



**EDWARD ASSHER
WDC PRESIDENT**

**Address to 2020 WDC Annual General Meeting
19 October 2020**

Ladies and Gentlemen

This year is so very different from my first years as President of the World Diamond Council in 2014.

In those early years we were talking about transparency, accountability and compliance.

In those days we had to make the industry more aware of the changes of what was expected of all of us.

Today we live in another world: the industry is fully aware of the changing times. We now live in a world where many decisions are forced upon us by the pandemic and this has influenced every aspect of the business. 2018 and 2019 were not great in themselves, now we are longing for business activity like we had in those years. But the very essential changes are coming to the surface when we look at research of consumer behavior especially in these pandemic times. We have just heard about that from David Prager. In our webinar for KP members later this month with the Natural Diamond Council – the former Diamond Producers Association- we shall hear about consumer research confirming these changes. The young generations understand very well that loving relationships are so important in these difficult times. Diamonds are still considered symbol of loving relationships but now consumers all over the world are asking for more. The key words today are sustainability, ethically sourced rough diamonds, and proof of respect for humanitarian law. The WDC is key to setting those conditions together with the governments and the NGO's.

The United Nations Sustainability Development goals (SDG) are playing a crucial role in the mining industry. The realization of change in consumer behavior is paramount. So is the growth of Lab Grown diamonds which may bring profits to retailers, but Lab Grown Diamonds bring nothing at all to the millions of people in Africa, Russia or Canada and Australia who make their livelihood with the production of rough natural diamonds. We commend the governments of the Russian Federation as Chair of the KP in 2021 to put the definition of conflict diamonds once again on the agenda. We are grateful to Hilde Hardeman of the European Union who has been pushing these changes and is willing to continue to do so with support of many other countries. We are equally grateful for our friends and colleagues at the NGO's community and especially for those who are involved in the day to day work of the KP. And of course we are also very grateful for my predecessor Stephan Fischler who has worked tirelessly on the expansion of the conflict diamond definition.

Next to the discussions about the definition we shall also see how we can support the important initiatives from our own members in the field of Artisanal Mining. I have great confidence in what the large mining companies are doing. Our attention can and should go to assist the Artisanal Small Mining sector as that is where we can reap benefits from our work. Not only to keep the diamond pipeline clean but also to add value, knowledge and human growth to the artisanal miners themselves. The training initiatives are of valuable importance here.

We at the WDC have developed our new System of Warranties. The object of WDC is not only to keep the rough supply chain free of conflict diamonds. The object of WDC is making sure that all diamonds entering the mainstream are ethically sourced with respect for social and environmental rights. The Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations are a guiding force. The System of Warranties is the bare minimum exercise on top of "KP basics", it is also an important part of the 5 Steps of the OECD framework. The internal procedures that will be put in place, to implement the updated SoW, will enable companies to be more capable to go through the required due diligence

Let me finish by thanking our members for their support of the WDC and our collaborators for their work: Elodie Daguzan who started in February 1st and it is as if she is already doing this work for years. Udi Sheintal who has been a force in the KP from the beginning and is a rock - may I say a robust and firm rock of the WDC- and I thank all those who work on the KP task force

and Elke Ceulemans as head of the Administrative Support Mechanism for the KP. Let me also thank Jim Pounds, who has been a long time board member and only left recently. David Bouffard who is head of the communications team and although he is always very busy for Signet we know the right timeslots to reach out to him. And Karla Bassalier who has been a long time valuable and knowledgeable member of the KP Task Force and who became this year a board member, she decided to strengthen the new Belgian government now 2 weeks ago.

Thank you all and we shall continue our work in this new direction and under these exceptional circumstances with full force.

Stay safe and healthy.