's Summary** will be circulated to all Security Council members following the meeting.

Proposed Briefers

- i. **Ambassador Nozipho Joyce Mxakato-Diseko**, Co-Chair, UN Secretary-General's Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals
- ii. **Ambassador João Samuel Caholo**, Executive Secretary, International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR)
- iii. **Mr. Tunde Arisekola**, African Minerals Development Centre (AMDC), African Union
- iv. **Mr. Bojun TANG**, Executive Secretary, Kimberley Process Secretariat
- v. **Mr. Mickaël Daudin**, Programme Manager, ITSCI