

# Understanding the Kimberley Process

*Published Rapaport Diamond Report - February 2007*

By Martin Rapaport

It is important that readers understand what the Kimberley Process (KP) does and what it does not do.

The KP was designed and implemented to solve one problem and one problem only – conflict diamonds. The broad government consensus necessary to implement international customs controls would have evaporated if the KP tried to extend its reach to include development issues.

It is important to recognize that the KP is a powerful dynamic process with the capacity of government and the power of law to address problems. The KP focuses on international movement of diamonds while recognizing the sovereignty of governments and their exclusive control of events within their national borders. A major challenge confronting the KP today is establishing standards for internal controls so that governments can exclude smuggled conflict diamonds from their KP certification export programs.

Those who complain that the KP does not work because it is not perfect are wrong. It is like arguing that fire departments do not work because there are fires. While preventive systems are being established and enforced, the real test of the KP is how it responds when the integrity of the system is challenged. When necessary, the KP legitimately and legally suspends a country's diamond exports based on fair due process of facts and consensus, not the shrill cries of sensationalist NGOs.

Those who mock and knock the KP to look righteous or promote their own agendas are poisoning the community well. The KP does not address vital development and ethical issues that must be addressed because it was never designed nor empowered to do so. Claiming that the KP is useless because it does not solve development problems is like saying the American Cancer Society is useless because it does not cure AIDS.

There is a crying need for development issues to be addressed. And the KP model of government, industry and NGOs cooperation should be harnessed to address these issues. There is a need to establish additional initiatives — such as the Diamond Development Initiative (DDI) — that address issues beyond the scope of the KP.

While the KP is not — and may never be — perfect, it is a dynamically improving process that incorporates the highest ethical standards of international cooperation to resolve fundamental humanitarian issues under the rule of law. It is capable of taking actions that will ensure that wars are not sustainably financed by diamonds. It is the most legitimate and correct response to those who justifiably cry — Never Again.