

'Whitewash' accusation

The report was widely seen in Belgium and in the DRC as a "complete whitewash". One of the two rapporteurs, George Dallemagne from the opposition Humanist Democratic Centre expressed "bitterness and anger" and refused to vote in favour of it. Dallemagne told this correspondent the report should have mentioned political pressures from the Belgian government to force the Delcredere managers to extend their guarantee for the \$12m loan from the Belgolaise bank to George Forrest's company.

Sources within the Commission claim that a letter from the Belgian foreign minister to the Delcredere provides evidence of this allegation.

The Brussels-based NGO Broederlijk Delen expressed its "disappointment", stressing that the report failed to name and shame those involved in the looting of the Congo.

The chairman of the Congolese 'Voice of the Voiceless' rights organisation, Floribert Chebeya Bahizire, said the report was "a scandal; impunity gets rewarded". The Cokatom (Overseas Katangese Community) expressed its support for the UN panel of experts and for a future anti-corruption committee which should be created in the DRC.

Sept 03: Criminal court could try 'conflict' diamond buyers

The International Criminal Court in The Hague could prosecute foreigners who bought 'conflict diamonds' from the DR Congo. They could be charged with complicity in war crimes and genocide, the prosecutor of the world's first permanent criminal court told journalists this month.

International Criminal Court Chief Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo said crimes linked to the Congo civil war may have been committed as far away as the US and Canada. "Follow the trail of the money and you will find the criminals. If you stop the money then you stop the crime," said the Argentine prosecutor, who is focusing on Congo for what could lead to his first formal investigation. The global court, which came into operation last July despite US opposition, has no formal cases on its books yet.

The warning comes amidst reports that there has been little follow-up to the UN's 2002 report on diamond exploitation and that of other minerals in the DRC.

According to the non-governmental organisation Partnership Africa Canada, the OECD guidelines for companies on which the UN panel relied are toothless and virtually unknown to many companies.

The report on corporate responsibility in the diamond industry released in June, says that corporate codes that rely on voluntary guidelines are completely inadequate.

It adds that the Kimberley Process certification scheme also lacks teeth, and that without regular monitoring the Kimberley agreement "will create false consumer confidence and the appearance of probity where none can be assured".

In his report the criminal court prosecutor said that foreign businessmen and firms who supplied cash or weapons in exchange for diamonds to people they knew were guilty of war crimes are just as liable to be prosecuted as anyone who actually carried out those atrocities, Moreno Ocampo said.

"If they received diamonds and knew that the people delivering them were getting them because of genocide then they could well be part of the crime," he told reporters.

KEY ACTORS IN THE EXPLOITATION OF RESOURCES

The UN researched into the companies and individuals engaged in the exploitation of the DRC's natural resources. Many of those named are still active players in post-war politics and business. In October 2002 it produced its final report on 'Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo'. In an annex it listed the companies on which the UN panel recommended placing financial restrictions

1 AHMAD DIAMOND CORPORATION ANTWERP BELGIUM

Diamond trading Mr. AHMAD Imad

2 ASA DIAM ANTWERP BELGIUM Diamond trading Mr.

AHMAD Ali Said

3 BUKAVU AVIATION TRANSPORT DRC Airline company

Mr. BOUT Victor