

IN RECOGNITION OF NATIONAL
PEANUT BUTTER DAY

HON. SAXBY CHAMBLISS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 14, 2002

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. Speaker, today is National Peanut Butter Day—a time to celebrate one of America's favorite foods. National Peanut Butter Day is part of the month long celebration of National Peanut Month. It offers a time to recognize the nutritional and economic values of peanuts. The state of Georgia ranks number one in the nation in peanut production growing peanuts in 79 countries and 45 percent of all peanuts grown in the United States. The industry has been a mainstay in south Georgia's economy for over 60 years and continues to benefit our local economy. The eighth congressional district of Georgia is second largest producer of peanuts in the nation.

Not only are peanuts an important part of our economy, but they offer nutritional benefits by providing essential vitamins and minerals. They are an excellent source of the B vitamin folic acid, which can prevent birth defects and lower the risk of heart disease. One serving of peanuts provides protein, vitamin E, niacin, folate, phosphorus, and magnesium, which can help lower blood pressure and decrease the risk of diabetes in women.

National Peanut Month and Peanut Butter Day provides us the opportunity to recognize the benefits of peanuts as well as the hard work of all the people in the peanut industry. Mr. Chairman, I hope you will join me today in recognizing National Peanut Butter Day and National Peanut Month.

A TRIBUTE TO THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY
OF GIRL SCOUTS USA

HON. SAM FARR

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 14, 2002

Mr. FARR of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 90th anniversary of Girl Scouts USA. For ninety years, Girl Scouts has had a proven track record of empowering girls to become leaders, helping adults be positive role models and mentors for children and helping build solid communities.

When founder Juliette Gordon Low assembled 18 girls ninety years ago she started what would become the largest organization of girls in the world. It was because of her vision, that girls now have access to a forum to develop mentally, spiritually, and physically. Girl Scouts promotes the ideas of fun, friendship and power of girls together. Through experiences such as cultural exchanges, outdoor experiences and community service projects girls learn life skills. They acquire self-confidence and expertise, take on responsibility, are encouraged to think creatively and act with integrity—qualities essential in good citizens and great leaders.

The Girl Scout Mission is “to help all girls grow strong.” I hope we can follow the examples set by the Girl Scouts and remember the great importance of coming together to give back to our communities.

CLEAN DIAMOND TRADE

HON. TONY P. HALL

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 14, 2002

Mr. HALL of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to update my colleagues on recent progress made in the battle against the scourge of conflict diamonds. The U.S. House of Representatives has been at the forefront of this work, and I am proud of our action on the Clean Diamond Trade Act last year—landmark legislation that would advance this fight. However, this problem requires a broader solution than the United States can implement alone. I am pleased to report that yesterday, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed the Kimberley Process's efforts to craft a system of customs controls capable of ending this blood trade.

International Efforts.—That work is far from complete, and a critical next step will be taken next week as representatives of civil society, the diamond industry, and more than 35 countries gather to finish the job. If they rise to the challenges conflict diamonds pose, we soon will have a mechanism for preventing rough diamonds that fund war from being traded as legitimate gems.

Yesterday, the non-governmental organizations whose exposés of this blood trade instigated this work warned all involved in this work that a flawed agreement may be worse than none at all. More needs to be done on monitoring and enforcing the system, making it transparent through the publication of key statistics on the secretive trade, and on WTO issues will be critical. NGOs argue that neither embattled civilians in Africa, nor terrorist targets in America, nor the countries and companies that depend on the legitimate trade in diamonds can afford half-measures or complacent confidence that the situation magically will resolve itself. They are absolutely right.

There is another grave flaw in this work: it depends upon a definition of conflict diamonds that senselessly excludes those mined in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Under the terms of both the Kimberley Process and the Clean Diamond Trade Act, conflict diamonds are only those embargoed by the United Nations. That means that unless the United Nations imposes sanctions on diamonds originating in a war zone, as it has in the case of the wars in Angola, Sierra Leone and Liberia, trade in the diamonds that fuel conflict there cannot be checked by this new international system.

A War for Plunder.—Diamonds are not the cause of what has come to be known as Africa's First World War, but they play a crucial role in sustaining it and spreading misery elsewhere—perhaps even to the United States, because Al Qaeda, Hezbollah, and other radical organizations reportedly have funded their terrorist activities with Congolese diamonds. There is ample evidence that diamonds and other resources have become the reason for the Congo's war, so ending their illegal trade essential. Some of the most compelling reports of the link between plunder and misery have been made by the United Nations' Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Here are a few excerpts from them:

Parties to the war in the DRC are “motivated by desire to control and profit from the natural resources of the [DRC] and . . . they finance their armies and military operations by exploiting those resources.”—From the report of the Panel of Experts of April 2001.

The conflict in the [DRC], because of its lucrative nature, has created a “win-win” situation for all belligerents. Adversaries and enemies are at times partners in business. . . . Business has superceded security concerns. The only loser in this huge business venture is the Congolese people.

Illegal exploitation of the mineral and forest resources of the [DRC] is taking place at an alarming rate. The conflict in the [DRC] has become mainly about access, control and trade of five key mineral resources . . . Plundering, looting and racketeering and the constitution of criminal cartels are becoming commonplace in occupied territories. These criminal cartels have ramifications and connections worldwide, and they represent the next serious security problem in the region.

The link between the continuation of the conflict and the exploitation of natural resources would have not been possible if some entities, not parties in the conflict, had not played a key role, willingly or not. Bilateral and multilateral donors and certain neighboring and distant countries have passively facilitated the exploitation of the resources of the [DRC] and the continuation of the conflict; the role of private companies and individuals has also been vital.—From the report of the Panel of Experts of April 2001.

The systematic exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth of the [DRC] continues unabated . . . the cease-fire is generally respected on the front line, leaving the exploitation of the resources as the main activity of the foreign troops. There is a clear link between the continuation of the conflict and the exploitation of natural resources. It would not be wrong to say that one drives the other. The military operations and presence in the [DRC] of all sides have been transformed into self-financing activities. . . .

The initial motivation of foreign countries or armies to intervene in the [DRC] was primarily political and security-related in nature; over a period of time, and owing to the evolving nature of the conflict it has become the primary motive of extracting the maximum commercial and material benefits. This holds true for both government allies and rebel supporters.—From the report of the Panel of Experts of November 2001.

United Nations is Dithering.—Despite the eloquent words of the United Nations' experts and diplomats, the impassioned calls for action made by virtually everyone who has examined the situation in the DRC, and the full knowledge that each day of delay has serious consequences for innocent Congolese, the United Nations has continued to dither.

Three months ago, the Security Council “strongly condemned the continued plundering of the [DRC's] natural resources . . . which it said was perpetuating the conflict in the country, impeding economic development and exacerbating the suffering of the Congolese people.” But then, instead of acting on the incontrovertible evidence that had been painstakingly gathered, it gave U.N. experts six more months to come up with yet more information and to propose solutions.