

Talking Conflict Free With Customers

By KAROLYN SCHUSTER

The Kimberley Process (KP), an initiative developed by the diamond industry, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), governments and the United Nations (UN) to eradicate diamonds illegally traded to fund conflict, was ratified on November 5, 2002, by 52 governments. Today, 71 governments are signed on to the UN-mandated process, which has become the centerpiece of the effort to assure jewelry consumers that conflict diamonds are, by and large, a thing of the past.

The “Conflict Diamonds Confidence Pack” produced by the World Diamond Council (WDC), as well as a series of self-assessment documents and “talking points” developed by the Jewelers of America (JA), both available to retailers, are summarized below.

THE WDC CONFIDENCE PACK

The WDC offers a comprehensive resource for retailers in its “Conflict Diamonds Confidence Pack” and on its [diamondfacts.org](http://www.diamondfacts.org) website. The confidence pack includes: the Manager’s Action Guide; the Mini Guide to Understanding the Processes in Place that Ban Conflict Diamonds, which is for all employees; the Employee Training Manual; a Back Office Poster; Pocket Confidence Cards, for employees; and a Consumer Brochure.

Additionally, the [diamondfacts.org](http://www.diamondfacts.org) website lists 23 separate facts that retailers will find to be helpful in conversations with customers. The facts generally focus on two areas: the KP and the significant contribution diamond revenues make to the governments and citizens in countries where the diamonds are mined.

On the subject of the KP, the WDC’s talking points include :

- Conflict diamonds have been reduced from approximately 4 percent of all diamond shipments to considerably less than 1 percent since the implementation of the KP.
- Today, 71 countries and the legitimate diamond industry are all committed and legally bound to eradicating conflict diamonds by refusing to conduct business with countries or companies not in compliance with the KP regulations.
- In November 2006, KP members and various NGOs agreed on measures to further strengthen the KP’s enforcement of its regulations and sanctions for violators and to make additional efforts to close the loopholes through which approximately 1 percent of diamonds continue to skirt the regulations.

On the subject of the diamond industry’s contributions

to mining countries, the WDC talking points include:

- An estimated 10 million people globally are directly or indirectly supported by the diamond industry, one million of whom work in the diamond digging sector.
- An estimated 65 percent of the world’s diamonds — \$8.4 billion a year — come from African countries.
- Major world leaders, including Nelson Mandela, have cited the importance of diamonds to the livelihood of African people.
- An estimated 5 million people have access to appropriate healthcare globally because of revenues from diamonds and that same revenue is instrumental in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The pack is accessible in the industry section of the WDC website, <http://www.diamondfacts.org/industry/index.html>.

JA’S INITIATIVES

The JA developed a series of four self-assessment documents for retailers to use to assure themselves and their customers that their diamonds and diamond jewelry are conflict free. Also, the JA outlined a series of three talking points — listed below — that its members can use in conversations with customers.

- We believe one conflict diamond is one too many. Diamonds are meant to be a symbol of love and we abhor how rebel groups used them to fund African conflicts. We welcome films and other media that shed light on this dark period in Africa’s history. It’s a story that needs to be told — if we are to prevent such tragedies from ever happening again.
- We’ve taken important steps as an industry to stop the trade in conflict diamonds, through the 2002 creation of the Kimberley Process, which now regulates 99 percent of the uncut diamond trade in 71 countries worldwide. Each of the KP countries is legally bound to certify diamonds as nonconflict, before exporting them in a tamper-resistant container, with a forgery-resistant certificate listing the contents, which is checked upon import to another KP country. No uncertified diamonds are permitted to enter or leave any KP country, and the countries in the system only trade with each other.
- We are required by our association, Jewelers of America, to sign a Code of Ethics each year that includes a commitment to not deal in the flow of conflict diamonds. Jewelers of America is also a member of the Council for Responsible Jewellery Practices (CRJP), a worldwide group working on further ethical, social and environmental standards for the diamond and gold jewelry industry.

The JA’s self-assessment documents are available to all JA members and can be found on the www.jewelers.org website. ♦