

**Valedictory remarks of Mr Karel Kovanda,
Kimberley Process 2007 Chairman
KP Plenary meeting, Brussels, 8 November 2007**

Ministers, Ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen,

We have worked hard during the last few days to achieve concrete progress to strengthen the KP. We have tackled some of the outstanding challenges and have advanced standards, particularly with respect to trading and manufacturing centres. We have worked with applicant countries to ensure they are fully prepared to assume the solemn responsibilities of KP membership. We have welcomed the Republic of Congo in our midst. We have built networks and made connections to share information, help each other out and work out regional solutions to regional problems.

And we have succeeded in broadening the participation of Civil Society – the conscience of the KP, as someone called it recently. The impressive number of NGOs present at Plenary is testimony to that. Last year in Gaborone, after our discussions of the miserable plight of diamond miners and diggers, I talked about a dream I had: a dream that sometime in the future, representatives of those diggers, perhaps of their cooperatives, would join us in our deliberations. Little did I think that merely a year later, this would actually happen. But this week, we had with us representatives of miners from the DRC and Brazil.

This brings me to the question of domestic NGOs. International NGOs have of course been in the forefront of KP's work since its inception. We now in our communiqué invite governments to work closely with their own domestic NGOs as well. I cannot support this call too strongly.

We have practically completed the first round of review visits, and kicked off a further round. You are thereby clearly demonstrating your openness to scrutiny, and your willingness to improve. And I hope many of you will volunteer to go on these peer review visits, one of the most valuable tools the KP has at its disposal. Some of you have offered technical assistance and training; some have indicated needs. Some have volunteered to increase their contributions to the KP by service in working groups, training or by providing financing. This is a wonderful testimony to the spirit of cooperation among the three segments that constitute the KP.

I have heard it say that ours was a boring meeting. Hard to tell whether this was meant as a criticism or as appreciation. A lot of intensive a delicate work, however, took place behind the scenes – work which resulted in our moving ahead on difficult issues such as Ghana/Cote d’Ivoire or Venezuela.

Still and all, we are leaving enough for India’s plate for 2008. And may their plenary be even more boring than ours! With the Brussels Initiative on Diamonds in Cote d’Ivoire, we believe there is a real possibility for the KP to support a truly regional approach to diamonds in West Africa. Also in South America we see promising signs of regional collaboration to address the very real challenges of controlling diamond production there. We trust too that India will bring a new focus on Asia’s role in the diamond industry, representing countries which are involved in mining, trading, cutting and, increasingly, consuming diamonds. Our Asian meeting on Monday foreshadowed this direction.

India represents not only the future, but also the past of diamonds. Diamonds were first discovered, or should I perhaps say recognized, in India during the 4th century B.C., and India was one of the first countries to mine the stone. India's diamonds have been prized for their size and beauty for hundreds of years, and some of the world’s most famous diamonds come from there - the Hope Diamond, Koh-i-Noor Diamond, Orlov and Sanc Diamonds, to name but a few.

It is now the eve of the centenary of the discovery of diamonds in Namibia. Namibia was of course one of the leading countries in the establishment of the KP. In fact, it was in Windhoek, in February 2001, that the name, ‘Kimberley Process’ was first officially used. So Namibia is very much part of our KP history -but it is also very much part of our KP future, as it pioneers new developments in its diamond industry, so that it too becomes involved in all parts of the pipeline “from mine to finger”, in Kennedy’s felicitous phrase.

The EC of course expresses its complete support to the 2008 Chair and Vice-Chair, and trust that you will be able to count on us just as we, in turn, have counted on the support and advice of past Chairs.

As a tool to prevent and deter conflicts fuelled by diamonds, the Kimberley Process may not be needed for ever. With your support, though, it will continue to broaden and deepen as long as it is needed.

Our lively discussion on how this year's communiqué dealt with the diamonds-development nexus indicates future efforts along these lines.

There is nothing automatic or inevitable about the progress that has been achieved during the past year, and this week. It has taken considerable creativity, compromise and constructive engagement, not to mention discussion, debate and dedication. And a few other things besides.

We have received many words of thanks for our work as this year's Chair, and are most grateful for them. But it really is up to us to thank all those who have made this plenary possible. My thanks must go first of all to H.E. Karel De Gucht and the Belgian Foreign Ministry for the extremely generous offer of the splendid premises of the Egmont Palace. Also, I thank the staff of the Palais, the conference and assistants, the technicians, and particularly the interpreters for all your hard work. Antwerp World Diamond Centre and De Beers have so generously sponsored some of the most enjoyable (and least boring) parts of the conference.

It remains for me, on behalf of the EC, to express my heartfelt thanks to all delegations – first and foremost to the Chairs of the working groups and committees - for your contributions, your hard work, and your willingness to work with others to build agreements and advance the Process.

My final thanks go to my staff and other colleagues from the Commission and EU member states for their tireless work throughout the year, and in particular in preparation of this Plenary meeting. Christian, Alyson, Stéphane, Willem and Cédric constitute the entire staff we have, supported by Anna, Eva and Zdravka. I have never worked with a group of more dedicated and more capable people in my entire long working life. I thank you all for your dedication, and indeed for the sacrifices you and your families have brought in order to ensure the success of our work here.

To all of you, I wish a safe journey home - and I am looking forward to meeting you again next year in India.

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