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Background Guide

United Nations Security Council

Agenda: Examining the role of conflict diamonds in fuelling armed conflict, human rights violations, and regional instability in Africa

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Letter from the Executive Board

Distinguished Delegates,

It is our distinct privilege to welcome you to this simulation of the United Nations Security Council. As we convene to address one of the most persistent and complex challenges at the intersection of natural resource governance, international security, and human rights, we urge you to approach this agenda with the intellectual rigor, diplomatic acuity, and collaborative spirit that the gravity of the subject demands.

The agenda before this council, examining the role of conflict diamonds in fuelling armed conflict, human rights violations, and regional instability in Africa, is not merely a historical retrospective. While the classic diamond-fueled civil wars of the late twentieth century in Angola and Sierra Leone have transitioned into periods of peace and reconstruction, the underlying structural vulnerabilities, geopolitical dynamics, and financial networks that link high-value mineral resources to armed violence remain highly active. Today, we witness the evolution of this threat in complex environments such as the Central African Republic, where the intersections of state fragility, transnational mercenary networks, and the illicit gem trade present novel challenges to the maintenance of international peace and security. As delegates in the Security Council, your task is to transcend surface-level moralizing and engage directly with the systemic, structural, and legal dimensions of this issue. You must grapple with the fundamental tensions of international relations: the friction between state sovereignty and international oversight, the delicate balance between imposing restrictive trade sanctions and protecting the fragile livelihoods of millions of artisanal miners, and the strategic competition between global trading hubs and resource-producing nations. This background guide has been prepared to serve as a comprehensive, academically rigorous foundation for your research. It provides deep conceptual framing, detailed historical context, structured legal analyses, and multi-dimensional case studies. We expect you to utilize this guide not as a script, but as a launchpad for original analysis, strategic policy formulation, and nuanced debate. We challenge you to move beyond defensive, zero-sum posturing and seek innovative, systemic solutions. How can the international community modernize supply chain monitoring in an era of digital commerce and geopolitical fragmentation? How can the United Nations better support the transition of informal, decentralized mining economies into formal, transparent systems that benefit local communities rather than armed factions? What is the role of this council in addressing state-sponsored human rights abuses and the involvement of non-state security actors in mineral-rich territories?

We look forward to witnessing your diplomatic mastery, your strategic insights, and your dedication to forging a more secure and just world.

Sincerely,

The Executive Board of the United Nations Security Council

1. Committee Overview

1.1 Mandate and Scope

The United Nations Security Council is established under Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations as the primary organ charged with the maintenance of international peace and security. To fulfill this formidable responsibility, member states have conferred upon the council the unique authority to act on their behalf. Unlike the recommendations formulated by the United Nations General Assembly, the decisions and resolutions adopted by the Security Council are legally binding upon all member states, as codified under Article 25 of the UN Charter.

The scope of the council's mandate is broad, yet strictly defined by the determination of threats to peace, breaches of the peace, or acts of aggression, as outlined in Chapter VII of the Charter. Historically, the council's focus was oriented primarily toward interstate conflicts, resolving military disputes between sovereign nations. However, the post-Cold War era witnessed a profound paradigm shift. The proliferation of internal civil wars, characterized by high levels of civilian casualties, state collapse, and the exploitation of high-value commodities by rebel groups, compelled the council to re-evaluate what constitutes a threat to international security. It was during this period of transition that the concept of resource-fueled conflict entered the formal purview of the council. The realization that the unregulated extraction and illicit trade of commodities, particularly mineral resources managed by extractive industries, could sustain armed insurgencies, prolong civil wars, and trigger regional humanitarian crises led the council to expand its analytical and operational scope. Under this expanded interpretation of Chapter VII, the Security Council began targeting the economic lifelines of belligerents. The council recognized that the maintenance of peace requires not only military peacekeeping and political mediation but also the systematic dismantling of the financial networks that fund violence.

Consequently, the regulation of the international trade in rough diamonds, when used to finance armed rebellion against legitimate authority, became a core component of the council's conflict-prevention and peace-enforcement strategies. To implement these strategies, the council first utilized a Certificate of Origin regime in Angola to target rebel funding. This regime banned the import of diamonds not certified by the host government, establishing a precedent for resource-focused sanctions. Acting under Chapter VII, the council has deployed these targeted bans to isolate rebel-controlled areas, reduce the financial viability of insurgencies, and break the link between conflict diamonds and the illicit trade in arms. These interventions demonstrated that the council's mandate extends beyond traditional diplomacy to encompass the regulation of

global supply chains that fuel blood diamonds. For delegates in debate, the primary analytical tension lies in how the council defines a threat to peace. While traditionalists argue that Chapter VII should only be invoked during active armed conflicts, modern statecraft requires the council to address structural factors, such as illicit financial flows and governance failures, before they escalate into violence. Delegates can leverage this tension to debate whether the council has the mandate to regulate sovereign mineral markets during times of peace to prevent future instability.

1.2 Relevance to the Agenda

The agenda addressing the role of conflict diamonds in fuelling armed conflict, human rights violations, and regional instability in Africa sits directly at the center of the Security Council's modern peace and security mandate. Conflict diamonds are not merely an economic or ethical concern; they are a direct catalyst for geopolitical instability and systemic human rights abuses. The relevance of this agenda to the council is demonstrated by several interconnected security dynamics.

First, the diamond trade provides immediate, highly liquid financial resources to non-state armed groups, rebel movements, and transnational criminal networks. Because diamonds are small, lightweight, exceptionally high in value, and historically difficult to trace, they serve as an ideal currency for purchasing illicit weaponry, paying combatants, and securing political patronage. By control of diamond-producing regions, rebel factions can sustain military operations indefinitely, even when facing comprehensive arms embargoes or lacking formal state sponsors.

Second, the struggle for control over diamond fields frequently exacerbates and prolongs civil wars, transforming political or ethnic grievances into economic enterprises driven by greed. This economic incentive structure makes conflicts highly resistant to traditional diplomatic mediation, as warlords and corrupt elites find the continuation of war more profitable than the establishment of peace.

Third, the illicit diamond trade has a powerful destabilizing ripple effect across international borders. Porous frontiers in regions such as West and Central Africa allow diamonds mined in conflict zones to be smuggled into neighboring, stable countries, where they are laundered into the legitimate global supply chain. This process corrupts the financial and administrative institutions of transit nations, draws neighboring states into proxy conflicts, and fuels regional arms smuggling networks.

Finally, the methods used to secure and extract diamonds in conflict zones involve systematic and egregious human rights violations, including forced labor, the recruitment of child soldiers, sexual violence, and mass displacement. The Security Council, in its capacity to protect civilians and uphold international humanitarian law, is directly implicated when the extraction of a consumer luxury item results in the devastation of entire populations. From a strategic perspective, delegates should focus on how natural resources alter the duration and intensity of conflicts. The presence of easily lootable resources not only makes insurgency economically feasible, but it also alters the mindset of combatants, turning war from a political activity into an economic one. In debate, delegates can argue that traditional peacekeeping missions are doomed to fail unless they are accompanied by robust mandates to secure resource-rich territories and sever the economic incentives of armed factions.

1.3 Powers and Limitations

To address the threat of conflict diamonds, the Security Council possesses a unique and powerful toolkit, primarily exercised under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. These powers allow the council to bypass the traditional requirement of state consent when international peace and security are threatened.

The primary mechanism employed by the council is the imposition of targeted, mandatory sanctions. These include:

- Comprehensive bans on the import of rough diamonds from specific, conflict-affected countries, effectively cutting off those nations from the legal international market.
- Mandatory arms embargoes designed to prevent the flow of weapons to rebel groups funded by diamond revenues.
- Asset freezes and travel bans targeted directly at individuals, corporations, and political leaders implicated in the illicit diamond trade and sanctions-evasion schemes.
- The establishment of dedicated sanctions committees and independent panels of experts to monitor compliance, investigate violations, and compile detailed reports on illicit financial flows.

Furthermore, the council can authorize United Nations peacekeeping operations with specific mandates to assist host governments in re-establishing state authority over diamond-producing regions, training mines monitoring officers, and securing national

borders. The council also coordinates with specialized international organizations, judicial bodies, and regional initiatives to enforce compliance and prosecute violators.

Despite these extensive powers, the Security Council operates under significant structural and operational limitations. The most prominent limitation is the veto power held by the five permanent members (P5). Geopolitical rivalries and divergent strategic or economic interests among the P5 can easily paralyze the council, preventing the adoption of robust sanctions or the enforcement of compliance against allied states.

Additionally, the council lacks its own independent enforcement mechanism. It relies entirely on the political will, administrative capacity, and legislative cooperation of individual member states to implement and enforce its resolutions. In many parts of Africa, governments suffer from weak institutional capacity, lack control over remote border regions, and host corrupt customs and security services. These domestic weaknesses make the physical enforcement of diamond bans and arms embargoes exceptionally difficult. The porous nature of African borders, combined with the sophisticated, transnational nature of smuggling networks, means that unilateral UN bans are easily bypassed unless supported by comprehensive, multilateral supply chain controls. The council also struggles to address situations where legitimate, internationally recognized governments, rather than rebel groups, commit human rights abuses in diamond-producing areas. This limitation is tied to the resource curse, which describes how countries with abundant natural resources often suffer from weak governance and high corruption. In terms of debate strategy, delegates must grapple with the tension between state sovereignty and international intervention. A key point of contention is whether the council should have the power to impose independent, third-party audits on the mineral sectors of sovereign states without their consent. Delegates representing permanent members can utilize their veto power as a diplomatic shield, while representatives of non-permanent members can advocate for regional, cooperative enforcement mechanisms to bypass geopolitical gridlock.

2. Introduction to the Agenda

2.1 Importance of the Issue

The exploitation of high-value natural resources to finance armed conflict is one of the most critical structural challenges to international security in the twenty-first century. Among these resources, rough diamonds occupy a unique and particularly destructive position. The global diamond market, valued at tens of billions of dollars annually, is built upon a delicate foundation of consumer trust, symbolic value, and aesthetic appeal. Yet, beneath the polished surface of the international jewelry market lies a complex, transnational network where the extraction of these precious gems has, for decades,

facilitated some of the most brutal civil wars and humanitarian disasters on the African continent.

