



global witness

For immediate release: 5 June, 2009

Global Witness hails commitment of veteran diamond campaigner

Global Witness today paid tribute to the efforts and commitment of Ian Smillie, a founding member of the Kimberley Process, who has decided to end his participation in the rough diamond certification scheme.

Leading Partnership Africa Canada's work on diamonds, Ian campaigned tirelessly for over 10 years to create and then strengthen an international system that was designed to prevent diamonds from fuelling conflict and human rights abuses.

"The Kimberley Process would not exist as it does today without Ian Smillie's insight and remarkable dedication," said Global Witness Director, Charmian Gooch. "We applaud Ian's energy and invaluable contributions to the international conflict diamond campaign, and wish him well in future endeavours."

Ian announced his resignation to Kimberley Process members in a letter sent last month, stating that he could "no longer in good faith contribute to a pretense that failure is success".

He denounced the scheme's inability to address some major challenges, including the trade in conflict diamonds from Côte d'Ivoire, smuggling of Venezuelan diamonds and serious human rights abuses in Zimbabwe's diamond sector.

In the letter he says: "when regulators fail to regulate, the systems they were designed to protect collapse" and asserts the need for "a genuine wakeup call and the growth of some serious regulatory teeth."

Global Witness is also a founding member of the Kimberley Process and will continue to push participating governments and the international diamond industry to meet their commitments to clean up the diamond trade. Global Witness agrees that the Kimberley Process still faces major obstacles to effectiveness and risks becoming irrelevant if governments do not adopt a more effective, proactive stance to resolving cases of serious non-compliance.

"The establishment of the Kimberley Process was an historic step forward in the campaign to break the links between natural resources, conflict and corruption," said Gooch. "However, if the scheme is to live up to its mandate to prevent the trade in conflict diamonds, governments must take decisive action to oppose human rights abuses in any participant's diamond sector and to address illicit flows of rough diamonds."

/ Ends

Contact: Amy Barry on 0207 5616358, abarry@globalwitness.org or Annie Dunnebacke on 0207 5616397, adunnebacke@globalwitness.org

To find out more about Global Witness's work on diamonds and other conflict resources visit: www.globalwitness.org