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**OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE
SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR THE
GREAT LAKES REGION**

Concept note for the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework

Pillar 1

Sustainable land and natural resources

Under the lead of FAO, UNEP and UN Habitat

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1) Type of Regional intervention

The regional intervention will focus on the harmonization of environmental and natural resources management policies, laws and mechanisms across the region in order to avoid degradation of natural resources, loss of biodiversity and inconsistencies and inefficiency in trans boundary natural resources management across the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda¹, to promote joint management of common resources and/or dispute resolution for cross border conflicts, and to reduce illegal cross border trade and smuggling of minerals, timber, charcoal and wildlife.

Most of the interventions will be done at regional level (or at national level with regional implication), in order to strengthen regional cooperation, by deepening economic integration, with special consideration to achieve the sustainable utilisation of natural resources, to harmonise export tariffs and promote legitimate mineral trades, hereby reducing incentives for smuggling minerals, and to support the return and reintegration of refugees in their respective countries of origin.

2) Introduction and Background

The interventions will be in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDGs7, 13 and 15, which put sustainable development of natural resources at the forefront of the agenda for revitalising the economy while protecting the environment and promoting peace, justice, social stability and harmony among people. They aim to foster confidence between people, communities, the state and international partners through: transparency; risk sharing; use and strengthening of country/region systems; strengthening government capacity; and timely and predictable aid.

The interventions assume that promoting the sustainable development and management of natural resources – *e.g.* developing policy, legal and regulatory frameworks and building capacity in key Natural Resources Management (NRM) institutions – will significantly contribute to establishing peace and maintaining stability in the Great Lakes region.

Regional institutions can play a lead role in providing policy guidance and technical support to the improvement of natural resources governance in the Great Lakes region. It is critical to support countries of Great Lakes region and communities of DRC and Rwanda to identify, define and implement new modes of environmental governance so that natural resources could be managed and accessed by different users peacefully, equitably and sustainably, and implemented through environmental friendly and

¹ The interventions will focus on those two countries, but could include Uganda and Burundi

ecosystem-based adaptation approaches to make it possible for ecosystem resources to effectively produce expected benefits for the communities.

3) Intervention rationale

The planned interventions are aligned with the priorities of the governments in the region and they complement priorities of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) and other donors' initiatives (World Bank, EU, etc.)

The triangle of land, power and identity is increasingly seen as key to the conflict in the region. It results in a wide variety of problems, such as lack of land and security of tenure, competition between different users, overlapping or contradicting policy and legal frameworks and land related conflicts. Rwanda and Burundi specifically face the main challenge of severe land scarcity, being such densely populated countries. Many of the land issues in eastern Congo are linked to the issue of movement of people (IDPs and refugees). Scarcity of land greatly contributes to persistent food insecurity and conflicts. The Great Lakes region is indeed one of the most densely populated in Africa and the Greater Virunga Landscape, the most populated region in the concerned countries.

The volcanic-derived soils in the region are fertile while the relatively humid climate has sustained rain fed agricultural production and grazing lands for cattle. This has made the region a major source of food that is even exported to the eastern and western regions. The region also has some wetlands that are critical for maintenance of livelihoods during dry spells. The potential for climate change adaptation for food security therefore exists, even if it needs to be strengthened for optimised food production.

In addition to mineral resources, the region is endowed with perennial freshwater springs, streams and thermal water sources. Some streams are sources for two major rivers, namely the River Congo and River Nile. There is thus untapped potential for (green) hydroelectric and hydrothermal power development. The Greater Virunga Landscape is also located close to the Lake Kivu, which embeds enormous quantities of methane gas. Alternative energy sources, livelihoods and income generation mechanisms can thus be developed to reverse deforestation, land and other natural resources degradation rates.

