

Forum: Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Issue: The role of diamonds in fueling conflict

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INTRODUCTION

Diamonds are a natural resource that is manually extracted and deemed a product of high monetary value due to their scarcity and difficulty surviving the extraction process. Specifically, approximately only 50% of diamonds are considered sufficient in quality to be provided to the diamond market¹. Moreover, factors such as the durability that the aforementioned resource has, as well as the specialization, meaning skilled experts and the process of handling it, all contribute to the high price and value of diamonds.

It is, thus, logical for nations to covet land that is rich in natural resources that are expensive and easily exploitable and, in particular, areas rich in diamonds. Numerous countries, including nations located in the Sub-Saharan region, are victims of a scenario called “resource curse”. This means that while national regions may hold a large number of diamonds, in this case, this wealth in such a resource does not result in national economic development, namely economic growth by the increase in Gross National Product (GDP) or a reduction in the levels of involuntary unemployment, but, on the contrary, fuels political or economic conflicts.

The “resource curse” may include cases where the overdependence of a country on exporting diamonds in the market means that, when armed conflict breaks out between another nation, the said country might face serious economic hardships, as the extraction process could be slowed down or even halted in periods of war. Areas rich in diamonds might be conquered by the enemy and resources may be illicitly extracted. This scenario may also take place due to diamonds being a highly valuable resource, which, in cases of war, may attract the opposing forces to mine them illegally to increase their wealth and ability to fund their own war expenses.

“Blood/Conflict Diamonds” is the official definition that the United Nations give to diamonds that are mined in regions that are controlled by the opposing forces that the legitimate and internationally recognised government during armed conflict, which are put on sale, in order to fund further military action and sustain the war efforts. The problem of the

¹ “Why are Diamonds so Valuable?” *Diamond Rocks*, <http://www.diamondrocks.co.uk/magazine/why-are-diamonds-so-valuable/>. Accessed 27 August 2023.

illicit trade of diamonds peaked in the 1990s when 4% of the international diamond production was made up of “blood diamonds”, which is still the approximate percentage of “blood diamonds” within the rough diamond traffic, according to the diamond business. However, the number might reach 15% within the whole trade market, according to other estimations².

Hence, the issue of “The role of diamonds in fueling conflict” needs to be dealt with urgently, as the economic welfare of nations involved in armed conflict is threatened as a result. As for the unlawful behaviour of the enemy forces that extract the diamonds, it is of great importance that they are held accountable for being involved in criminal activities.

DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

Artisanal Mining (ASM)

“Artisanal and small-scale mining, or ASM, is a largely informal economic sector that includes workers around the world who use basic tools to extract from the earth everything from gold and gemstones to vital metals such as cobalt, tin, tungsten and tantalum.”³

Blood/Conflict Diamond

“Blood diamond, also called conflict diamond, as defined by the United Nations (UN), is any diamond that is mined in areas controlled by forces opposed to the legitimate, internationally recognised government of a country and that is sold to fund military action against that government.”⁴

Consumerism

“Consumerism is related to the predominantly Keynesian idea that consumer spending is the key driver of the economy and that encouraging consumers to spend is a major policy goal. From this point of view, consumerism is a positive phenomenon that fuels economic growth.”⁵

²“What is a Blood Diamond?” *New World Diamonds*, 6 Oct. 2022, www.newworlddiamonds.com/blogs/news/what-is-a-blood-diamond#.

³ Glover, Donald. “.” - *YouTube*, 2 October 2022, <https://www.pactworld.org/our->. Accessed 27 August 2023.

⁴ “Blood diamond | Conflict, Trade & Human Rights.” *Britannica*, 15 August 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/blood-diamond>. Accessed 27 August 2023.

⁵ “Consumerism Explained: Definition, Economic Impact, Pros & Cons.” *Investopedia*, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/consumerism.asp>. Accessed 27 August 2023.

