



global witness

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## **Global Witness and PAC reject Zimbabwe diamond bribe allegations**

Campaign groups Global Witness and Partnership Africa Canada (PAC) today categorically rejected allegations that they offered to support Zimbabwe's bid to resume diamond exports in exchange for a 1% cut of the profits. The allegation surfaced at the end of the week-long meeting of the Kimberley Process (KP) diamond certification scheme, where Zimbabwe's compliance with the scheme's minimum requirements was hotly debated.

"We reject outright this malicious and unsubstantiated allegation. At no point did any of the non-governmental organisations at the meeting make any kind of offer of conditional support for exports. The violence that continues to plague Zimbabwe's Marange diamond fields – and the government's blatant disregard for KP rules – indisputably signify that no exports should take place now," said Annie Dunnebacke, campaigner at Global Witness.

On Sunday, the Zimbabwean newspaper The Sunday Mail, quoted the Minister of Mines, Obert Mpofu, who led Zimbabwe's delegation at the meeting, as saying that Global Witness and PAC approached him with the "money-for-support" proposal, which he rejected as "extortion". He said that the groups "wanted 1 percent of our sales from Chiadzwa for their operations" and that in return they "would lobby for the endorsement of our diamonds".

"This is a cynical and amoral attempt by Minister Mpofu to distract from the organised smuggling and human rights abuses being carried out by state institutions, in direct contravention of KP minimum requirements, and from his efforts and those of his Zanu-PF cronies to capture the country's diamond wealth for their own personal benefit," said Alan Martin from Partnership Africa Canada. "The Kimberley Process managed to salvage some of its credibility last week by refusing to endorse a resumption of exports from Marange. Zimbabwe seems intent upon damaging the scheme further with this latest slur."

The campaigners said that the source of the rumour was likely to be a late-night brainstorming session at which the idea was floated of using 1% of any future diamond sales to create a protection fund for Zimbabwean civil society. There was never any suggestion that this money would be as a reward for allowing exports to resume before the situation on the ground had improved.

"The idea was never formally put on the negotiation table by civil society groups, or anyone else, and at no point in the informal discussions was it posited as a condition for the resumption of diamond exports," said Martin from PAC. "During his time in Tel Aviv Minister Mpofu repeatedly showed a troubling disregard for the truth. The latest example appears to be his suggestion that civil society directly proposed this unethical exchange to him."

"Zimbabwean civil society activists are routinely intimidated and suppressed. For example, Farai Maguwu, the Director of the Centre for Research and Development, is still being held in detention as a result of his brave and important work exposing abuses and smuggling in Marange. His plight amply demonstrates the need for greater protection and support for civil society in Zimbabwe. The authorities should let him go," said Global Witness's Dunnebacke.

As the Kimberley Process meeting drew to a close last week, Minister Mpofu threatened to resume exports anyway, in spite of the lack of consensus at the meeting. Campaigners warned that this would pose a significant challenge to the scheme's membership who would have to be vigilant in ensuring that blood diamonds did not enter the international market.

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