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Kimberley Process still in process - Progress made, but key issues remain

JOHANNESBURG: April 30, 2003: Representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) attending the First Plenary Meeting of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) welcomed international commitment to take additional effective steps to break the link between diamonds and human rights violations and conflict in Africa. However, governments failed to take action on an element critical to the credibility of the Scheme - the need for regular, independent monitoring of all participants, to ensure that the process is not subject to abuse. "For too long diamonds have been used to fuel conflict, leading to the deaths and maiming of millions of vulnerable people in Africa. It is time to act," said participating NGOs, representing over 200 organizations around the world.

NGOs are deeply disappointed that no action was taken on establishing a regular, effective monitoring mechanism to assess over time all national diamond control systems and meet the threshold of trust and credibility that consumers want. This discussion has been postponed yet again, to the next plenary, scheduled in October 2003. The credibility of the Kimberley Process rests on effective monitoring.   This was endorsed by Nicky Oppenheimer, Chairman of De Beers Corp in an April 29 speech: "... transparent verification of both government and industry procedures is essential to the credibility of the certification scheme in the eyes of the world.   [...] the industry wholeheartedly supports the NGOs' objectives in securing a credible system of monitoring."

The Kimberley Process, an international diamond certification scheme to ban trade in conflict diamonds, was launched on 1 January 2003. Armed opposition groups have used conflict diamonds to purchase arms and perpetrate violent acts against civilians.   NGOs called for effective action to be taken at this meeting to strengthen four critical elements of the KPCS: monitoring; membership criteria; participant coordination; and accurate collection of trade and production statistics. NGOs are encouraged by governments agreeing to establish rules of procedure, review countries' ability to implement the scheme and report statistics.   Agreement was also reached to carry out the Scheme's first review mission, to the Central African Republic, to evaluate if it can implement the KPCS effectively after the recent unconstitutional change of government.

NGOs were also gravely concerned that a number of countries, which have been

attending meetings of the Kimberley Process since its inception in 2000, have failed to put in place laws and regulations to implement the scheme. The cost of further delay means more lives lost from conflicts fuelled by the illegal trade in diamonds.

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme has been cited by international forums as a model for preventing illicit exploitation of natural resources from fuelling conflict. If the Scheme is to live up to these expectations, the participants must address the four key deficiencies to promote peace and development in war-torn countries, and provide hope for the millions of victims of wars in Africa.

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Amnesty International (International Secretariat)
Cenadep (DRC)
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