

THE HERALD

## Zimbabwe: KPCS Clears Zim Diamond Exports

BY BREZHNEV MALABA, 30 NOVEMBER 2012

MARANGE diamonds were finally cleared yesterday when the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) took a landmark decision to withdraw monitors and allow unhindered exports.

In a major victory for the nation's quest to harness the mineral, the KPCS' Working Group on Monitoring said Zimbabwe had fulfilled all the requirements to certify its own diamond exports.

WGM said the Government had shown full transparency and accountability by ensuring that 15 percent of royalties in Marange were being directly channelled to the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority.

The decision means the Government would now sign Marange export certificates without having to consult KPCS monitors Abbey Chikane and Mark Van Bockstael.

Mines and Mining Development Minister Obert Mpofu hailed the decision as "a victory for every Zimbabwean".

"We stuck to principle and we won. Zimbabwe can achieve its economic development objectives through the unencumbered exploitation of resources," said Minister Mpofu.

"I commend the Zimbabwean team here, including our Attorney-General Johannes Tomana, for a job well done. More importantly, I thank our principals back home who have given us all the support in our quest to free the Marange diamonds.

"His Excellency the President has given us tremendous guidance throughout."

An international diamond analyst described Zimbabwe's achievement as remarkable.

"Ghana's diamond industry was under close KP monitoring for five long years. Comparatively, it has taken Zimbabwe just 12 months to move from monitored exports to fully unimpeded exports," said the expert.

Mr Tomana, who has been part of the Zimbabwean delegation to the KP plenaries and inter-sessional meetings for several years, described yesterday's KP decision as "a great victory".

"I would like to congratulate the people of Zimbabwe. Now we can export the Marange diamonds unhindered. God knows how significant this is for our nation," he said.

Discussions of the WGM are closed to the media.

As details of the meeting filtered through, it became clear that Zimbabwe's victory was anchored on strong bonds of solidarity with other members of the 76-strong Kimberley Process grouping.

It now emerges that when Zimbabwe Mining Development Corporation chairman Mr Godwills Masimirembwa and vocal civil society activist Mr Shamiso Mtisi entered the venue of the meeting at the US State Department, the EU chair of the WGM said to them: "You two must sit next to each other. You're from the same country."

This remark set the tone.

For a meeting that was supposed to drag on for hours, delegates were surprised that it lasted barely 30 minutes.



Photo: Denford Magora

The reddish-coloured diamonds of Marange.

Mr Mtisi, who has built a career from accusing the Government of committing unspeakable crimes in Marange, told the gathering that although civil society has differences with the Government, progress had been recorded.

He said this was shown by the Government's decision to allow civil society to make contributions to the recently formulated Zimbabwe Diamond Policy.

KP monitor Mr van Bockstael presented a positive report, detailing the work that Zimbabwe has undertaken to attain full compliance with the diamond watchdog's rules.

He told the meeting that Zimra directly gets a 15 percent royalty from the Marange output, putting to rest allegations that money from diamond proceeds was not being remitted to Treasury.

The money goes straight into the Zimra account.

What happens to the money after that is entirely up to the Government through the Ministry of Finance.

An Indian delegate clinched the case for Zimbabwe when he asked the WGM meeting: "Is there any company that is operating in Marange without KP approval?"

The answer from Mr van Bockstael was a resounding "No".

On the other contentious issue, namely the campaign by the United States to push for the re-definition of "conflict diamonds", the KP's Working Group on Reform said the matter could not be concluded at the plenary.

Effectively, the issue has been deferred to next year's KP inter-sessional meeting in South Africa.

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