The region is a landscape that embeds several mountains that make its ecosystem complex, yet fragile. The Greater Virunga Landscape is part of the Central Albertine Rift that covers the Eastern part of DRC, the Northern part of Rwanda and the Western part of Uganda. The Landscape contains three World Heritage Sites (Virunga National Park in DRC, Ruwenzori Mountains and Bwindi Impenetrable National Parks in Uganda). Also within the landscape is one Ramsar Site (Lake George and Edward) and one Man and Biosphere Reserve (Queen Elizabeth National Park). The landscape has been recognized as an area of global importance. The Virunga National Park forms the backbone of this landscape and connects to the Volcanoes Park in Rwanda and Mgahinga National Park, Queen Elizabeth National Park, Ruwenzori Mountains, and Semuliki National Parks in Uganda.

This region has been categorised by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as a high biodiversity hotspot and is ranked amongst the highest priority for conservation in Africa. In this regard, it is critical to reverse unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, which is partly characterised by intensive deforestation for shelter building and energy production (fuel wood and charcoal). Deforestation makes the most damage to the environment and makes vulnerable a mountainous ecosystem in a relatively humid climate, as it increases soil erosion impacts (with subsequent nutrients leaching) and deteriorates surface water quality and groundwater recharge rates.

While endowed with abundant natural resources, the region faces an uneven distribution and accessibility. Misuse of land, deforestation, poor natural resources management and climate change pose additional challenges. Risks of flooding are increasing, as are conflicts over natural resources as population grows. The mineral riches in eastern DRC form an integral part of the regional dynamics. Gold, coltan, cassiterite, wolframite, but also timber and poached animals find their way out of the DRC through Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. The illegal exploitation and trade of raw materials 'co-finances' the conflict.

There are many irregularities in the application of tax regimes to artisanal mining and the minerals they produce, including disparities between eastern provinces of DRC. Artisanal mining is particularly prone to illegal taxation which places a huge burden on the miners and traders yet, paradoxically, does provide a means of wealth distribution at a community level and fills the gap in payment of many government services. The most extreme cases of illegal taxation include up to 30 percent 'product share' with certain authorities and 'community labour' to pay security services.

Annually, the illegal exploitation of natural resources in eastern DRC generates an estimated USD 1.25² billion, which is used in a poor governance and traceability context to perpetuate conflict and instability. The future of the illegal armed groups largely depends on the continued illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources in Eastern DRC. The presence of more than 25 illegal armed groups ensures that none of them can disrupt the flow of resources, mainly controlled from outside eastern DRC.

An estimated 50 percent of the illegal flow of resources comes from gold export. Only two percent of these revenues show up as taxable production in the DRC, the rest has landed in bank accounts, mainly outside of the DRC. One fifth of the overall income is generated by illicit charcoal trade, which, in its environmental consequences, jeopardises the sustainable economic future of the whole of East Africa and Eastern DRC. The demand for charcoal is exponentially increasing in the Great Lakes region and its significance in the illegal trade in a few years is expected to equal that of gold. The 3T (tin, tantalum and tungsten), timber, diamonds, wildlife, ivory and other trade make up 30 percent of the illegal trade, are fragmented and in relative decrease in the illegal revenues, reflecting reductions in their availability or value.

The interaction between conflict, natural resource management, population displacement and unsolved land tenure is highly complex in the Great Lakes region. Even prior to the outbreak of large-scale violence and displacement in the 1990s, land conflicts in the Great Lakes region were related to a wider agrarian crisis with cultural, social, economic and political backdrops. Competition over the control of land and its central role as the source for natural resources is recognized to be one of the root causes of the conflict. Disputes over land have become key drivers of conflict for generations. They have recently affected over three million people in DRC, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi and Tanzania. Forced displacements that typically accompany the outbreak of armed violence affect land tenure, food security, the use of resources and local development. Displacement, resettlement and return of displaced populations often lead to tensions with host communities and new occupants, thus continuing the cycle of conflict. Successful reintegration and resettlement of returnees and displaced persons will depend on to what extent regional institutions and individual countries demonstrate ability to collaborate around land and property issues and to create enabling social and political environments to improve land policies and tenure. Regional legal instruments, such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

² UNEP-MONUSCO-OSESG.2015 Experts' background report on illegal exploitation and trade in natural resources benefitting organised criminal groups and recommendations on MONUSCO's role in fostering stability and peace in eastern DRC. Final report. April 2015. Available at www.unep.org

(ICGLR) Protocol on land and property are not fully implemented and the capacity of the ICGLR secretariat is still challenged on these issues.

