



Kimberley Process Plenary Meeting

Opening Session

SPEECH

by

H.E. Didier REYNDERS

Deputy Prime Minister

and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs

12 November 2018

Dear Ministers,
Your Excellencies,
Esteemed guests,
Friends and Colleagues,

I am delighted to warmly **welcome** you today in the beautiful Egmont Palace here in Brussels.

I am **very pleased** to see that many of you have travelled from all corners of the world to Brussels to participate in the debates during the plenary meeting of the Kimberley Process.

Almost exactly one year ago, on November 14th 2017, I opened the very first African Diamond Conference, right here (at the Egmont Palace) in Brussels. Together with the Antwerp World Diamond Centre - *the organization that represents the Antwerp diamond sector* - we brought together representatives from governments, industry and NGOs at the highest level, to dialogue about issues of particular relevance to the African diamond producing countries and the diamond industry at large.

At the onset, I would like to convey my gratitude to South Africa for showing genuine interest in hosting the second edition of the African Diamond Conference in the fall of 2019 and I want to repeat my support to AWDC for their leadership and efforts to promote a fair and ethical diamond value chain.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This conference comes at a **critical juncture** for the global trade in rough diamonds.

The Kimberley Process, from its inception in 2003, has been a **successful and effective partnership** between nation states, industry and civil society to prevent conflict diamonds from entering the legitimate trade of rough diamonds. The numbers confirm its success. Today, conflict diamonds account for an estimated 0,2% of rough diamonds in circulation, down from 15% back in 2000.

But the **race is far from run**. In some cases, diamonds remain a source of conflict, rather than a source of sustainable development. New challenges are on the horizon, like the growing market share of lab grown diamonds that are marketed as an ethical alternative to natural diamonds. From our debates during the African Diamond Conference it transpired that consumers, and especially the younger generations like the millennials, want to have the assurance that diamonds are mined in a sustainable and ethical way.

We need to remain vigilant to sustain and further the progress that has been achieved. The goal of our discussions this week is to **strengthen the Kimberley Process** in an inclusive way, to achieve not only the eradication of conflict diamonds from our planet, but to make the mining and trade in rough diamonds a more sustainable and inclusive endeavour all together.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The EU is the current Chair of the Kimberley Process, with India as its Vice Chair as well as the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Review and Reform. A lot of hard work has been done under the leadership of the European Union to present tangible results on the reform process. Its broad experience with multilateral negotiations based on inclusiveness, shared goals, and finding common ground, has proved to be very valuable. This week's plenary must have the ambition to make decisive progress on the

reform agenda, and to allow for continuity of the reform process under the chairmanship of India.

Together with all of you, **Belgium is committed** to continuing this common endeavour to turn natural resources, and diamonds in particular, into an unquestionable partner for sustainable and inclusive growth. This drives our commitment to reform the Kimberley Process.

Inclusive management of natural resources is an important **priority of Belgian diplomacy**.

Our policy can be summarized in three key words: **Sustainability, Inclusiveness, and Dialogue** and are inspired by the Sustainable Development Goals.

- Management practices have to be environmentally sustainable, and financially profitable
- Natural resource policies have to support the improvement of the livelihoods of local communities, starting from their needs, such as schooling, infrastructure and service provision.
- Continuous dialogue within a tripartite structure of governments, industry and NGOs is critical to achieve tangible progress

Belgium serves as a non-permanent member in the UN Security Council for the period 2019-2020. We are determined, as says the motto of our campaign, to foster consensus and to act for peace. Belgium will bring to the agenda of the UN various issues linked to the illicit exploitation of natural resources, and continue our efforts to **mainstream sustainable natural resources management** Today's conference is yet another example of how Belgium has the ambition to contribute to shaping the global debate on natural resources.

Lastly, I wish to extend words of sincere appreciation and thanks to Hilde Hardeman and her team for the active and constructive chairmanship that, I am confident, will allow us to achieve real progress this week. I wish to commend the different working groups of the Kimberley Process, and the Ad Hoc Committee on Review and Reform in particular, for the hard work done leading up to this plenary meeting. This has allowed several important draft administrative decisions to be tabled for discussion and, hopefully, adoption.

I wish all the participants to this plenary meeting very fruitful and constructive discussions. Our ambition must be to reach consensus on a "**Brussels Package of progress on key reforms**". This is critical to keep the Kimberley Process 'fit for purpose', and ensure its continued credibility.

Thank you for your attention.
