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**The Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition
PRESS RELEASE
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Failure to suspend Zimbabwe from blood diamond scheme undermines efforts to end abuses and clean up international trade

The Kimberley Process (KP) rough diamond certification scheme failed to reach a consensus to suspend Zimbabwe at this week's Plenary meeting in Namibia, in spite of evidence of serious non-compliance with the KP's requirements and widespread government-sponsored human rights abuses, said civil society groups today.

"Governments' failure to suspend Zimbabwe points to fundamental weaknesses in the scheme's procedures and to a serious lack of political will to take decisive action when countries are not implementing minimum standards," said Annie Dunnebacke from Global Witness. "This undermines the scheme's effectiveness and compromises those participants who implement the system in good faith. It also sends the message that there will be no serious consequences for those who break the rules."

A joint action plan was agreed with the government of Zimbabwe to bring the country back into compliance, which provides for a KP-appointed monitor to verify all shipments of diamonds from the Marange diamond fields prior to export. However, the plan does not address the wider context of non-compliance in Zimbabwe's KP system. There is no mention of the central role the Zimbabwean army continues to play in mining and smuggling, nor does it refer to past and ongoing human rights abuses.

Susanne Emond from Partnership Africa Canada said: "If Zimbabwe cooperates with the KP and implements the provisions it has agreed to on paper, it will be an improvement from the status quo. But the action plan falls short of addressing the most serious issues raised by the KP review mission team last July. The Government of Zimbabwe must bring to an end the horrific abuses in the Marange diamond fields, and hold to account those responsible for the extra-judicial violence."

This week's proceedings were dominated by the KP's attempt to tackle the crisis in Zimbabwe, to the detriment of progress on other key issues, including the need for reform of the Process itself. The KP must clarify its approach to human rights in the diamond sector, develop a more rigorous and independent capacity for monitoring implementation and develop more effective decision-making procedures. All these will require renewed political will.

"We hope that the Israeli Chairmanship in 2010 will provide the leadership and direction that has been so conspicuously absent throughout this year," said Alfred Brownell from Green Advocates, Liberia.

The meeting also expressed concern about the growing trade in conflict diamonds from Côte d'Ivoire and the challenges in implementation of KP controls in West Africa. Governments, industry members and civil society renewed their commitments to increase collaboration and improve Kimberley Process implementation at the regional level. This will include the development of tools to identify Ivorian diamonds, as well as measures for closer KP monitoring of rough diamond exports from Guinea. Constructive and positive discussions also took place about the links between diamonds and development, but will need to be followed up by concrete action in order to make a real difference to diamond mining communities.

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Notes:

1. The Kimberley Process is a rough diamond certification scheme, established in 2003. It brings together governments, industry and civil society, and aims to eradicate the trade in conflict diamonds. Member states are required to pass national legislation and set up an import/export control system. Over 75 of the world's diamond producing, trading and manufacturing countries participate in the scheme.
2. Since the discovery in 2006 of significant alluvial diamond deposits in Marange, eastern Zimbabwe, controls over the diamond sector have been nonexistent and communities in and around the diamond fields have borne the brunt of a series of brutal measures to restore state control over the area. The authorities have failed to stop the military from carrying out abuses and profiting from the illicit trade in diamonds, effectively condoning - and perhaps even encouraging - the looting and attendant violence against civilians.
3. The Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition includes Green Advocates (Liberia), CECIDE (Guinea), COOPERGADI and COOPERGAC (Brazil), CLONG (Republic of Congo), CENADEP and GAERN (Democratic Republic of Congo), GRPIE (Côte d'Ivoire), the Network Movement for Justice and Development (Sierra Leone), Centre for Research and Development (Zimbabwe), Partnership Africa Canada (PAC) and Global Witness (GW).