

Statement of

The Honorable Sam Brownback

United States Senator

Kansas

September 24, 2008

Senator Sam Brownback on Extraction of Natural Resources

Subcommittee on Human Rights and the Law- 24 Sept. 2008

The extraction of natural resources in many developing countries serves more as a hindrance for the people of those nations than it does as an asset towards economic growth within those countries. Many of these natural resources in the mist of conflict, known as "conflict resources", have fueled wars in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola and today we see them in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

These natural resources found in the heat of conflicts range from diamonds, gold, cassiterite, coltan (columbite-tantalite), timber, copper, cobalt, and oil. The smuggling and extraction of these conflict resources is not only at the heart of many conflicts around the world, but can also be linked to the issues child soldiers, rape and sexual violence, trafficking, poverty, and displacement within certain conflicts.

Specifically in the Democratic Republic of Congo we see cassiterite, coltan, and gold at the heart of the conflict. There the control of the mining areas of these minerals is an economic sanctuary. Pillaging, raping, abducting women and young children to be used as laborers, child soldiers, or sex slaves, rebels seize and extract the resources from these lucrative mining areas. In Congo, rebel movements are motivated more by economic incentives rather than the pursuit of political ideals. Middlemen are then hired to form relationships with clients and then facilitate transactions between those who control the resource and foreign corporations without the question of legitimacy.

In a world immersed in technology where tantalum, a component of coltan, is found in nearly every cell phone on this globe, how can the corporations and industry be so irresponsible in the legitimacy of where the raw materials of they use for their products originate from?

And in a country, such as the Congo, where 5.4 million have died in the past 10 years due to this conflict and 1,500 people continue to die a day, directly and indirectly from the conflict, where rape and sexual

violence run rapid as a tool of war, where impunity reigns over justice, where children are harbored as child soldiers, sex slaves and laborers, corporate responsibility of the components which make up their products is essential in this matter. When concerning the lives touched by the components they are putting into the components that produce and make their products.

We have come to a point where we cannot live without certain minerals and the components they produce for certain products and goods. However, neither can nor will we sit idly by while others suffer. While we need to be responsible as a nation and as consumers, we must hold our supplier's accountable. Corporate responsibility should not be a question but a distinct fact.