



## KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Intervention at

ECOSOC Special Meeting – Natural Resources, Peaceful Societies and Sustainable Development: Lessons from the Kimberley Process

**KINGDOM OF BELGIUM**

New York, 18 March 2022

---

Mr. President,

In his keynote address, the Representative of the European Union stressed the EU's strong commitment to the Kimberley Process. Belgium aligns itself fully with his statement, including on Ukraine. I thank the Government of Botswana for organising this important event.

The **Kimberley Process** has significantly curtailed the trade in conflict diamonds. Nevertheless, the mining and trade of rough diamonds face new challenges. These include violence perpetrated by private security companies or sometimes even government actors.

Regardless of the type of natural resources, serious human rights abuses such as child labour and forced labour continue to be common in resource-rich, fragile and conflict affected countries , and more in particular in the artisanal and small mining sector. Broadening the definition of conflict diamonds would allow the Kimberley Process to make a more effective contribution to the living conditions of local communities.

If managed responsibly, revenues from the exploitation of mineral resources can make a positive contribution for inclusive and sustainable development and constitute a lever for economic growth to the benefit of the population. For this, joint efforts from Governments, Industry and Civil society are needed. Such tripartite structure underpins the work of both the **Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)** and the **Kimberley process**.

Belgium gives strong support to EITI and the Extractives Global Programmatic Support of the World Bank Group (WBG/EGPS). What began with a limited number of principles has grown into an international set of standards with capacity building to governments and civil society alike for better governance and management of mineral resources. As of today, 56 countries, in particular in Africa, implement EITI standards, which will be refined for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. But EITI would have an even stronger impact if more countries adhered to it.

Mr. President,

Undervaluation of diamond imports deprives many African producer countries of much-needed revenues. Therefore, countries of **transit and destination**, such as my own, have a role to **play too**.

In Antwerp, where over 80% of the world's rough diamonds and 50% of all polished diamonds are traded, a dedicated team of government experts carefully checks all diamond shipments to prevent undervalued diamonds from entering the country.

Mr. President,

Belgium highly appreciates the driving force of **civil society**. **Civil society organizations, including women's organizations, are at the forefront of drawing attention to the aspects of good governance, better management and accountability**. Following several NGO reports in the late 1990s on the global trade in conflict diamonds, Belgium took action and became the champion of transparency in the diamond trade, with a robust monitoring system and an unrivalled regulatory framework.

We must preserve and strengthen the vital role of the civil society in holding extractive industries to account to the benefit of the whole societies. The benefits to be reaped from transparency can not only lead to a better governance, but also improved conditions for women in artisanal and small-scale mining.

I thank you for your attention.