



Permanent Mission of the State of Eritrea

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Statement by

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To the United Nations

During

United Nation Security Council Thematic Open Debate

On

“Conflict Prevention and Natural Resources”

New York, 19 June 2013

Mr. President,

I would like to thank the delegation of the United Kingdom for organizing this open thematic debate on prevention of conflicts and natural resources. I would also like to thank the Deputy Secretary General Mr. Jan Eliasson for his concise and enlightening briefing on a very complex subject. I also commend the informative introductory remarks by the Chair of Africa Progress, Mr. Kofi Annan and World Bank Managing Director Caroline Anstey.

Mr. President,

My delegation views that endowment in natural resources as an asset to lift millions of people out of poverty. However, fierce and aggressive competition over access, illegal exploitation and mismanagement of natural resources are among the most important factors that are linked to several civil strives in African states, both causing and perpetuating conflicts. Employing of good governance in the control, management and trade of natural resources and equitable access to natural resources therefore become imperative in ensuring an inclusive economic and social well-being of all the people in a given country. This in itself would be critical to maintaining and creating a cohesive and harmonious society. It is equally important to underscore the negative impact of exploitative interferences by external powers and transnational companies that undermine sovereign rights of many member states over the use and management of their natural resources. More often than not this has become a recipe for international conflicts with grave consequences for international peace and security.

While concurring with some of the elements mentioned by delegates regarding intrastate conflicts, including measures to prevent illicit exploitation of natural resources by non-state actors, I would like to stress the following:

First: States have the prime responsibility of developing and exploiting their natural resources for the benefit of their respective societies. This is an inalienable right which is also unambiguously reflected in a landmark General Assembly Resolution 1803 of 1962 entitled *Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources*, which, inter alia, states “violation of the rights of peoples and nations to sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources is contrary to the spirit and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and hinders the development of international co-operation and the maintenance of peace.”

Second: The negative consequences of interferences in the inalienable right of a nation to use its natural resources on international peace and security are a matter of historical record. In recent years, the Security Council has acted on several occasions to curb the negative consequences of illicit trade in natural resources, targeting non-state actors. It must, however, be stressed when such actions are taken, it is important that there is a full consent and engagement of the state concerned. More importantly, any resolution by the Council should not undermine state's right to exploit its natural resources nor be used as a tool for political pressure. In this connection, it is important to underscore that UN organs dealing with social and economic development are best suited to discuss the issue of international cooperation on natural resources.

Mr. President,

As a country that has come out from the ashes of war and endowed with natural resources, Eritrea has recently reached to a stage of developing and exploiting its mineral resources in close cooperation with its international partners. The cardinal principle of Eritrea's mining policy could be summarized as: all mineral resources are a public property, and that the conservation and development of these resources must be ensured for Eritrea's present and future generations. Guided by this principle, the government has been heavily investing the revenues from its nascent mining sector in developing its human resource, building the most needed infrastructure, and in providing basic social services, including towards meeting most of the Millennium Development Goals.

Let me conclude by stressing that Eritrea views that natural resources should promote cooperation not conflicts. It is firmly convinced that pursuing policies with the aim of creating a win-win solution is critical within and between countries and corporations, on the sustainable utilization of resources in order to meaningfully transform the living standards of millions of people trapped in poverty and to ensure regional and international peace and security.

Thank You Mr. President.