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WFDB president welcomes deadline given for implementation of Kimberley Process system

Ramat Gan, ISRAEL: May 5, 2003 – Shmuel Schnitzer, the president of the World Federation of Diamond Bourses (WFDB), has welcomed the decision to set a deadline of June 30/July 31, by which countries will have to complete implementation of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, if they are going to be able to continue trading diamonds in the international marketplace. The decision was taken during the three-day plenary session of the Kimberley Process, which ended in Johannesburg, South Africa, on April 30.

“The original date for implementation was January 1, 2003, but we realized at the time that certain countries lacked both the physical and legal infrastructures ready to properly introduce the certification scheme,” Schnitzer said. “Because it was in all of our interests to get as many countries on board, it was clear that a degree of flexibility was required regarding dates. But that was months ago, and by now all those governments that are serious about putting Kimberley Process systems in place should have already done so, or be in the final stages of preparation.”

Schnitzer was also complimentary about decision taken at the Johannesburg meeting to dispatch a mission to Central African Republic (CRA) to investigate its government’s ability to monitor the flow of rough diamonds in and out of the country. “By going out into the field to investigate charges of illegal trafficking of conflict diamonds, we are showing to the international community that we are taking this matter seriously and that we are committed to the cause. Charges were leveled against the CRA and its government invited us to come in and see things for ourselves. That’s an encouraging sign, and I hope we will be able to put the matter to rest,” Schnitzer said.

Schnitzer said that he was thankful that the Kimberley Process forum had chosen to maintain its focus on the problem of curbing the flow of conflict diamonds in the legitimate diamond pipeline. “While we condemn any illicit trade in diamonds, we have neither the tools nor experience to become an international law enforcement authority,” Schnitzer stated.

The WFDB president also had warm words of praise for Abbey Chikane, who will complete his term as chairman of the Kimberley process in October. Schnitzer said that under Chikane’s stewardship Kimberley Process had advanced tremendously. He also expressed his confidence that Chikane’s successor would continue to carry the process’ banner as successfully as he did.

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