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Blood diamonds - time to plug the leaks

Civil Society Groups warn Kimberley Process effectiveness compromised

A landmark scheme established in 2003 to prevent trade in conflict diamonds is potentially failing in its objectives, campaigners said today.

Ahead of a key meeting of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) in Namibia, a coalition of civil society groups said that despite having all the tools in place, the scheme was failing to address effectively issues of non-compliance, smuggling, money laundering and human rights abuses in the world's alluvial diamond fields. The groups highlighted a number of countries where there were issues of concern:

- In **Zimbabwe** there is clear evidence of government-led human rights abuse in diamond mining areas, as well as smuggling and weak internal controls;
- **Lebanon** is exporting significantly more gem-quality rough diamonds than it imports. The problem has been known for months, but the KP has been sluggish in its response;
- Over the past two years there has been an astonishing 500% increase in diamond exports from Guinea, a country whose current government has acknowledged widespread corruption in the mining industry. A KP review team visited Guinea in August 2008 but a year later its report has still not been completed, suggesting critical problems in the KP monitoring system;
- **Venezuela** agreed in 2008 that it would suspend its diamond trade until new control systems could be established. A civil society investigative visit to Venezuela in May 2009 found that diamonds are still being mined and smuggled into the world's legitimate trade with complete impunity.

Annie Dunnebacke from Global Witness, said: "The clock is running out on Kimberley Process credibility. The work it was set up to do is vital - it would be scandalous if uncooperative governments and industry succeeded in hobbling it into ineffectiveness".

The civil society groups are repeating calls for action in the following areas:

- **Human Rights:** Civil society organisations propose that the following words be added to the preamble of the main KPCS document: The Kimberley Process shall promote respect for human rights as described in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and shall require their effective recognition and observance in the diamond industries of participating countries, and among the peoples, institutions and territories under their jurisdiction.
- **Monitoring:** The Kimberley Process must significantly improve its monitoring function. Its forthcoming review of Zimbabwe must be thorough, and must provide clear direction where problems are identified. Ongoing problems in

Venezuela, Guinea and Lebanon must be addressed and solved as a matter of urgency.

- **Cutting and Polishing Centres:** The KP has long ignored a significant loophole in its control procedures. Civil society organizations call yet again for the KP to ensure that statistics regarding the purchase, use and sale of rough diamonds by cutting and polishing centres are incorporated into its internal control mechanism and reconciled in such a way that rough diamonds do not bypass other internal control measures.

Alfred Brownell from Green Advocates, Liberia, said: "Namibia was a founding member of the Kimberley Process and as current Chair of the scheme should be a leader in ensuring an effective and efficient diamond certification system. The Kimberley Process must be a force for development in Africa's diamond-rich nations and take a clear stand against human rights abuses."

Susanne Emond from Partnership Africa Canada, said: "The Kimberley Process must fulfill its potential to ensure a clean diamond trade. We are calling on the diamond industry to join with us in demanding that governments enforce the scheme's rules with greater commitment and timeliness."

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Note:

The Kimberley Process (KP) is a government-led rough diamond certification scheme created to halt and prevent the trade in conflict diamonds that led to the death and displacement of millions of people in Angola, Sierra Leone, DRC, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. Member states are required to pass national legislation and set up an import/export control system to implement the KP. Over 75 of the world's diamond producing, trading and manufacturing countries participate in the scheme.

Signed: Centre du Commerce International pour le Développement (CECIDE), Conakry; Fatal Transactions, Amsterdam; Global Witness, London ; Green Advocates, Monrovia ; Groupe de Recherche et de Plaidoyer sur les Industries Extractives (GRPIE), Abidjan; Network Movement for Justice and Development, Freetown; Partnership Africa Canada, Ottawa