



Press Release

Ivory Coast Resuming Diamond Trade Thanks to Belgium

In 2003, the UN imposed sanctions on Ivory Coast, forbidding the country to trade diamonds. Now that political calm has returned, Belgium's FPS Foreign Affairs and the Antwerp World Diamond Centre are helping the Ivorian government set up a monitoring system so that they will be able to adhere to the strict conditions of the Kimberley Process, and resume their diamond trade.

The Antwerp World Diamond Centre has trained three Ivorian senior officials to become diamond experts. The 8-week training was funded by the FPS Foreign Affairs and aimed to provide the Ivorians with the necessary knowledge to estimate the value of a diamond. It also taught them everything about the stringent regulations of the Kimberley Process, and how that knowledge can be applied to everyday practice.

"In 2003, the UN imposed sanctions on Ivory Coast, forcing the country to stop trading diamonds. The sanctions were put in place because the risk of conflict diamonds entering the regular circuit would have been too great otherwise," says Margaux Donckier, spokeswoman for the AWDC.

Now that the Ivory Coast's political situation has stabilized and its economy is recovering, diamond production is back in the picture. But in order to actually start trading again, Ivory Coast must meet the stringent requirements of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, and the Ivorian government must establish a control panel.

"As Belgium has been one of the driving forces behind the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme since the very beginning, Ivory Coast has appealed to us to help them set up a supervisory body," says Margaux Donckier. The FPS Foreign Affairs and the Antwerp World Diamond Centre are glad to help Ivory Coast by providing knowledge and expertise. The FPS Foreign Affairs believes that the development of Ivory Coast, Belgium's position as a major diamond trading hub and the diamond trade in general will all benefit from a fair diamond trade.

Experts believe Ivory Coast has the potential to produce 150 to 200,000 carats of rough diamonds annually in the years ahead, representing a value of \$25 million. Ivory Coast will launch its new control panel on 1 January. The UN will follow developments closely and will publish an assessment report every six months. In addition, the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme's own control panel will be visiting Ivory Coast to see if all conditions are being met, and to formulate recommendations if necessary.

The **Antwerp World Diamond Centre (AWDC)** is the coordinating body and the official representative of the Antwerp diamond sector. AWDC promotes the entire diamond industry at home and abroad and is internationally recognized as the host, spokesperson and intermediary for the entire Belgian diamond community.

Diamonds love Antwerp

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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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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.

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