

DEVELOPING A HOLISTIC APPROACH WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS TO ADDRESS THE ILLICIT EXPLOITATION AND TRADE OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION



The Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region has been supporting regional efforts to address this issue by promoting a more sustainable management of natural resources. To advance this critical issue, Special Envoy Huang Xia has developed a vision based on a holistic approach with all stakeholders across the entire value chain, to overcome the decade-long illicit trade of natural resources from the region. This vision also highlights the UN's support to the Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources in the Great Lakes Region (RINR) which aims to provide a concerted response to this scourge through a comprehensive approach including an elaborate Regional Certification Mechanism (RCM).

To materialize this vision, the main strategic initiative of the Office of the Special Envoy has been to prepare the convening, in conjunction with the International Conference on the Great

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Lakes Region (ICGLR), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the Government of Sudan, of a joint high-level workshop, initially scheduled in September 2020 in Khartoum, Sudan, but postponed until March 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of this workshop will be, amongst others, to develop and validate a regional action plan based on the synergy of initiatives of all actors at national and regional levels and supported by development partners.

As part of his political and diplomatic outreach efforts, Mr. Xia has held, in 2020, many consultations with various stakeholders on the issue of natural resources. On 15 July 2020, he briefed the UN Security Council during an ARRIA-formula meeting dedicated to the issue of curbing the illicit exploitation and trade of minerals in the Great Lakes region. He also co-organized two high-level roundtables discussions during the DRC-Africa Mining Forum held virtually on 17-19 June 2020 and the Rwanda-Africa Mining Forum on 16-20 November 2020, both under the theme “Attracting Mining and Natural Resources Investment in the Great Lakes Region in a Pandemic Environment”. These platforms were an opportunity for ministers in charge of mining and other relevant actors, including the private sector, civil society, investors, and development partners, to exchange on ways to address the issue of illegal exploitation of natural resources.

Going forward, the Office will develop a detailed roadmap for the Khartoum workshop with a timeline, budget and identifiable strategic actions for advocacy, engagement, and outreach in the next three years. Synergy and commitment from all stakeholders, supported by a strong political will from the Great Lakes countries, will be needed around new priority areas of intervention to achieve two key objectives: strengthening regional and international cooperation while reducing incentives for trafficking and illicit trade in minerals.