



## PRESS RELEASE

### Richard Branson guest of honor in Antwerp

*Antwerp, May 6 2012. On Sunday May 6, AWDC launches its first Antwerp Diamond Academy. Guest of honor that day is the illustrious Sir Richard Branson, arguably the most famous and remarkable businessman of our times.*

On May 6, in the heart of Antwerp, the city's 'Stadsschouwburg will be the scene of the first ever Antwerp Diamond Academy. These Academies are targeted directly at the Antwerp diamond companies. Our goal is to provide them with hands-on knowledge and tools to enhance their position in an increasingly competitive business. Each Academy is built around a specific topic; the first edition will be all about 'innovation'. This initiative stems directly from the vision and ideas launched in the Antwerp Diamond Masterplan | Project 2020.

To give the whole event that extra sparkle, the Antwerp diamond community invited Sir Richard Branson. During an interactive panel discussion, Branson – innovative entrepreneur par excellence – will share his very own recipe for success with the audience. The public will be able to join in on this exclusive event via co-organizer Flanders DC. It is a truly unique opportunity to learn a trick or two from superbusinessman and enfant terrible of the business world, Sir Richard Branson.

During this event, Sir Richard Branson will also launch the new electronic trading platform 'Diamdax'. Through this platform diamond companies will be able to buy and sell polished diamonds online worldwide. Registered diamond dealers can upload the stones on the website, where interested parties will be able to buy them or make a bid. The purchasing and selling of the diamonds will be processed fully automatic online.

With this first, worldwide online trading platform, the credibility of the diamond industry will be strengthened significantly. At the same time, online trading is a more efficient way of doing business that will deliver an independent clearing reference price for polished diamonds. The biggest asset of that 'Antwerp Spot Price' and the consequential transparency is beyond doubt that it will enable new financing channels for the capital intensive diamond industry. This could be an adequate answer on the much needed financial oxygen after the financial turmoil and credit crunch of the past few years.

Branson's speaking fee will be donated to Virgin Unite, the independent charitable arm of the Virgin Group.



## AWDC

Karen Rentmeesters | +32 3 222 05 41 | [karen.rentmeesters@awdc.be](mailto:karen.rentmeesters@awdc.be)

Valerie Weekers | +32 3 222 05 04 | [valerie.weekers@awdc.be](mailto:valerie.weekers@awdc.be)

**AWDC**, short for Antwerp World Diamond Centre, is an industry-established foundation, whose mission is to serve and support the diamond business in Belgium. We are headquartered in the heart of Antwerp's diamond district, and led by a Board of Directors that is elected directly by those who define the Antwerp Diamond Community. We are 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.

### **The importance of the diamond industry for Antwerp, Flanders, Belgium and Europe**

The city and country are the world's leading diamond trade centre.

80% of all rough diamonds and 50% of all polished diamonds pass through Antwerp.

Belgium is the largest exporter of diamonds in the world, equalling a total of \$ 27 billion.

Diamond represents 8.25% of the total amount of Belgian exports and 15% of all Belgian exports outside the EU, making diamonds the most important export product outside the EU.

### **The economic impact of the industry**

A yearly turnover of more than \$ 56.5 billion (2011).

Diamonds represent an added value of \$ 1980 million for Belgium.

The diamond industry creates more than 34000 jobs (direct en indirect) in Flanders.

Each year, the diamond sector pays between 400 and 1000 million \$ in fiscal and parafiscal taxes.

For a number of countries, diamond is the first export product from Belgium, for example to India, China and Russia.

Diamonds equal 86% of total Belgian exports to India.

Antwerp is home to 1850 registered diamond companies.

In Antwerp (in the diamond community) over 70 different nationalities live and work together in harmony.

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**Flanders DC** is the Flemish organization for entrepreneurial creativity. Our mission is to make entrepreneurial Flanders more creative and Creative Flanders more entrepreneurial. We do research on creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship and creative industries. We set up events, develop tools and bring people together.

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FLANDERS



making  
creativity  
happen

**DIAMDAX** is the World's first online certified diamond exchange which uniquely offers electronic continuous auctions for buyers and sellers to trade individual polished diamond categories based on real time tradable spot prices. Its mission is to deliver an innovative solution that will facilitate the trade and investment in diamonds using technology in a global marketplace. The system is a unique and bespoke online trading technology developed for the trade of polished diamonds.

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**Virgin Unite** is the not for profit foundation of the Virgin Group, founded by Richard Branson. We're all about getting the right people together with the right ideas (and a little entrepreneurial magic) to help build a better world for everyone. Now, more than ever, the world needs businesses to play a role in tackling some of the tougher challenges facing our global community. As a catalytic organisation, Virgin Unite has been built in the belief that business can and must be a force for good. We challenge businesses to behave more responsibly and discover that by so doing they will perform better. We help businesses act in a way that can benefit staff, customers and society at large. The consumers of tomorrow will demand it.

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