Kimberley Process – India's Role as Chair, 2026

Mains: *GS-II – International Organizations | Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate*

Why in News?

Recently, India has assumed the chair of the Kimberley Process (KP) for the year 2026.

What about Kimberley Process (KP)?

- **KP** – It is a multinational mechanism or structure for governing the ***trade of 'conflict diamonds'*** — the rough (or pre-polished) diamonds & a ***tripartite initiative*** involving governments, the international diamond industry and civil society.
- **Purpose** – It is to govern the trade in conflict diamonds which are used illegally by rebel or insurgent groups across the world to undermine or threaten legitimate governments, as defined in *United Nations Security Council resolutions*.
- **Origin** – It was initiated in *May 2000* when the countries of southern Africa initiated dialogues to prevent the trade in conflict diamonds.
- **Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS)** – Formalized in 2003 after negotiations with 37 signatory parties.
- **Participants** – Currently, it has *60 participants* representing 80 countries with the European Union and its Member States counting as a single participant.
- **Coverage** – It accounts for ***approximately 99.8%*** of the global rough diamond production.
- **India's 2026 Chair** – India has been chosen to chair the Kimberley Process for the ***third time***.
- **Nodal agency for KP in India** – Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC).

What is the Core Feature of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme?

- **Purpose** – It is the most comprehensive international mechanism which ensures that only diamonds from legitimate sources enter the global supply chain.
- **National Enforcement** – Each KP participant country enforces the scheme individually, responsible for verifying compliance within their own jurisdiction.
- **Certification Requirement** – Each consignment is accompanied by a KP certificate verified by a participant country.
- **Trade Restrictions** – The rough diamonds trade is permitted only between certified KP members who comply fully with these international standards.
- **Data Obligations** – Additionally, participant countries are obliged to share timely and accurate statistical data for diamond production and trade, helps maintain

transparency and accountability in the system.

What about the strategic leverage within the Kimberley Process?

- **Major Producers of Rough Diamonds** – Angola, Botswana, Canada, Congo, Namibia and Russia alone account for ***more than 85%*** of the production of rough diamonds, in quantity and value terms.
- **India's Import Role** – Though India is not a producer, it is a major importer of rough diamonds, ***importing roughly 40%*** of the total global imports, both in quantity and value.
- **Cutting & Polishing Hub** – India is the world's leading center for diamond cutting and polishing, and activities are concentrated in ***Surat and Mumbai***.
- **Re-export Markets** – India re-exports polished diamonds to major markets which include China, Hong Kong, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the United States.
- **Strategic Leverage in KP** – India's strategic position, at the heart of the global diamond value chain, gives it unique leverage within the KP to steer meaningful reforms in global diamond governance.

What are the Major Issues Linked to the KP Framework?

- **Narrow definition of conflict diamonds** – Its scope is very narrow, capturing *only the financial mechanism* between rebel groups and governments.
- It *ignores the illicit use of rough diamonds* in state-linked abuses, human rights violations and human trafficking, environmental harm, abuses in artisanal mining, and illicit trade channels.
- **Flaws in decision-making process** – Under the current system, any determination can be blocked, limiting effectiveness.
- Civil society asks how the KP can ever identify 'conflict diamonds' if any such decision is subject to political veto.
- **Civil society concerns –** KP doesn't adequately address community-level violence or state-related abuses.

What about the Central African Republic Case: Lessons for KP Reform?

- **Case study** – The case of the Central African Republic, which was banned from exporting rough diamonds in 2013 and rejoined in 2024.
- It shows that bans without strong support measures tend to increase smuggling and worsen violence rather than stop it.
- **Community Protection vs. State Violence** – Many governments highlighted the need to protect the mining communities, there was less agreement on whether the KP should also address state-related violence.
- A *more inclusive approach* would better reflect the full range of challenges communities experience.

What about India's Reform Opportunities as KP Chair in 2026?

- **Broaden scope** – India may broaden the agenda, without reopening political fights, by forming a technical working group on violence and human rights risks beyond rebel

insurgencies.
- The findings/recommendations from this group may build a consensus before any re-definition of conflict diamonds.
- **Digital Modernisation** – India can leverage its technological strengths to promote digital, tamper-proof KP certificates and harmonised customs data exchange.
- A *blockchain-based certification system* would ensure each shipment carries a unique, immutable and time-stamped digital record linked to key shipment details.
- It would significantly reduce fraud, enhance transparency, and modernise KP operations.
- **Capacity Building** – India can support producer countries by establishing regional KP technical hubs in key producing areas, particularly in central and eastern Africa.
- By offering training, IT support, certification assistance and forensic capacity, would make reforms more feasible and collaborative rather than punitive.
- **Institutional Reforms** – India can advance institutional reforms by adopting independent or third-party audits in a subset of participants and push for full public release of granular KP statistics from participant countries, a step towards greater transparency.
- **Civil society engagement** – Since the KP's strength is its tripartite structure, India can ensure that civil society engagement remains robust by facilitating open communication channels.

What measures India can take with respect to Africa?

- **Highlighting Livelihoods** – India can show how diamonds support jobs and incomes in African communities.
- **Alignment with SDGs** – Push the KP to explicitly acknowledge this reality by aligning its work with relevant Sustainable Development Goals, such as decent work, poverty reduction and responsible consumption.
- **Revenue for Development** – India can help ensure that the KP framework channels diamond revenues toward community development, supporting health, education, and local infrastructure, rather than allowing mining regions to be bypassed.
- **Narrative Shift** – This would help shift the KP's narrative from blocking bad diamonds to enabling a responsible and inclusive diamond trade.

What lies ahead?

- India, as the KP chair and the leader of the Global South, should start pursuing the reform agenda more aggressively to make it a more inclusive, progressive, sustainable, and rule-based multilateral body.

Reference

[The Hindu | A chance for India to polish the Kimberley Process]

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