



WORLD
DIAMOND
COUNCIL

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Antwerp, June 1st, 2020

Dear Chair,

Dear Vice-Chair

Dear KP participants,

Dear friends,

As my tenure as WDC president comes to an end, I would like to thank you all for your commitment to the Kimberley Process.

The KP is a unique enterprise, born out of the suffering of many human beings, but mainly African men, women and children. It was created to respond to the plight of those who had been scarred deeply by conflict and by the selfish interests of foreign powers and businesses.

It is a process also marked in the past, by missed opportunities and sometimes by a lack of vision, clouded by narrow and sometimes personal interests.

Nevertheless, I believe it to be a unique UN-mandated initiative supported by many committed individuals coming from all over the globe. These are people deeply concerned and impassioned about making a difference for all of those mainly artisanal communities still badly impacted by the lack of basic livelihoods and opportunities.

The industry, represented by the WDC, has never denied its responsibility to mitigate the potential of harm being done in the areas where it does business. On the contrary, the diamond industry has stepped up to the challenge, not only supporting the process to the best of its ability, but by initiating programs that complement the KP, sometimes independently and sometimes together with non-industry players.

I urge all KP members and in particular, the representatives of diamond mining countries with large artisanal sectors not to fear a more effective and robust Kimberley Process. Do not be suspicious of an expanded KP mandate. The only concern you should have is failing your own people back home, not doing that which is possible to protect them from harm and increasing the opportunities they

may have for a better life. We must always remind ourselves that “all lives matter”.

There is an African proverb that says: “If you know the beginning well, the end shall not trouble you”

But those pushing for reform must also be ready to recognize and support genuine and honest efforts for change. There are those who worked toward this end for many years, and they deserve to be acknowledged.

For far too long, many have considered mining countries simply as places that are rich in minerals, without seeing their people and their communities. This “grab and get rich” mentality must change. We must find a way to positively link financial reward with ensuring the grass-roots communities truly benefit from the natural resources with which they are blessed.

Today many governments push for “due diligence” or “proof of care,” but does it necessarily impact properly on those who are supposed to benefit?

Please be aware that technology is deeply changing the way supply chains operate. It is impacting mining, the manufacturing and trading of polished diamonds, jewelry design, and ultimately the sale and demand for our products. Consumers have never had so much choice and such easy access to information, goods and services. They have the power today to decide the fate of a product or brand, and this includes diamonds.

Many diamond-producing countries are simply too disconnected from the consumer markets or simply refuse to face these changes and challenges. But they nevertheless are present, and these will severely impact us all, let there be no doubt about that.

The Kimberley Process is the ideal forum to discuss, exchange and provide solutions to these issues. I believe it should support technology and data-driven supply chains. Better processes that could potentially minimize the harm that still is being done and increase the benefits.

I believe that the KP has an exceptional opportunity, through its global representation, to focus on solutions and not merely on embargoes. But it can only do so if it faces its challenges with honesty and candor, and concentrates on those processes that can truly trigger long-term change.

There remains a great deal of faith in the potential for good in this process. And so, the dialogue must continue and the common commitment to change must deliver tangible results.

I wish to thank all the delegates of member countries and observers from the civil society with whom I have worked closely with over the years. I thank them for their efforts, trust and support. I feel I have gained many friends from around the world and hopefully made some difference for those who need, more than ever, sustainable livelihoods and a better future for their children.

I have no doubt that the WDC will continue to support genuine and impactful change. Myself, I am looking forward to carrying on providing support.

I sincerely hope this global pandemic that we currently are dealing with will have the effect of bringing about greater awareness of the need to protect our natural environment and build stronger international solidarity.

Wishing all the very best of success to Russia and Botswana with their chairmanships.

To all of you members and observers, rest assure that, more is in us.

Keep well all of you.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephane Fischler', written over two horizontal lines.

Stephane Fischler
President

