



EUROPEAN UNION

Brussels, 1 November 2011
A 439/11

Statement by EU High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on the agreement reached in Kimberley Process regarding Marange diamonds

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission made today the following statement:

" I welcome the agreement reached during the Kimberley Process Plenary meeting in Kinshasa as a way forward for the KP in relation to Marange diamonds from Zimbabwe.

The EU recalls that at the Intersessional meeting of the KP in Kinshasa in June 2011, no consensus could be reached on the exports of diamonds from Marange, which was necessary for these diamonds to be traded under the KP Certification Scheme.

Following the June meeting, the EU launched an initiative which was aimed at finding consensus among all KP Members including Zimbabwe and preserve the credibility and integrity of the process, building on the decision taken at Swakopmund.

After months of intensive negotiations with all parties, an agreement has now been reached on the basis of this initiative, which protects the integrity of the KP, respects the core concerns of Zimbabwe and the EU, recognises the concerns of Civil Society and meets the expectations of diamond producing and importing countries. "

P R E S S

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The EU welcomes in particular the fact that the agreement includes:

1.

A renewed commitment by Zimbabwe to address outstanding areas of non-compliance so as to ensure adherence to KP minimum standard for the whole of the Marange area.

2.

A credible oversight mechanism including independent elements (KP monitoring team) that allows for unrestricted but monitored export of compliant Marange diamonds, with a view to ensuring that non-compliant Marange diamonds are not traded under the KP Certification Scheme; and

3.

A role for civil society, in line with the tripartite structure of the KP, in order to provide transparency on the conditions of KPCS implementation in Marange.

The EU recognises that this agreement is a positive outcome not only for the KP but also for the people of Zimbabwe, enhancing transparency so that they can benefit from the revenues that will derive from the export of their natural resources. The EU urges the Zimbabwean authorities to honour their commitments without further ado.

The EU will continue to monitor the situation in the Marange area closely and respond in an appropriate way to any further developments. This agreement offers the opportunity for the KP to move forward and for all Participants to work constructively to uphold its principles and objectives in the future.”

Note to editors:

The Kimberley Process (KP) is a voluntary and international certification scheme which requires governments to certify that shipments of rough diamonds are conflict-free. The KP, established in 2003, currently has 50 members representing 76 countries.

The EU has actively supported actions by the Kimberley Process (KP) to address the serious human rights violations that were reported in 2008-2009 in the Marange diamond fields, and played a key role in brokering a KP Decision in Swakopmund, in November 2009, under which export of Marange diamonds was suspended pending progress in the governance of the Marange area. The KP was the first to expose the problems associated with the militarization and violence in the Marange area, towards the end of 2008.

Since 2009, the KP has been working relentlessly to ensure that the Marange mining fields become KP compliant with a view to, ultimately, improving governance and reducing violence in Marange. The KP's critical engagement with Zimbabwe has delivered substantial agreements – most notably the Swakopmund Decision – providing a solid, constructive and consensual basis to address the issues. In support of these agreements, the KP has mobilized a vast array of tools to monitor developments in Marange – including satellite monitoring, statistical analysis, expert field missions and mobilization of local civil society, as well as technical assistance. As an illustration of effective multilateralism, the KP has developed tools for countries around the world to ensure vigilance against irregular shipments, blocking irregular exports of Marange diamonds and arresting smugglers worldwide.

The KP response has combined public diplomacy and political dialogue with technical support and guidance. In many respects, the Marange crisis has actually demonstrated the KP's capacity to operate effectively in situations of crisis.

Although there are continued reports of human rights abuses in the Marange region, a KP Review Mission (including officials from Liberia, Australia, Ghana, India, Namibia, South Africa, USA, the World Diamond Council and the Civil Society Coalition, including Global Witness) to Marange in August 2010 noted reports by Zimbabwean independent civil society organisations that there had been improvements in the human rights situation on the ground. These improvements are the direct result of KP pressure on Zimbabwe.

However, while recognising the important progress made by Zimbabwe, the EU and other KP members do not consider that KP minimum standards have yet been met in the whole Marange area. Before the Plenary in Kinshasa, the KP therefore did not allow the import or export of Marange diamonds from any Participant, including the EU.

See also:

- [The EU and the Kimberley Process](#)

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