Fair Trade

“A system of trading with a developing country in which a good price is paid for their exports, and the people who produce the goods have good working conditions and are paid a fair wage.”⁶

Gross National Product (GDP)

“Gross domestic product (GDP) is the standard measure of the value added created through the production of goods and services in a country during a certain period.”⁷

Mine

“To extract from a source (earth).”⁸

Resource Curse

“A paradoxical situation in which a country underperforms economically, despite being home to valuable natural resources.”⁹

Smuggle

“To take goods into or out of a country illegally.”¹⁰

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historical information on the origin of “blood diamonds”

Diamonds have posed as sources of intrigue and desire from early times. Their fascination can be traced back to the ancient past when they were prized by kings and nobility and thought to have supernatural powers. The dynamics of the diamond trade, however, were fundamentally transformed by the discovery of substantial diamond reserves in Africa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly in nations like South Africa, Botswana, Namibia,

⁶ “FAIR TRADE | English meaning - Cambridge Dictionary.” *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fair-trade>. Accessed 27 August 2023.

⁷ Weeknd, The. “.”. - *YouTube*, 2 October 2022, <https://data.oecd.org/gdp/gross-domestic-product-%20gdp.htm>. Accessed 27 August 2023.

⁸ “Mine Definition & Meaning.” *Merriam-Webster*, 21 August 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mine>. Accessed 27 August 2023.

⁹ Scott, Gordon. “Resource Curse: Definition, Overview and Examples.” *Investopedia*, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/r/resource-curse.asp>. Accessed 27 August 2023.

¹⁰ “SMUGGLE | English meaning - Cambridge Dictionary.” *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/smuggle>. Accessed 27 August 2023.

and Sierra Leone. Diamonds evolved into both weapons of war and emblems of luxury and fortune in the second half of the 20th century. This conflict can be attributed to geopolitical and smart interconnected marketing campaigns. The emergence of conflict diamonds whose association with the use of weapons in the African economy exposed the dark side of the diamond trade at the same time the diamond companies' impressive marketing efforts of De Beers "A Diamond." The "Is Forever" campaign illustrates the complex interplay between policies and cultural aspirations.

Several African countries, including Sierra Leone, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Liberia, have endured cruel and lengthy wars that were stoked by the trade in illegal diamonds. In these nations, rebel groups took advantage of the diamond industry to fund their uprisings, buy weapons, and continue their violent operations. These diamonds, which were frequently mined in cruel and exploitative ways, were given the name "blood diamonds."

Economic Significance of Diamonds

To fully comprehend the role that diamonds have in armed conflict, one must first understand their economic significance. The many steps of the worldwide diamond supply chain range from exploration and mining to cutting, polishing, and retail. It involves several significant players, including governments, the diamond business, consumers, and miners.

Mining

Open-pit or underground mining operations are the main methods used to harvest diamonds from mines. Notably, rebel organizations have been able to access diamond resources for funding by controlling some mines in areas prone to violence. This occurs because, during armed conflict, the enemy forces tend to focus on conquering areas rich in diamonds and generally natural sources, especially in times of war consisting of vulnerability. In addition, the technology required to extract diamonds as well as the process of mining is relatively easy, giving more grounds for illegitimate owners to attain the product.

Cutting and Polishing

Rough diamonds are transported to cutting and polishing facilities after extraction, which are frequently found in nations that are far away from the mine areas. In this process, diamonds are turned into brilliant jewels used in jewellery. This process requires specialization and expertise, as cutting and shaping diamonds is an intricate process, however, the organization of miners into cooperatives that share knowledge, regarding setting prices for the

diamonds and methods of handling, make it easier for the enemy forces to exploit local workers for their benefit.

Diamonds are significant economically and have the potential to yield enormous profits, making them appealing as a source of income for both legitimate governments and rebel organizations. The intricacy of the situation is shown by the fact that diamonds may both be a source of wealth and a cause of conflict.

