



Press Release

HRH Princess Astrid of Belgium inaugurates AWDC KP dedicated seminar in Pretoria

Antwerp, October 24th 2013 – In the framework of the Belgian Princely Mission to South-Africa, Antwerp World Diamond Centre (AWDC) organized a Kimberley Process (KP) dedicated seminar and Antwerp Diamond networking event in Pretoria. Belgium and South Africa share long and mutually beneficial relations as the founding centres of the modern diamond industry, not in the least in the development of the KPCS.

Ten years on since its start, it is clear that Belgium and South Africa are prepared to continue their leadership roles and take up their duties in maintaining and reinforcing the KP. Therefore, AWDC organized a KP dedicated seminar, including a round table that focussed on the instrumental roles of both South Africa and Antwerp in the KPCS. The event was organized in the framework of the Belgian Princely Mission to South Africa, in the presence of HRH Princess Astrid of Belgium, official representative of HM the King.

Ari Epstein, CEO of AWDC; “We are very grateful Her Royal Highness, Princess Astrid, now continues on the path that was set out by HM King Albert and HM King Philippe. On various occasions we have witnessed how the commitment of the Royal family adds tremendous value to these missions, by opening doors and creating a highly conducive atmosphere for our foreign trade relationships.”

Stéphane Fischler, President of the AWDC: “On the tenth anniversary of the KP and under the Chairmanship of South Africa, the Antwerp diamond industry felt it would be suitable to put the focus of this mission to South Africa on the achievements and the future of the Kimberley Process. The Kimberley Process has been instrumental in combatting conflict in producing countries, and to create an environment where trade can act as agent for prosperity. Notwithstanding, as the leading diamond trade centre, challenges remain and the industry must continue to support the establishment of sustainable development standards on the ground.”

The seminar was officially opened in the presence of HRH Princess Astrid of Belgium official representative of HM the King and HE Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Didier Reynders. In his address, Minister Reynders noted: “Within the industry pillar of this tripartite system, the Antwerp World Diamond Centre has always been a reference for expertise, diamond valuation and a living memory of the KP institution, chairing the group of diamond experts, sending teams to review visits, offering knowledge and expertise whenever needed.”

In addition, Mr Levy Rapoo, representative of HE South African Minister of Mines Susan Shabangu, HE Ambassador Nhlapo, current Chair of the KP, Dr. Ola Bello, Programme Head, Governance of Africa’s Resources Programme (GARP) and Ernest Blom, President of the World Federation of Diamond Bourses joined the debate. After the seminar, AWDC organized an exclusive networking cocktail that enabled participants to network with local diamond companies and government officials.

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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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