



**Edward Asscher  
WDC President**

**Address to Presidents Meeting**

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Your Excellencies, Mr. President, dear Presidents, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a pleasure and an honor to be addressing you today – and in person, which is an uncommon experience in these unusual times.

This year will mark the 22nd anniversary of the Diamond Congress of the WFDB and IDMA in Antwerp in 2000. It was there that we agreed to establish the World Diamond Council, to coordinate the industry's effort in addressing the challenge of conflict diamonds in Africa.

It was a defining moment, but few fully realized how much our business would change. That decision set in motion a series of processes, some which took years to come to fruition and others which are still ongoing.

The WDC today sees its mission as being: "to protect the ethical integrity of the natural diamond supply chain."

Representing and uniting our industry, our role is to protect the complete supply chain from violations of fundamental human rights, including but not only those that occur within the context of civil conflict.

This broader perspective does not in any way discount the fundamental role played by the Kimberley Process, where we have always operated as the industry's official representative, working alongside governments and civil society. We remain committed to its mission, which often is not properly understood and is under-appreciated. We believe strongly that, by broadening its mandate, the KP can be strengthened and become even more effective.

The WDC is the only industry body that brings around the table all diamond sector participants, from miners through the midstream to the retail jewelry trade. The WDC also facilitates a continuous review of the systems and tools being used to uphold the integrity of the value chain.

**There are no bad diamonds, but industry requires protection from bad actors.**

From the beginning, the KP within its existing mandate could address only a limited range of human rights violations. To provide more comprehensive solutions, other complementary tools need to be developed. And we were not ready to wait for governments to act. We needed to do so ourselves, independently, as an industry.

What we essentially created was a responsible supply chain doctrine. It involves a series of protective layers that are designed to filter out diamonds that are being infiltrated illegitimately by bad actors, preventing them from reaching the market. Our approach is today aligned with the OECD's Due Diligence Guidance.

The first layer is the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme itself, which is enforceable through the authority of law in each of the 85 member countries. The subsequent layers, of which there are three primary ones, are applied by the industry itself.

**The first of those layers is WDC's System of Warranties.**

It was originally designed to verify that not only rough diamonds, but also polished diamonds and diamond jewelry are KP-compliant. Last year, the upgraded System of Warranties was introduced. Now, in addition to KP-compliance, it **covers human rights, labor rights, anti-corruption and anti-money laundering.**

The second layer is the Responsible Jewellery Council's Code of Practices, which includes a wider and more detailed set of business integrity, social and environmental supply chain standards. To become RJC-certified, a company needs to be independently monitored and certified.

The third layer includes due diligence systems which were created by some of the larger corporations in our industry, among them WDC members ALROSA, De Beers and Signet. Each system is customized to the respective company's supply chains and clients, and they are all grounded in the protection of fundamental human rights.

Let me be absolutely clear. Our approach is inclusive. I have often said: **"Leave no one behind,"** and by that I mean that we must represent not only the large companies, but also the myriad of small and medium-sized firms that make up the backbone of the diamond industry and of which so many are member of the WFDB.

At the end of the day our obligation at this Presidents' Meeting is to look out for the smaller diamantaire, who needs to make a living for his or her company and his or her family.

Each one of the industry-created layers that I referred to is open source. This means that all companies can refer to them when conducting their own due diligence.

We also need to be able to address new risks, for there is always a potential for bad actors, looking to breach the system. The WDC is currently developing a policy and Terms of Reference, which will address such instances. They will provide a roadmap of how to act when we become aware of proven violations of the seven principles of the responsible sourcing of rough diamonds.

But that's not all. In today's market, we also need to demonstrate that our products have social value. We need to show that natural diamonds support millions, providing food, water, secure living environments, education, healthcare and the promise of sustainable economic growth and development.

Their success relies on consumer confidence, and that partly requires us providing assurances about human rights and responsible sourcing. It also requires that all aspects of our industry reflect the worlds in which we live. And for that we need more diversity.

Our industry is clearly multicultural, with the most dramatic growth taking place in India, China, Southeast Asia, Africa and here in the Middle East. Our memberships and our boards need to reflect this better.

The same is true when it comes to gender. Simply stated, women are not adequately represented in our leadership. But positive change is taking place. I am delighted that WDC's incoming president is Ferial Zerouki, who is breaking glass ceilings of gender, and of youth as well. Here, allow me to commend her company, De Beers, for supporting her in taking the role that she will assume in July of this year.

It was De Beers' CEO Bruce Cleaver who several years ago at the JCK Show in Las Vegas talked about the need for more women at the top our industry. I complimented him at the time, and do so again, for acting on his convictions.

Feriel will be in good company. Among that group of talented female executives in our industry I can point to Iris van der Veken, RJC's Executive Director, and closer to home to Elodie Daguzan, who fill a parallel role at the WDC.

Twenty-two years ago, WDC began a journey that changed an industry. Over the years we evolved from covering conflict diamonds in Africa, to serving to protect the integrity of our entire value chain. To express what we have become, I am proud to announce that, next week, we will unveil WDC's new brand identity, expressing what we do and what we strive for.

We live in a very dynamic industry. As we heard on Monday, new developments are changing our environment. As leaders, it is our responsibility to direct not only our own organizations, but also our communities.

It has been my honor to do that together with you, my colleagues, during my second term as President of the World Diamond Council .

Thank you.