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Conflict Diamonds: The Valentine's Day deception

This Valentine's Day (14 February) diamond retailers will be touting the ultimate symbol of love and devotion, but according to Amnesty International consumers can expect little reassurance that their diamonds are not products of war and human rights violations.

A survey of diamond retailers and suppliers in Australia and six European countries found that fewer than one in five companies surveyed could provide a meaningful account of their policy to prevent the trade in diamonds from regions of conflict.

The disappointing results come more than two years after the diamond industry committed itself to a system of self regulation including the issuing of written warranties and the implementation of a code of conduct in support of the international Kimberly Process Certification Scheme.

"The trade in conflict diamonds in countries like Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone, has already led to the destruction of nations and cost millions of lives. Yet for some companies the response has been, 'we are not concerned, there are other things more important in life,'" said Alessandra Masci of Amnesty International.

Between July and December 2004, Amnesty International sent letters and questionnaires to diamond retailers in Australia, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

Out of 291 companies that were sent requests for written information about their policies, 67% failed to respond. Of the 96 companies that did respond:

63% (60 out of 96) admitted to having no policy on conflict diamonds;

Only 36% stated that they have a policy to prevent dealing in conflict diamonds. However, 77% (27 out of 35) of those who stated they have a policy do not provide adequate details on how the system of warranties is being implemented and what polices, procedures and auditing measures companies have in place to back them up.

56% said they never or rarely asked their suppliers to provide warranties that their diamonds were conflict free;

Less than 20% provided their customers with a warranty as standard practice.

This survey follows the one carried out last summer in the UK and USA* and shows that the diamond industry in Europe and Australia is even further behind the UK and the USA in terms of its overall

response and implementation of the self-regulation policy. The results show the urgent need for greater government oversight of the diamond industry's self regulation system. In particular governments should carry out rigorous auditing and inspections of diamond companies to ensure that the diamond industry is implementing its own self-regulation and, most importantly, that this effectively halts the trade in conflict diamonds.

Consumers can also play an important role in pressuring diamond jewellery retailers to follow through on commitments to combat conflict diamond trading. Valentine's Day is an important time for consumers to raise this issue. When they buy diamonds customers should demand written warranties showing that the diamonds they are being sold are conflict free and therefore not contributing to human rights abuses.

*: For a full report of the survey carried out in the UK and the USA , please see *Dejavu - The diamond industry still failing to deliver on promises* a report by Amnesty International and Global Witness (PDF format)
[http://web.amnesty.org/library/pdf/POL340082004ENGLISH/\\$File/POL3400804.pdf](http://web.amnesty.org/library/pdf/POL340082004ENGLISH/$File/POL3400804.pdf)

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