In the Great Lakes region, the statutory land tenure system was introduced under colonialism. From the very beginning, the pre-existing customary land rights were only partially recognised and protected under the statutory system. This led to a systematic marginalisation of customary landowners. Most legal systems in the region still provide little protection for land that is not held under a formal title deed³. The dichotomy between customary and statutory land rights has moved to sociological dimensions with layers of ethnic competition and tension around land and property associated with nationality and identity.

All five World Heritage Sites in DRC are listed as World Heritage Sites in danger. They are threatened by miners, loggers, poachers, charcoal traders and displaced people. Currently, they are also scenes of intense armed conflict. Instead of sustaining biodiversity, waters and woods, these lungs of the Earth are being deforested and lose their wildlife at a pace that can soon become irreversible.

Already UN Country Teams (UNCTs) are taking several actions to address these profound problems. MONUSCO has joined forces with UNEP and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region (O/SESG-GL) and published an expert report on illegal exploitation and trade in natural resources benefitting organised criminal groups and recommendations on MONUSCO's role in fostering stability and peace in eastern DRC. Based on a workshop on environmental crime in Goma, in February 2015, and which discussed the recommendations of the report, UNEP, MONUSCO and the O/SESG-GL discussed potential projects on how to stop illegal mining, including in national parks. The proposed projects took a conflict resolution and economic incentive-based approach to promote environmentally friendlier artisanal gold mining.

FAO is currently implementing one and developing three pilot projects, on supporting sustainable agriculture-based livelihoods within national parks and in the border areas, as well as in areas occupied by returning internally displaced persons (IDPs). It has also just closed a project on combatting topsoil loss and soil erosion in hilly areas. FAO has also had regional projects that help to combat and control the spread of plant diseases (banana wilt and mosaic virus) and is planning to promote animal health across the region to control the deadly *Pestes des Petits Ruminants* (PPR) and other trans-boundary animal diseases. FAO further supports the joint assessment and management of the fish resources of the Great Lakes (Tanganyika, Kivu, Edouard, Albert). FAO is also planning to carry out sensitisation and training on Voluntary Guidelines for Responsible Governance of Tenure applicable on Land, Fisheries and Forestry in the context of national food security (VGGT) and the Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa (F&G) in DRC. The opportunity exists to extend this to the Great Lakes region. In line with the awareness raising and advocacy on the VGGT, FAO may support the setting up of multi stakeholder land platforms for policy dialogue and exchange for policy and legal formulation, review and implementation. As part of its Regional Initiative 2, in 2014, as part of a joint initiative (with UNHABITAT and UNDP) FAO has facilitated a participatory land use planning/ negotiated territorial development approach in Luhonga (Nord Kivu), this is a good practice that has potential for replication.

Through the Bioenergy and Food Security (BEFS) approach, FAO has the capacity and experience to assist the Great Lake Regions in understanding the potential of bioenergy as an alternative and sustainable source of energy and to facilitate the development of appropriate guidelines, policies and strategies at regional as well as at country level that assist in enhancing energy and food security while contributing to environmental sustainability and climate change adaptation/mitigation.

