



United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Topic A. Strategies to prevent the illicit transaction of rough diamonds from fueling armed conflict

Introduction:

The United Nations Security Council, as the organism responsible for maintaining international peace and security, also tasked to assess international threats and prevent armed conflicts, has noted that the illicit transaction of rough diamonds represents a severe issue to tackle internationally. The transaction of rough diamonds has fueled wars and human rights violations over decades, becoming an international concern to address on a priority basis. According to the resolution 78/270, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, the trade of rough diamonds, often referred to as *blood diamonds*, is directly related to the fueling of armed conflicts, the activities of rebel groups that seek to destabilize governments, and the illicit trafficking and proliferation of weapons.¹

Rough diamonds have financed multiple armed conflicts, especially in African countries, such as Angola, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone, which has resulted in multiple deaths and the displacement of millions of people. In this regard, an estimated 3.7 million people have died in conflicts fueled by the illicit transaction of these diamonds.² Commonly, rough diamonds mined in areas controlled by rebel groups are sold directly to merchants or smuggled to neighboring countries. Once they reach these countries, they are merged with legitimately mined diamonds and then sold in the open market. Ultimately, the profits generated from diamond sales are used to buy armament and weapons.³

¹ United Nations General Assembly. *The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict: breaking the link between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflict as a contribution to prevention and settlement of conflicts*. United Nations. “No update date”. In: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/092/51/pdf/n2409251.pdf> (18/11/2024).

² Amnesty International. *Blood Diamonds are still a reality*. Amnesty International. 25/01/2007. In: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/pol300022007en.pdf> (18/11/2024).

³ Britannica. *Blood diamond*. Britannica. 3/10/2024. In: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/blood-diamond> (18/11/2024).





Concepts and definitions:

- **Blood diamonds:** also referred to as *conflict diamonds*, are mined in a war zone and illegally traded to finance further military actions of rebel forces, particularly in central and western Africa, where around two-thirds of the world's diamond supply is extracted.⁴
- **Fuel:** to provide power to something, to aggravate, to incentivize.⁵
- **Non-governmental organization (NGO):** group that functions independently of any government with the objective of improving social conditions.⁶

Current issue:

Africa dominates the global production of industrial diamonds, with more than half of all industrial diamonds originating on the continent. Specifically, countries located in the southern area of the continent represent the largest producers of diamonds in the world.⁷ In this regard, the Pula Fund of Botswana is one of Africa's largest and oldest sovereign wealth funds that served as a portfolio for revenue from the diamond exports with the aim of preserving part of the income from diamond exports for future generations.⁸

Nonetheless, the trade of rough diamonds in Africa is currently influenced by multiple global and regional factors, creating both opportunities and challenges for African diamond-producing nations. With sanctions on Russian diamonds in place, African countries like Botswana, South Africa, and Namibia are experiencing increased demand for

⁴ Shop Magazine. *Blood diamonds*. Diamond Rocks London. "No update date". In: <https://www.diamondrocks.co.uk/magazine/blood-diamonds/> (18/11/2024).

⁵ Cambridge Dictionary. *Fuel*. Cambridge University. "No update date". In: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/fuel#> (18/11/2024).

⁶ Folger, J. *Non-Governmental Organization (NGO): Definition, Example, and How It Works*. Investopedia. (08/05/2024). In: <https://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/13/what-is-non-government-organization.asp> (18/11/2024).

⁷ Madhumitha Jaganmohan. *Mine production of industrial diamonds worldwide in 2023, by leading country*. Statista. 2023. In: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/267365/diamond-mine-production-by-country/#:~:text=Comparative%20diamond%20production%20volumes,diamonds%20originating%20on%20the%20continent> (21/11/2024).

⁸ Pula Fund. History. "No update date". In: <https://www.bankofbotswana.bw/content/pula-fund>. (21/11/2024).





their rough diamonds as they step in to fill the gap left by Russia. This shift allows African nations to play a more prominent role in the global diamond supply chain, potentially increasing their revenue and investment in local mining sectors.⁹

However, this increase in market presence has not come without complications. The G7's introduction of a diamond tracking system, aimed for verifying diamond origins (to prevent the sale of Russian diamonds) has sparked backlash from African leaders. Botswana and other countries argue that sending diamonds for certification to Antwerp's diamond district, in Belgium, creates unnecessary delays and costs, impacting the efficiency of African diamond exports. Leaders from countries like Zimbabwe and Botswana have voiced concerns, suggesting that the G7's measures undermine African autonomy in the diamond market.¹⁰ Meanwhile, countries such as Angola, where Russian company Alrosa has stakes in diamond mines, face indirect challenges due to the association with Russian enterprises.