The geopolitical importance of this issue cannot be overstated. When rebel groups, warlords, or corrupt state actors gain control of diamond-producing regions, they acquire an autonomous, self-sustaining source of wealth that is independent of public taxation, legitimate foreign aid, or international financial institutions. This financial independence fundamentally alters the behavior of armed groups. It insulates them from external diplomatic pressure, allows them to bypass international arms embargoes, and reduces their incentive to negotiate peace agreements in good faith. In essence, the diamond trade transforms political rebellions into commercial operations, where the acquisition of territory is driven less by ideological grievances and more by the pursuit of mineral wealth.

Furthermore, the regional instability generated by conflict diamonds is highly contagious. The illicit flows of gems, weapons, and mercenaries easily cross porous borders, corrupting the political and financial institutions of neighboring states and transforming localized disputes into regional wars. The collapse of state authority in resource-rich regions creates lawless vacuums that attract transnational criminal organizations, arms traffickers, and terrorist networks. These actors exploit the informal diamond trade to launder money, purchase weapons, and fund operations globally. Therefore, addressing the role of conflict diamonds in Africa is not merely a localized humanitarian concern; it is a critical requirement for stabilizing fragile states, maintaining regional security, and protecting the integrity of the global financial and trading systems. Delegates should recognize that the economic model of modern warfare is decentralized. Armed groups do not require complex industrial bases; they only require access to easily transportable, high-value commodities. In debate, delegates can highlight how the illicit diamond trade acts as a form of shadow globalization, linking remote, war-torn villages directly to global financial centers, thereby rendering traditional state-centric security models obsolete.

2.2 Conceptual Framing

To engage in productive debate on this agenda, delegates must possess a precise, nuanced understanding of several key theoretical and legal concepts. The primary concept is the resource curse, which describes how countries with an abundance of non-renewable natural resources tend to experience less economic growth, poorer developmental outcomes, worse governance, and higher rates of internal conflict than countries with fewer natural resources. The resource curse operates through several distinct channels. Economically, resource-rich nations are highly vulnerable to extreme commodity price

volatility, and the concentration of investment in the extractive sector often crowds out agriculture, manufacturing, and other vital areas of the domestic economy. This structural imbalance is often exacerbated by Dutch Disease, where a sudden surge in natural resource exports leads to a sharp appreciation of the national currency, making other domestic export sectors highly uncompetitive.

Politically, governments that derive their revenues primarily from mineral exports, rather than the taxation of their citizens, are frequently unaccountable, highly corrupt, and detached from the needs of their populations. This lack of fiscal connection leads to intense rent-seeking behavior, where political and military elites focus their energy on capturing and distributing resource rents rather than building transparent, public-facing institutions. The state becomes a prize to be captured, leading to intense, violent struggles among rival factions.

Within this broader framework of the resource curse, conflict diamonds represent a highly specialized and toxic sub-category. According to the core definition adopted by the United Nations and the Kimberley Process, conflict diamonds are rough diamonds used by rebel movements or their allies to finance armed conflicts aimed at undermining or overthrowing legitimate, internationally recognized governments. This definition, while legally and operationally significant, has become a subject of intense conceptual debate.

Historically, the term was designed to address the specific dynamics of the 1990s civil wars in Angola and Sierra Leone, where insurgent groups directly exploited diamond fields to fund their military campaigns against state forces. However, critics, human rights organizations, and several member states argue that this traditional definition is dangerously narrow. It fails to account for contemporary security realities, such as state-sponsored human rights abuses, violence perpetrated by government military forces or private security companies, and the involvement of transnational mercenary networks in diamond-producing regions.

These critics advocate for an expanded conceptualization of blood diamonds, one that encompasses any diamonds whose extraction, trade, or processing is associated with gross human rights violations, systemic corruption, or physical violence, regardless of whether the perpetrators are rebel groups or sovereign governments. This conceptual tension between a narrow, rebel-focused definition and a broad, human rights-focused definition is one of the most critical debates that delegates must address.

A sophisticated debate point for delegates is the weaponization of the term legitimacy. Under the current definition, diamonds are only classified as conflict stones if they are used to oppose a legitimate government. However, when a government itself lacks democratic legitimacy, engages in systemic corruption, or commits atrocities against its own citizens, the current framework continues to classify its diamonds as clean. Delegates can challenge the council to define where sovereign legitimacy ends and state-sponsored criminal behavior begins, using this conceptual boundary to propose new standards for international intervention.

2.3 Nature of the Problem

The nature of the problem before the Security Council is multi-dimensional, comprising economic, security, humanitarian, and institutional challenges. At its core, the problem is defined by the ease with which rough diamonds can be extracted, smuggled, and integrated into the legal global market, combined with the devastating human toll of this process.

The physical nature of diamonds makes them uniquely susceptible to illicit exploitation. Unlike gold, timber, or oil, which are bulky, difficult to transport in large quantities, and require specialized, visible infrastructure to extract and process, diamonds are highly concentrated stores of wealth. A single handful of high-quality rough diamonds can be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, yet can be easily concealed in a pocket, a piece of luggage, or a hollowed-out container. This physical portability makes the enforcement of border controls and customs inspections exceptionally difficult, particularly in regions characterized by vast, unmonitored land borders and corrupt, underpaid security personnel. Furthermore, the extraction of diamonds in many parts of Africa is highly decentralized, relying on artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM). ASM is characterized by informal, labor-intensive, and low-tech operations where individuals, families, or small groups dig for diamonds in alluvial deposits along riverbeds. Because these operations occur outside the formal economy and are spread across expansive geographic areas, they are extremely difficult for governments to regulate, monitor, or tax. This institutional vacuum allows rebel groups, local warlords, and corrupt middle-tier traders to easily infiltrate artisanal mining communities, establish parallel administrations, and extort miners through forced labor, illegal roadblocks, and artificial price manipulation.

The humanitarian consequences of this system are catastrophic. In diamond-fueled conflicts, civilian populations are frequently targeted with extreme violence designed to induce mass displacement, thereby clearing the way for armed groups to seize control of lucrative mining zones. The recruitment of child soldiers is rampant, as children are easily manipulated and forced to work under hazardous conditions in the mines or serve as

combatants on the front lines. The systematic destruction of local infrastructure, combined with the collapse of public health and education services, traps diamond-producing communities in cycles of extreme poverty, disease, and exploitation. Institutionally, the influx of illicit diamond revenues corrupts the judiciary, security forces, and administrative agencies of both host and neighboring transit nations. This systemic corruption erodes public trust in state institutions, undermines the rule of law, and creates a highly volatile political environment where coups, civil wars, and regional proxy conflicts become increasingly likely. For delegates, the core strategic challenge is to design interventions that address the informal nature of artisanal mining. Because ASM communities operate largely outside the formal banking and legal systems, top-down international trade restrictions often push these vulnerable populations further into the hands of criminal syndicates. In debate, delegates can advocate for policies that create economic incentives for formalization, arguing that the only way to secure the supply chain is to make compliance more profitable for artisanal miners than participation in illicit smuggling networks.

3. Substantive Issue Analysis

3.1 How the Issue Works

Understanding how conflict diamonds fuel armed conflict and regional instability requires a detailed analysis of the international diamond supply chain and the specific mechanisms used by illicit networks to exploit its vulnerabilities. The journey of a diamond from the ground to the consumer retail market is highly complex, involving numerous intermediaries, trading hubs, and regulatory jurisdictions. This complexity provides multiple entry points for conflict diamonds to be laundered into the legitimate trade. The process begins with the physical extraction of the rough stones. In Africa, rough diamonds are found in two primary geological formations: kimberlite pipes and alluvial deposits. Kimberlite mining involves deep, capital-intensive underground or open-cast operations that require heavy machinery, advanced geological expertise, and highly structured corporate organization. Because of the scale of investment and the high visibility of these mines, kimberlite deposits are relatively easy for national governments to monitor, secure, and regulate.

In contrast, alluvial mining targets diamonds that have been eroded from kimberlite pipes over millions of years and deposited by rivers across vast alluvial fields. These deposits are highly accessible, requiring only basic tools such as shovels, sieves, and water pumps. Alluvial mining is the primary domain of artisanal and small-scale mining, which is characterized by high levels of informality, lack of legal land tenure, and extreme

socioeconomic vulnerability. Once rough diamonds are extracted by artisanal miners, they enter a highly fragmented, informal domestic trading network. Because miners typically lack capital, direct access to formal markets, and accurate knowledge of rough diamond valuation, they rely on local middle-tier buyers, often known as negociants or collectors. These middlemen purchase the rough stones at heavily discounted prices, frequently exploiting the miners through debt-bondage systems or the provision of basic subsistence supplies in exchange for exclusive buying rights. From these local buyers, diamonds are consolidated and moved to urban trading centers, where they are purchased by larger export houses. It is at this stage that the primary laundering of conflict diamonds occurs. Smugglers and illicit networks exploit porous national borders to transport conflict-affected diamonds from lawless regions or embargoed countries into neighboring, stable states. This cross-border transit is often facilitated by transnational criminal organizations, corrupt border guards, and specialized smuggling networks that operate across West and Central Africa.

Once inside a neighboring transit country, the conflict diamonds are mixed with legally mined local stones. This process of mixing origins effectively obscures the physical provenance of the conflict diamonds. The blended parcel of rough diamonds is then presented to the national export authority of the transit country, where corrupt officials, or inadequate verification systems, issue a legitimate Certificate of Origin or a Kimberley Process certificate. This administrative step transforms the illicit blood diamonds into legally certified stones. With these falsified documents in place, the diamonds are exported to major international trading bourses, such as Antwerp, Dubai, or Mumbai. At these global hubs, diamonds are sorted, traded, and re-exported multiple times. The widespread use of mixed-origin certificates at the international level further dilutes the ability of customs authorities and industry compliance officers to trace the stones back to their specific mine of origin. From the trading hubs, the diamonds are sent to manufacturing centers, primarily in Surat, India, where over ninety percent of the world's rough diamonds are cut and polished. Once a diamond is cut and polished, all physical and geological markers of its geographic origin are permanently erased, making forensic tracing virtually impossible. Finally, the polished gems are sold to jewelry manufacturers, wholesalers, and retail stores, where they are purchased by global consumers who are completely unaware of the violent history associated with the stones. This entire process depends on traceability, which is the ability to track the complete physical journey of a diamond from its mine of origin to the final consumer.

3.2 Structural Factors

The persistence of the conflict diamond trade in Africa is driven by several deep-seated structural factors that characterize the political economy of resource-rich, fragile states.