³ Dominik Kohlhausen, study for the GLR Conflict Facility, a joint project between WBG and O/SESG

UN Habitat and FAO are organising partnerships to find long-term solutions and immediate conflict resolution for thousands of displaced persons, and to solve the land and property issues, with special attention to eastern DRC, Burundi, Central African Republic, Rwanda, and Uganda through a support program to the secretariat of the ICGLR to deal with land and property in a displacement context. Under the support program to the ICGLR, jointly with the O/SESG-GL, the UN-European Union (EU) Trust Fund, the WB and the Swiss Development cooperation, UN-Habitat organised a ministerial regional consultation meeting on land and conflict in the Great Lakes region in April 2015 (Nairobi Declaration). This created a new momentum towards a greater political engagement of relevant ministries, to address land related issues through comprehensive policy and regional cooperation. The EU/UN Partnership is supporting civil society initiatives to deal with land and natural resource conflicts in the region, through capacity building, research and learning exchanges, which is about to enter its third phase.

UNDP has just embarked on a three-year partnership with the EU on a global project to make artisanal and small-scale mining sustainable. The project will integrate into the on-going country-based and regional projects. The objective is to support the small-scale mining sector towards becoming socially and environmentally responsible, while also promoting jobs and income generation. The products covered are low-value metals and minerals, which include:

- (i) construction materials;
- (ii) dimension stones;
- (iii) industrial minerals;
- (iv) low-grade metals, minerals and precious stones.

The project is largely training focused, covering 40 countries, which include Great Lakes region's countries. The beneficiaries of the training are three groups:

- (i) the miners themselves;
- (ii) the public institutions that regulate them;
- (iii) the communities affected by mining.

An integrated approach will be required to better address illegal, or irrational, exploitation of natural resources in the region. Taking into consideration the close interrelation between land, mining and forest exploitation, a fragmented approach, whether at the country or regional level, will not reach expected results in improving policies and community livelihood conditions. Land has proven to be critical for an enabling environment for mineral exploitation. Today the prevalence of customary land laws and conflict/overlap among laws related to land and natural are hindering great investment because of a lack of sound scope of dialogue between community and central government (conflict between communities, government, and private investor, DRC, Burundi). Also, environmental degradation in mining areas result from the lack of a sound land use planning system to define various functions of the space including agricultural and grazing area. Absence of land use planning systems in mining and protected areas has resulted in a lack of diversity of livelihood activities and high dependency on mining only. For this intervention, a sound land management system is a prerequisite. It will seek to create an enabling environment for sustainable management of natural resources in the Great Lakes region.

4) Proposed response

Activities to be undertaken with the support of UN Country Teams (with regional implication).

Initiative/action 1: Regional NRM and sustainable livelihoods in the Greater Virunga Landscape

Activity 1.1: Assess the existence and effectiveness of national policies and instruments to inform natural resource management reforms and ecosystem/biodiversity preservation;

Activity 1.2: Promote the sustainable development and management of natural resources by developing policy, legal and regulatory frameworks and building capacity in key Natural Resources Management (NRM) institutions at regional and national level;

Activity 1.3: Support participatory land use planning/ negotiated territorial development approach for efficient biodiversity conservation and natural resources management

Activity 1.4 Promote Bioenergy and Food Security (BEFS) initiatives at national and local levels as a sustainable substitute to wood and charcoal energies for sustainable biodiversity and natural resources conservation.

Initiative/action 2: Formalization of artisanal mining and promotion of legal regional mineral trade.

Activity 2.1: Improve the organisation and production yields from artisanal mining and its contribution to national economy;

Activity 2.2: Reduce and mitigate the negative environmental and social impacts of artisanal mining;

Activity 2.3: Enhance the capacity of government regulatory institutions to monitor the impact of mining;

Activity 2.4: Improve the participation and engagement of communities as well as civil society to ensure social and environmental safeguards in place.

Initiative/action 3: Secure land and property rights.

Activity 3.1: Provide support to develop a regional communication strategy to improve information and data sharing on land related issues for regional communities, refugees and IDP's;

Activity 3.2: Carry out awareness raising and training of the VGGT and F&G to key Stakeholders in the region;

Activity 3.3: Support setting up of national and local multi -stakeholder land platforms for policy dialogue and information sharing on land tenure and property rights in line with the development, review, harmonization and implementation of land policies and laws in the GREAT LAKES REGION;

Activity 3.4: Document and disseminate best practices on land governance, land related conflicts resolution and community resettlement;

Activity 3.5 Develop appropriate land governance tools to ensure equitable access and control of land and to address land related conflicts at the national and local levels.

