

PRESS RELEASE

Kimberley Process at a Turning Point

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CONFLICT DIAMONDS

Kimberley Process at a Turning Point

The integrity of the Kimberley Process Diamond Certification Scheme (1) will be at stake this week when representatives from governments, the diamond industry and NGOs convene for the Kimberley Process plenary meeting being held from 29-31 October 2003 in Sun City, South Africa.

Civil society groups continue to remain gravely concerned about the loopholes that threaten the effectiveness and the credibility of the Kimberley Process and are pressing for the adoption of regular reviews to assess how each country's laws and regulations are working, in practice, to halt conflict diamond trading. This would involve carrying out review missions to each participant once every three years to evaluate how the Kimberley Process requirements are being implemented and enforced.

At the meeting, the key decision facing governments will be whether to adopt a South African peer review proposal for regular reviews. Currently, there are no formal arrangements in the Kimberley Process for effective, systematic monitoring of how each country's laws and regulations actually work in practice.(2)

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the World Diamond Council and major diamond producing and trading countries such as South Africa, Canada, the United States, Israel and the European Commission, are calling for regular, impartial monitoring to ensure that the system is effective and does not suffer a crisis of credibility. Some governments remain opposed to the idea, however, and could block the adoption of an effective review system.

“We strongly support the industry, the European Commission, South Africa and other governments that are actively pushing for regular monitoring. It is inconceivable that some governments would continue to oppose it, “ said Corinna Gilfillan of Global Witness.

“It is crucial that all participating governments give the Kimberley Process the credibility and the tools it needs to be effective,” said Ian Smillie of Partnership Africa Canada. “Regular monitoring is standard practice in other international agreements to ensure effective implementation and transparency - the Kimberley Process should be no different.”

An additional problem is the lack of progress in collection and analysis of statistics - an important tool for detecting conflict diamond trading. Many governments have failed to submit the required statistics, calling into question their commitment to the Kimberley Process. NGOs will argue that governments that have not submitted their statistics before the Plenary Meeting should be suspended from the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme.

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Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa/Fatal Transactions Campaign - Netherlands

Network Movement for Justice and Development - Sierra Leone

One Sky - Canadian Institute of Sustainable Living - Canada

Partnership Africa Canada - Canada

World Vision - USA

Editor Notes:

(1) The Kimberley Process, launched in January 2003, is an international diamond certification scheme to eradicate the trade in conflict diamonds. It requires governments to implement export/import control regimes in rough diamonds to prevent diamonds from fuelling war and human rights abuses and from financing terrorist activities. The Kimberley Process was negotiated by governments, civil society organisations and the diamond trade, in response to a civil society campaign against the trade in conflict diamonds.

(2) In July 2003, NGOs welcomed the publication of a new list of participating countries that met the minimum requirements of the Kimberley Process. However, the Kimberley Process Participation Committee, which is responsible for reviewing membership credentials, only examined whether countries have the requisite laws, not how they are actually being implemented and enforced. Currently there are 55 countries participating in the Kimberley Process.

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