



global witness

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Global Witness leaves Kimberley Process, calls for diamond trade to be held accountable

Global Witness today announced that it has left the Kimberley Process, the international certification scheme established to stop the trade in blood diamonds.

The Kimberley Process's refusal to evolve and address the clear links between diamonds, violence and tyranny has rendered it increasingly outdated, said the group. Despite intensive efforts over many years by a coalition of NGOs, the scheme's main flaws and loopholes have not been fixed and most of the governments that run the scheme continue to show no interest in reform.

"Nearly nine years after the Kimberley Process was launched, the sad truth is that most consumers still cannot be sure where their diamonds come from, nor whether they are financing armed violence or abusive regimes" said Charmian Gooch, a Founding Director of Global Witness. "The scheme has failed three tests: it failed to deal with the trade in conflict diamonds from Côte d'Ivoire, was unwilling to take serious action in the face of blatant breaches of the rules over a number of years by Venezuela and has proved unwilling to stop diamonds fuelling corruption and violence in Zimbabwe. It has become an accomplice to diamond laundering – whereby dirty diamonds are mixed in with clean gems."

In a shocking move, the Kimberley Process recently authorised exports from two companies operating in the controversial Marange diamond fields in Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean army seized control of the area in 2008, killing around 200 miners. Mining concessions were then granted in legally questionable circumstances to several companies, some of them associated with senior figures in Robert Mugabe's Zanu PF party. Newspapers have reported that the Zimbabwean Central Intelligence Organisation, the state security service aligned with Mugabe whose members are accused of committing acts of violence against opposition supporters, directly benefits from off-budget diamond revenues.

"Over the last decade, elections in Zimbabwe have been associated with the brutal intimidation of voters. Orchestrating this kind of violence costs a lot of money. As the country approaches another election there is a very high risk of Zanu PF hardliners employing these tactics once more and using Marange diamonds to foot the bill. The Kimberley Process's refusal to confront this reality is an outrage," Gooch continued.

"Consumers should not buy Marange diamonds, and industry should not supply them," said Gooch. "All existing contracts in the Marange fields should be cancelled and retendered with terms of reference which reflect international best practice on revenue sharing, transparency, oversight by and protection of the affected communities."

The diamond industry should be required to demonstrate that the diamonds it sells are not fuelling abuses – by complying with international standards on minerals supply chain controls, including independent third party audits and regular public disclosure. Governments must show leadership by putting these standards into law.

"Consumers have a right to know what they're buying, and what was done to obtain it," added Gooch. "The diamond industry must finally take responsibility for its supply chains and prove that the stones it sells are clean."

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Note to editors:

Global Witness today wrote to the Chair of the Kimberley Process to announce its withdrawal as an official Observer. Global Witness first exposed the problem of blood diamonds in 1998 and played a key role in establishing the Kimberley Process. The KP is a government-led rough diamond certification scheme launched in 2003, which requires member states to pass national legislation and set up an import/export control system for diamonds. Over 75 of the world's diamond producing, trading and manufacturing countries participate in the scheme. Global Witness has been an official Observer in the Kimberley Process since 2003 and a member of the KP Civil Society Coalition. Global Witness will continue to work with NGOs in the Civil Society Coalition to reform the diamond sector.

Global Witness investigates and campaigns to prevent natural resource-related conflict and corruption and associated environmental and human rights abuses