



OPENING SESSION: MAY 7, 2013

DR. GAETANO CAVALIERI
CIBJO PRESIDENT

Your excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

It is both a pleasure and privilege to be with you today. As many of you know, this is a long week for us in Tel Aviv, starting with the World Diamond Council Annual Meeting and continuing on to the 2013 CIBJO Congress, which will officially start tomorrow in this very hall.

We are all here thanks to the generosity and effort of the Israel Diamond Institute, and I would like to add my thanks to those of Eli to Moti Ganz, the IDI Chairman; the IDI Board of Directors, Eli Avidar, the IDI managing Director; and the IDI team that responsible for all that we see around us today. Organisations like ours and events such as these are reliant on people being prepared to step up and volunteer. We are most grateful.

As we have already heard, later today we will witness the signing of an agreement between the World Diamond Council and the Kimberley Process, which will lead to the establishment of the long-anticipated Administrative Support Mechanism.

The new body will be operated for and on behalf of the KP by the World Diamond Council, and the organisations that have volunteered to engage their resources and personnel for this project are the IDI, here in Israel; the Antwerp World Diamond Council in Belgium; the Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council in India; and the Diamond House of the Government of Ghana.

Once again, through the WDC, our industry has demonstrated its firm commitment to the Kimberley Process, and to the principle that we will not only avoid situations that may compromise the reputation of our people and our products, but we also will act to ensure that this remains the case.

The conflict diamond crisis that sparked the establishment of both the Kimberley Process and the World Diamond Council was a watershed event, and one that changed the way in which we do business.

There are today virtually no diamonds in the pipeline that comply with the original definition of conflict diamonds. But the KP and the WDC remain. Why so? One should never assume that, because the KP was not disbanded after the incidence of conflict diamonds in the pipeline was virtually eliminated, that there is lack of confidence in the ethical commitment of our members. On the contrary, we have consistently looked for ways to improve its operation, as is evidenced by the creation of the Administrative Support Mechanism, and also to ensure that system that was created is equipped to deal with challenges that face us today.

Like stringent airline security, the KP will not disappear. It is today part of the system, and it responds to the consumers' need and ours as well, to know that the integrity of diamonds and diamond-set jewellery is beyond reproach.

We live in a world that is different to the one in which most of us began our careers, and today social responsibility is considered a business prerequisite alongside profitability, marketability and good service.

We are privileged today to be joined by a good number of distinguished government representatives, from a variety of countries, as well as the United Nations and the European Union. Their presence at this meeting underscores the fact that the subjects which we discuss today go beyond pure commercial interests.

The understanding that, in our modern world, the challenges faced by society are best addressed by joining the interests of government and business, is one that we recognized in CIBJO about nine years ago, when we began the process of becoming affiliated to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. It was then that we committed ourselves to actively promoting the fulfilment of the UN's eight Millennium Goals, the purpose of which is to enable individuals and communities in less developed regions achieve sustainable economic independence.

We do this primarily not because it makes good business sense, although I would argue that it does that as well. Just as our reason for being in business is not purely to make money, but rather to leverage our economic acumen to build better lives for ourselves and our families, we today appreciate that we also are business to build better societies.

How exactly that should best be done is a question for discussion. It is why we are here today. Our goal is not necessarily to agree on all issues, but to debate, discuss and consider different alternatives, with the aim being that, at the end of the process, we will be able to reach consensus.

What is absolutely critical is that we continue doing in this in an open forum – in an atmosphere that all feel that there is place for them at the table, as long as they are prepared to play by the rules. And the rules themselves cannot be imposed. They, too, need to be accepted by the broadest possible majority.

I would like to conclude my remarks today by paying tribute to my close friend Eli Izhakoff, who, as we all know, has decided to step away from the presidency of the WDC at the end of next month.

I think it is fair to say that without his leadership we would not be here today. I would go so far as to venture, without what he has done over the past 13 years, our industry may have been but a shadow of what it is. One only has to remember what happened in the fur trade in order to understand what could have happened with diamonds and diamond jewellery.

But thanks to Eli, as well as the individuals he gathered around him and their coalition partners from government and civil society, our industry did not regress. In fact it almost certainly grew stronger.

It also developed a reputation of being socially responsible – not only meeting consumer expectations, but influencing them as well.

That is a tremendous legacy, Eli, and one that not only you, but all of us should be very proud of. I thank you for your years of service and leadership, and I urge you to not go far. We will continue to rely on your experience, dedication and extremely keen political intuition.

I thank you.