Geopolitical Significance of Diamonds

Geopolitically, conflict diamonds have had a significant impact. They can undermine governments, destabilize areas, and intensify hostilities. Conflict diamonds are significant on a worldwide scale for the following reasons:

Regional hostilities

In Africa, there has been a connection between the illicit diamond trade and local hostilities. For instance, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone used the sale of conflict diamonds to finance its insurgency. This made the fight last longer, led to widespread atrocities, and uprooted many civilians. With the profits of the illicit diamond trade, the forces can fund more expensive and, yet, powerful weaponry, hence bringing about more forces, as well as other essential supplies, which make it more difficult and longer for the legitimate government that owns the region to fight off the enemy.

Global Diamond Trade

With a market value in the billions of dollars, the diamond industry has a substantial economic influence. Major players that have an impact on global policies, regulations, and the movement of diamonds include De Beers, ALROSA, and the World Diamond Council. However, it is difficult for such policies and organizations to be able to trace all areas that have fallen victim to the “resource curse” and produce “blood diamonds”, as there are hundreds of areas in the African region that face this issue, which makes experts question the success of such organizations.

Ethical Consumerism

The problem of conflict diamonds has raised consumer awareness of the value of ethical sourcing and sensible purchasing habits. This has compelled the diamond industry to take action to guarantee that diamonds are free from conflict. There are subtle characteristics that can hint towards a “blood diamond”, which results in an increasing number of consumers having been informed and are therefore cautious about their purchases. Firstly, diamonds that entered the market before the 2000s have a higher chance of being illicitly traded, as the 1990s were

the peak of “blood diamonds” in stock. Moreover, unusually low pricing and lack of gem certification are also signs that the product probably falls under the category of a “conflict diamond”.

Ethical and Humanitarian Concerns

In addition to funding violence, conflict diamonds are frequently linked to major violations of human rights. Children and adults alike work in dangerous conditions in many of the areas that produce diamonds and are subjected to abusive labour practices. It is crucial to comprehend the larger ethical issue raised by the diamond industry:

Child Labor

The diamond business has been accused of using children to mine diamonds, especially in several African nations. The industry's dedication to ethical sourcing is called into question by this problem. This event takes place due to numerous African countries enduring widespread poverty, making them rely on the most affordable way of extracting diamonds, making the process less costly. Child labour is a form of exploitation of the younger generations, in this case, as they can work long hours To days of the week and be underpaid for the effort that is put in.

Ethical Mining and Sourcing

Consumer desire for ethical sourcing and transparency in the diamond industry has given rise to organizations like the Responsible Jewellery Council (RJC), which advocates for ethical supply chains. Other organizations have been formed, such as the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS), the Ottawa Process, and others, that, while not all may be legally binding, have proposed ways that “blood diamond” production can be halted, how such products can be prevented from entering the market, as well as how they can be recognized.

Challenges regarding “Conflict Diamonds”

Although there has been a lot of work achieved in tackling the problem of diamonds driving violence, problems still exist. Among the persisting difficulties is:

Artisanal mining

Artisanal and small-scale mining, or ASM, is a primarily informal economic sector that includes individuals from all over the world who use simple tools to extract everything from gold and gemstones to essential metals like cobalt, tin, tungsten, and tantalum from the earth.

A significant part of these metals are manufactured via ASM. As international demand for these minerals is high, artisanal miners still exist, working frequently in dangerous and exploitative situations that involve child labour and other human rights violations.

Nearly 45 million people worldwide rely on ASM for a living, with tens of millions more relying on the sector¹¹, including family members and small business owners along the ASM supply chain. Artisanal mining is a key engine of development in communities from Africa to Asia, where there are frequently few other options for earning a living. ASM contributes favourably to several of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the global community may offset ASM's negative impacts through inclusive, complete formalization.

Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) continues to be a major concern since it frequently takes place outside of the official diamond supply chain and is therefore challenging to manage and observe, in cases where illicit activity may occur.

