

**Remarks given by H.E. Mr. Paul Heinbecker  
to the United Nations General Assembly  
Item 175: UN General Assembly Debate on 'Conflict Diamonds'  
Friday, December 1, 2000.**

Mr President,

Today this Assembly is signalling that the world wants the issue of conflict diamonds solved. The draft resolution charts the course for doing so. Today's debate is an important and encouraging milestone on that course. The resolution is evidence of the remarkable international resolve to break the link between the illicit trade in rough diamond and armed conflict. While the vast majority of diamonds are from legitimate sources, it is clear that the small percentage of the trade represented by 'conflict diamonds' has a disproportionate impact on the intensity and intractability of certain armed conflicts.

The toll on peace and human security in Angola, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo is tragic. The damage to prosperity and economic and social development is unacceptable.

Like others represented in this Chamber, the Government of Canada is deeply concerned about this issue. That is why during our term on the Security Council, particularly as Chair of the Angola Sanctions Committee, we have worked hard, in collaboration with others, to hasten to an end these devastating conflicts, and the role of diamonds in fuelling them. These goals will not, however, be met unless all countries represented in this room cooperate.

In Canada's view, the endorsement of this General Assembly is crucial to concrete solutions. The General Assembly brings together all the producing, manufacturing and consuming countries, and most of the trading and transit centres for rough diamonds. Precisely for this reason, today's debate provides an important opportunity to signal our collective commitment and responsibility to take action to curb this trade.

We have already seen major progress:

- The UN Security Council continues to implement its resolutions 1173 (1998) and 1176 (1998) on Angola, and 1306 (2000) on Sierra Leone, and other relevant decisions that target the link between diamonds and conflict.
- The reports of the Panel of Experts on Sierra Leone and the new Monitoring Mechanism on Angola are due by the end of the year.
- These reports, and those of the previous Panel of Experts on Angola, will make the imperative of terminating the role of diamonds in conflict and their costs in human

misery unmistakable.

Already, this work is having a major impact.

At the national level, the Governments of Angola and Sierra Leone have taken significant steps to strengthen national controls, as have a number of key trading and marketing centres. Industry has established the World Diamond Council– a body created to implement industry measures to combat the conflict diamond problem. The creation of the Council is particularly welcome, reflecting as it does the industry’s commitment to action, and providing a mechanism to facilitate complementary effort, by governments.

Civil society also continues to offer key support, through its role in raising awareness and generating the political will and the ideas necessary to bring about solutions.

Perhaps most remarkable, though, has been the Kimberley process. Launched under the leadership of Southern African producer-states, this initiative has broken new ground. It has galvanized international action by bringing together a cross-section of key players to begin taking practical steps towards resolving the problem.

Canada was pleased to participate in both the Pretoria Ministerial in September, and the London Inter-Governmental meeting in October. These meetings were also important milestones at which the number of countries involved in the Kimberley process has increased and foundation for future work laid. The South African resolution tabled today takes the international community one important step further by initiating a more comprehensive and inclusive inter-governmental process. That process will focus on the development of concrete proposals for action. We commend South Africa for this initiative.

We also welcome the offer of the Government of Namibia to host the first technical meeting of this process. Canada is pleased to join others in co-sponsoring the resolution; we invite the support of the international community as a whole.

The problem before us is complex, and touches on important interests. Progress will take perseverance, cooperation, consequence and pragmatism.

- Perseverance, because the stakes are high and the challenges complex; solutions are needed to ensure real protection for real people – usually quite innocent civilians– whose lives continue to be threatened by people who trade in conflict diamonds.
- Cooperation, because we need to build on the inclusiveness of the Kimberley model and expand participation in it; partnerships between governments, industry, civil society and relevant international organizations will be of key importance, by bringing together those with the political authority and the technical expertise;

All States with a significant interest in diamonds need to be involved.

- Consequence, because we must go beyond diplomatic niceties to develop effective measures; Canada supports further consideration of an international certification scheme for rough diamonds.
- Pragmatism, because the measures we develop will need to be workable, cost-effective, fair, not unduly burdensome for the industry, and informed by existing expertise, experience and best practice.
- And they must not impose collateral damage on the legitimate diamond trade.

As a new producer and manufacturer of diamonds, Canada considers that it has both a responsibility and interest in participating in international efforts to curb conflict diamonds. We intend to work closely with domestic and international stakeholders, in particular those governments involved in the international trade in rough diamonds, to do so. Our common goal must be to eliminate diamonds as a driver for conflict, and preserve them as a force for prosperity.

In conclusion, I take the opportunity to express our gratitude to the British government, for its leadership in placing this item on the agenda of the General Assembly, and to the South African government, for its leadership in preparing the resolution before us.

Thank you, Mr President.