These structural factors create an environment where the illicit exploitation of mineral wealth is not only highly profitable but often the only viable economic activity for marginalized populations. The primary structural factor is the profound governance vacuum that exists in remote, mineral-rich regions. In many African nations, the authority and administrative capacity of the central government are concentrated almost exclusively in the capital city and major coastal urban centers. In the distant, interior regions where diamond deposits are located, there is a systemic absence of basic state services, including law enforcement, a formal judiciary, transport infrastructure, schools, and healthcare. This lack of state presence allows non-state armed groups, rebel factions, and transnational criminal syndicates to establish control over mining communities, fill the governance void, and set up parallel administrative and taxation systems.

A second structural factor is the high rate of informality and lack of legal protection within the artisanal and small-scale mining sector. The vast majority of artisanal miners operate without legal mining licenses, land tenure, or formal employment contracts. This informality deprives miners of legal protection, leaving them highly vulnerable to extortion, physical violence, and arbitrary eviction by armed actors, corrupt police, and corporate mining interests. Furthermore, the lack of access to formal banking, micro-finance, or credit facilities in rural mining areas forces artisanal miners to rely on informal, often predatory, financial networks managed by local elites and foreign trading syndicates. These informal networks trap miners in cycles of poverty and debt, encouraging rent-seeking behaviors where local leaders and middlemen profit from the exploitation of miners while contributing nothing to the sustainable development of the community. A third structural factor is the systemic corruption and institutional weakness of state bureaucracies, customs services, and border enforcement agencies in both resource-producing and transit countries. Underpaid, poorly trained, and unmotivated officials are easily bribed to falsify shipping documents, ignore smuggling across borders, and leak sensitive information to illicit networks. In some cases, high-ranking political elites and military commanders are directly involved in the diamond trade, utilizing their official positions to protect smuggling operations, launder funds, and secure mining concessions for their personal benefit or to fund political patronage networks. Finally, the geographical reality of West and Central Africa presents a major structural challenge to regulation. The region is characterized by thousands of kilometers of porous, heavily forested, and topographically complex borders that cut across ethnic and cultural groups. These borders were drawn during the colonial era without regard for local geography or demography, and today they exist largely on paper. Physically monitoring every forest trail, river crossing, and dirt road is an impossible task for resource-constrained governments, allowing smugglers to easily move diamonds, weapons, and personnel across national boundaries without detection.

A sophisticated line of argument for delegates is the critique of state-centric regulatory models. Traditional regulatory frameworks assume that the state is a neutral, benevolent actor capable of enforcing laws. However, in many fragile resource-producing countries, the state itself is fragmented, with different ministries, military units, and local officials pursuing competing economic interests. Delegates can argue that to be effective, international policy must bypass corrupt state structures and work directly with local, decentralized institutions, such as traditional chiefdoms and cooperative mining associations, to establish legitimate, community-level controls.

3.3 Evolution of the Issue

The role of conflict diamonds in fuelling armed conflict and regional instability has evolved significantly over the past four decades, shifting in response to geopolitical transitions, technological advancements, and international regulatory interventions. Understanding this historical evolution is essential for delegates to formulate contemporary, forward-looking policies.

During the late twentieth century, particularly the 1990s, the issue of conflict diamonds was defined by classic, highly violent civil wars between rebel insurgencies and central governments. In countries such as Angola, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the end of the Cold War led to a rapid withdrawal of financial and military support from global superpowers. Left without external patrons, both governments and rebel factions turned to the exploitation of local natural resources to sustain their war efforts.

Insurgent movements seized major alluvial diamond fields and used the proceeds from illicit gem sales to purchase vast arsenals of sophisticated weaponry on the international black market. These conflicts were characterized by extreme violence against civilians, the widespread recruitment of child soldiers, and the complete collapse of state institutions. The international response during this period focused primarily on state-centric trade bans and the deployment of large-scale United Nations peacekeeping missions to disarm rebels and re-establish state authority. The launch of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme in 2003 marked a major turning point, successfully reducing the volume of rebel-financed conflict diamonds to less than one percent of the global trade. However, rather than eliminating the link between diamonds and violence, this international regulatory intervention caused the issue to adapt and evolve into new, more complex forms.

In the contemporary era, the threat has shifted away from large-scale, rebel-led civil wars toward more diffuse, state-sponsored, and transnational security challenges. One major dimension of this modern evolution is the rise of state-sponsored violence and human rights abuses in diamond-producing areas. In countries such as Zimbabwe, the legitimate

government utilized its military forces to violently seize control of the Marange diamond fields, committing gross human rights abuses against artisanal miners and laundering the proceeds through state-owned corporations and corrupt networks. Because the Kimberley Process is structurally limited by a rebel-focused definition of conflict diamonds, these state-perpetrated abuses occurred within the boundaries of legal compliance, exposing a major loophole in the international governance framework. A second contemporary dimension is the involvement of non-state security actors, private military companies, and transnational mercenary networks in resource-rich, fragile states. In the Central African Republic, the collapse of state authority during the 2013 civil war led to a decade-long Kimberley Process embargo on the country's diamond exports. To counter rebel insurgencies and secure its political survival, the central government turned to the Russian-backed Wagner Group in 2017. Wagner's involvement rapidly transformed the dynamics of conflict financing.

The mercenary group did not merely provide military support; it systematically seized direct control of lucrative gold and diamond mining areas, utilizing intimidation, violence, and extrajudicial killings to displace local miners and establish monopoly control over the trade. To bypass international sanctions and the Kimberley Process embargo, Wagner established front companies and diamond-buying houses to ship rough diamonds directly to global trading hubs, where they were mixed with legal parcels and laundered into the international market. Furthermore, the focus of conflict financing has diversified. While diamonds remain a significant source of wealth, armed groups and mercenary networks have increasingly shifted their focus toward gold and timber, which are often easier to self-finance, subject to fewer international regulatory controls, and highly profitable. This diversification demonstrates that addressing conflict diamonds in isolation is no longer sufficient; the Security Council must adopt a comprehensive, multi-resource approach to conflict financing that addresses the entire political economy of resource extraction in fragile states.

4. Geopolitical / Stakeholder Context

The geopolitical landscape of the global diamond industry is characterized by deep asymmetries of power, wealth, and administrative capacity between resource-producing nations, processing hubs, and consumer markets. This complex web of national interests, commercial priorities, and regulatory philosophies makes international consensus on reform exceptionally difficult to achieve.

Producer Nations: African Resource-Rich States

Within the African continent, producer nations can be divided into two distinct groups based on their governance structures and mineral management models:

- **Botswana and South Africa:** Botswana stands as the global model for successful diamond-driven development. Through a highly structured, long-term joint venture with major corporations like De Beers, Botswana has utilized its deep kimberlite diamond wealth to fund comprehensive public infrastructure, education, and healthcare systems. The state has successfully implemented beneficiation policies, requiring a significant portion of diamond sorting, cutting, and polishing to take place domestically, thereby generating skilled employment and capturing high-value downstream revenues. For these stable, high-capacity states, protecting the reputation and consumer confidence of the natural diamond market is a vital national security and economic interest. They are highly supportive of robust, transparent regulatory systems but are deeply cautious of reforms that could impose excessive administrative burdens on their legitimate industries or undermine state sovereignty.
- **The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, Angola, and Sierra Leone:** These nations represent the fragile, high-risk end of the producer spectrum. They possess vast alluvial diamond deposits that are highly vulnerable to smuggling, corruption, and exploitation by armed groups. These governments often suffer from weak institutional capacity, lack control over remote border regions, and are highly dependent on diamond revenues for state income and local livelihoods. For these nations, strict international trade bans and embargoes can be a double-edged sword, cutting off rebel finance but also devastating the local artisanal mining communities that rely on informal sales for basic survival.

Processing and Trading Hubs

The middle of the diamond value chain is dominated by a small number of highly specialized international hubs that manage the global trade, valuation, and manufacturing of rough gems:

- **India (Surat and Mumbai):** India occupies a central position in the global supply chain, cutting and polishing over ninety percent of the world's diamonds. The industry employs millions of workers and is a major contributor to India's export earnings. During its 2026 chairmanship of the Kimberley Process, India introduced the guiding principles of the "3Cs" (Confidence, Compliance, and Credibility), emphasizing the need to modernize the process while maintaining its consensus-driven, cooperative character. India is highly supportive of technological

innovation, such as blockchain-based traceability systems, to secure the supply chain and protect its manufacturing sector from reputational risks. However, India is extremely cautious of sweeping redefinitions of conflict diamonds or politically motivated trade restrictions that could cause economic volatility, raise production costs, or exclude vulnerable artisanal mining sectors from the market.

- **Belgium (Antwerp):** Antwerp is the historic financial and trading capital of the global diamond trade, managing the sorting and valuation of a vast majority of the world's rough stones. Belgium has established a highly sophisticated, rigorous regulatory framework, including dedicated government expert teams that carefully inspect and verify the valuation of all incoming and outgoing diamond shipments to prevent fraud, tax evasion, and money laundering. Belgium is a leading advocate for high transparency standards, robust peer-review mechanisms, and the active involvement of civil society in natural resource governance.
- **United Arab Emirates (Dubai):** Dubai has experienced a rapid rise as a global diamond-trading hub, utilizing its strategic geographical position, low-tax environment, and highly efficient transport infrastructure to attract international buyers and sellers. However, Dubai has faced significant criticism from civil society organizations and competitor hubs, who argue that its regulatory controls and verification systems are less stringent, making it a primary destination for smugglers, sanctions-busters, and mixed-origin laundering schemes. Dubai is highly protective of its commercial interests and state sovereignty, advocating for a business-friendly regulatory approach and resisting reforms that could impose intrusive international monitoring or disrupt trading volumes.

Consumer Markets: United States and European Union

The United States represents the largest retail market for diamond jewelry in the world, consuming over half of the global production, followed closely by the European Union and China. Because the value of a diamond is entirely dependent on consumer perception and emotional association, these Western consumer markets are highly sensitive to the reputational risks associated with conflict diamonds, child labor, and human rights abuses. The United States and the European Union have implemented comprehensive domestic legislation, such as the Clean Diamond Trade Act in the United States and Council Regulation 2368/2002 in the European Union, to enforce the Kimberley Process and prohibit trade with non-participants. These nations are the primary drivers of efforts to expand the definition of conflict diamonds to include state-sponsored violence and human rights abuses, utilizing their immense market power to push for higher standards of corporate responsibility and supply chain due diligence.

