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PUBLIC STATEMENT ON THE SITUATION IN THE MARANGE DIAMOND FIELDS, ZIMBABWE

The situation in Zimbabwe's diamond sector was closely monitored in 2007, after a diamond rush threatened Zimbabwe's KPCS system. A review visit led by the Russian Federation then came up with recommendations to strengthen Zimbabwe's Certification Scheme. In 2008, Zimbabwe submitted reports to Intersessional and Plenary meetings in India to update the KP on progress there.

The 2008 Plenary meeting noted with great concern the continuing challenges faced by Zimbabwe in meeting its obligations to the KP and recommended further monitoring of developments and concerted actions in that respect.

The KP expresses growing concerns at the reports of violence and indications of smuggling in the Marange Mining area. The KP has engaged with the Zimbabwean authorities on the matter and Authorities have reported to the KP Chair on the developments of the situation in the Chiadzwa Marange diamond fields to date, which also delayed the immediate release of the Public statement.

As recommended by the Working Group on Monitoring, KP has stepped up international efforts to prevent the laundering of those diamonds. These measures have been put up as actions to contain illicit trade in Marange diamonds and prevent them from fuelling the violence further.

- The KP Chair requested the Working Group on Monitoring to work in association with the Working Group on Statistics and the Working Group on Diamond Experts to set up a team of experts to investigate and gather information about statistical data and identify trade anomalies that could reflect illicit trade in Marange diamonds and the smuggling patterns.

- KP Participants were recommended to implement enhanced vigilance measures targeting illicit trade of Marange diamonds, Participants were advised to make use of the footprints provided by the WGDE, with detailed

identifications of Zimbabwean diamonds and to follow procedures that were highlighted to work best with this recommendation.

- Regional cooperation will be enhanced to establish a first line of containment against illicit flows of Marange diamonds. KP Participants were called on to support this efforts through technical assistance programmes.
- A High Level envoy led by the KP Chair visited Zimbabwe from the 15 - 18 March 2009, A political message regarding the Marange diamond fields situation was delivered and emphasised on KP concerns and urged authorities to put an end to the violence in Marange and bring the area under control possibly through adequate and proportional measures. The Zimbabwean authorities welcome a the KP team to do a Review Mission when possible.

The visit to Zimbabwe was favoured by the majority of KP stakeholders, although some questioned the need for a high level envoy visit to Zimbabwe. We believe in consensus, and the situation of Zimbabwe should be treated as such. A report was received from Zimbabwe representing their viewpoint. There are differing views from Participants on the matter.

Part of finding a solution to this problem is to look at the situation in a broader perspective. The diamonds smuggled from Zimbabwe find their way out of Zimbabwe, and chances are they enter the legitimate trade, that of KP Participants. Suggestions of suspending Zimbabwe have been made by the NGO's. Could suspending Zimbabwe from KP bring their situation to halt? Will the suspension bring an end to the illegal activities currently going on in Zimbabwe or worsen them? If Zimbabwe is suspended as per the NGOs, it will only help exacerbate the problems in Zimbabwe continue and these diamonds would keep penetrating the legitimate trade.

Like the visit to Venezuela, it enabled the KP to arrive at a better understanding of the challenges faced by that country's diamond sector. As a consequence the KP has since decided that it will continue to engage with Venezuela in order to assist and support the country in developing appropriate internal controls over its alluvial diamond mining, consistent with the minimum standards of the Process. As highlighted in last years statement on the role of fuelling conflict by the Permanent Representative on agenda item 11, this was yet another example of mutual inclusiveness inherent in the Scheme and is testimony of the willingness of the KP

