



**2022 Kimberley Process Intersessional Meeting
Botswana, Kasane**

**Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition opening
statement**

20 June 2022

Dr. Michel YOBOUE, Coalition Coordinator

Honourable Lefoko Moagi, Minister of Mines and Energy of Botswana;
Mr. Jacob Thamage, Chairman of the Kimberley Process;
Mr. Edward Asscher, Chairman of the World Diamond Council;
Chairmen of the Kimberley Process Working Groups
Focal Points of the participating countries;
Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen in your respective capacities.

It is a privilege for me to speak as the new Coordinator of the Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition (KP CSC).

I would like to extend my sincere thanks and those of the Civil Society Coalition delegation to the Government of Botswana and especially to all the organisers of this intersessional meeting.

Thank you for the warm welcome our delegation has received since our arrival in Kasane.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen;

At the opening of this Intersessional meeting, our thoughts are with all those who suffer because rather than benefit from diamond wealth, be it in Ukraine, across Africa, in the Americas or anywhere in the world.

For the Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition, as we wrote in the statement we issued last week, the fact that the Kimberley Process (KP) is unable to even discuss whether it should continue certifying Russian diamonds as conflict-free, reaffirms what we have been denouncing for years: that the world's conflict diamond scheme is no longer fit for purpose. Indeed, the silence of the KP over the Ukraine crisis confirms that we are right to challenge the claim that conflict diamonds represent less than 1% of all diamonds in circulation.

The unprecedented challenges that face us today are not easy to address, but more clearly than ever signal the need for change. We repeat our call on KP Participants to:

- Finally agree on a **long overdue expansion of the Kimberley Process's conflict diamond definition** to include diamonds associated with widespread or systematic violence and serious violations of human rights, regardless of whether they are committed by rebel groups, criminals, terrorists, private or public security forces or governmental actors
- **Suspend the Russian Federation**, and thereby stop certifying Russian diamonds as conflict-free, until Russia unconditionally ends its aggression against Ukraine
- Adopt a **serious and meaningful reform agenda** that at minimum makes an end to the stifling consensus model and replaces it with more flexible decision-making. The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) should moreover facilitate rather than complicate the industry's accelerating efforts towards traceability. This can be achieved by reforming its system of mixed origin certificates which contribute to blurring the origin of the large majority of diamonds.

For the past years, many of these meetings have taken place with limited public scrutiny. When this gathering repeatedly failed to reach consensus on much-needed reforms, this hardly ever reached mainstream media. But now, as the magnitude of the Russian diamond controversy is putting the spotlight on the KP's shortcomings, the world is watching and demanding answers.

The exchanges over the past months, and the experience of all failed reform cycles, have shown that those opposing progress play it hard. Meanwhile, the faith in this process only keeps decreasing, and only decisive action will be able to stop this. Therefore, Participants who want the KP to play a meaningful role in minimising the harms and maximising the gains of diamond mining - and we know that is the large majority - will also have to up their game.

The veto power that all of you KP Participants have has only been used by a small minority to block progress for the past two decades. Is this acceptable? Is there no other way? Must the KP continue to be held to ransom by a minority of its participants? Do we really all need to settle for the lowest common denominator? Have we travelled and spent so much to be here for another stalemate? Clearly not. You Participants do not have to agree with an Intersessional agenda that does not include the issues that are on all of your minds. Let us finally move forward and address the challenges that lie ahead of us or stand accused of sanitising conflict diamonds. It's time for change!

And these challenges are plentiful. The grassroots research on the impact of diamond mining that our Coalition has undertaken in 8 African countries clearly shows the room for improvement in ensuring a fairer distribution of diamond wealth, for a more professional and organised artisanal and small-scale mining sector, for better and safer working conditions, for human rights, for mitigating the environmental impact of diamond mining. These challenges are not just about artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM). Industrial mining also poses huge risks for human and environmental health. This is painfully shown by the huge tailings spill at the Catoca diamond mine nearly 1 year ago. To date, this pollution is affecting thousands of communities that rely on the contaminated water for their livelihoods. Recent tests by universities in DRC and Belgium demonstrated that the water still contains toxic metals such as nickel and uranium.

The situation in the Central African Republic is another key challenge for the KP that continues to concern us. We continue to receive reports of human rights abuses committed by security forces and Russian mercenaries. This security context makes independent monitoring by civil society increasingly difficult and impossible. Therefore, it is more important that the UN Panel of Experts can resume its work unhindered as soon as possible.

We have a unique combination of experience and expertise in this room to address these challenges. And many of us are already doing important work in this direction. We are excited that WGAAP is starting a cooperation with the World Bank's Delve program to ensure more evidence-based policies and assistance for ASM. Another important example is the regional cooperation in the Mano River Union, that is now inspiring similar efforts in the Central African region, both under the leadership of WGAAP. These overarching efforts lay the basis for better local impacts of diamond mining. Also on this level, important efforts are already being undertaken. In addition to the existing and successful GEMFAIR program in Sierra Leone, we commend the DRC Ministry of Mines, the Antwerp World Diamond Council, Everledger and DDI@Resolve for starting an ASM traceability pilot in DRC's Kasai Province, called OrigemA.

We also want to credit South Africa and all team members for the important work on the Zimbabwe review visit. This was the first review visit under the revised peer review system. It made notable efforts in following up on several key changes such as the consultations with civil society and the timely delivery of the final report within the 30 days deadline.

Ladies and gentlemen, with challenges so plentiful, the Coalition keeps working hard to improve diamond governance and protect the rights of communities affected by diamond mining. Thanks to the support of the European Union, we have been able to book considerable progress in the 10 African countries in which we are active and on a regional level. But much more work is to be done still. That is why we are very happy to announce that the group has again expanded. After one year of associate membership, CCRAAG from the Central African Republic has now joined as a full member. In addition, we'd like to introduce our two new associate members: Women in Mining from Sierra Leone and Botswana Watch from this wonderful host country.

On a final note, let me remind all of you that this Process was born in crisis. Let this crisis also be the moment to finally make it fit for purpose again.

Thank you for your attention



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