Civil Society and Industry Observers

The governance of the international diamond trade relies on a unique tripartite structure that includes not only national governments but also industry representatives and civil society organizations:

- **The World Diamond Council (WDC):** The WDC represents the global diamond industry, from mining giants to retail jewelers. Its primary interest is to protect the integrity, reputation, and economic viability of the natural diamond market. To support the Kimberley Process, the WDC launched the System of Warranties (SoW), a self-regulation mechanism that requires all business-to-business transactions of diamonds, whether rough, polished, or set in jewelry, to carry a written warranty statement assuring the buyer that the stones comply with the Kimberley Process and respect fundamental human rights and anti-corruption standards.
- **The Kimberley Process Civil Society Coalition (KP CSC):** Comprising a diverse network of international and local non-governmental organizations, the Civil Society Coalition acts as the primary watchdog of the diamond trade. The coalition is a vocal critic of the Kimberley Process's structural limitations, consensus-driven paralysis, and inability to address state-sponsored violence, environmental destruction, and systemic poverty in mining communities. They advocate for comprehensive structural reforms, public transparency of peer-review reports, and the direct alignment of resource revenues with local community development and poverty reduction.

Stakeholder	Primary Role	Core Geopolitical / Economic Interests	Stance on Regulatory Reform
Botswana	Major Producer	Protect natural diamond reputation; sustain national development; promote local beneficiation.	Supports high standards; cautious of administrative overload and sovereignty infringement.
Fragile African States (e.g., CAR, DRC)	High-Risk Producers	Secure state revenue; control remote regions; protect fragile artisanal livelihoods.	Cautious of strict embargoes that harm local miners; struggle with enforcement

Stakeholder	Primary Role	Core Geopolitical / Economic Interests	Stance on Regulatory Reform
			capacity.
India (Surat/Mumbai)	Processing & Cutting	Maintain manufacturing dominance; protect millions of jobs; promote supply chain stability.	Supports gradual, technology-driven reforms (3Cs); strongly opposes politically divisive redefinitions.
Belgium (Antwerp)	Historic Trading Hub	Enhance market transparency; prevent illicit financial flows; protect competitive position.	Strongly advocates for robust compliance, peer-review, and civil society engagement.
United Arab Emirates (Dubai)	Rapid-Growth Hub	Maximize trading volumes; maintain low-tax, business-friendly environment; protect sovereignty.	Prefers flexible, market-driven regulations; resists intrusive international oversight.
United States & EU	Primary Consumer Markets	Protect consumer trust; prevent financing of terrorism/rebellion; uphold human rights.	Strongly advocates for expanding "conflict diamond" definition to include state-sponsored abuses.
World Diamond Council	Industry Representative	Protect commercial value of natural diamonds; promote self-regulation (System of Warranties).	Supports modernization of the KP; seeks to balance ethical sourcing with industry viability.

Stakeholder	Primary Role	Core Geopolitical / Economic Interests	Stance on Regulatory Reform
Civil Society Coalition	Public Watchdog / Monitor	Eradicate human rights abuses; promote revenue transparency; empower mining communities.	Highly critical of KP limitations; demands binding human rights criteria and end to consensus vetoes.

5. Legal / Policy Framework

5.1 Core Principles

The legal and policy architecture governing the international response to conflict diamonds is founded upon several fundamental principles of international law, trade regulation, and human rights. These core principles provide the normative basis for intervention and dictate the limits of international cooperation:

- **Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity:** Enshrined in Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, the principle of state sovereignty dictates that all sovereign nations have the exclusive right to manage their internal affairs, govern their populations, and exploit their natural resources. Any international regulatory intervention, sanctions regime, or monitoring mechanism must navigate this principle. The Security Council can only bypass state sovereignty without consent when acting under Chapter VII, which requires a formal determination that the situation constitutes a threat to international peace and security.
- **Human Rights and Humanitarian Law:** The international community has a binding obligation under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Geneva Conventions to protect civilians from physical violence, forced labor, and systemic abuse. When natural resource extraction is directly linked to gross human rights violations, the principle of human security asserts that the protection of individuals must take precedence over the unhindered trade of commercial commodities.
- **Supply Chain Traceability and Due Diligence:** Modern international trade policy increasingly recognizes that corporations and importing nations have a responsibility to verify the ethical provenance of their goods. This principle of due diligence asserts that businesses must take proactive, verifiable steps to identify,

prevent, and mitigate human rights risks, conflict financing, and corruption throughout their global supply chains, from the raw material extraction site to the

5.2 Doctrines / Policy Approaches

Over the past three decades, several competing and complementary policy approaches have emerged within the international community to address the nexus of resources and conflict:

- **Restrictive Sanctions and Embargoes:** Historically, the primary policy tool of the Security Council was the imposition of top-down trade restrictions and embargoes designed to completely isolate conflict-affected areas from the global market. While effective in denying rebel groups immediate access to formal export channels, this punitive approach often has severe negative consequences. It drives the trade underground, accelerates smuggling networks, and devastates the livelihoods of vulnerable artisanal mining populations, who are forced to sell their gems at heavily discounted prices to black-market traders.
- **Formalization and Integration:** This development-oriented policy approach asserts that the most effective way to eliminate conflict diamonds is to bring the informal, artisanal mining sector into the formal economy. By providing artisanal miners with legal mining licenses, secure land tenure, access to fair credit, and training in valuation and business management, formalization aims to reduce their vulnerability to extortion, bypass exploitative middlemen, and ensure that resource revenues flow back into local community development.
- **Tripartite Co-Governance:** This innovative policy approach recognizes that national governments alone cannot manage complex, transnational supply chains. It advocates for cooperative governance structures that bring together state authorities, private industry representatives, and independent civil society organizations on an equal footing. This tripartite model, which underpins both the Kimberley Process and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, aims to combine the regulatory power of states, the operational expertise of industry, and the monitoring capacity of civil society to create a more resilient and credible oversight system.

5.3 Existing Frameworks

The international community has developed a comprehensive, yet fragmented, matrix of legal instruments and regulatory frameworks to combat the conflict diamond trade and improve resource governance:

United Nations Security Council Resolutions

The Security Council has adopted numerous targeted resolutions under Chapter VII to address diamond-fueled conflicts in specific countries. These include:

- **Resolution 1173 (1998):** Imposed comprehensive sanctions against the rebel group UNITA in Angola, including a landmark ban on the import of all Angolan rough diamonds not controlled through the state's official Certificate of Origin regime, marking the first time the council utilized a certification system to enforce a commodity ban.
- **Resolution 1295 (2000):** Strengthened the enforcement of the Angola sanctions, encouraged diamond-importing nations to establish severe penalties for sanctions-evasion, and created an independent monitoring mechanism to investigate violations.
- **Resolution 1306 (2000):** Imposed a comprehensive prohibition on the direct or indirect import of all rough diamonds from Sierra Leone, requested the government to urgently establish an operational Certificate of Origin regime, and authorized a Panel of Experts to track the weapons-trade link.
- **Resolution 1343 (2001):** Demanded that the government of Liberia immediately cease all support to the Sierra Leonean RUF rebels and banned all imports of rough diamonds from Liberia, which had served as a primary arms-for-diamonds transit conduit.
- **Resolution 1643 (2005):** Imposed a comprehensive diamond export ban on Côte d'Ivoire following the outbreak of civil war, mandate the UN Group of Experts to monitor the ban, and aligned the council's sanctions with Kimberley Process compliance.

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS)

Established in 2003, the KPCS is an international, multi-stakeholder trade regime designed to eliminate the trade in conflict diamonds. The KPCS currently has fifty-four participating members, representing eighty-one countries (with the European Union counting as a single participant), which account for more than ninety-nine percent of the global rough diamond production and trade. Under the KPCS, participating states make a political and legislative commitment to:

- Incorporate KP minimum standards into national legislation and establish domestic import and export control agencies.

- Prohibit the import of rough diamonds from, and the export of rough diamonds to, any nation that is not a certified participant in the scheme.
- Ensure that every shipment of rough diamonds is transported in a sealed, tamper-proof container and is accompanied by a unique, government-issued Kimberley Process Certificate certifying that the stones have been handled in compliance with the scheme.
- Collect, verify, and publish detailed statistical data on their diamond production, imports, and exports.
- Participate in a peer-review mechanism, including regular review visits and annual reporting, to monitor compliance with established rules.

The Moscow and Washington Declarations

Recognizing the unique developmental challenges facing the alluvial and artisanal mining sectors, the Kimberley Process adopted two key administrative decisions:

- **The Moscow Declaration (2005):** Focused on improving internal controls over alluvial diamond production. It recommended that producing states and the donor community support the registration of artisanal miners, establish functioning land registries, build capacity for mines inspectorates, and promote the formation of mining cooperatives to bring artisanal miners into the formal economy.
- **The Washington Declaration (2012):** Emphasized the integration of economic development principles with Kimberley Process implementation. It encouraged participants to leverage the expertise of international development organizations, establish regional technical assistance hubs, reduce the cost and bureaucratic barriers of mining licenses for local communities, and include dedicated sections on ASM development in their KP annual reports.

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and OECD Due Diligence Guidelines

The EITI is a global standard for the good governance of oil, gas, and mineral resources. It requires oil and mining companies to disclose their payments to governments, and governments to disclose their received revenues, thereby reducing corruption, enhancing public accountability, and ensuring that natural resource wealth is managed to the benefit of the population. Complementing this, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) developed the Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas. This framework provides

a practical, five-step risk-management methodology for companies to verify that their mineral purchases do not contribute to conflict, human rights violations, or financial crime, establishing a global standard for corporate social responsibility in the extractive sector. To support this, the government of Sierra Leone worked closely with an independent valuator to ensure that its internal diamond valuation matched international standards, reducing the incentive for undervalued smuggling. For delegates, this regulatory matrix represents the structural tools currently available. In debate, delegates should not simply call for new resolutions, but should analyze why existing frameworks are failing to communicate. For example, there is currently no legal mechanism to automatically trigger a Security Council investigation when the Kimberley Process identifies a compliance failure. Delegates can propose the creation of a formal, inter-institutional bridge between the KP and the UNSC, allowing the council to utilize its Chapter VII powers to enforce KP compliance when a participant repeatedly violates the minimum standards.