Interventions at regional level⁴

Initiative/action 1: Regional NRM and sustainable livelihoods in the Greater Virunga Landscape

Activity 1.1: Conduct environmental and economic assessment studies to generate evidence on the costs of inaction and the benefits of the wise use of natural resources to inform harmonized regional policy instruments and for advocacy framework;

Activity 1.2: Insert the Great lakes natural resources governance issue in existing national and regional platforms to engage national partners (government institutions, programmes and projects, private sectors, NGOs and community structures) in relevant debates that identify and improve regional norms and standards in support to natural resource management;

Activity 1.3: Support the implementation of the Greater Virunga Trans boundary Collaboration Treaty;

Activity 1.4: Support Bioenergy and Food Security (BEFS) approach and facilitate the development of appropriate guidelines, policies and strategies on Bioenergy and Food Security at regional level as an alternative and sustainable source of energy capable to stop or reduce illegal charcoal production in protected areas and control cross border trade.

Initiative/action 2: Formalisation of artisanal mining and promotion of legal regional mineral trade.

Activity 2.1: Creation of publicly accessible database to track mineral flows within and across the Great Lakes region;

Activity 2.2: At national and regional levels, support the operationalisation of the ICGLR

Regional Certification Mechanism for 'conflict minerals'

Initiative/action 3: Secure land and property rights.

Activity 3.1: Provide capacity building to the ICGLR Secretariat to better address land and property issues (social cohesion, political negotiation and opportunity for cross border investment) at national level;

Activity 3.2: Provide support to the Issue Based Coalition on Land and conflict to develop tools to analyse root causes of land related conflicts and to guide the political analysis at the regional level to prevent land related conflicts at Regional scale (UN and Non-UN entities);

Activity 3.3: Push for regional cooperation among research institutions on land related conflicts in the Great Lakes region (Bukavu Centre for Conflict and Peace, Universities, Institutes).

5) Fulfilment of the guiding principles of priority regional interventions

The three areas will be developed and implemented in close cooperation with ICGLR, local governments and the communities. As other international actors, especially INGOs have been developing similar, but sporadic projects; UNCTs will aim to unite these via more intense coordination and mapping. The Special Envoy will take the lead on donor policy coordination. The three intervention areas interact in multiple ways, thus MONUSCO, UNEP, UN Habitat, FAO and UNDP, O/SESG – and other relevant agencies - will create a joint monitoring and evaluation team to steer development and implementation.

Selective coherent intervention approaches in close collaboration will be implemented in working closely with involved national and regional bodies to better address issues identified in the three areas.

⁴ Some interventions could be done in Uganda and Burundi as well.

Gender will be integrated in the regional interventions, with specific targeting of women and youth as beneficiaries in land and natural resources activities. Additionally, attention will be given to the gender sensitivity of new activities, for example by looking at the specific roles and needs of men and women as direct and indirect beneficiaries.

The interventions will also focus on improved rights and access to services, promote gender friendly behaviour and combat gender based violence.

Enhancing cross border trade and private sector investments as related to natural resources management, will provide a vehicle to improve the livelihood of men and women and assist in building trust and cross border relations. It will be also a way of reducing the high youth unemployment, key for economic development and reduction of instability.

