WORLD DIAMOND COUNCIL

Feriel Zerouki, WDC President
Address to Closing of 2024 KP Plenary Meeting

Dubai, UAE
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Kimberley Process Chair, Mr. Ahmed Sultan Bin Sulayem,

Coordinator of the Civil Society Coalition, Mr. Jaff Bamenjo,

Our WDC Immediate Past President, Mr. Edward Asscher, who has joined us this important week as our strong sponsor,

Ministers and Excellencies here present,

Kimberley Process Participants and Observers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Salamou Alaykoum,

As we close this Kimberley Process Plenary, I want to begin by expressing my deepest gratitude. The UAE has been an exemplary host, guiding us with a steady hand through complex discussions and fostering a spirit of collaboration and determination.

The Kimberley Process is not just a framework—it is a lifeline for trust and transformation in our industry.

For those who question its relevance, the Central African Republic (CAR) provides a powerful example. Earlier this year, the World Diamond Council joined the review mission led by South Africa and witnessed CAR's unwavering determination to engage fully with the KP. Despite immense challenges, the government and people of CAR demonstrated their resolve to build a future defined by progress and stability.

The people of CAR made it clear: they seek opportunities, not aid.

Through the Kimberley Process' Peer Review Mechanism, we have supported a nation striving for economic development and peace. This work exemplifies the KP's core mission: enabling diamonds to be a force for good. By strengthening CAR's ability to transition from conflict to growth, the Kimberley Process shows how it can bridge divides and build futures.

This is just the latest example of how we, as the KP family, have pulled together in the same way we did for the DRC, Angola, Côte d'Ivoire and Zimbabwe. Let me remind the Plenary that these countries subsequently thrived, with some even becoming the KP Chair. We share our hopes that CAR will one day lead the KP after taking this important first step.

I am proud to say that this week, despite challenges, commitments to the mandate of the Kimberley Process have been reaffirmed to the WDC.

These commitments demonstrate that there is a determination to deliver on the mandate of the expanded conflict diamond definition to reflect modern realities.

We are believing and trusting this commitment.

Consumer demand is the foundation of our trade, and it remains one of the most pressing issues we face.

In today's evolving market, consumers demand accountability, transparency, and clear demonstrations of ethical practices. Meeting these expectations is not optional—it is critical to safeguarding the future of our industry.

Consumer demand in natural diamonds sustains livelihoods throughout the diamond supply chain.

Expanding the definition of conflict diamonds is central to maintaining this demand. For us, this is not just a procedural issue; it directly impacts how the Kimberley Process is perceived by stakeholders and the public.

By expanding the definition to reflect modern realities, we reinforce the Kimberley Process' credibility and relevance, ensuring natural diamonds remain a trusted symbol of hope and progress.

This week has shown that all Participants recognize the importance of this task, and I commend everyone for their determination to move forward together, which will mean compromise.

As Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, "Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world." Every step we take—even incremental progress—brings us closer to fulfilling the mandate and building a stronger future for our industry.

Industry is driven by commercial interests, which are synonymous with ESG credentials. Our mantra is to leave no one behind, an expanded definition will support our vision for an equal opportunity for all African diamonds to succeed.

This Plenary has also showcased significant advancements in modernizing our practices.

The UAE's development of tamper-proof digital certificates, complete with QR codes linked to a secure database, represents a transformative step forward.

These certificates are adaptable to Participants' needs and enable the listing of multiple countries of mining origin for greater traceability. Best of all, this digital platform has been offered free of charge, creating an equitable process across all KP Participants.

I commend the UAE for championing this initiative. Their QR-coded system is accessible, secure, and demonstrates how innovation can enhance the Kimberley Process. This progress highlights our ability to evolve and address today's needs while maintaining the integrity of governmental needs and those of our industry.

This digitization, together with the concept of listing countries of mining origin, positions the KP as the strongest independent rough diamond certification scheme globally, built on 20 years of international collaboration and expertise mandated by the UN.

We also celebrate Uzbekistan's accession to the Kimberley Process this week. Their journey has been marked by diligence and preparation, exemplifying the high standards expected of all Participants. Today, Uzbekistan becomes the 86th Participant of our KP family. Let us congratulate them and look forward to their contributions as we advance our shared mission.

To our host, the UAE, I offer profound gratitude. Your leadership has safeguarded the Kimberley Process during a pivotal time, and your agreement to continue as custodian Chair for another year ensures stability and continuity. We thank you.

We also celebrate Thailand's successful application as Vice Chair in 2025 and their forthcoming role as Chair in 2026. These decisions reflect the important succession of the KP.

The World Diamond Council (WDC) represents the global diamond trade—from miners to retailers, from large-scale enterprises to small independents, across all continents.

As the WDC, we do not represent any single country or player. Instead, we unite diverse perspectives and focus on what binds us together and not what divides us.

This unity allows us to advocate with one voice—a voice that calls for progress and defends the integrity of the Kimberley Process and the diamond trade.

The WDC demonstrates that while challenging, unity is achievable. The Kimberley Process thrives when we work together, guided by innovation, transparency, and shared responsibility. The road will not always be easy, but together, we can inspire trust and drive meaningful change.

It took leadership, courage, and collaboration to deliver unity to meet the demands of today and build a brighter future for tomorrow.

In my opening speech, I emphasized "there are decades where nothing happens, and then there are weeks where decades happen." This has been one of those weeks.

In closing, The Kimberley Process is built on the dedication of its contributors. I want to recognize the exceptional efforts of the review and reform team, chaired by Angola through Brother Lau and supported by South Africa through Brother Cecil as Vice Chair.

A Special thanks go to:

Sister Milikani Ndaba, for leading the consolidation of the Core Document into a true reflection of the KP's work over the last two decades;

Brother Sabyasachi Ray, for heading the Sub-team on Compliance and Governance, executing his duties with precision, excellence, and efficiency;

Sister Linda Nkhumishe, for championing the Sub-team on Technical Assistance and Development of Diamond Communities, promoting capacity building in the KP;

Sister Kele Mafole, for leading the Sub-team on the Definition with unquestionable integrity and purpose.

And, of course, the unsung heroes who have driven positive advancements in the KP, such as:

-Ms. Nour Ben M'Barek, for her consistent dedication to supporting all KP Participants and Observers;

-Mrs. Nazia Haque, for leading the expert mission that enabled Uzbekistan's successful admission as the newest member of the KP family;

-Ms. Nosi Mzamo, for leading the review mission to CAR, cementing their readmission to the KP.

These individuals have worked tirelessly to advance the Kimberley Process, and their contributions are invaluable. Let us extend our heartfelt gratitude to them.

Before I leave the stage, may I ask you all to join us on stage for a picture and a well-deserved applause. You are the future shapers of the KP!

Thank you.