Smuggling

Illegal diamond smuggling is still an issue, with conflict-zone gems occasionally being washed through legal channels. For example, diamonds can be smuggled outside the country's border, as they are very valuable, but yet very small, resources, making them easy to conceal and, therefore, not be detected.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

Angola

In an effort to weaken the Angolan rebel movement, UNITA, the UN imposed the first of a series of arms, travel, and capital restrictions in 1993. However, inadequate enforcement by member governments, as well as UNITA's takeover of numerous diamond-producing areas in Angola, allowed the movement to finance its activities with smuggled stones and re-arm with impunity. According to the research, UNITA was formerly Angola's single top diamond producer. UNITA violated a peace accord and went back to war in 1998, prompting the Security Council to probe Mr. Savimbi's sanctions-breaking operation and drawing world attention to the relationship between diamonds and conflict in Africa.

The recapture of several of the country's major diamond-producing areas by government troops, as well as the restructuring of Angola's mining industry, have limited UNITA's access to rough stones and restricted its ability to sell them on global markets,

¹¹ Weeknd, The. " ". - *YouTube*, 2 October 2022, <https://www.pactworld.org/our-%20expertise/mining>. Accessed 27 August 2023.

according to investigators. However, despite the implementation of the reform initiative, which includes the registration of independent miners and dealers as well as the need that all uncut gems exported from the country be certified, UNITA's exploitation of diamonds to finance the war has continued. The Angolan government estimated last year that the rebels were still earning between \$90 million and \$125 million from the stones known as "conflict diamonds."¹²

In Angola, investigators discovered evidence of a "shadow buying structure" operating outside of the government certification scheme. The government's recent campaign, which included the de-certification of 400 traders accused of smuggling, could decrease the illicit flow of diamonds to other states. The Council is investigating 16 multinational diamond firms with Antwerp offices for probable participation in the plan and has passed information on one firm to the Belgian government for further action.

In total, \$350 million to \$420 million in Angolan diamonds were smuggled into neighbouring nations in 2000. This figure represents around half of Angola's annual output and 5% of global annual rough diamond sales.¹³

Sierra Leone

The civil war in Sierra Leone, which broke out in 1991, was distinguished by horrendous bloodshed, mass atrocities, and severe human rights violations. Rebel organizations, most notably the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), battled the government for control of the country's diamond-rich regions. These insurgent groups relied significantly on conflict diamond sales to fund their insurgency, procure weapons, and sustain their campaigns. After the civil war concluded in 2002, Sierra Leone implemented diamond sector reforms to enhance transparency, ethical sourcing, and compliance with international standards. To combat the trade in conflict diamonds, the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme was established. The issue of blood diamonds sparked widespread outcry and motivated substantial efforts to address it. In collaboration with regional organizations, the UN launched peacekeeping missions and placed penalties on the sale of conflict diamonds. Furthermore, Sierra Leone received help in a variety of forms, including financial aid, development programmes, and assistance with security sector reforms.

World Federation of Diamond Bourses (WFDB)

¹² Fleshman, Michael. "Conflict diamonds' evade UN sanctions | Africa Renewal." *the United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2001/conflict-diamonds-evade-un-sanctions>. Accessed 27 August 2023.

¹³ Fleshman, Michael. "Conflict diamonds' evade UN sanctions | Africa Renewal." *the United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/december-2001/conflict-diamonds-evade-un-sanctions>. Accessed 27 August 2023.

The World Federation of Diamond Bourses (WFDB) is an organization that promotes the interests of the world's major diamond bourses and their members. The WFDB, as the official organisation of the worldwide diamond trade industry, develops a set of trading practices for rough and polished diamonds. The WFDB, as the industry's most prominent representative group, promotes the concepts of trust, openness, and honesty among board members and throughout the sector.

