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Press Release Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition

For immediate release

“Conflict diamond certification scheme unable and unwilling to reform”

Today, another three-year reform cycle of the Kimberley Process came to an end without meaningful change. Participating states could only find consensus on insignificant changes to the scope and governance of the scheme. They once again failed to effectively protect communities in diamond mining areas from ongoing abuses. In this manner, KP certificates still provide no guarantees that diamond purchases are not tainted with blood.

“The 2019 Kimberley Process (KP) Plenary, under Indian chairmanship in New Delhi, was a sad and surreal spectacle”, says Shamiso Mtisi, Zimbabwe-based coordinator of the KP’s civil society coalition. “The 82 participating states lost themselves in excruciating discussions on rules, procedures and trivialities as they could only agree that, in fact, they do not agree on anything substantial”.

Most problematic is the failure of the umpteenth attempt at broadening the scope of the certification scheme to capture contemporary conflict challenges. As a result, the KP remains a process that only serves to protect state interests against rebels seeking to overthrow them.

“Other important reform areas were kicked into the long grass, as States refused to commit to concrete actions and timelines”, explains Shamiso Mtisi. This includes the creation of a Permanent Secretariat and Multi-Donor Fund, both of which aimed at filling key shortcomings regarding professionalism, technical capacities and tripartite participation of the KP.

While KP participants were busy rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic, African communities supported by the members of our civil society coalition continue to suffer the downside of diamond riches. This involves harms to their livelihoods, environmental damage and – despite this conflict prevention scheme – often still violence and abuse. This Plenary failed to give these communities any reassurances that the Kimberley Process actually cares. In the same way, States failed to provide any answers to the insistent marketing of synthetic diamonds as ethically superior alternatives to natural diamond purchases.

One of the rare substantive engagements in New Delhi focussed on the embargo on conflict diamonds from non-compliant zones in the Central African Republic (CAR). The KP and the CAR government agreed on a more flexible monitoring framework in attempt to facilitate and promote legitimate diamond trade in CAR. “As civil society coalition, we call on CAR’s

authorities to make this experiment work and strengthen internal controls in order to curb fraud and diamond smuggling in the country”, stresses Mr Mtisi.

“Our overall conclusion from this Plenary is one of deep disappointment”, concludes Shamiso Mtisi. “While the Kimberley Process may on paper be a tripartite process, in reality it is a government-dominated body that fails to transcend national interests. As civil society we will continue to hold the spotlight on this often murky process, with its tendency to pretend being something broader and more effective than it actually is. But as the KP continues to lose relevance and credibility, it is ever more clear that we will have to look outside of this rigid process to find the real solutions for improving diamond governance and defending the interests of diamond mining communities”.

More information:

Shamiso Mtisi, KP Civil Society Coalition Coordinator (ZELA), +263 7 742 169 56

Hans Merket, IPIS, + 32 474 34 20 14