This situation complicates trade relations and adds a process of inspection to their operations.¹¹ It underscores the balance that African producers must maintain amidst shifting geopolitical pressures. Consequently, the future of the rough diamond trade in Africa will likely depend on how effectively diamond producing countries can navigate new trade restrictions, leverage their increased influence, and advocate for a more inclusive role in global diamond certification processes.

Furthermore, the diamond industry is susceptible to trafficking and has been proved to provide rebel groups with a steady income. Diamonds' high value-to-weight ratio makes them easy to transport, facilitating their use for untraceable transactions. Countries with less stable governments or insufficient monitoring systems are often exploited in the trade, allowing diamonds to move with minimal oversight. This illicit trade not only funds

⁹ Mayur Joshi. *Africa Emerges as Diamond Power Amidst G7 Sanctions on Russia*. Regtech Times. (20/01/2024). In: <https://regtechtimes.com/africa-diamond-power-g7-sanctions/> (18/11/2024).

¹⁰ Business Insider Africa. *New G7 diamond tracking system sparks fierce backlash across Africa*. Business Insider. (26/03/2024). In: <https://africa.businessinsider.com/local/markets/new-g7-diamond-tracking-system-sparks-fierce-backlash-across-africa/vggf8f3> (18/11/2024).

¹¹ Sputnik. *Brics Countries Can Play 'Decisive' Role in Stabilizing Global Diamond Market: S. African Official*. (20/10/2024). In: <https://en.sputniknews.africa/20241020/brics-countries-can-play-decisive-in-stabilizing-global-diamond-market-south-african-official-1068782270.html> (18/11/2024).





conflict but also disrupts legal diamond markets, as buyers unknowingly purchase conflict diamonds. This cycle perpetuates instability in conflict regions by providing funds to groups that undermine governments and commit human rights violations and atrocities.¹²

Specifically, the conflict surrounding blood diamonds dates to the 1990s, when insurgent groups realized they could exploit natural resources to fund warfare, and it became a more and more common practice. Nowadays, the illicit trade of rough diamonds remains a serious international concern as these gems are often mined in war zones and sold to finance the activities of rebel movements aimed at undermining or overthrowing legitimate governments. Moreover, the illicit trafficking and proliferation of armament (especially small arms and light weapons) has been fueled by the profits of these illicit activities related to diamonds.¹³

Therefore, the devastating impact of conflicts fueled by the trade of diamonds has affected the peace, safety and security of people in many countries, and the systematic abuse of their human rights. This problematic is mostly associated with African countries, such as Angola, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, and Liberia. In these countries, rebel groups and insurgent forces have historically funded their activities through the sale of these diamonds. The consequences are multifaceted, impacting local populations, economies, and international stability.

Mostly, the humanitarian impact of the diamond trade is profound. Populations in mining regions endure forced labor, trafficking, human rights violations, and displacement due to violence from insurgent forces. Communities are often left bankrupt, even as the diamonds extracted are sold for millions of dollars, since the benefits from their activities are not remunerated. The forced recruitment of children, gender-based violence, and the forced displacement of thousands make the humanitarian crisis in these regions worse. Moreover, the arrival of conflict diamonds into the global market has led to skepticism and

¹² S Krishnan. *Blood diamond: From conflict to illicit-mapping the diamond trade*. International Journal of Law, India, 2021, 60-76. (21/11/2024).

¹³ Refworld. *The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict: breaking the link between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflict as a contribution to prevention and settlement of conflicts*: resolution adopted by the General Assembly. (25/02/2014). In: <https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/2014/en/77962> (18/11/2024).





a decreased demand among consumers who want ethically sourced diamonds. This shift has pushed the diamond industry toward greater accountability, but not without difficulty.