6) Capacity to address the identified issues

In support of the regional framework for sustainable natural resources management, UNEP will provide advisory support to institutional and legal development of NRM policies and standards. It will coordinate the audit of existing legal frameworks and support the participative strengthening process of norms and standards for natural resource governance. UNEP in its role of lead Agency will also provide to other UN bodies involved and other partners the programme implementation guidelines, and the facilitation support that may require. FAO will support the development and inclusion of norms and standards for farmer-based management of natural resources. It will also contribute to the development of ecosystem-based approaches and adaptation guidelines for sustainable development and livelihoods in the Virunga Landscape. Building on its current experiences in the GREAT LAKES REGION, UN HABITAT will contribute to data collection and analysis on land distribution and will support capacity development on negotiation and mediation techniques for land management, through the development of appropriate tools to both manage land disputes and land governance. UNEP will contribute to the design of the governance framework based on the analysis of the specific vulnerabilities of artisanal mining communities. UNEP will also support the analysis of broader trends on the state of natural resources.

In collaboration with the DRC Government UNEP conducted a national scale and multi-thematic post-conflict environmental assessment with special emphasis on the illegal exploitation of natural resources (published in 2011). Based on the recommendations of the assessment, a number of demonstration projects are currently underway, including community-based catchment management to protect urban drinking water supply and ecosystem-based interventions to reduce disaster risk. In addition, UNEP is providing technical assistance on various topics including development of national water policy, environmental regulations and water quality monitoring. UNEP collaborated with the national park authority ICCN, the International Institute for Sustainable Development and the Wildlife Conservation Society to develop and implement a conflict sensitive approach to conservation. As a result, illegal farmers left an important ecological corridor of the Kahuzi-Biega national park in eastern DRC. Illegal activities decreased, and rehabilitation activities were started. As the next step, there are plans to tackle the issue of illegal mining inside the park. Pending funding, a first phase will assess how many miners are inside the park, how much do they earn, what would be needed to offset the illegal activities, and what the economic alternatives would be. UNEP is also partnering with MONUSCO and Partnership Africa Canada (PAC) to promote legal artisanal gold mining at two mining sites in South Kivu and Ituri provinces in DRC. The project is based on an incentive-based approach to help create a legal and environmentally friendlier gold supply chain. In so doing, it will also directly contribute to the operationalisation of an ICGLR certification process for gold in eastern DRC and the wider region. This intervention does not only

reduce the environmental impact on the DRC national parks, it will also reduce access of armed groups to income from mining activities, especially gold and the 3Ts.

In the past, UNEP provided targeted support to the Greater Virunga Trans boundary Initiative. The Greater Virunga Trans boundary Collaboration Treaty that was recently signed by DRC, Rwanda and Uganda, offers new opportunities to address trans boundary issues such as conflict in trans boundary fisheries, illegal timber, charcoal trade, and wildlife trade. UNEP is in a good position to assist with the implementation of the treaty.

Gender and the role that women can play in natural resource management and women's endowment will be reflected in the policy tools and dispute resolution mechanisms and will be covered through UNWOMEN support.

UN Habitat is working on land and conflict in many post conflict countries (DRC, Liberia, Ivory Coast) in Africa. Since 2009, UN Habitat is implementing a land and property program in DRC as part of the ISSSS/STAREC strategy for peace, reconciliation and recovery, while supporting also the overall land reform process in the DRC. The organisation is engaged in a 3 year program related to land governance with the aim of supporting the peace and stability process through land disputes resolution and land tenure security initiatives at the community level. At the regional level, UN-habitat is supporting the ICGREAT LAKES REGION since 2013 through an MoU, on capacity building for the organisation to better deal with land in the context of displacement. This proposed project will be an opportunity to bring up experiences from this first partnership and to foster the linkages between national and regional levels in addressing land issues. UN Habitat, in coordination with EU-UN partnership, O/SESG-GL, WB and the Swiss cooperation, supported the ICGLR to organize a regional consultation on land and property in April 2015 in Nairobi that brought together Ministries of Land Affairs and Humanitarian Affairs of the Great Lakes (Nairobi Declaration on Land and Conflict). Through its Global Land Tool Network Platform (GLTN), UN Habitat is lifting an issue-based coalition on land and conflict, which also involved the UN Department of Political Affairs and the Office of the Special Envoy for the GREAT LAKES REGION. UN-Habitat has been collaborating with UNEP under the EU/UN Partnership framework on land and natural resources conflict preventions (training to civil society, knowledge sharing and policy dialogue at the global level).

