

CONFLICT DIAMOND PROCESS ENTERS KEY PHASE

Rough diamonds

The Kimberley Process is aimed at ending conflict fuelled by diamonds in Africa. With a new certification scheme in place, Canada's challenge as Chair will be its implementation.

The international community, with Canada in a lead role, is poised to take major steps toward turning "conflict diamonds" into "prosperity diamonds."

Illegally traded rough diamonds used for tax evasion and money laundering represent as much as 20 percent of annual world diamond production. The scope of this illicit trade has particularly fuelled the spread of diamonds used by rebel armies to pay for weapons. Over the past decade, these conflict diamonds have contributed to the massive displacement of civilians and untold deaths, primarily in Angola, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but also in Guinea, Liberia and elsewhere (see *Canada World View* Issues 16 and 19).

The Kimberley Process—named for the meeting in Kimberley, South Africa, where it was established in 2000—set up an international certification scheme for rough diamonds that went into effect in January 2003. This scheme will essentially allow the international community to keep track of diamond production in each participating country. At a meeting last October in Sun City, South Africa, participants made major progress on the sticky issue of how to monitor compliance with the scheme. They approved a peer review system for diamond producers based on the submission of annual reports and voluntary review visits, which will involve industry and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as host governments.

At Sun City, Canada was chosen to succeed South Africa, which has managed the Kimberley Process since its inception. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has established a secretariat in its Peacebuilding and Human Security Division to handle the country's duties as Chair.

Diamond prospectors sift through earth in a mine: the illicit trade in rough diamonds is used by rebel armies to pay for weapons, leading to the massive displacement of civilians and untold deaths.

"Canada has always taken a human security approach to the question of conflict diamonds," says Tim Martin, a Canadian diplomat who represents Canada in its new role. "Diamonds have contributed to conflicts in Africa and have had a devastating impact on people. Our goal is to ensure that diamonds start to support, rather than undermine, human development."

Working closely with the Russian Federation as Vice-Chair, Canada will manage various working groups and committees that oversee activities such as collecting diamond production statistics and monitoring compliance.

Martin identifies two key priorities for the Kimberley Process with Canada as Chair this year. First, it must effectively monitor the implementation of the certification scheme, including analyzing annual reports and identifying countries to receive review visits. He says that several countries have already indicated their willingness to participate in these voluntary missions. Second, it must put together reliable statistics on the global production and trade in rough diamonds based on the certification scheme. "Our performance here is a key element of evaluating how the system is working, and identifying any anomalies that allow conflict diamonds to pass through unnoticed," Martin adds.

Martin's concerns are echoed by Partnership Africa Canada (PAC), a coalition of African and Canadian NGOs working to end diamond-related conflict. "Without good trade and production statistics, you just can't track the movement of diamonds," says Ian Smillie, Research Coordinator for PAC's Diamonds and Human Security project.

"We're entering a new phase of the Kimberley Process," says Smillie. "We're no longer creating the systems, we're starting to implement. As the new Chair, Canada will have the difficult job of making sure countries do what they said they would do." 🍁

For more information about conflict diamonds, visit Partnership Africa Canada on-line at www.pacweb.org and DFAIT's Human Security Web site at www.humansecurity.gc.ca.