Rebels and armed groups continue to find ways to evade detection, especially as diamond trafficking methods become more sophisticated. Furthermore, new conflict zones can emerge, as witnessed in recent years, creating new challenges for the diamond industry and international bodies that handle these matters. Regardless of worldwide initiatives, illicit trade of rough diamonds continues to fuel armed conflict in regions rich in resources but plagued by instability. While efforts that have been made by the international community represent a step toward resolving the issue, addressing this global problem requires a collaborative and adaptable approach to create a diamond industry ruled by ethics and reliability.

Initiatives taken by the international community:

To mitigate the relation between illicit transactions of rough diamonds and armed conflicts, the international community has taken several important initiatives to address and prevent the ongoing problem. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has played a significant role in addressing illicit trade, by stating sanctions and declaring resolutions. The committee has established trade bans on diamonds from countries like Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, and Angola, to prevent diamonds from becoming a tool to finance rebel groups and increase armed conflicts. In addition, the UNSC has implemented arm embargoes to stop the flow of weapons to armed groups that were using diamonds to fund their operations in conflict areas.¹⁴

In like manner, fully alarmed by the proliferation of armed conflicts, economic and political instability and human rights abuses connected to rough diamonds, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has put this issue on top of its agenda several times to address these matters during sessions as an attempt of finding strategies to breaking the links between the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and armed conflicts.

¹⁴ United Nations Security Council. *Sanctions and Other Committees*. United Nations. "No update date". In: <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/repertoire/sanctions-and-other-committees>. (18/11/2024)



Furthermore, other international initiatives, such as the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) have been implemented to regulate the export and import of rough diamonds, seeking to prevent blood diamonds from entering the legitimate diamond market.¹⁵ Specifically, the KPCS is an international, multi-stakeholder trade regime created in 2003 with the aim of increasing transparency in the diamond supply chain and eliminating trade in conflict diamonds.¹⁶ In this regard, the KPCS is a collaboration of governments, the diamond industry, and civil society organizations that aims to prevent the illicit trade in rough diamonds, ensuring the ethical sourcing of diamonds, and transparency in the global supply chain.

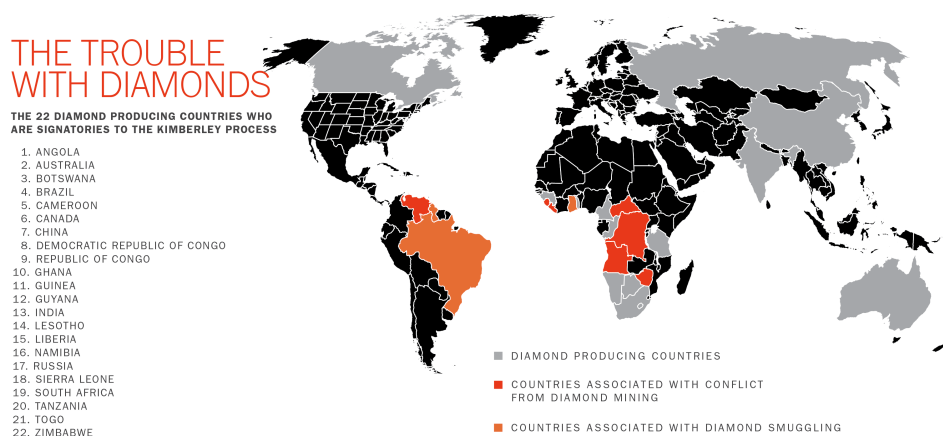


Figure 1. Twenty-two diamond producing countries signatories to the Kimberley Process.¹⁷

The KPCS unites 59 member countries around the world (including the European Union - which stands as one nation). Since its creation, it has been largely successful in reducing the flow of blood diamonds into the international market and has significantly decreased the role of diamonds in fueling armed conflicts, especially in Sierra Leone, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The mechanism consists of a Kimberley

¹⁵ Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations in New York. *EU Statement – UN General Assembly: Adoption of the draft resolution on the Role of diamonds in fuelling conflict (Kimberley Process)*. (03/04/2024). In: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-new-york/eu-statement—un-general-assembly-adoption-draft-resolution-role-diamonds-fuelling-conflict-0_en?s=63 (18/11/2024).