5.4 Gaps and Limitations

Despite this extensive network of legal and policy instruments, the international governance framework for natural resources suffers from several critical structural gaps and operational limitations:

- **The Rebel-Focused Definition Loophole:** The most significant limitation of the Kimberley Process is its narrow, outdated definition of conflict diamonds as rough stones used by rebel movements to finance conflict aimed at undermining legitimate governments. This definition completely excludes situations where internationally recognized governments, military forces, or state-backed security contractors commit gross human rights abuses, extrajudicial killings, and systemic corruption in diamond-producing regions. Because of this loophole, states can commit severe atrocities against their own citizens while remaining in legal compliance with the KPCS, allowing dirty diamonds to be certified as clean and sold on the legitimate market.
- **Consensus-Based Paralysis:** The Kimberley Process operates on a strict model of consensus-based decision-making, where any participating state holds a de facto veto over all substantive decisions, administrative policies, and reform proposals. While designed to ensure inclusivity and respect for state sovereignty, this structure frequently paralyzes the organization. A single participant, particularly one implicated in human rights violations or political corruption, can block critical resolutions, prevent the imposition of necessary embargoes, and stall efforts to expand the definition of conflict diamonds. For example, for three consecutive

years, the Kimberley Process failed to adopt a standard Plenary communiqué due to geopolitical deadlocks and political vetoes among participants.

- **Lack of Independent Verification and Enforcement:** Neither the Security Council nor the Kimberley Process possesses an independent, permanent monitoring and enforcement agency. The KP has no permanent central office or staff; it relies entirely on the voluntary, rotating contributions of participants under the principle of burden-sharing. The peer-review visits are brief, pre-announced, and require the formal consent of the host government, making it exceptionally easy for states to temporarily hide non-compliance, restrict the movement of observers, and manipulate data. Furthermore, the enforcement of diamond bans and national borders depends entirely on the administrative capacity and political commitment of individual states, which are often weak, corrupt, and resource-constrained.
- **Paper-Based Inefficiencies and Fraud Vulnerability:** The Kimberley Process still relies heavily on a paper-based certification system. These physical certificates are highly vulnerable to forgery, theft, and corruption, with numerous documented cases of fake Kimberley Process certificates accompanying illicit diamond parcels from West and Central Africa. The lack of a unified, real-time digital registry and harmonized customs data makes it extremely difficult for importing nations to verify the authenticity of certificates in a timely manner.

6. Role of International / Institutional Actors

The international response to the challenge of conflict diamonds is characterized by a complex, multi-layered ecosystem of institutional actors, each operating with distinct mandates, resources, and strategic priorities.

The United Nations System

The United Nations plays a central coordinating and enforcing role in resource governance. Within the UN system, the Security Council provides the necessary binding authority under Chapter VII to impose international trade bans, arms embargoes, and targeted sanctions. To support the council's work, the Secretary-General provides regular reports, strategic guidance, and coordinates the deployment of peacekeeping operations. UN peacekeeping missions have played a vital role in stabilizing conflict zones, securing diamond-producing areas, and assisting host governments in rebuilding administrative capacity. Additionally, the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission and country teams work in post-conflict environments to support the formalization of artisanal mining, train former combatants for employment in legitimate industries, and integrate natural resource management into broader national recovery and sustainable development

strategies.

International Financial Institutions

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund play a significant role in addressing the economic dimensions of the resource curse. The World Bank Group provides vital technical assistance, capacity building, and financial resources to governments in resource-rich, fragile states. These programs focus on:

- Improving the transparency and accountability of state resource revenue management systems.
- Supporting the formalization, licensing, and safety standards of the artisanal and small-scale mining sector.
- Assisting producing countries in designing and implementing competitive, transparent fiscal regimes that ensure a fair share of resource wealth benefits local populations rather than corrupt elites.

Regional Organizations

Regional economic communities in Africa are critical partners for the enforcement of international regulations and the promotion of regional stability:

- **The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS):** ECOWAS has been at the forefront of efforts to address the regional dimensions of resource conflicts. Following the civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia, ECOWAS member states took collective action to undertake regional inquiries into the illegal trade in diamonds, coordinate national customs policies, and support the harmonization of export taxes to reduce the incentives for cross-border smuggling. ECOWAS also plays a vital mediation role, deploying its own peacekeeping and monitoring forces to stabilize borders and prevent proxy wars funded by resource exploitation.
- **The Southern African Development Community (SADC):** SADC, which includes major stable producers like Botswana and South Africa as well as transition states like Angola, provides a vital regional forum for aligning resource policies. SADC was a primary supporter of the diamond sanctions against the Angolan rebel group UNITA, demonstrating how regional political consensus can strengthen the effectiveness of global sanctions regimes.

Civil Society and Human Rights Advocacy Groups

Non-governmental organizations are the moral conscience and intellectual drivers of reform in the global diamond trade. Heavyweight human rights organizations, alongside specialized natural resource investigators, first drew international attention to the devastating link between rough diamonds and civil wars in the late 1990s. These groups conduct dangerous field research, compile forensic financial reports, and launch highly successful consumer awareness campaigns that threaten the diamond industry with widespread boycotts. Within the Kimberley Process, the Civil Society Coalition acts as an essential watchdog, consistently pushing for binding human rights standards, independent monitoring, and the elimination of the consensus-based veto. When the KP has proven incapable of reform, civil society organizations have not hesitated to temporarily withdraw their participation, successfully utilizing public pressure to force governments and the industry to address critical loopholes.

7. Impact Analysis

7.1 Social Impact

The social consequences of diamond-fueled conflicts are catastrophic and long-lasting, resulting in the structural devastation of entire societies. The primary social impact is the systematic violation of fundamental human rights. In diamond-producing areas controlled by rebel groups or corrupt military factions, civilian populations are frequently subjected to horrific physical violence, including forced labor in the mines, sexual violence, and arbitrary executions.

In Sierra Leone, the rebel group RUF utilized a deliberate strategy of terror, hacking off the limbs of thousands of civilians to induce mass panic and clear the diamond-rich areas of populations, thereby facilitating unhindered mining operations. A second profound social impact is the disruption of education, public health, and family structures, leading to the generational exploitation of children. Child labor is rampant in the informal, artisanal diamond mining sector, where hundreds of thousands of children are forced by economic desperation or physical coercion to perform hazardous, exhausting work under highly dangerous conditions. These children are denied access to education, trapping them in cycles of permanent illiteracy and poverty. Furthermore, diamond-rich, fragile regions are major hotspots for the recruitment of child soldiers, who are forced by armed groups to serve as combatants, sexual slaves, and mine workers. The social disintegration caused by this systematic abuse leads to deep psychological trauma, high rates of substance abuse, and the erosion of traditional community structures.

Additionally, resource conflicts generate massive, destabilizing flows of internally

displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. To escape violence and forced labor, millions of people are compelled to abandon their homes and land, fleeing to overcrowded urban slums or refugee camps in neighboring countries. This mass displacement triggers severe humanitarian crises, characterized by extreme food insecurity, lack of clean water, and the rapid spread of infectious diseases. There is also a significant gender dimension to this social impact. Women and girls in resource-rich, conflict-affected areas suffer from high rates of gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, and economic marginalization. While women comprise a significant portion of the labor force in artisanal mining, they are frequently excluded from ownership of mining claims, denied access to credit, and forced to perform the lowest-paying, most hazardous tasks while having no voice in the management of resource revenues.

7.2 Economic Impact

While diamonds possess immense potential to serve as a powerful engine for economic growth and poverty reduction, as demonstrated by the case of Botswana, their exploitation in fragile states often results in severe economic distortion, impoverishment, and the entrenchment of the resource curse. The primary economic impact of the illicit diamond trade is the massive loss of national public revenue through smuggling and tax evasion. Because a high percentage of rough diamonds are smuggled across porous borders and exported through informal or falsified channels, governments are deprived of critical tax revenues, royalties, and export duties. This chronic fiscal shortfall starves the state of the financial resources necessary to invest in vital public services, such as education, healthcare, transport infrastructure, and law enforcement, leading to a permanent cycle of state weakness and underdevelopment. Furthermore, the concentration of economic activity and investment in the extractive sector leads to severe structural distortion of the national economy. This phenomenon leads to Dutch Disease, where resource exports cause a significant appreciation of the national currency, making other domestic sectors, such as agriculture and manufacturing, highly uncompetitive on the global market. The country becomes dangerously dependent on a single, highly volatile commodity, leaving the entire economy vulnerable to sudden, devastating global price shocks.

At the local level, the influx of informal diamond wealth often generates severe economic inequality, inflation, and the development of highly exploitative, short-term economic bubbles. In artisanal mining towns, the prices of basic goods, housing, and food frequently skyrocket, making life unaffordable for non-mining residents.

The wealth generated by the mines is concentrated in the hands of a small number of local elites, corrupt politicians, and foreign buyers, who engage in rent-seeking behaviors and

capital flight, exporting their profits to offshore tax havens and luxury international real estate markets rather than reinvesting in the sustainable development of the local economy. When the alluvial deposits are depleted, these mining towns are left as abandoned, economically devastated environmental wasteland, with no alternative industries or sustainable livelihoods. For delegates, the primary economic challenge is to design fiscal policies that break this cycle. In debate, delegates can advocate for the creation of mandatory, state-managed sovereign wealth funds, modeled on Botswana's, which would require a set percentage of mineral revenues to be invested in long-term, diversified international assets and local infrastructure. Delegates can propose that the Security Council condition the lifting of mineral sanctions on a state's legislative adoption of transparent, independently audited sovereign wealth funds to ensure that resource wealth is preserved for the public benefit.

7.3 Institutional / Political Impact

The political and institutional impact of the conflict diamond trade is characterized by the systematic erosion of state authority, the degradation of the rule of law, and the entrenchment of systemic corruption.

The primary political consequence is the transformation of state institutions into instruments of personal enrichment and political patronage. When control of diamond-producing regions provides politicians and military commanders with direct, unaccountable access to wealth, the state ceases to function as a public service provider. Instead, it becomes a commercial prize to be captured. Systemic corruption spreads through every level of the state bureaucracy, as officials from the judiciary, customs, border security, and police are easily bribed by smuggling networks to falsify documents, release seized shipments, and ignore illegal mining operations. This institutional decay destroys public trust in the legitimacy of the government, creating a highly volatile political environment characterized by deep bitterness, mistrust, and alienation among the population. Furthermore, the availability of autonomous diamond revenues to non-state armed groups directly undermines the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force. Rebel movements and warlords utilize these revenues to build private militaries that are better armed and paid than the national security forces, allowing them to carve out autonomous territories, defy central government authority, and challenge the sovereignty of the state.

