



PRESS RELEASE

Antwerp welcomes South Africa's Minister of Mineral Resources

Antwerp, May 16 - 2012. On Wednesday May 16, an official delegation led by H.E. Ms. Shabangu, Minister of Mineral Resources of the Republic of South Africa, was welcomed by AWDC's Vice President Stephane Fischler and AWDC CEO, Ari Epstein.



The visit of the high level delegation underscores the excellent relationships South Africa and Antwerp have enjoyed for over a century, as both can be historically situated at the cradle of the modern diamond business as we know it today.

In the past, Antwerp also had the pleasure to welcome former President Thabo Mbeki, during the 2004 Antwerp Diamond Conference and current President, Jacob Zuma, during a special gala event in September 2010.



AWDC's CEO, Mr Ari Epstein said: *"South Africa and Antwerp, though at opposite ends of the globe share much common ground. Let's not forget that more than 60% of the world's diamond production originates from the African continent. In addition, South Africa continues to be a role model for so many other African countries and stakeholders, a position Antwerp is happy to support as the world's prime diamond trading hub. Moreover, we believe Antwerp can be a significant partner to the entire African continent in terms of a global, sustainable diamond trade, for example through the UN supported ITCCO here in Antwerp."*

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 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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