



# World Diamond Council

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Eli Izhakoff, Chairman / 580 Fifth Avenue / New York, NY 10036 / USA

Address to Kimberley Process Plenary  
Swakopmund, Namibia  
2 November 2009

*Presented by Andrew Bone on behalf of Eli Izhakoff*

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Mr Chairman, Participants and Observers of the Kimberley Process,

Thank you for the opportunity to address Plenary today, the beginning of what promises to be one of the most important Kimberley Process sessions in several years.

None of the issues we will discuss this week are new. In fact, many of them have been on the agenda for quite a while. Some might say too long.

Right now, the world is looking to us to provide leadership and take decisive and principled action to renew and invigorate the Process.

Nowhere is decisive action and leadership required more than here, and now, to bring an end to the uncertainty surrounding the situation in Zimbabwe. The outside world does not understand why this issue has been dragging on for several years without resolution.

This perceived dithering and delay is bad for the affected communities and individuals in and around Marange, who are denied security and decent living conditions. It is bad for the Government of Zimbabwe, which suffers loss of revenue and reputation. It is bad for legitimate production in Zimbabwe that supports local communities, but is overshadowed by events in Marange. It is bad for our industry, as unaccounted goods threaten to find their way into the main stream.

It is also bad for the Kimberley Process, which risks losing credibility and the confidence of the public unless it seen to act and act decisively.

Further delay is no longer an option, for all parties involved.

When we set out on this journey, back in 2000, the development of the Kimberley Process, by governments, the diamond industry and civil society, wasn't just the development of yet another international trade agreement – it was a call to action.

It is imperative that we send out a clear message to the world at the end of this week that reflects this. That message must be that the Kimberley Process means business and that it means to stand by the principles it set out to uphold in 2003.

The comedian Groucho Marx once said, ‘Those are my principles. If you don’t like them... I have others’. It is not in our collective interest to allow the Kimberley Process to be seen in the same light.

The question of Zimbabwe’s status as a founding member of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme must be resolved this week through rational debate and followed up with principled action.

The Government has, once again, assured us that it is taking the necessary steps to secure the Marange area for the civilian population and achieve full KP compliance. It has also appealed to its fellow member governments for help in achieving these objectives.

What the Government needs to do is provide unequivocal evidence to back these words, and prove those wrong who would say, ‘we’ve heard it all before’.

If this is met – *and met sincerely* – what the KP family needs to provide are the resources and political will to assist and succeed in helping Zimbabwe attain full compliance.

If these conditions prevail, the World Diamond Council is ready and willing, as always, to provide its technical expertise to complement these efforts.

We have overcome many difficulties over the years, but never more successfully than when we have acted together.

Indeed, it is important for us to remind ourselves of our past achievements and how far we have come. In spite of the challenges of today and tomorrow, diamonds remain one of the most monitored and audited natural resources in the world.

However, we are capable of doing more and improving the KP’s effectiveness. It would be healthy for us to reflect on the old saying that goes: ‘Don’t measure yourself on what you have accomplished, but rather by what you should accomplish with your ability’.

This brings us to another subject that requires rational debate and effective action. That is the need to introduce elements of reform to the Kimberley Process.

That is, many of the challenges we face could be better addressed with a more streamline decision-making process and improved resources.

This should come as no surprise, as we called for reforms two years ago, in Brussels. The World Diamond Council agrees with civil society on this issue and, in particular, Alfred Brownell’s view that, *‘At present, timely action is consistently hampered by inefficient and obstructive procedure - this needs to change if the scheme is to fulfil its potential and its mandate’*.

There are several areas where reform is required. Chief amongst them are:

- The adoption of two thirds majority voting amongst participant governments to replace the present system of consensus.
- The deployment of a professional team to oversee the running of the Kimberley Process and assist the Chair with logistics, communication and research.

We hope that recent events will have made the case for this obvious and beyond doubt. We believe that we can no longer deny the Kimberley Process the modifications it needs to sustain long-term effectiveness and credibility. We hope that Plenary will engage positively with civil society and the WDC to bring about these changes avoid the temptation to retreat into denial.

Once again, we call upon member governments to provide the Kimberley Process with political will to flourish and the resources to make a difference.

Mr. Chair, honoured invitees and member delegates. This is a defining moment for the Kimberley Process. Be in no doubt that we are being watched and watched closely by the world outside.

They are looking for leadership, and you are the leaders.

Leaders are the ones who know the way, go the way and show the way.

Show us that way, here, this week. We are ready.

*Thank you.*

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