The struggle for control over these lucrative resource zones frequently triggers military coups, civil wars, and regional proxy conflicts, as neighboring governments are drawn into the trade, sponsoring rebel groups in adjacent states to secure a share of the mineral

wealth. This constant threat of instability discourages long-term foreign direct investment, prevents the development of stable democratic institutions, and traps the nation in a perpetual state of political fragility and conflict. Delegates can analyze this political decay through the lens of state capture. When resource wealth is concentrated in the hands of a small, unaccountable elite, the formal institutions of democracy and governance are hollowed out, serving merely as a legal facade to protect illicit economic networks. In debate, delegates can argue that political stabilization requires more than holding democratic elections; it requires the systematic dismantling of the illicit financial-military networks that control the natural resource sector, proposing that the Security Council utilize its sanctions powers to freeze the personal assets of any political or military official found to be pocketing state mineral revenues.

7.4 Distributional Effects

The economic benefits and physical costs of the global diamond trade are distributed in a highly unequal, asymmetric manner, exposing profound injustices at every stage of the value chain. At the bottom of this global hierarchy are the artisanal miners and local communities who bear the full physical, social, and environmental costs of diamond extraction. These individuals perform grueling, highly hazardous manual labor in waterlogged pits, exposed to severe physical injuries, waterborne diseases, and constant exploitation by armed actors and corrupt officials. Yet, they receive only a microscopic fraction of the final value of the gems they extract, often earning less than two dollars a day, which is insufficient to escape extreme poverty.

In contrast, the vast majority of the wealth, value addition, and profits are captured by downstream actors located in secure, wealthy nations. These include:

- **Local Elites and Smuggling Networks:** Corrupt military commanders, politicians, and specialized cross-border syndicates who utilize violence, coercion, and bribery to buy rough diamonds at heavily discounted prices and launder them into the formal trade.
- **International Trading and Cutting Hubs:** Sorting, trading, and manufacturing bourses, which capture immense value through commercial trade, processing, and the transformation of rough stones into polished gems.
- **Global Jewelry Brands and Retailers:** Major luxury brands and retailers in the United States, Europe, and Asia, who sell polished diamonds to consumers at massive markups, leveraging sophisticated marketing and branding to capture the highest margins of the value chain.

This profound distributional asymmetry means that while the natural wealth of African nations is systematically extracted to adorn consumers in the developed world and enrich international intermediaries, the local producing populations are left with nothing but environmental devastation, physical trauma, and systemic underdevelopment. For delegates, this distributional analysis is a powerful tool to push for systemic reform of the global value chain. Delegates can argue that the ethical consumer movement is insufficient unless it is accompanied by structural policies that redistribute value upstream. In debate, delegates can propose the creation of an international mineral valuation standard, which would require global jewelry retailers to pay a mandatory, fair-trade premium directly to local mining cooperatives, demonstrating how targeted economic redistribution can build community-level resilience and prevent the return of conflict financing.

8. Case Studies

8.1 Angola

The civil war in Angola stands as one of the most prominent and devastating examples of a conflict sustained and prolonged by the illicit trade in natural resources. Following its independence from Portugal in 1975, Angola was immediately plunged into a complex, multi-decade civil war that became a major proxy arena of the Cold War. The conflict was waged primarily between the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), which established the central government, and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), a powerful rebel movement led by Jonas Savimbi. During the Cold War, both factions relied heavily on financial and military sponsorship from global superpowers, with the MPLA receiving support from the Soviet Union and Cuba, while UNITA was funded by the United States and apartheid South Africa. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s led to a rapid withdrawal of this external funding.

Rather than bringing peace, this geopolitical transition compelled both warring parties to turn to the direct exploitation of Angola's vast natural resources to sustain their war efforts. The MPLA government utilized its control over the country's offshore deepwater oil reserves to fund its state military, while UNITA turned its focus to the interior regions, seizing control of over seventy percent of Angola's diamond-producing territory, particularly the rich alluvial deposits along the Cuango Valley. Between 1992 and 1998, UNITA generated up to thirteen billion dollars from the illicit trade of rough diamonds. This massive, autonomous source of wealth allowed Jonas Savimbi to maintain a highly sophisticated military force, bypass international arms embargoes, and purchase vast arsenals of weapons, including tanks, artillery, and surface-to-air missiles, on the

international black market. UNITA bypassed trade restrictions by utilizing corrupt regional networks, falsifying end-user certificates, and smuggling rough diamonds through neighboring transit countries, particularly Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) and Togo, where the gems were mixed with local parcels and exported to European trading centers.

The Security Council responded by taking unprecedented action under Chapter VII to target UNITA's economic lifelines:

- **Resolution 1173 (1998):** Mandated a comprehensive ban on the direct or indirect import of all rough diamonds from Angola that were not controlled through the state's official Certificate of Origin regime, marking the first time the council utilized a certification system to enforce a commodity ban.
- **The Fowler Report (2000):** Under the leadership of Canadian Ambassador Robert Fowler, the Angola Sanctions Committee conducted a groundbreaking, highly aggressive investigation into sanctions-busting networks. The resulting report utilized a novel strategy of naming and shaming, directly identifying sitting heads of state, international arms traffickers, and major diamond dealers who had facilitated UNITA's illegal trade.
- **Resolution 1295 (2000):** Hardened the sanctions regime, established a permanent monitoring mechanism, and encouraged diamond-importing nations to establish severe penalties for possession of illegal Angolan stones.

These targeted measures, combined with the military defeat of UNITA and the death of Jonas Savimbi in 2002, successfully brought an end to the civil war. While the certification system established in Angola served as a direct inspiration for the global Kimberley Process, the legacy of the conflict remains visible. Angola's diamond sector continues to struggle with high levels of informality, smuggling, and human rights abuses in rural mining areas, demonstrating that the formal end of a civil war does not automatically resolve the underlying structural challenges of resource governance. For delegates, the primary lesson of the Angolan case is the power of targeted, investigative monitoring. The Fowler Report demonstrated that sanctions are completely ineffective unless they are accompanied by a rigorous, independent mechanism that identifies and penalizes the specific international facilitators of illicit trade. In debate, delegates can propose the institutionalization of the Fowler model, advocating for the creation of a permanent, well-funded UN sanctions intelligence unit with the mandate to conduct continuous, forensic financial audits of transnational smuggling networks.

8.2 Sierra Leone

The civil war in Sierra Leone during the 1990s became the global symbol of the horrors associated with conflict diamonds, directly inspiring the international outcry that led to the creation of the Kimberley Process. The conflict began in 1991 when a small, brutal rebel group known as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), led by Foday Sankoh, launched an armed insurgency from the eastern border regions with the explicit goal of overthrowing the central government. While the RUF exploited local grievances regarding state corruption and systemic poverty, the group lacked any coherent political ideology. Its primary operational focus was the rapid acquisition and control of Sierra Leone's rich alluvial diamond fields, particularly in the Kono and Tongo districts.

The RUF utilized a deliberate, systematic campaign of terror against civilian populations to secure and maintain control of the diamond fields. This campaign was characterized by the widespread amputations of hands and limbs to prevent civilians from mining diamonds for the government or farming, the mass abduction of children to serve as child soldiers, and the systematic use of sexual violence and forced labor. At its peak, the RUF's annual income from rough diamonds was estimated at one hundred and twenty-five million dollars. The rebel group used these funds to purchase automatic weapons, ammunition, and communication equipment on the international black market, allowing them to sustain a high-intensity war against both the national military and international peacekeeping forces. The RUF's illicit trade was heavily facilitated by the active involvement of the government of neighboring Liberia, led by President Charles Taylor. Liberia served as the primary transit hub and arms-for-diamonds conduit for the RUF. Rough diamonds mined in Sierra Leone were smuggled across the border into Liberia, where Charles Taylor's state security apparatus laundered them into the legitimate international market, providing the RUF with immediate access to weapons, logistics, and safe haven in return.

The Security Council took comprehensive action under Chapter VII to break this transnational network:

- **Resolution 1306 (2000):** Imposed a comprehensive international ban on the import of all rough diamonds from Sierra Leone, while requesting the government to establish an operational Certificate of Origin regime. This resolution also established an independent Panel of Experts to investigate the arms-for-diamonds link.
- **Resolution 1343 (2001):** Imposed binding sanctions against the government of Liberia, demanding that Charles Taylor cease all support to the RUF and banning all imports of rough diamonds from Liberia.
- **Community Development Fund Initiatives:** Following the deployment of the

United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the disarmament of the rebels, the government implemented a system where twenty-five percent of total export taxes paid by legitimate diamond exporters were reserved for a dedicated Community Development Fund, designed to directly benefit local mining chiefdoms based on the number of active licenses, thereby incentivizing local communities to support the legitimate trade.

The successful end of the war in 2002 led to a rapid increase in Sierra Leone's legal diamond exports. However, the structural vulnerabilities of the artisanal mining sector remain a major challenge. The majority of local miners continue to live in extreme poverty, working under informal and hazardous conditions, highlighting the deep difficulty of converting mineral wealth into broad-based, sustainable development.

8.3 Zimbabwe

The case of the Marange diamond fields in Zimbabwe represents a profound structural failure of the Kimberley Process and highlights the critical limitations of its narrow, rebel-focused definition of conflict diamonds. In 2006, vast, highly accessible alluvial diamond deposits were discovered in the Marange region of eastern Zimbabwe, triggering a massive, unregulated rush of tens of thousands of local artisanal miners.

Rather than supporting the formalization of this discovery to benefit the local economy, the legitimate government of Zimbabwe, under the leadership of President Robert Mugabe, took violent action to assert state control. In October 2008, the Zimbabwean government launched "Operation Hakudzokwi" (Operation No Return). The national military, supported by helicopter gunships, automatic weapons, and attack dogs, violently swept through the Marange diamond fields, committing gross human rights abuses.

Military forces killed an estimated two hundred artisanal miners, engaged in widespread torture, beatings, and forced labor, and systematically drove local communities off their land. Following this violent seizure, the military established direct control over the mining zones, forcing local miners to work in syndicates under armed guard, with the proceeds of the diamond sales laundered through state-owned joint ventures and shell companies to enrich military commanders and corrupt political elites. Because the Kimberley Process defines conflict diamonds strictly as rough stones used by rebel movements to finance conflict aimed at undermining legitimate governments, Zimbabwe's state-perpetrated military violence did not technically violate the core definition of the scheme. When civil society organizations and several member states demanded that Zimbabwe's diamond exports be suspended, the government of Zimbabwe, supported by allied participants within the consensus-based KP framework, utilized its veto power to block any formal declaration of non-compliance.

