



SPEECH OF MR. PETER MEEUS, CHAIRMAN OF THE DUBAI DIAMOND EXCHANGE
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Eng. Antonio Carlos Sumbula Chairman of Endiama, Honourable Governors and Ministers, Your Excellency Prof. Dr. Francisco Queiroz, Mr. Ambassador Nhlapo, Hon. Susan Shabangu, Hon. Isak Katali, Mr. Fyodor Andreev, President of Alrosa, Mr. Ahmed Bin Sulayem, Executive Chairman of the DMCC, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Yesterday our Chairman Ahmed Bin Sulayem has informed you about the phenomenal growth of the city where I'm living since the last 8 years, Dubai, formerly known as the city of gold. Today one of the three largest trade centres of diamonds in the world. Just have a look at the most exciting view slide of JLT, the fastest growing Free Zone in the Middle East and where I am privileged to work with its Executive Chairman Ahmed Bin Sulayem.

I don't want to repeat today the same story our Chairman brought yesterday.

Therefore, and in view of the select audience assembled here in Luanda I want to address another issue which has caught our attention recently and that is the growing pains of the Kimberley Process after its tenth anniversary. Although it was proven to be the most successful supply control mechanism in the commodities business, today it's being questioned by some Western countries and NGO's on its efficiency.

As you may have heard from Mark Van Bockstael I was part of the old boys club that assembled in Kimberley in the year 2000, more specifically on the 12th of May 2000. I remember it well because it was my first trip to Southern Africa. I was overwhelmed by the atmosphere of this continent, the beats of it's music, the warmth of it's people.





I was then the CEO of what was called then the HRD or in Dutch Hoge Raad voor Diamant, today Antwerp World Diamond Council. Obviously that was before I moved to Dubai. It was at the beginning of a period of seven years that I stood at the helm of that organisation.

Robert Fowler, the Canadian Ambassador came to see us in Antwerp. I remember it as if it was yesterday. He explained us that we were going to be in trouble. That was a year before the meeting in Kimberley in 2000.

So September 1999 came when I officially took up my position as CEO. And after a couple of weeks came two young kids to my office, Charmian Gooch and Alex Yearsley, the activists of Global Witness.

It was their first visit to Antwerp. They explained us that according to their sources all these 'dirty' diamonds which fuelled conflicts in Africa were being sold on the market in Antwerp. And that they were particularly worried about the situation in Sierra Leone.

I immediately understood the seriousness of the situation and explained it to my Board of Directors. Nobody listened and they thought I was going nuts. I told them 'Guys this is going to hit us in the face beyond any imagination. We need a special task force to handle this. I'm going to appoint someone special to lead this and his name is Mark Van Bockstael.

And so Mark started his work which till today he is doing so successfully, first at the HRD later as technical boss of the WDC which was established in July 2000. It didn't take long for it to hit the fan. In a few weeks we became as if we were infected by the pest. The whole Belgian Government didn't want to have anything to do anymore





with the dirty diamond business, the media attacked us from all sides and in the mean time the market itself didn't understand what was going on.

In the mean time Mark had been doing his tour. And we understood that the only way to pass the storm was to come with solutions. Its also then that I learnt that there is a time for solutions and there is a time for making trouble. And that we were still in the making trouble phase. Nobody wanted to hear about solutions.

But we had to do what we had to do. So we went to Angola where the UN Boycot demanded a tailor made solution. It was there - and later in Sierra Leone after the civil war ended - that we tried out our first mechanism of shipments of tamper-proof containers of diamonds with a confirmation slip to make sure the same content also arrived at the point of import.

It was then that I met the Vice Minister of Mines and Geology of the Republic of Angola who had been instructed by his Chief, HE President Dos Santos to search for solutions to lift the embargo which was crippling the country. The same Vice Minister Carlos Sumbula who is our host today and with whom we worked out together the first principles of what later became the KP Certificate.

That is also why I'm so proud to stand here for you know. Because Angola together with Kimberley is the cradle of the KP. People generally happen to remember everything after a certain date and not what has lead to the events and the people crucial for the success of it. Two of them are sitting here in this room, Mr. Van Bockstael and Mr. Sumbula and our applause for this 10th anniversary of the KP should also go to them.