The UNDP RSC- An extractives team works on policy and programmatic issues around six areas. These are:

- (i) supporting governments in institutional and legislative reform around extractives and their transformational potential;
- (ii) promoting and enhancing the participation of mining communities and CSOs around issues to do with mining in general and environmental, local economic development and community development in particular;
- (iii) enhancing business linkages across the extractives value chain;
- (iv) assisting governments with revenue management and transparency reforms;
- (v) knowledge production;
- (vi) ASM, as noted in an earlier section.

This is done within the Africa Mining Vision (AMV) framework. This capacity is further supported by UNDP Country Offices and a global network of pre-approved consultants to tap into. The UNDP currently has extractives related interventions of one kind or the other in all the GREAT LAKES REGION countries. Of particular relevance to this project are recent analyses of the ASM sectors and their structures in the DRC and the CAR (which were carried out separately). Building up from this, the UNDP therefore can provide technical expertise around the formalisation of artisanal mining and promotion of legal regional mineral trade.

7) Partners

There are a multitude of donor meetings and regional discussions about the 3Ts - cassiterite (tin), wolframite (tungsten), coltan (tantalum) – gold, diamonds, cobalt and copper, major minerals mined in eastern DRC. But minerals are still smuggled for hundreds of millions of dollars of net profits across borders to Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, as well as to other parts of DRC.

The World Bank has not yet engaged with the artisanal mining scene and the land and property rights issues are not on its agenda. Donors may need further coordination and ‘division of labour’, where the Special Envoy could play a role with facilitation and leadership. MONUSCO envisages extending its mandate to support national and regional efforts to investigate, prosecute and sanction members of armed groups and criminal networks engaged in national and transnational organised crime, including the illicit exploitation and trade in natural resources, such as gold and other minerals, wildlife, charcoal and timber. Special emphasis is placed on addressing sources of conflict and safeguarding protected areas from armed groups, particularly, but not limited to, in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The pillar’s regional actions will be further coordinated from inception with AU, UNECA, IOM, UNDP and working with donors together, especially with the EU, the Netherlands, UK DfID, GIZ and USAID.

The work on conflict sensitive conservation and the inclusion of illegal mining in national parks will seek collaboration with MONUSCO, the national park authority (ICCN), IISD, and WCS. Under the larger transboundary umbrella, UNEP will work with the Greater Virunga Trans boundary Collaboration Secretariat and one of its main technical partners, the International Gorilla Conservation Programme. UNEP is also collaborating with MONUSCO and PAC on the development of a legal and conflict free supply chain in two artisanal gold mining sites in eastern DRC. The pilot projects also address serious health and environmental concerns stemming from mercury use. Lessons from the project will help inform the operationalisation and scale up of the ICGLR certification process for gold in Eastern DRC and the wider Great Lakes region.

Through the bioenergy and food security approach, initial steps will be taken to provide sustainable alternatives to meet the population energy needs and to curb down deforestation and its numerous impacts in the ICGL member states, especially in the Virunga Landscape.

As related to land, the rationale of this project is to strengthen the capacity of the ICGLR member states to better deal with land and property issues so as to create an enabling environment to facilitate return and reintegration for refugees and IDP’s and to encourage investment in land and land-related activities. Then the ICGLR Secretariat will be the primary partner and beneficiary for this joint program. The project will also closely collaborate with universities and research institutions in the regions (Universities in Bukavu, Centre for Peace in Tanzania, the Land Commission in Burundi) as well as regional bodies like GVTC Greater Virunga Trans boundary Collaboration) Secretariat and regional NGOs in conservation like IGCP (International Gorilla Conservation Programme) and WCS (World Conservation Society) working in the greater Virunga Landscape for Biodiversity Natural Resources Conservation.