This political deadlock led to several critical developments:

- **Systemic Laundering of "Dirty" Diamonds:** Despite overwhelming evidence of gross human rights abuses and military-run smuggling networks, the Kimberley Process allowed Zimbabwe to maintain its certified status, effectively laundering diamonds associated with state violence into the clean, legitimate international market.
- **Civil Society Boycotts:** Outraged by the KP's refusal to address the Zimbabwean realities in the Marange fields, founding civil society organizations formally ended their partnership with the Kimberley Process, declaring that the scheme had become an accomplice to diamond laundering and was no longer fit for purpose.
- **The Definition Reform Debate:** The Zimbabwe case serves as the primary catalyst for ongoing, highly contested efforts by Western consumer markets and civil society to expand the definition of conflict diamonds to include state-sponsored violence and human rights abuses, a reform that continues to face intense resistance from sovereign-focused producer states and trading hubs.

The Marange case study demonstrates that state-sponsored violence can be just as devastating and destabilizing as rebel-led insurgencies, exposing a major loophole in global resource governance that the Security Council must address to remain relevant in the contemporary security landscape. For delegates, the Zimbabwe case is a prime example of the tension between state-sponsored violence and international regulation. It exposes a profound structural loophole: when the state itself is the perpetrator of atrocities, the traditional international frameworks protect the state under the guise of sovereignty. In debate, delegates can leverage this case to propose an independent, UN-administered human rights monitoring system for the extractive sector, arguing that the Security Council must override the Kimberley Process's consensus model when a government utilizes its state military to commit atrocities in resource-producing zones.

8.4 Central African Republic

The Central African Republic (CAR) stands as the most complex contemporary challenge on the Security Council's resource security agenda, representing the intersection of state fragility, ethnic conflict, and transnational mercenary networks in the modern diamond trade. The country has been mired in systemic instability for decades, but the crisis intensified in March 2013 when a coalition of primarily Muslim rebel groups, known as the Séléka, launched a violent coup that overthrew the government, triggering a brutal

counter-insurgency by predominantly Christian self-defense militias, known as the Anti-Balaka. Both the Séléka and Anti-Balaka factions rapidly seized direct control of CAR's rich alluvial diamond fields in the western and eastern regions of the country, utilizing the proceeds from illicit gem sales to fund their operations, purchase weapons, and pay combatants. The Kimberley Process responded by imposing a comprehensive international embargo on all rough diamond exports from CAR in May 2013, effectively isolating the nation from the legal global market.

To alleviate economic pressure on vulnerable artisanal miners who depend on the diamond trade for survival, the Kimberley Process gradually eased the embargo between 2015 and 2019, establishing specific compliant zones in western CAR where the government had re-established basic state authority and could verify the legal provenance of local stones. However, the implementation of these compliant zones was highly fragile, and ongoing violence, corrupt administrative structures, and lack of state capacity prevented investor confidence from returning. The security dynamics shifted dramatically in 2017 when the CAR government, facing a renewed rebel advance that threatened the capital city of Bangui, turned to the Russian-backed Wagner Group for military assistance.

Wagner's involvement rapidly transformed conflict financing and mineral extraction in CAR. The mercenary group did not limit its activities to military operations; it systematically seized direct control of lucrative gold and diamond mining areas, utilizing intimidation, violence, and extrajudicial killings to displace local artisanal miners and establish monopoly control over the trade.

To bypass international sanctions and the Kimberley Process embargo, Wagner established front companies and diamond-buying houses. Between late 2019 and early 2022, a Wagner-linked buying house officially shipped over six hundred thousand dollars worth of rough diamonds to international trading hubs, primarily Dubai, where they were mixed with legal parcels and laundered into the legitimate global supply chain. When this buying house was exposed and sanctioned by the United States, the European Union, and the United Kingdom, Wagner adapted its business networks, shifting its focus in specific prefectures to the timber trade through another sanctioned entity. Furthermore, Wagner drove a massive gold rush, securing large-scale mining operations through a private mining enterprise. Consequently, gold and timber surpassed diamonds as the primary revenue source for both rebel factions and government-backed forces, highlighting the diversification of conflict financing.

In November 2024, the Kimberley Process abruptly decided to lift the decade-old embargo on CAR's rough diamond exports. This controversial decision was largely

political, driven by considerations of state sovereignty and framing the embargo as unwelcome Western interference. However, the embargo was lifted without any comprehensive plan to address persistent challenges, such as systemic corruption, transnational smuggling networks, and the continued physical presence of armed actors and mercenary forces in mining areas. By lifting the embargo under these conditions, the Kimberley Process has raised existential questions about its continued credibility and relevance, presenting the Security Council with a critical challenge to prevent the resurgence of a major conflict-financing channel.

Case Study	Key Insurgent / Armed Actors	Primary UN Security Council Resolutions	Primary Laundering & Smuggling Routes	Key Governance / Regulatory Failures
Angola	UNITA vs. MPLA Government	Resolutions 1173 (1998), 1295 (2000)	Smuggled via Zaire (DRC) and Togo to European trading centers.	Weak border control; fake end-user certificates; lack of global supply chain tracing (pre-KP).
Sierra Leone	RUF vs. Central Government	Resolutions 1306 (2000), 1343 (2001)	Smuggled across porous borders into Liberia (Charles Taylor's proxy conduit).	Extreme state collapse; complete lack of regulatory presence in remote alluvial fields.
Zimbabwe	National Military Forces	None (No consensus due to P5 veto and sovereign focus)	Laundered through state joint ventures and shell companies to international	Narrow "conflict diamond" definition loophole; consensus-based veto paralysis

Case Study	Key Insurgent / Armed Actors	Primary UN Security Council Resolutions	Primary Laundering & Smuggling Routes	Key Governance / Regulatory Failures
			hubs.	within the KP.
Central African Republic	Séléka & Anti-Balaka; Wagner Group	Resolution 1643 (and related country-specific mandates)	Smuggled via Cameroon land routes or direct air freight to Dubai, Lebanon, and West Africa.	Abrupt lifting of embargo in Nov 2024 without resolving corruption, smuggling, or mercenary presence.

The CAR case study represents the absolute frontier of modern resource security, showing how transnational mercenary networks can systematically capture a state's extractive sector under the guise of security assistance. In debate, delegates can use the CAR case to argue that the Security Council must expand its definition of armed actors to include private military contractors and state-backed mercenaries. Delegates can propose the creation of an international Wagner-watch mechanism, which would coordinate global financial and physical tracking of any private military company operating in resource-rich, fragile environments, preventing the laundering of their illicit mineral revenues.

9. Challenges to Cooperation

The formulation of a cohesive, effective international response to the challenge of conflict diamonds is hindered by several deep-seated political, economic, and institutional challenges that prevent consensus among global actors.

Sovereignty vs. International Oversight

The primary obstacle to international cooperation is the fundamental structural friction between national sovereignty and international oversight. Many resource-producing nations in Africa, often supported by geopolitical allies on the Security Council, view intrusive international monitoring, binding supply-chain audits, and the deployment of independent inspectors as direct infringements on their sovereign right to manage their internal natural resources. These states argue that international regulatory frameworks

should act as supportive, voluntary capacity-building mechanisms rather than punitive instruments that override national judicial and administrative systems. This protective stance makes the establishment of mandatory, independent international monitoring systems exceptionally difficult, as sovereign states can easily refuse access to reviewers, restrict the movement of UN panels, and reject the imposition of external standards.

Consensus-Based Decision-Making Paralysis

Within the Kimberley Process, the strict adherence to a consensus-based voting model represents a major structural barrier to effective action. While designed to ensure that all participating states, regardless of their size or wealth, have an equal voice in global diamond governance, this model has devolved into a mechanism of paralysis. Because any single participant holds a de facto veto, politically sensitive reforms, such as expanding the definition of conflict diamonds to include state-sponsored violence or human rights abuses, are routinely blocked by states that are either implicated in such abuses or fear that such rules could be used as political tools by Western powers. This structural paralysis prevents the KP from adapting to contemporary security threats, allowing violators to exploit the consensus requirement to shield themselves from accountability and maintain their access to the legitimate global market.

Geopolitical Rivalries and P5 Gridlock

The broader geopolitical fragmentation of the contemporary era directly infects the Security Council's ability to address resource conflicts. The rising strategic competition between permanent members (P5), particularly the United States, European Union, China, and the Russian Federation, has led to a major gridlock on sanctions enforcement and peace operations. In situations like the Central African Republic, Russia's strategic backing of the Wagner Group's mining operations directly conflicts with Western-led efforts to enforce transparency and human rights compliance. This geopolitical division allows state and non-state actors to play P5 members against one another, utilizing the threat of vetoes to weaken sanctions mandates, defund expert monitoring panels, and block coordinated international interventions.

Commercial Interests and Regulatory Competition

The middle and downstream sectors of the diamond value chain are characterized by intense commercial competition between international trading and processing hubs. Hubs operate with distinct regulatory philosophies, tax structures, and compliance standards. Efforts by Western nations to impose strict, mandatory supply-chain due diligence requirements and digital tracing systems are often viewed by competing hubs as protectionist trade barriers designed to give European markets a competitive

advantage or impose excessive administrative costs. This economic rivalry discourages the harmonization of customs data and regulatory standards, as hubs are reluctant to implement stringent controls that could drive trading volumes to less regulated competitor jurisdictions, leading to a race to the bottom in global compliance. For delegates, these challenges represent the political boundaries of debate. To be successful, any draft resolution must build bridges across these divides. A sophisticated delegate can propose a grand bargain: a consensus-building mechanism that offers technical and financial assistance for formalization to sovereign-focused producer states, in exchange for their commitment to implement independent, third-party due diligence audits. This approach shows how economic development can be leveraged to secure geopolitical consensus.

10. Key Policy / Strategic Dilemmas

Delegates on the Security Council must navigate three critical policy and strategic dilemmas when formulating resolutions and strategic interventions. These dilemmas represent deep, unresolved trade-offs where any policy action carries significant negative consequences.

Dilemma 1: Sanctions vs. Livelihoods

The most immediate humanitarian and economic dilemma is the balance between imposing restrictive trade sanctions to cut off conflict financing and protecting the fragile livelihoods of millions of artisanal miners. Alluvial diamond mining is a vital economic survival strategy for an estimated ten percent of the population in fragile African states, where alternative employment, agricultural land, and public services are non-existent. When the Security Council imposes a comprehensive embargo on a country's diamond exports, the immediate result is the collapse of the formal, local gem economy. While designed to starve rebel groups or corrupt elites of funding, the embargo disproportionately harms the poorest, most vulnerable artisanal miners, who are cut off from legal buyers. Faced with starvation and economic ruin, these miners are forced to sell their diamonds at heavily discounted prices to illicit smuggling networks and warlords, who thrive on instability and exploit the embargo to consolidate their control over the trade. Thus, the council must grapple with the tension of whether to impose strict, top-down trade bans that devastate local populations, or allow the continuation of trade under weak controls that risk fuelling armed conflict.

