Ellah Muchemwa: ADPA to launch Africa's first diamond mining standard next year

04 november 2024

Exclusive



The African Diamond Producers Association (ADPA), which is based in Luanda, Angola, and represents the interests of mainly African diamond producers and those with the potential to produce diamonds, will next year launch the Sustainable Development Standard (SDS), which will be the continent's first diamond mining standard.

This follows the ADPA Council of Ministers' 9th Extraordinary Meeting held recently in Harare, Zimbabwe, reaffirming the association's commitment to sustainable diamond mining practices.

ADPA's executive director Ellah Muchemwa told Rough & Polished's Mathew Nyaungwa on the sidelines of the Angola International Diamond Conference, recently held in Saurimo, that the standard would be launched in the first quarter of 2025, focusing on both the artisanal and small-scale mining sector (ASM) and large-scale miners (LSM).

Below are excerpts from the interview.

During a panel debate at the Angola International Diamond Conference, you said ADPA will launch Africa's first diamond mining standard next year. Can you elaborate more on that?

The Sustainable Development Standard for Diamond Mining is an initiative by ADPA for its member states African producers, and it will be the first standard developed by Africans for African mining and diamond trading designed to promote responsible business practices. The SDS is aligned with the principles of Frame 7 of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) and supports other international standards.

We look at it as part of continuous improvement and strengthening the effectiveness of the implementation of the KP minimum standards.

Moreover, our initiative comes at a crucial time for the global diamond industry when the promotion of natural diamonds as a "sustainable choice" to end consumers on global markets is as important as never before. With this initiative, Africa makes a clear statement that it is ready to take responsibility for the sustainable development of our industry and long-term investment in marketing our beautiful product.

What is unique about this standard for Africa when there are several international standards in place?

The Standard is designed to be the first African diamond mining standard, developed by African diamond producers for African diamond producers, and it captures the challenges and reality of diamond mining in Africa and seeks to address concerns on the ground to support responsible mining and sourcing.

The standard is backed by the ADPA membership and supported by governments as best practice that is based on the Frame 7 principles of the KP and other international standards.

If one says that you are reinventing the wheel, what will be your reaction?

No, we are not reinventing the wheel, because SDS is a common standard developed by the African diamond producers targeting both the industrial and ASM sectors and ensuring that the standard is also based on Kimberley Process Principles [for responsible diamond mining and sourcing as best practices] (Frame 7). It's a continuous improvement process to address practices in the upstream and downstream of the pipeline 'by miners for miners and traders'.

ADPA is open to collaboration with other interested standard-setting organisations in the industry for potential cooperation and cross-recognition.

How are you going to implement that standard?

Implementation by the ADPA members will be voluntary and will start in the first quarter of 2025 with a pilot in the ASM sector. The final version of the standard will capture outputs from the pilot in the ASM sector and from industrial mining. ADPA members will be encouraged to go through self-assessment and non-financial audits for the expert team of ADPA to verify the audit outcomes and allow the companies to market their diamonds as sustainable.

In as much as the member states are going to volunteer to make use of or adhere to these standards, what are you going to do to promote the uptake of this protocol?

The launch of any standard or protocol like this one requires time and effort. We will work collectively with our members to promote SDS in our countries and ensure that there is strong stakeholder engagement with local industry organisations and through respective government bodies in the case of the ASM sector. A lot of work has gone into developing implementation guidelines that will be shared with members, and assistance will be provided to the members who need help.

Who will implement the standard?

Well, the standard will be implemented by both large-scale and small-scale companies/players working in the member states. SDS applies to any organisation involved in the rough diamond supply chain from mine to manufacturing regardless of size, type, and geographic location.

How many members do you have at the moment?

At ADPA, we have 20 member states, 15 effective members, and 5 observers.

Do you have hopes to increase your membership?

We are working on increasing the footprint of ADPA on the African continent by engaging and recruiting more members, and we also hope to increase this footprint on the world diamond platform because the ADPA definition of observer

was recently changed to include non-African countries that have diamond expertise to share.

What was the reason behind that change?

To broaden the membership base and benefit from a wider network of countries and industry players through collaboration and cooperation with as many countries as possible.

What are some of the issues that you expect the upcoming 21st Kimberley Process Plenary in Dubai to deal with?

The Plenary is an important decision-making forum, and we look forward to some progress and finalization on various items on the agenda of the current Review and Reform cycle as well as opportunities to strengthen the KPCS for the benefit of our member countries. ADPA will continue to support the KP in pursuing its established mandate and ensuring that those relying on diamonds for livelihoods and future generations benefit from their natural resources.

Mathew Nyaungwa, Editor in Chief, Rough&Polished, recently in Saurimo, Angola