

**Question for written answer E-003825/2018
to the Commission**

Rule 130

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Subject: Resource exploitation in Virunga and Salonga national parks

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has officially announced plans to drill for oil in 'areas of oil interest' covering 21.5% of the total area of Virunga national park and 40% of Salonga national park. Prospecting and drilling for oil are not activities compatible with these parks' status as UNESCO world heritage sites.

They are of considerable ecological value, and are indispensable for the preservation of biodiversity and the fight against climate change. Salonga national park is home to nearly 40% of the world's bonobos and Virunga contains the vital habitats of many protected species, including some of the last mountain gorillas in existence.

What is more, a large proportion of the parks' financing comes from the European taxpayer, via the 11th EDF (particularly the B4Life programme).

These nature reserves also represent a major source of tourist income, a means of avoiding the creation of lawless zones, and enable the local people to benefit from the security, economic and energy development that they need.

How does the Commission intend to work with its partners such as the USA, Canada, Switzerland and UNESCO to ensure that these plans to exploit resources are not implemented in a manner that is damaging to these parks?