It were of course other times. But it were times that we also enjoyed working together as an industry with the NGO's. They were fighting for a right and just cause





and especially in Africa they know what that means fighting for a right and just cause. So they had the support of the Africans in the first place. And it worked. Anno 2013 diamonds are the best-controlled commodity in the world. The diamond industry doesn't need to take lessons from any other business. More than 99.5% of the diamonds produced in the world fall under a certification regime. Central African Republic, Ivory Coast, Guinea and Venezuela do NOT even represent 0.5% of the world production. In reality we probably speak about less than 0.2%.

But at the same time today our relations with the NGO's have degraded to a point well below zero. And it's going down further at an amazing speed. So let's ask us a simple question. Why would that be? Why are the NGO's suddenly so dissatisfied with the accomplishments of the KP and the diamond industry.

Definitely not because there are more conflict diamonds than there were twelve years ago. So why is it then?

Could it be because the NGO's became a small business themselves and that the funds available are less so that the competition for the funds is stronger and the need to tell strong stories higher.

Could it be that the NGO's themselves are fighting for their own relevance?

Could it be that this is one of the reasons why we are basically confronted with something I cannot call otherwise than fantasies – some would call it lies - which fit perfectly well in a horror movie but which do not have any factual substance. Like the story two years ago about the torture camp in Marange. Or like the story on daily killings in the Lunda provinces in Angola?





Stories which are then disseminated to news media around the world and which are good for publicity and for fundraising. But which are blatantly untrue. Can anyone give me any other reason why the NGO's do not exercise the same due diligence they ask from rough diamond buyers over their own story suppliers.

Is that due diligence from the NGO side? Businesses should be accountable. Politicians have to be accountable. Isn't it time for NGO's to be accountable also?

And after being confronted with the same kind of fantasies can one understand that the relations are now below freezing level. Because there are limits to which ends you go to reach your goals. Even for NGO's.

Ladies and Gentlemen, if there would be one hair on my head that believed that two years ago the Marange military had a torture camp I would not set one foot anymore in Zimbabwe. And neither would a lot of us.

I would not be the same person that had worked together with Chairman Gooch and Alexander Yearsley and Carlos Sumbula and Mark Van Bockstael if there would be even the most single moment of doubt that this whole story of a torture camp brought by the BBC was a terrible and actually unforgivable fantasy cooked by some frustrated people in the Civil Society community after they had left the Kinshasa Intersessional and which was presented to the BBC and then went around the globe and was believed by many. How far do we go Ladies and Gentlemen before we say NO.

So indeed it's time to come to a new understanding in the KP. It's time to restore what the initial gentlemen's agreement was all about. So let me come with a solution rather than keep passing each other the hot potato which is what is going on now since the US took over the Chair.





Obviously human rights are a precious thing which should be defended by the highest possible instances which was once again reconfirmed by Dr. Rui Mangureira, Angola's Minister of Justice yesterday. But it should also be examined by instances that can rule above any reasonable doubt. I cannot give the right to judge over whether human rights have been violated to organisations that have accused me wrongly about the existence of torture camps or more recently the so-called daily killings in the Lunda provinces.

But there are bodies in the world that can judge in all objectivity about these serious concerns. Institutions which have in their structure the experience and institutional memory to judge. Institutions which we can respect. Institutions which do not depend from funding of foreign governments which have economical interests.

And if we can agree on all that then we don't need all that OECD blablabla which today is being launched to fight against conflict diamonds at a moment that diamonds are probably the most conflict-free commodity on the planet. So, isn't it rather time to get rid of this perception of being "dirty" business? Which business is 100% clean? Which person is 100% perfect? Isn't 99.9% pretty well done?. Because today there are hardly no conflict diamonds anymore.

So why creating structures and spent millions for something that isn't there. If there are human rights violations they need to be judged by independent institutions that are really independent and are respected as such. That don't cook stories for the sake of their own further existence.

That is what we proposed last year to the then KP Chair. A message clearly not understood. So its time to repeat it. Let the KP do what the KP does when we construed it, Mark, myself and others some twelve years go. A certification scheme is





a certification scheme and is not a human rights violation checker. Let judges do what they are used to do. Judge infringements. Judge violations. Beyond reasonable doubt. In all objectivity. Not biased.

I thank you for your attention!

Peter Meeus
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