



global witness

CONFLICT DIAMONDS: WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

- **Diamond-fuelled wars** have killed over 4 million people, destroyed countries, and displaced millions more.
- **Blood diamonds are not just a problem of the past** – blood diamonds from West Africa are currently reaching international markets. The UN recently reported \$23 million in blood diamonds from the Ivory Coast are being smuggled into international diamond markets. Diamonds have fuelled the conflict in the Congo (DRC), the bloodiest war since WWII; armed violence and human rights abuses continue over control of diamonds mines in eastern Congo. As the brutal conflict in Sierra Leone shows, even a small amount of conflict diamonds can wreak enormous havoc in a country.
- **The government-run Kimberley Process**, set up to stop the trade in conflict diamonds, has serious weaknesses that must be addressed to make this system effective. Government controls are not strong enough or enforced effectively enough to make sure that diamonds mined by rebel groups don't get sold to fuel conflict.
- **Governments have let the industry off the hook**, failing to hold the industry to account over the trade in blood diamonds.
 - Diamond companies and traders exploit weak government controls and poor enforcement along the diamond supply chain and continue to trade in blood diamonds with impunity.
 - Massive Kimberley Process-related fraud has also been uncovered in Brazil and Venezuela. The Kimberley Process must require governments to set up strong diamond controls and carry out more checks on the industry.
- **The diamond industry, worth \$60 billion in 2005, has failed to match its rhetoric with action.** It agreed to police itself in support of the Kimberley Process, but it has not made a wholesale change in the way it operates to make sure that diamonds never again fuel conflicts. Some members of the industry continue to operate with impunity - breaking the law and trading in blood diamonds - while the rest of the industry turns a blind eye.
- **The industry's voluntary system of warranties is more of a PR exercise than a credible system.** It is not a robust or credible system that will combat conflict diamonds. There is no third party verification or monitoring to make sure that companies are adhering to the system and responsibly sourcing diamonds. The warranties system is not backed up with concrete policy measures.
- **Consumers can play an important role in combating conflict diamonds.** When in a diamond store, consumers should ask for a guarantee that the diamond they are buying is conflict-free.
- **Global Witness and Amnesty International** are supporting the film, *Blood Diamond*, as an important way to raise awareness about how diamonds can fuel conflict. We hope that as a result of the movie, people will ask more questions before buying a diamond, and that the industry will take action to make sure companies can provide consumers with adequate assurances that the diamonds they sell are conflict-free.

Background – More detail on Blood Diamonds

- Blood diamonds have been used by rebel groups to fuel brutal wars in Africa. These conflicts have resulted in over 4 million deaths and the displacement of millions of people in Angola, Sierra Leone, the DRC, Liberia, and now in Ivory Coast. These diamonds have been sold to international diamond dealers giving rebels profits to buy large quantities of small arms.
- In 1998 Global Witness began a campaign to expose the role of diamonds in funding conflicts. As the largest grassroots human rights organization in the world, Amnesty International has been instrumental in educating the public about the problem, and pressing governments and industry to take action. Over the years, international pressure has increased from a large coalition of NGOs.
- In 2003, the government-run Kimberley Process scheme was launched to stop the trade in conflict diamonds. Over seventy governments taking part in the process are required to certify that diamond shipments through their countries are conflict-free, and they are required to set up diamond control systems to ensure this is true. Governments must pass national laws implementing the Kimberley Process and they can only trade with other participants in the process.
- The diamond industry agreed to police itself to support the Kimberley Process by tracking diamonds from mines all the way to retail stores – this is generally referred to as the “system of warranties” or the “system of self regulation.” But it isn’t fully implemented. Every company dealing in diamonds should have a policy in place to ensure their diamonds are conflict-free.
- Governments must also step in and monitor the diamond industry. They should require all sectors of the diamond trade to put meaningful systems in place to combat conflict diamonds (responsible sourcing policies, third party auditing measures). Governments should carry out periodic spot checks of diamond companies to make sure they have systems in place to prevent any trade in conflict diamonds. Governments participating in the Kimberley Process have agreed that it is a priority to set up government checks of rough diamond companies over 2007.
- The World Diamond Council, set up to represent the diamond industry on conflict diamonds, has launched an aggressive, multi-million dollar PR campaign aimed at convincing the public that the conflict diamond problem has been solved. This campaign jeopardizes global efforts to stop diamonds from fuelling conflict and to protect the legitimate diamond trade in Africa. Industry profit and inaction come at the expense of economic development in Africa, and at the expense of people’s lives.
- Many diamond-rich countries are extremely poor and people are not benefiting from the wealth in their soil. Diamond fields are rife with chaos and instability, and rebel groups and terrorists can still take advantage and access diamonds. The Kimberley Process means little to hundreds of thousands of men and children digging for diamonds in dangerous, dirty and difficult conditions in Africa. They often earn less than a dollar a day from artisanal mining, carried out with simple picks, shovels and sieves.

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