

## Antwerp steps up efforts to combat conflict diamonds

07/06/2014

Source: JNA News

The Antwerp diamond industry, represented by the Antwerp World Diamond Centre (AWDC), is stepping up efforts to combat conflict diamonds, AWDC said recently. The city, largely owing its reputation as the “most transparent and strictly controlled” diamond trade centre due to the rigorous controls of all diamond imports and exports at the Antwerp Diamond Office, is determined to continue its commitment towards the Kimberley Process. According to AWDC, the increased vigilance and intensified controls have already resulted in the detection by the Diamond Office experts of a shipment likely containing conflict diamonds from the Central African Republic (CAR).

In June 2013, the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS), the global control mechanism for rough diamonds, issued an export ban on rough diamonds originating from CAR. Because of the KP ban, any import of rough diamonds coming from CAR, accompanied by a Kimberley Certificate from CAR, will not be allowed to enter the Antwerp market and will be confiscated, AWDC said.

Apart from the strict controls that are applied in Antwerp and the 100-percent physical control of each and every shipment that enters or leaves Antwerp, the Diamond Office procedures go even further, it added. Each suspicious shipment is verified, comparing the contents of the parcels with the so-called “production footprints” of mining operations in conflict areas, AWDC said. Rough diamonds that are imported legally in Antwerp through other diamond trade hubs will be cross-checked on typical characteristics such as colour, assortment and size using visual material from a typical rough production of a certain area, such as the CAR. Thus, the Diamond Office experts can assess whether or not diamonds are likely originating from a specific conflict area, according to AWDC.

By implementing these strict controls, Antwerp aims to give a strong signal and to prohibit that conflict diamonds enter the Antwerp market. Citing a recent report from the Enough Project, AWDC said diamonds from CAR are still illegally entering the market in certain countries. These conflict diamonds enter the legal circuit, mostly through forged KP certificates that are insufficiently controlled via other diamond hubs, it noted.

The recent discovery of a suspicious shipment of rough diamonds and the strong indications these diamonds originate from CAR have now led the AWDC to raise the alarm, it added. The AWDC said it is calling upon all diamond centres to implement the same strict controls on import and export procedures and KP requirements. It is clear that the Kimberley Process, a unique cooperation between governments, industry and civil society, can only be a powerful tool if all KP participants take responsibility in the fight against conflict diamonds, AWDC said.