

**Question for written answer E-002115/2020/rev.1
to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs
and Security Policy**

Rule 138

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Subject: Illegal gold smuggling in Africa

A series of reports by Reuters have revealed a vast illicit gold market, in which the United Arab Emirates (UAE) plays a key role. The country acts as a major trading hub that receives, processes and 'launders' African gold. In addition to tax avoidance and health and safety implications, the surge in the volume and scope of the illegal gold trade has given rise to grave security concerns. Revenue from gold smuggling appears to be financing Jihadist radicalisation and armed conflict in Africa, and the battle for control of the gold mines is destabilising and impoverishing states. The link between gold, violence and terrorism is particularly stark in the Sahel region of Africa. The belt of territory south of the Sahara includes large areas of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger. Having lost territory and momentum in the Middle East, Jihadis have shifted their attention to mining areas of the Sahel.

The mines in the region provide these terrorist groups with income to recruit members and purchase weapons, as well as being ideal hideouts and sources of explosives used in attacks.

1. Does the VP/HR intend to focus on this issue and take action?
2. Is there any mechanism in place to reduce illicit financial flows to terrorists in the Sahel area?
3. Countries such as the UAE play an important role in this crisis. Can the VP/HR put pressure on these countries so that they engage in combating the phenomenon?