



Joint statement

Chinese President Xi Jinping witnesses signing of Cooperation Agreement between AWDC and SDE

Antwerp, 1 April 2014 – Yesterday, in the presence of Chinese President Xi Jinping, the Antwerp World Diamond Centre (AWDC) and the Shanghai Diamond Exchange (SDE) signed a Cooperation Agreement, outlining their cooperation with respect to the development of an exclusive commercial and trade relationship. The signing of such an agreement, in the framework of President Xi Jinping's first visit to Europe as Head of State, marks the key importance of the diamond trade between Antwerp and China.

In the last decade, the increasing trade and financial flows between the EU and China have considerably heightened their interdependence, a trend also clearly reflected in the diamond trade between the two countries. AWDC has for many years placed a special focus on China, with the goal of increasing cooperation between these two natural partners. "It is truly an honour for AWDC to enter into a Cooperation Agreement with SDE, which will contribute to even stronger links between the Belgian and Chinese diamond trade. Our historical ties and interdependence are a solid foundation for enhanced cooperation that will benefit both AWDC and SDE, and in turn both the Belgian and Chinese economies," said AWDC President Stéphane Fischler.

Currently, China and Antwerp enjoy fruitful trade relations, especially in polished diamonds, as emulated in the 2013 trade figures. As a key partner for the Antwerp diamond sector, greater China takes second place in the ranking of Antwerp's top trading countries. In 2013, Antwerp exported 1,9 million carats to greater China, valued at US\$ 3,7 billion. Imports from greater China amounted to 2 million carats, valued at US\$ 3,4 billion.

The signing of the Cooperation Agreement by AWDC President Stéphane Fischler, AWDC CEO Ari Epstein and SDE President Lin Qiang, is a testament to the resolve to deepen the trade relationship, by entering into a long-term partnership, geared towards increasing the bilateral trade. The agreement commits both parties to increase the trade in diamonds between China and Belgium by at least 10% annually, over three years. In addition, it encompasses cooperation in exchanging market information and diamond knowledge, encouraging free trade of diamonds and cooperating in the field of research and development, especially concerning preserving and defending the integrity of the natural diamond pipeline.

SDE President Lin Qiang declared, "The Cooperation Agreement between SDE and AWDC will prove vital in deepening our relationship. The scope of the partnership outlined in this agreement is an organic development in the Belgian-Chinese diamond trade, and an important dimension of both countries' strategic aims. I am confident that the full commitment of SDE and AWDC to the goals outlined in the agreement will be mutually rewarding for both sides."

Diamonds love Antwerp

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Collaborating with SDE, is a natural step for Antwerp, continuing to expand its reach and presence worldwide. AWDC is positive that the existing strong links between Belgium and China will be conducive to a further boost in trade.

“Greater China already takes second place in the rankings of Antwerp’s top trading partners. In this Cooperation Agreement we have set out ambitious goals for AWDC and SDE to further increase bilateral trade in diamonds. AWDC is confident that entering into a long-term partnership with a valued stakeholder such as SDE will further contribute to a win-win relationship between both parties. We are especially honoured that this key step in the Belgian-Chinese diamond trade relationship is cemented in the presence of President Xi Jinping,” stated AWDC CEO Ari Epstein.

AWDC, 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 is 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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