This dilemma provides delegates with a direct, highly effective debating tool. A delegate can challenge the traditional, punitive sanctions model by arguing that comprehensive embargoes are a form of collective punishment that hurts the poorest citizens while enriching black-market war profiteers. They can propose a strategic alternative: the

creation of a UN-administered green corridor system, which would allow local mining cooperatives in embargoed nations to continue exporting their gems directly to the international market, provided the transactions are managed through transparent, independently audited escrow accounts that bypass the state and rebel factions entirely.

Dilemma 2: Formalization vs. Exclusion

A second major dilemma lies in the design of supply-chain traceability and compliance standards. Human rights organizations and Western consumer markets advocate for the rapid implementation of highly advanced, digital certification systems, blockchain-based tracing, and stringent independent third-party audits. However, the rapid imposition of these sophisticated, high-tech standards risks systematically excluding the informal, artisanal mining sector from the legitimate global supply chain. Artisanal miners are overwhelmingly poor, uneducated, and operate in remote, rural areas with no access to internet connectivity, electricity, or formal banking systems. If the international community mandates that only diamonds with full, digital, mine-to-market tracing can be traded legally, the vast majority of artisanal production will be declared illicit. This exclusion does not eliminate the mining; it merely drives it deeper into the informal, black-market economy, hand in hand with transnational criminal networks and armed groups who are more than willing to trade in uncertified stones. The strategic challenge is how to design rigorous, credible compliance systems that secure the supply chain without setting the barrier so high that it criminalizes and marginalizes the very populations it is designed to protect. Delegates can leverage this dilemma to debate the structural design of international trade regulations. They can argue that top-down, Western-designed compliance standards represent a form of regulatory imperialism that ignores the socioeconomic realities of developing nations. To resolve this, a delegate can propose a tiered compliance pathway, which would allow artisanal cooperatives to enter the formal market with basic, low-tech verification (such as physical bagging and tagging by local traditional leaders), while providing them with a structured, five-year technical assistance program to gradually upgrade to full, blockchain-based digital tracing.

Dilemma 3: Focus on Rebel Insurgencies vs. State-Sponsored Violence

The third fundamental dilemma centers on the mandate and definition of conflict diamonds. Expanding the definition of conflict diamonds to include state-sponsored human rights abuses and violence perpetrated by legitimate governments or private security contractors is a critical requirement for addressing contemporary security realities, as demonstrated by the cases of Zimbabwe and the Central African Republic. However, pursuing this reform risks destroying the delicate international consensus that keeps the Kimberley Process functioning. Sovereign-focused producer states and trading

hubs view this expansion as a direct threat to state sovereignty, fearing that human rights criteria will be used selectively by Western powers to impose political sanctions and embargoes on developing nations.

If the Western consumer markets insist on expanding the definition without securing the consensus of producer nations, the Kimberley Process could splinter, leading to the collapse of the unified global certification system and the rise of separate, competing trade blocs. This division would make global monitoring impossible, leading to a massive resurgence of untraceable, illicit diamond flows. The council must weigh the trade-off between maintaining a unified, consensus-driven, yet structurally compromised global system, or pushing for high ethical standards that risk shattering international cooperation.

This dilemma represents the ultimate political fault line in global resource governance. In debate, delegates can use this tension to challenge the council's conceptual foundations. A delegate representing a Western consumer nation can argue that maintaining a compromised consensus is a form of moral cowardice that complicitly launders state-sponsored violence. Conversely, a delegate representing a sovereign-focused producer can argue that expanding human rights criteria is a politically motivated intervention that will destabilize legitimate economies. A strategic compromise could involve proposing the creation of a separate, independent human rights panel under the UN General Assembly, which would evaluate state-sponsored mining abuses and issue advisory recommendations to the Security Council, thereby preserving the technical focus of the Kimberley Process while establishing a political pathway for human rights accountability.

11. Conclusion

The role of conflict diamonds in fuelling armed conflict, human rights violations, and regional instability in Africa remains one of the most critical, evolving challenges on the United Nations Security Council's peace and security agenda. While the classic, large-scale rebel-led civil wars of the late twentieth century have transitioned into periods of stabilization, the underlying structural drivers of resource conflict have adapted and mutated, presenting the international community with complex, multi-dimensional security threats. Today, the challenge is defined not merely by insurgent factions fighting sovereign states, but by the rise of state-sponsored violence, the direct involvement of transnational mercenary networks, and the systemic diversification of conflict financing into gold and timber. The international regulatory frameworks, primarily among them the Kimberley Process, have made remarkable strides in reducing rebel finance, yet they are increasingly paralyzed by their own structural limitations, consensus-based vetoes, and an outdated, rebel-focused definition of conflict diamonds.

For the Security Council, addressing this agenda requires a profound shift in strategic approach. The council must move beyond simple, reactive trade embargoes and embrace comprehensive, developmental, and cooperative resource governance policies.

This transition requires the council to:

- Address the fundamental governance vacuum in remote, mineral-rich regions by assisting host states in building professional, transparent administrative institutions.
- Support the systematic formalization, registration, and economic empowerment of the artisanal and small-scale mining sector to protect miners from exploitation.
- Leverage advanced digital technologies, such as blockchain and geological footprinting, to secure supply-chain traceability without excluding vulnerable populations.
- Foster deep, institutional collaboration between the UN, regional organizations, private industry, and independent civil society observers.

Only by dismantling the financial incentives of resource extraction and ensuring that the natural wealth of African nations is managed to the direct benefit of local populations can the Security Council break the cycle of the resource curse and establish a foundation for sustainable development, human security, and lasting international peace.

12. Questions to Consider

1. How can the United Nations Security Council modernize the definition of conflict diamonds to address contemporary threats, such as state-sponsored human rights abuses and private mercenary networks, without triggering a total collapse of international consensus within the Kimberley Process?
2. What specific measures can the council take to strengthen the physical enforcement of diamond embargoes and arms controls in fragile states characterized by extremely porous borders and weak administrative capacity?
3. How can the international community resolve the strategic tension between imposing restrictive trade sanctions to cut off conflict finance and protecting the fragile livelihoods of millions of artisanal miners?
4. In what ways can advanced digital technologies, such as blockchain-based traceability and automated customs registries, be deployed to secure the global

diamond supply chain without systematically excluding poor, remote artisanal mining communities?

5. What policy frameworks can be established to prevent the Wagner Group and other transnational mercenary syndicates from exploiting state fragility to seize monopoly control over mining concessions and launder illicit minerals?
6. How can the Security Council better coordinate its security-focused interventions with development-focused institutions, such as the World Bank and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, to promote long-term, sustainable natural resource governance?
7. What strategies can be implemented to ensure that a greater share of rough diamond revenues and downstream value addition, such as beneficiation, directly benefits local mining communities rather than international intermediaries and corrupt elites?
8. How can the consensus-based decision-making paralysis of the Kimberley Process be reformed to ensure that the organization can take swift, decisive action against non-compliant participants?
9. Given the increasing diversification of conflict financing, should the Security Council transition from resource-specific sanctions toward a unified, multi-commodity approach to targeting illicit financial flows from fragile states?
10. What role should global consumer markets and retail jewelers play in enforcing supply-chain due diligence, and how can private-sector self-regulation be integrated with binding international law?

13. Glossary

- **Alluvial deposits:** Clay, silt, sand, gravel, or mineral matter deposited by flowing water in riverbeds, floodplains, or deltas, which in Africa serve as a primary, highly accessible source of rough diamonds.
- **Artisanal and small-scale mining:** Low-tech, informal, labor-intensive mineral extraction activities conducted by individuals, families, or small groups utilizing rudimentary tools, often operating outside the formal regulatory economy.
- **Beneficiation:** The process of bringing high-value downstream industrial activities, such as diamond sorting, cutting, polishing, and jewelry manufacturing, into resource-producing countries to generate local employment and state

revenues.

- **Blood diamonds:** A colloquial term for rough diamonds that are mined in conditions of violence, forced labor, and extreme human rights abuses, historically used to describe stones that fund armed conflict.
- **Certificate of Origin:** A formal document issued by a sovereign government authority verifying that a specific shipment of rough diamonds has been mined legally within its territory and complies with international regulations.
- **Compliant zones:** Specifically designated geographical regions within conflict-affected countries where the central government has re-established sufficient administrative authority and physical security to verify and certify the legal origin of local diamond production under Kimberley Process standards.
- **Conflict diamonds:** Rough diamonds used by rebel movements or their allies to finance armed conflicts aimed at undermining or overthrowing legitimate, internationally recognized governments.
- **Dutch Disease:** An economic phenomenon where a sudden surge in natural resource exports leads to a sharp appreciation of the national currency, making other domestic sectors, such as agriculture and manufacturing, highly uncompetitive on the global market.
- **Extractive industries:** Businesses and industrial sectors engaged in the physical extraction of non-renewable natural resources from the earth, including mining, oil and gas extraction, and large-scale forestry.
- **Formalization:** The process of bringing informal, unregulated economic sectors, such as artisanal mining, into the formal legal and administrative economy through the provision of licenses, secure land tenure, tax structures, and legal protections.
- **Independent valuator:** A highly specialized, third-party diamond expert appointed to conduct objective, independent assessments of the physical characteristics and market value of rough diamond shipments to prevent fraud and tax evasion.
- **Kimberlite pipes:** Deep, vertical geological formations of igneous rock that serve as the primary, capital-intensive underground source from which natural diamonds are mined.
- **Rent-seeking:** Unproductive economic behavior where individuals, companies, or

corrupt elites utilize political influence, violence, or institutional control to capture mineral revenues and profits without contributing to local development.

- **Resource curse:** An economic and political paradox where countries with an abundance of non-renewable natural resources experience less economic growth, poorer developmental outcomes, worse governance, and higher rates of internal conflict.
- **System of Warranties:** A global self-regulation mechanism launched by the World Diamond Council that requires all business-to-business invoices for rough diamonds, polished gems, and diamond jewelry to carry a written statement assuring the buyer of compliance with the Kimberley Process and ethical standards.
- **Traceability:** The ability to track the complete physical journey and legal chain of custody of a commodity, such as a diamond, from its specific mine of extraction through every stage of transport, trade, and manufacturing to the final retail consumer.

14. Further Readings

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