



**KIMBERLEY
PROCESS
CIVIL SOCIETY
COALITION**

2023 Kimberley Process Plenary Meeting, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition closing remarks.

10 November 2023

The KP Civil Society Coalition gave the following remarks as they walked out of the negotiations on the final communique at 2am in the morning:

“We have been pushing tirelessly to break the links between diamonds and conflict. We want to see action, but we can't even agree on simple words. This Plenary can't even note the simple fact that it received a letter from Ukraine on the role of diamonds in financing Russia's war against Ukraine. We can no longer observe this sad spectacle that continues to erode responsible diamond governance. We have no confidence in these discussions and will now leave this meeting. We can only hope that a good crisis can serve as catharsis and will finally get some sense into this deadlocked process.”

We share the closing remarks we had prepared in writing:

Honourable Minister Zhemu Soda,

Honourable Minister Winston Chitando,

Honourable, Ahmed Bin Sulayem, Vice Chair of the KP

Ms Ferial Zerouki, Chair of the World Diamond Council;

Honourable Chairs of the Kimberley Process Working Groups;

Focal Points of the participating countries to the Kimberley Process;

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen in your respective capacities.

The Civil Society Coalition would like to thank KP Chair from Zimbabwe and his team for their hospitality and professionalism in organising this Plenary.

First of all, we would like to remind all Participants and Observers of one issue that some like to forget: civil society is one of the three pillars on which this process is built. We call on all of you to denounce any attempts to undermine or deny our role.

We want to appreciate all the work done to launch the KP Permanent Secretariat. This will be a significant step for the Kimberley Process. We call on the secretariat to perform its administrative work independently from any political pressures and hope that it will contribute to increasing the standards of work and professionalism within this process. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Ms Elke Ceulemans, Central Focal Point, for her years of dedicated support to the KP. I myself am about to hand over the coordination of the Civil Society Coalition to my colleague Jaff Bamenjo from the Republic of Cameroon.

Infighting over CAR at the expense of communities

Throughout this Plenary, it was again very popular to say that the KP should not be politicised. This is the go argument when one does not want to talk or take position about something. But when it comes to the Central African Republic many positions seem to be informed by politics only. The KP has a dedicated team and structure for monitoring compliance with the requirements that all Participants have committed to in stopping conflict diamonds. Yet, positions are taken without even listening to the updates from this extensive monitoring work that reveals serious challenges that need to be addressed if we want to move forward.

Civil society regrets the lack of constructive attitudes in developing an approach to ensure that the Central African Republic and its people - rather than rebels, criminal networks or mercenaries - reap the full benefits of their diamond wealth. The inability of the KP to deal with these challenges, that go to the core of its mandate, highlights how its old recipes are way beyond their expiry date. Only a comprehensive roadmap that combines the ongoing monitoring, with technical assistance, on-the-ground reviews and enhanced regional cooperation between mining authorities, law enforcement, industry and civil society can break the deadlock the KP is facing.

Reform process again not getting a fair chance

The KP CSC, as longest-standing advocate of KP reform, is concerned that the much-needed reform is again not getting a fair chance. We are having déjà-vu upon déjà-vu. We hope that the announced panel of experts, that will include testimonies from communities, will help to open the eyes of participants. This should make them realise that they are undermining the foundations of the industry they claim to protect if they don't prioritise and speed up KP reforms.

The urgency of transparency and responsible sourcing

Civil society is eager to learn more about the United Arab Emirates' priorities for next year, when it assumes KP chairmanship. We truly hope they will include the acceleration of KP reform efforts, as well as other pressing issues such as transparency, traceability and the fight against money laundering in the diamond trade.

An update to the extremely narrow conflict diamond definition remains, even after 20 years, controversial. To bring the KP somewhat more in touch with reality, the implementation of Frame7 on Responsible Sourcing Principles, becomes ever more important and urgent. Our simple and straightforward call to KP Participants is to at the very least make Frame7 part of peer review, so that members annually report on progress and can be evaluated on these principles during peer review visits.

The vital need to reorient the KP toward communities

In addition, and as we have stressed before, we need to genuinely reorient the KP towards communities, so that they finally become the main beneficiary of this process. This is not a one-off exercise or a box that can be ticked, but a serious and ongoing effort. During this week, for instance, several residents that were relocated for diamond mines in Marange, Zimbabwe reached out to us. They expressed desperation about their living conditions and the lack of any hope to build a decent future for them and their children. Only by addressing the root causes of poverty, neglect and

desperation of communities that live from or near diamond mining operations can the KP again become relevant.

We were also in touch with the communities we work with in Sierra Leone this week. We recorded a testimony that we would like to share with all of you now. This community testimony reflects the multitude of adverse impacts of diamonds. It is the duty of the Kimberley Process to tackle these challenges.

Thank you for your attention.

Dr. Michel YOBOUE

Civil Society Coalition Coordinator

info@kpcivilsociety.org