



Your Excellencies,  
Presidents and delegates,  
Dear colleagues and friends,

Diamonds are housed all over of the world. In the mines of Yakutia, the North West territories, to the alluvial fields of Congo and Zimbabwe.  
In the various polishing, trading and jewelry manufacturing centers of China India, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas.

But there is only one place on earth they call home and this for more than 500 years. Yes, indeed ladies and gentlemen, a warm welcome to Antwerp, the beating heart of the diamond world.

But this heart can only beat with the support and care of a few important individuals and organizations.

AWDC, representing the interest of the largest rough and polish trading platform in the world has the privilege to be supported by our federal and local governments.

In particular I would like to acknowledge those who are with us today. Our minister president of Flanders, Mr. Kris Peeters, and our governor Mrs. Cathy Berx.  
Your support, over the years has been invaluable to us.

Not to forget our beautiful city and our alderman for diamonds Ludo van Campenhout and vice-mayor Philip Heylen.

Antwerp's unique infrastructure would not be recognized all over the world as in a "class of its own" if not for the support of the various ministries and in particular our ministry of economic, finance and foreign affairs. To their representatives here today, a warm thank you.

It is an immense pleasure for us to see so many excellencies, and I dare to say, friends here today.

I would firstly like to acknowledge a person and an organization not very well known in our industry, but of critical importance.

The Gokhran of Russia and its president Mr. Yurin.  
And of course, Antwerp largest mining partner, Alrosa.

Very grateful indeed to enjoy the presence of the KP Vice-Chair, Mr. Bernardo Campos, their Excellencies Minister of Mines of the Republic of Zimbabwe and Namibia and the South-African delegation led by Mr. Levy Rapoo.

Again Antwerp would not be Antwerp without the presence of those who have believed in us for so many years. First and foremost Rio Tinto, De Beers, Dominion diamonds, and recently Grib Diamonds, as well as all those junior miners and traders who have selected us for their operations.

I would like in particular to salute Tiffany & Co through its subsidiary Laurelton diamonds, among others, who has for many years employed and recognized the unmatched skills of the Belgian diamond cutters.

But dear friends a home needs to be kept warm in the winter and cool in the summer, and this –demands power, fuel if you like. Without this it would rapidly decay. Thanks to the diamond bankers not only ours in Antwerp but all the diamond houses around the world remain hospitable. So yes we have a collective responsibility to maintain the right level of trust and reputation to anchor and further develop our relations.

Allow me to say a few words about what AWDC, representing around 1700 diamond companies here in

# Diamonds love Antwerp

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the heart of Europe is focused on.

Yes indeed we have been discreet leaders for many years. Yes indeed we believe that trade more than politics builds bridges, enrich dialogue and foster friendships. But also, that no one should be left aside. That all those men and women digging or polishing, sometimes in conditions that must keep challenging us, are part of this big diamond family and contribute enormously in creating added value.

And so, the AWDC, among others, proudly supports the important and much recognized work of the Diamond Development Initiative.

This industry cannot afford to produce THE most unique and precious, without maintaining collectively the highest reputation in the eyes of governments and consumers.

We in Antwerp have since many years invested substantially in fundamental and applied research, through the WTOCD in order to maintain and support the integrity of natural diamonds and for ensuring the necessary development of innovative technologies and processes. And so maintain our competitive position.

But dear colleagues, is only by working ALL together, from Surat to New York, from Bangkok to Kinshasa, from Dubai to Tel-Aviv, from Moscow to Harare, from Antwerp to Shanghai, that we can manage and eliminate the risks and challenges to ensure we will continue to reap our well-earned rewards.

As you know we just traveled back from the Kimberley Process meeting in Shanghai with a restructured World Diamond Council and a new board with Edward Asscher as president. I can only say how positive we at AWDC feel being part of such an organization.

To the organizing committee, under Willy Henneuse and the secretariat from the WFDB and IDMA led by Martine De Bruyne and Linda Vancauwenberghe, enormous thanks for your fantastic efforts in bringing us all here today. During the last few weeks, you must have dreamed of a magic wand to complete the challenge, but let me tell you: you accomplished wonders!

To both the WFDB and IDMA, in the name of my board at AWDC we are happy and proud to have been able to contribute to power this event.

With you, the largest of the international diamond industry bodies, rest the responsibility to provide guidance and value to your members. Challenges abound but only if we collectively leverage the drivers for growth will we realize fully the opportunities.

I would like to leave you with this thought: It is in our hands to ensure that to the millions of women around the world, who day in, day out around the globe marvel at our diamonds, which for them represents the start of a life of memories, our diamonds remain a unique gift from nature.

Wishing you all productive debates.  
Thank you.

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