Partnership Africa Canada (PAC)

Partnership Africa Canada (PAC) is a coalition of Canadian and African non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focusing on human rights, security, and sustainable development concerns. PAC conducts research and policy discourse projects on African issues in partnership with its members and other organizations. PAC has been actively involved in researching and reporting on the African diamond trade. Their study has advanced awareness of conflict diamonds and campaigned for diamond sector changes.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
1947	The World Federation of Diamond Bourses was founded
May 1986	The Partnership Africa Canada was formed
March 23, 1991-January 18, 2002	The Sierra Leone Civil War took place
May 2000	The Kimberley Process began, in South Africa
16 January 2002	The International Tribunal Court for Sierra Leone was established
January 28, 2003	The UN Security Council Resolution 1459, where the official definition of “blood diamonds” is included, was passed
July 29, 2003	The US Clean Diamond Trade Act was passed
December 22, 2003	UN Security Council Resolution 1521 was passed

2005	The Diamond Development Initiative was founded
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RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

International Tribunal for Sierra Leone

The Special Court for Sierra Leone is a hybrid international-Sierra Leonean tribunal intended to bring individuals most responsible for crimes committed during the country's civil war from 1999 to 2002 to justice. The Court's prosecutor filed an 11-count indictment against Taylor in 2003, while he was still Liberia's head of state, accusing him of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, including pillage, murder, rape, and the use of child soldiers. The verdict is momentous, delivering a clear message to those in power who want to terrorize their people that they will be held accountable.

Taylor's trial has drawn attention to the vital role he played in Sierra Leone's violent diamond trade, as well as how natural resource thievery funds armed conflict and human rights violations around the world. The Taylor trial emphasizes the importance of natural resources in funding and fueling wars. The RUF's primary military goal in Sierra Leone was the diamond fields, which used slave labour to dig diamonds for export. The RUF was believed to have received annual profits of between US\$25 and US\$125 million from diamond sales while in control of the industry, "more than enough to sustain its military activities," according to the UN¹⁴.

UN Security Council Resolution 1521¹⁵

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1521, passed on December 22, 2003, is primarily concerned with the situation in Liberia and the measures to resolve the country's conflict and instability. The resolution expresses concern about the exploitation of natural resources in Liberia, such as diamonds, rubber, and lumber, to fund armed conflict. It also urges efforts to be made to halt the illegal trafficking of these resources. A series of resolutions were

¹⁴ "The Charles Taylor Verdict: A Global Witness briefing on a dictator, blood diamonds and timber, and two countries in recovery." *Global Witness*, 26 April 2012, <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/archive/charles-taylor-verdict-global-witness-briefing-dictator-blood-diamonds-and-timber-and-two/>. Accessed 27 August 2023.

¹⁵ "S/RES/1521 (2003) | United Nations Security Council." *the United Nations*, 27 June 2018, <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/s/res/1521-%282003%29>. Accessed 27 August 2023.

passed in the early 2000s regarding “conflict diamonds”, such as Security Council Resolution 1459.

Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS)

The Kimberley Process (KP) is a certification scheme that contributes to the reduction of the existence of “rough diamonds used to finance wars against governments” internationally. KPCS was put into action 23 years ago, in 2000, and 99.8% of its participants are responsible for the generation of 99.8% of the global “blood diamond” production¹⁶. One of the observers of the KP is the World Diamond Council, which represents the diamond industry as a whole. Moreover, KP follows the United Nations Mandate. The main characteristics of the KP include the following:

Rough Diamonds Certification

Participating nations declare in the Kimberley Process that the rough diamonds they export are conflict-free. When these diamonds are sent, they must be accompanied by a tamper-proof certificate that attests to their authenticity.

Collaboration Between the Government, Industry, and Civil Society

Governments, the diamond industry, and civil society organizations collaborate in the Kimberley Process. This multi-stakeholder strategy attempts to build widespread support and efficient diamond trade regulation.

Monitoring and Reporting

To oversee the production and export of rough diamonds, participating nations must set up internal controls and monitoring systems. To ensure transparency, they also share details regarding their diamond trading.

