BSMUNC Economic and Social Council

Conflict Diamonds

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Overview of Conflict Diamonds

The issue of conflict diamonds has escalated to one of the most pressing issues in some countries. Countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola, The Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, and the Central African Republic have been most affected by the issue of conflict diamonds. The issue of conflict diamonds, also known as "blood diamonds", refers to the illegal trading of diamonds to fund military action that will lead to war against a country's government (Conflict Diamonds). The illegal trade of these diamonds is such a pressing issue in some countries because it has "help fund devastating civil wars in Africa, destroying the lives of many" (Amnesty). In fact, the illegal trading of conflict diamonds is such a wealthy network that "profits from the trade in conflict diamonds, worth billions of dollars, were used by warlords and rebels to buy arms during the devastating wars in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sierra Leone" (Amnesty). Many people have been forced by government opposed groups to illegally mine these diamonds and the civil wars that have resulted from this illegal trade have cost the lives of many (Amnesty).

Current Situation

Many countries, particularly from central and West Africa, are currently dealing with

the issue of conflict diamonds. Although countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola, The Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, and the Central African Republic have been dealing with the actual trading of these diamonds occurring in their countries, there are other countries that have also been affected. For example, countries such as Australia, Botswana, Canada, Namibia, Russia, South Africa, and Tanzania have also been negatively affected by the illegal trading of conflict diamonds (Conflict Diamonds). Rebel groups have entered these countries and exploited their diamonds illegally, causing these countries to have a delay in their "development of infrastructure, schools and hospitals for the good of the communities in which diamonds are found" (Conflict Diamonds). In regards to the countries located in central and West Africa, the issue of conflict diamonds has caused many lives to be lost. In these countries, rebel groups illegally sell conflict diamonds in order to fund civil wars against their own governments. These civil wars have collectively claimed the lives of about 3.7 people, including rebels and innocent civilians (Amnesty). In order to stop this cycle, 81 countries have adopted the Kimberley Process which "imposes extensive requirements on its members to enable them to certify shipments of rough diamonds as 'conflict free' and prevent conflict diamonds from

entering the legitimate trade" (Kimberly). Although the 8 Kimberley Process has helped controlled the situation to some degree, more must be done in order to completely control the issue of conflict diamonds.

Past International Action

Ever since the issue of conflict diamonds began in countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Angola, the Republic of Congo (Brilliant Earth), Côte d'Ivoire, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of Congo the international community has taken multiple steps to combat this issue. Global Witness is an NGO specializing in "exposing the links between natural resources, conflict and corruption and to systematically document and expose how this sustains poverty, fuels instability and destroys the environment" (Global Witness). They made the first breakthrough 10 with this issue when they published, A Rough Trade, released in 1998. This report highlighted how the trade of these diamonds was directly funding the civil war in Angola (Global Witness). Now the international community recognizes that these diamonds have funded civil war and violence in seven African countries. This NGO not only exposed an issue that was overtaking a vast region and amount of people but works with companies and

encourages them to use due diligence when purchasing diamonds.

In 2003 a major milestone was hit in the fight against combating conflict diamonds with the adoption of the Kimberley Process which introduced to stem the flow of conflict diamonds. The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) is used to ensure that diamonds being exported are conflict free. The purpose is "to ensure that diamond purchases were not financing violence by rebel movements and their allies seeking to undermine legitimate governments" (Official Kimberly). There are currently 54 participants in this compromise with the EU counting as a single participant. Some examples of the Kimberley Process taking action within specific countries is the Executive Order 13194, ordered by Bill Clinton (GPO) and Partnership Africa Canada. These forms of action all take a role in creating laws that deal with the export and import of rough diamonds, and also how they are transferred. The Kimberly Process does have shortcomings because often times people are bribed and thus it is not certain whether the diamonds are truly conflict free. Officials can be bribed with \$50 \$100 to declare that diamonds are conflict free even and therefore Kimberley Process Certified. This causes NGOs like Global Witness to abandon the cause because their plans fail to stop the flow of these

diamonds (GPO). It is important to have the trade because it helps promote the economy of Africa and plays a major role in their foreign affairs however it is the violations of the human rights doctrine that have to be stopped while still allowing African countries to produce diamonds and contribute to the economy.

Possible Solutions

While this issue one that is well known because of its exposure in media there needs to be steps recommend to solve the problem in a more hands on manner. Exposure and awareness is important but it will not fix the problem by itself. First, one huge problem is corruption when establishing if the diamonds are truly conflict free. We must find a method to suggest to countries that would limit and eventually end the corruption. This could be done in a multitude of days including the rotation of officials. It is important to address this because once a diamond enters the trade it is more difficult to extract and the nation has the money to continue to fund civil wars. Unilateral Action through trade by expelling countries that knowingly export conflict diamonds are also possible solutions. Some other suggested solutions include international and regional regulations on both countries that buy and sell diamonds. Many of the rebel groups who are involved in the illegal trade of

conflict diamonds often connect with other trade networks across a country's borders. Therefore, it is imperative that countries increase their border control if they are in an area that is heavily involved in the trading of conflict diamonds in order to ensure that these diamonds do not spread to other countries.

Questions to Consider When Researching

- 1. How is your country's economy impacted by the selling and purchasing of conflict diamonds?
- 2. Has your country adopted the Kimberley Process?
- 3. Has your country implemented any policies to control the issue of conflict diamonds?
- 4. What groups of people, if any, in your country are impacted by the collection and distribution of conflict diamonds? Are rebel groups benefitting?

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