



Press Release

AWDC: Amnesty International Report on CAR Ignores Antwerp Controls

Antwerp, 30 September - Despite the fact an Amnesty International team visited the Antwerp World Diamond Centre, including the Antwerp Diamond Office which supervises all imports and exports of diamonds to and from Antwerp, and was able to witness how the strict controls on imports of rough are conducted in Antwerp, the Antwerp World Diamond Centre cannot but conclude the report contains factual errors in this regard.

More precisely, the report ignores the fact the Antwerp Diamond Office implements a 100% strict control mechanism for each import or export of diamonds, which led to the interception and seizure of two shipments, containing rough diamonds potentially originating from CAR. The very moment these suspicious parcels were presented for import at the Antwerp Diamond Office, they were immediately intercepted and blocked by the experts of the Federal Public Service Economy, within the Diamond Office.

These experts succeeded in intercepting and blocking the shipments because of, on the one hand, a foolproof system of controls through which each and every of shipments is verified on value, weight, classification (HS Code) and documented origin. Their immense expertise on the other hand, allowed the experts to determine, even in the case of a shipment of mixed origin - which forms the very basis of the Antwerp trade model, through which assortments of goods originating from different mining areas are bought and sold to meet with clients' requirements - if the parcel contains diamonds that could originate from KP banned areas such as the CAR. The Diamond Office performs a 100% check of all shipments, instead of spot-checks as the report states.

Consequently, the two shipments that were blocked in Antwerp never entered the market, contrary to what the report seems to suggest, a judicial inquiry was initiated and the companies involved lost their license to trade in Antwerp. Moreover, the fact these two shipments were intercepted, was one of the reasons why the UN imposed sanctions on certain entities later on.

In conclusion, the AWDC regrets the comments, summarized in the above statement, which AWDC made on fragments of the draft report sent for revision, were not taken into consideration by Amnesty International in the final report.

Diamond Office is responsible for the declaration and assessment of diamond shipments imported or exported to and from Belgium, through a unique model of import and export controls. Each and every shipment that enters or leaves is being controlled, verified and declared by sworn experts. Diamond Office executes these controls in close collaboration with and under the supervision of the Belgian Government; the FPS Economy and the FPS Finance – Customs. The FPS Economy is the competent authority for the implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for rough diamonds, as appointed by the European Commission. The Antwerp Diamond Office is widely recognized as the benchmark for the highest standards and controls on diamond imports and exports in terms of (KP) compliance.

Diamonds love Antwerp

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AWDC, short for Antwerp World Diamond Centre, is an industry-established foundation, whose mission is to serve and support the diamond business in Antwerp, the world's most important diamond trade hub. AWDC is the coordinating body and the official representative of the Antwerp diamond sector, and as such are recognized internationally as the host, spokesperson and intermediary for the Belgian diamond community. In this capacity, AWDC liaises on behalf of the Belgian diamond sector with governments and actively promotes support for the diamond sector at home and abroad.

84% of all rough diamonds and 50% of all polished diamonds pass through Antwerp. Diamonds represent 5% of the total Belgian exports and 15% of all Belgian exports outside the EU, making diamonds the most important export product outside the EU.

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