Imposition of Sanctions

Sanctions against nations that disobey its rules are one of the Kimberley Process's provisions. International diamond trade participation may be prohibited for non-compliant nations.

Preventing conflict diamonds from entering the legal diamond supply chain is the primary goal of the Kimberley Process. It seeks to sever the financing sources for armed rebel groups by regulating the trade in raw diamonds.

The Kimberley Process' efficacy has, however, been a point of controversy. Critics claim that it has restrictions on enforcement, transparency, and dealing with concerns like human

¹⁶ *The Kimberley Process (KP) | KimberleyProcess*, <https://www.kimberleyprocess.com/>. Accessed 27 August 2023.

rights violations in the diamond sector and smuggling. The international community is still debating ways to improve and strengthen the Kimberley Process.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Clean Diamond Trade Act

On July 29, 2003, the Clean Diamond Trade Act went into effect. The act mandates that raw diamonds imported or exported from the United States be subject to the Kimberley Process. Rough diamond imports must include an original Kimberley Process certificate. There is a certain set of requirements that ought to be followed, which are highlighted on the official website.¹⁷

Diamond Development Initiative (DDI)

Recognizing the Kimberley Process' inadequacies, the Diamond Development Initiative (DDI) develops an integrated framework to address the fundamental issues of diamond-financed warfare in Africa. The DDI, a cross-sector initiative comprised of representatives from NGOs, donor communities, and the diamond industry, could aid in resolving the "political, social, and economic challenges"¹⁸ posed by conflict diamonds in Sierra Leone, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and other African countries.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Legal Measures and Sanctions under International Certification Schemes

As KPCS is already in use, the UN and its members need to strengthen this scheme, to minimize the illicit trade of blood diamonds. For example, one way to impose such a measure is by straightening the measure of certification for diamonds, meaning that none can be sold unless there is a valid certificate of authenticity that it is not a "blood diamond". This, however, cannot be legally binding as KPCS is an international processing scheme. Hence, member states can decide on enforcing it.

¹⁷ "Kimberley Process Clean Diamond Trade Act Fact Sheet." *U.S. Customs and Border Protection*, <https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2016-Aug/Kimberley%20Process%20Clean%20Diamond%20Trade%20Act%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>. Accessed 27 August 2023.

¹⁸ "NGO Opinions and Initiatives on Diamonds in Conflict." *Global Policy Forum*, <https://archive.globalpolicy.org/the-dark-side-of-natural-resources-st/diamonds-in-conflict/ngo-opinions-and-initiatives.html>. Accessed 27 August 2023.

Ensuring Corporate Responsibility

While “blood diamonds” are considered illegal by definition, meaning mining them and smuggling them for sale are both illegal and so is the knowledgeable sale of such diamonds by business owners. Therefore, corporate accountability should be enforced, which is defined as the imposition of punishment on business owners who engage in criminal activity, such as selling “conflict diamonds” with the industry. The sentence for such a crime depends on each UN member state, however, propositions by the ECOSOC committee, as part of the UN, could be mentioned in resolutions, including the enforcement of sanctions such as fines, incarceration, etc., according to the severity of the unlawful behaviour.

Technology for Monitoring and Tracking Possible Illicit Movements

As diamonds are small in size and can be easily smuggled successfully, thorough checks must take place in airports, and generally when a person or embargo is leaving the territory. As technology is often used to detect metals and other products that are subject to confiscation, such technology must be used to track possible illicit trafficking of valuable and expensive resources, in this case diamonds, to ensure that smuggling “conflict diamonds” is minimized. Another way of ensuring that “blood diamonds” are not trafficked, security staff should conduct careful checks on personal luggage and belongings. If a questionable quantity of diamonds is worth over a certain amount, which could be set within a UN resolution, it should be reported immediately to the officials, meaning the police, and on a second basis to the responsible UN body.

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