



**KIMBERLEY
PROCESS
CIVIL SOCIETY
COALITION**

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Press Release Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition

For immediate release

“Civil society challenges complacency of the Kimberley Process at UN gathering in New York”

Addressing government and industry representatives in New York on March 3, at the occasion of the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on the Role of Diamonds in Fueling Conflict, the Kimberley Process (KP) Civil Society Coalition (CSC) questioned the often-hailed contribution of the KP to preventing conflict and promoting development.

A conflict prevention tool?

During events organized around the adoption of the UN Resolution in New York, CSC representative from Zimbabwe, Mukasiri Sibanda, pressed the Kimberley Process to stop the obstinate self-praise and finally face its long-known weaknesses.

The UN Resolution presents the KP as “an effective multilateral tool for conflict prevention”, “but when has the Kimberley Process actually prevented any conflict from emerging?” questioned Mr. Sibanda.

“The KP does not have the means at its disposal to act promptly upon early warning signs of widescale violence, let alone to stop it from escalating. It is an indolent organ with embargoes as its sole response to react after the damage is already done. Even worse, ‘damage’ in KP terms refers solely to situations where diamonds finance rebels that fight governments. The KP turns a blind eye to all other forms of violence such as human rights abuses, torture, inhumane or degrading treatment, environmental degradation and economic crimes.”

“We therefore find it extremely disappointing that a 3-year reform cycle, which ended during last year’s New Delhi Plenary meeting, again failed to bring consensus on updating the KP’s obsolete conflict diamond definition”, adds Shamiso Mtisi, Zimbabwe-based coordinator of the KP CSC.

Promoting sustainable development?

What about the repeated claims that the KP actively promotes sustainable development? “In many countries diamonds do indeed create jobs and contribute to economic advancement, but their development potential is far from fully realized. And this said,

where is the contribution of the Kimberley Process to this? How are the massive resources engulfed by the endless gatherings of hundreds of country and industry representatives across the globe benefiting local communities?” questioned Mukasiri Sibanda.

“We should ask local communities, but where are they? They are, literally and metaphorically, far away from these gatherings. When we mention the KP to the communities we engage with, we mostly get a blank stare. Those who have heard of it, typically do not associate a lot of good with the mechanism. Is it not emblematic that, at grassroots level, the scheme is most known in countries that have lived through a KP embargo? Communities know the Kimberley Process for its sanctions, not for its benefits.”

A huge unexploited potential

“There is a huge unexploited potential within the KP, which brings together all countries involved in the diamond sector with industry and civil society. This unique position makes it best placed to develop a diamond governance mechanism that genuinely prevents conflict and promotes development,” explains Hans Merket, researcher for Belgian-based KP CSC member IPIS. “Unfortunately, we note that time and energy within the KP are predominantly wasted on procedural navel-gazing with no relevance whatsoever for communities impacted by diamond mining.”

“Civil society participation is essential within the Kimberley Process and the Civil Society Coalition has from the outset been advocating for change to the benefit of communities affected by diamond mining. The failed reform cycle shows a lack of commitment by the Kimberley Process to maximize the benefits of diamond mining and trading, and to minimize the harms. “As the civil society coalition, we can no longer justify our engagement in this insular logic, which is so far out of touch of the realities and needs of our constituencies.” stresses Shamiso Mtisi. The coalition has decided to increasingly work through other international initiatives, as well as at the national and the regional level, with a particular focus on three themes: redistribution of diamond mining benefits, reduction of violence and the protection of land rights of local communities. “We will not be confined by the KP’s many limitations in continuing our mission of defending the rights of communities affected by diamond mining operations.”

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