



Dear Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear KP Family,

Welcome to Antwerp.

I am very pleased to host the Kimberley Process intersessional meeting in Antwerp. We are glad to be able to offer a setting that may inspire fruitful conference proceedings, just a stone's throw away from our Diamond Quarter.

Antwerp is indeed the cradle of transparency and compliance in the diamond trade. It is the place where the World Diamond Council was founded. It is also the largest trade center for rough diamonds, with more than 84% of all rough diamonds passing through Antwerp. In view of that, it seems self-evident for the KP to touch down in Antwerp. As Mayor of the city of Antwerp, I am honoured and proud that Antwerp is not only the home of diamonds, it is the largest and most transparent hub for the diamond trade.

Antwerp continues to be the epicentre of the global diamond trade. With our critical mass of rough diamond supply and demand, both miners and diamond traders are sure that in Antwerp they will find the business partners they need. We are home to no less than 1600 diamond trading companies, and our total diamond imports and export amount to 46 billion USD annually.

One of the critical success factors of Antwerp is the existence of expertise and trust. Antwerp has long done itself proud with the importance we place on the so-called fifth C, which stands for compliance and confidence. Mining companies are sure that their goods are sold at correct price levels, and diamond traders are sure that in Antwerp, every diamond parcel is fully compliant with the Kimberley Process Standards and enjoys the best checks through our much renowned Diamond Office. This level of transparency is part of the DNA of Antwerp. Last year we discovered an edict in the city archives indicating that since 1447 already, the trade in fake diamonds has been penalized. A clean diamond trade therefore has been an integral part of our local economy for over 570 years.

Maintaining this level of transparency is an ambition that we continue to cherish. In this regard, the Belgian industry has taken initiatives to scale up the fight against undisclosed mixing of diamonds. The M-Screen developed by HRD Antwerp is unique both in its accuracy and user friendliness. But innovation in Antwerp goes wider than this, and we see technical innovation as a key asset to stay the centre for the global diamond trade in the future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

New technologies & innovation are key to ensure that Antwerp remains the global diamond capital. I am grateful that yesterday I could reveal the "FENIX", a technology allowing grain independent diamond polishing. This could make the diamond polishing industry much more efficient and allow diamond trading companies to become vertically integrated in Antwerp. We have also reached out to the wider public to help us in becoming the global centre in diamond innovation. In May, we organized our first Diamond Hackathon where over 60 hackers competed in finding solutions for current industry challenges such as the blockchain and the trade of tomorrow. Innovative blockchain solutions, co-working spaces that bring

together different communities, and ensuring that a diamond can be traced from mine to finger were amongst the winning proposals of this contest.

We are convinced that the KP itself should also embrace innovation and reform. I see this KP Intersessional Meeting as an ideal opportunity to open the debate regarding the reinforcement of the KP to make it respond to contemporary consumer demands. It has been obvious that, together with the global geopolitical context, consumer behavior has evolved since the inception of the KP. Let us therefore work towards a KP that responds to the demands of today, and not those of bygone times. Let us not forget that responding to consumer demands was one of the main reasons to establish the KP in the first place. I sincerely do hope that we will succeed in aligning the KP more with the contemporary global political and economic context, while continuing to ensure that diamond producing countries continue to benefit from the global diamond trade in terms of employment and fiscal revenue. Hence, I am looking forward to the Special Forum on innovation and technology, this afternoon.

For the Belgian industry, full transparency of global value chains remains a minimum requirement. We honestly think that there is still a lot of progress to be made and wins to be achieved. Let us therefore work towards mutual gain and use this opportunity of the KP reform cycle to align the KP with contemporary demands in a spirit of constructive dialogue. Ladies and gentlemen,

Antwerp is a restless city, which means we are never satisfied. We always see things that bit differently, and we always see 'room for improvement'. Things can always be that bit better, different or newer. Antwerp is full of examples, great and small, of how we tackle things that bit differently, that bit better. Lots of things that are 'different from elsewhere'. That is what makes the city Atypically Antwerp. As I understand, this is also part of your challenge for this conference, during which the working sessions and KP reforms will take a central place. So you have come to the right place !

I wish you all a constructive debate, and hope you will enjoy your time in our beautiful city of Antwerp.