

Question for written answer E-003069/2015
to the Commission
Rule 130
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Subject: Sale in the EU of minerals mined in breach of the law

Almost all of the valuable minerals that are mined around the world are readily available on EU markets. However, there are major concerns about how some of those minerals are mined, processed and placed on the market, including in EU Member States.

In very many cases the minerals have been mined in breach of not only national and international laws on matters such as the environment, but also of workers' rights and fundamental human rights. Some come from mines and processing plants in which safety standards are not observed or where forced labour, involving not just adults but also children, is used. The use of the term '21st century slavery' is appropriate in such cases.

What is more, the proceeds of the trade in or processing of such minerals are used for other illegal activities, such as drugs trafficking or, what is even more alarming, arms trafficking and the funding of armed conflicts that claim the lives of tens, and in some cases hundreds, of thousands of people every year, in particular in Africa and Latin America.

Is the Commission aware of the background to the trade in some minerals and mineral products, and what is it doing now, and what does it plan to do in the future, to alleviate the suffering it causes in many of the world's poorer regions?