



Press Release

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For immediate release

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“THE DIGGING FIELDS – A WARNING AND AN APPEAL”

In a keynote address to the [Antwerp World Diamond Congress](#) today, Rory More O’Ferrall, one of the diamond industry’s most respected leaders and Honorary Vice Chairman of the [Diamond Development Initiative](#), said that dealing with the plight of artisanal diamond diggers has become an urgent moral and business imperative.

In Africa and South America there are more than one and a half million diamond diggers working in arduous and highly dangerous conditions. They and their families – up to 10 million people in total – barely survive on less than two dollars a day and their communities are trapped in abject poverty, exploited and abused. An estimated 16% of the world’s rough diamonds come from this informal sector of mining, as does 12% of gold.

Speaking to an audience of the world’s foremost diamond manufacturers, dealers, brokers and bankers, More O’Ferrall said that artisanal miners “are just as much members of this industry as are your employees and colleagues in your factory, your office, your workshop or your retail store. They are just as much members of the industry as we are – you and me – they are *our* people. But for them nothing much has changed and they don’t have a choice.”

More O’Ferrall warned that "issues of human rights and social degradation are all too clearly present in the digging fields of Africa. They increasingly attract media and public attention and pose a real threat to the reputation of the industry and the integrity of our product".

He spoke about the Diamond Development Initiative, which confronts the political, social and economic challenges facing the informal mining sector, bringing governments, industry and civil society together to create sustainable development for diggers and their communities.

More O’Ferrall called for action, saying, “This is not just an issue of morality – doing the right thing – it is actually a business-driven imperative, something that needs to be done – and done now – to protect the margins, differentiate the product and continue to create value in all the businesses represented here today, large or small.”

“Today,” More O’Ferrall said, “I am asking you to help to make a real difference to those of our fellow industry members unbelievably less fortunate than ourselves, to show that you are a responsible member of an industry proud to be at the forefront of sustainable development – and to be seen to be so. Act now, protect your business, protect the industry, and make a contribution to DDI.”

Successful DDI projects in the Congo, Sierra Leone and elsewhere demonstrate that artisanal mining can be carried out responsibly and safely, with respect for human rights, supporting national economies and providing a livelihood for millions of people living in poverty in some of the most vulnerable places on earth.

For the full speech, go to: <http://www.ddiglobal.org/login/resources/rory-more-oferrall-digging-field-warning-appeal.pdf>

For more information on DDI, visit our website at www.ddiglobal.org.