

Small Group D: Curbing the use of natural resources to finance conflicts

Guiding questions

- For several years, the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace had a significant engagement in support of action on tackling conflict minerals. In which other areas of the natural resources-conflict nexus should the EU invest more?
- What kind of actions, including civil society initiatives, should the EU support in these areas?

Participants' comments and recommendations

- Conflicts can happen at different levels (e.g. within communities, between different communities, between communities and private companies, between communities and foreign companies etc.), and can be exemplified by a lack of capacity or space for civil society actors, a lack of (effective) legal frameworks, a lack of transparency or a lack of proper governance mechanisms. Supporting and involving civil society actors is paramount to understanding and addressing conflicts related to natural resources.
- Conflict dynamics related to natural resources are context and resource-specific. Therefore, any intervention by the EU needs to be conflict-sensitive and start with a strong context, conflict and gender analysis, involving civil society and private actors at the earliest stage. This will help the EU to prioritise its different actions.
- EU support can be critical in building communities' capacities to voice their concerns and mediate their own conflicts, ensuring the transparency of trade deals linked to natural resources (including at the local level) and strengthening the (implementation of the) existing legal system.
- The EU should act when and where it has an added value or specific leverage. In situations in which the EU does not benefit from a positive image, it should adopt a low-profile approach and support civil society actors to express their own grievances.
- Coordination between different institutional actors is required if the EU is to adopt a consistent approach towards conflicts linked to natural resources (e.g. the use conflict analysis by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Trade).