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An overview on geoethical perspectives in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Geology is an important science that allows to study, analyze the dynamic of the earth and to give answers to the request of earth materials for the society. Minerals have been always of great importance for ornaments and jewelry. In Africa, minerals, especially precious ones like gold, diamond or iron have been always a proof of richness and power. It is the case of the iron industry in the Meroe civilization of the 5th century B.C. The greed for minerals has pushed people to undertake a massive exploitation, often without considering the negative consequences or impacts on the natural environment and humans. In the 18th century, with the industrial revolution, the need for minerals and geomaterials increased strongly. The discovery of oil as a source of energy pushed people to a new lifestyle. Western countries, unable to cover all the resources they need for their economic growth, resorted to Africa: so, from centuries, Africa is for them a new Eldorado regarding natural resources. And today, emerging countries like China, India and Brazil consider Africa as a great storage deposit. The DR Congo well known for its diversified and massive geo-resources is suffering the mankind covetousness. In this situation after several decades, the DR Congo, has undergone a conflict situation and a terrible civil war. Natural resources have been looted and the ongoing exploitation has not brought income to local people. When exploitation activities starts, in many cases, there is no plans that supports the rights of local community members to have access to advantages coming from dividends of the mining exploitation. In relation to their lands and their culture, local community members have no space to express themselves, when they should benefit from the economic growth and be part of the development process. Mining code have been promulgated in 2003 [1], but many efforts still need to be done. In addition to this issue, many natural hazards affect the DR Congo: some have an exogenous origin (floods, landslides, erosion processes, climate change, and drought), others an endogenous origin (volcanos, earthquakes). Their effects on agriculture, economics and social life are remarkable and led communities into hunger and poverty [2]. It is absolutely necessary to promote an advocacy committee that defends, informs, sensitizes about geoethical practices at every stage of decision-making process about natural resource governance, socio-economic integration, and risk reduction. Building the awareness on these topics need to be realized as the result of a strict collaboration between local communities, scientists, national and international stakeholders and politicians. This will help Congolese people to get involved with experts in different fields (economics, social sciences, geosciences) for fighting against poverty, for managing geo-resources in a more sustainable way and for mitigating geo-risks.

References:

[1] Journal Officiel n° spécial du 15 juillet 2002; journal Officiel n° spécial du 6 novembre 2002

[2] Jean-Berckmans B. MUHIGWA, 2010, Perturbation climatiques autour de Bukavu, Annales de l'UOB, pp 111-112