¹⁶ U.S. Department State. *Conflict Diamonds and the Kimberley Process*. U.S. Department State. “No update date”. In: <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/repertoire/sanctions-and-other-committees> (18/11/2024).

¹⁷ Baker, A. *Blood Diamonds*. Time. “No Update Date”. In: <https://time.com/blood-diamonds/> (18/11/2024).





Certificate leading all rough diamond shipments proving that the diamonds were mined and exported in compliance with the KPCS regulations and are not used to exacerbate conflict. Moreover, the KPCS requires in an obligatory manner that any rough diamond traded must pass through certified export and import points¹⁸.

However, the KPCS only certifies rough diamonds as "conflict-free" if they are not being used to finance rebel movements; but it does not address broader issues of human rights abuses or environmental harm in the diamond industry. Critics argue that the KPCS lacks sufficient enforcement and oversight, making it susceptible to loopholes and corruption.¹⁹ Because of this, newer interventions have focused on improving technology and responsible sourcing initiatives that aim to protect workers' rights and align with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In this regard, the World Diamond Council (WDC), a global organization representing the diamond industry, stands out as another international initiative to tackle this problem. Its key focus is ensuring that diamonds are sourced responsibly and ethically and plays a crucial role in the global effort to prevent blood diamonds. The organization was founded in 2000, and ever since has worked with governments, international organizations, and civil society groups to promote ethical practices and compliance with international regulations.

The WDC has achieved key aspects to the solution, like a system of warranties and a standard for certification that diamonds are conflict-free, overall creating greater transparency in diamond transactions. Additionally, securing that diamonds meet ethical criteria and addressing broader issues like human rights abuses and environmental damage is one of the organization's crucial works. The WDC actively works alongside organizations like Global Witness and Human Rights Watch to ensure the diamond industry does not contribute to violence or exploitation of human rights.²⁰

¹⁸ Kimberley Process. What is the Kimberley Process? "No update date". In: <https://www.kimberleyprocess.com/en/what-kp> (18/11/2024).

¹⁹ Journals Library. *Blood diamonds: the successes and failures of the Kimberley process certification scheme in Angola, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe*. "No Update Date". In: <https://journals.library.wustl.edu/globalstudies/article/560/galley/17399/view/> (18/11/2024).

²⁰ World Diamond Council. *About WDC*. "No update date". In: <https://www.worlddiamondcouncil.org/> (18/11/2024).





Furthermore, these last two international NGOs, as well as Amnesty International, have been crucial in raising global awareness about the damaging impact of blood diamonds and pushing for changes to ensure that the diamond industry contributes positively to society and does not fuel violence or conflict. Similarly, civil society organizations and advocacy groups, ranging from large international non-governmental agencies to local organizations, have consistently called for increased transparency, accountability, and ethical standards in diamond sourcing and trade. This has made them essential in shaping how the diamond industry addresses issues such as the illicit trade of blood diamonds, human rights abuses, and environmental harms.

Guiding questions:

1. Is your delegation involved in the transaction of rough diamonds in any way?
2. Does your delegation export rough diamonds? Does it import them?
3. For the most part, are these transactions illicit?
 - If they are, how does it affect your delegation and its region?
 - If not, how has your delegation managed to ensure that they are not?
4. Has your country or region experienced armed conflicts related to the illicit transaction of rough diamonds? If so, which have been the effects?
5. Historically, which armed conflicts have been fueled by the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and how? What happened? Are they still ongoing?
6. Has your country or region been negatively impacted by the illicit transaction of rough diamonds in any other ways than the fueling of armed conflict specifically?
7. Has your country implemented the KPCS?
8. How can the KPCS be strengthened to prevent the illicit transaction of rough diamonds and its consequences?
9. How does the trade of blood diamonds fuel armed conflicts and the destabilization of governments?
10. What are the consequences of not efficiently addressing the illicit trade of blood diamonds in terms of maintaining regional and international peace and security?





11. What else can the United Nations Security Council do to prevent the illicit trade of blood diamonds?
12. Which strategies can the United Nations Security Council implement not only to break the links between armed conflicts and the illicit transaction of rough diamonds, but also to address broader related issues, such as human rights abuses and environmental harm?

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