

No. 0120

(Sense-of-the-Assembly)

RESOLUTION ON CONFLICT DIAMONDS IN SIERRA LEONE

ADOPTED by the General Assembly

Funds from sales of diamonds in areas under control of rebel forces in Sierra Leone have financed a brutal war in that West African nation causing the United Nations to designate it as the country with the world's worst quality of life. The United Nations has called for an embargo on trade in rebel-controlled rough diamonds from Sierra Leone and several other African countries. In response, the diamond industry has agreed to set up a system of rough controls with a forgery proof delivery system and computer data base for the tracking of shipments of uncut stones. This system of diamond industry controls must be monitored by U.N.-supervised international agencies. A certificate of origin should be issued for every uncut diamond. In this way the solid diamond-based economies of democratic nations such as Namibia, Botswana and South Africa will not be effected by U.N. imposed embargos aimed at diamonds from Sierra Leone, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

WHEREAS, the human tragedy of war in Sierra Leone cries out for an effective international response; and

WHEREAS, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel movement in Sierra Leone, whose brutality included cutting off the hands, feet and legs of children, has been sustained by the sale of diamonds from mining areas under its control; and

WHEREAS, the income derived from diamonds correlates directly with the RUF's access to arms to continue its brutal war; and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ traces its connection with Sierra Leone to the successful efforts of 19th century New England Congregationalists in returning the crew of the Amistad to that country; and

WHEREAS, both the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ continue to support development and relief efforts of Sierra Leonean Christians through Week of Compassion and One Great Hour of Sharing grants;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U.S.A. and Canada, meeting in Kansas City in July 2001:

Calls upon the United States government to fully support the United Nations embargo on conflict diamonds ;

Urges that the international diamond industry move forward to establish a system for certifying legitimate diamonds and for prohibiting the buying, cutting, and exporting of diamonds originating in rebel-controlled Sierra Leone;

Appeals to the U.S. Congress and the Canadian Parliament to legislate a ban upon the importation of diamonds from any country that does not have rough controls in place to prevent the marketing of conflict diamonds;

Calls upon our congregations to reflect upon this critical issue and advocate to secure the end of conflict diamonds as a means of sustaining the war in Sierra Leone, not only through advocacy with the U.S. and Canadian governments, but also by communicating their concerns to jewelers in their communities, toward the end that dealers in diamonds, who have previously opposed these steps, may be persuaded to support efforts to end the trade in conflict diamonds;

Urges all parties to proceed toward a system of identification and certification that provides no hindrance to the sale of legitimate diamonds because such a hindrance would harm the economies of nations including Botswana, Namibia and South Africa;

Requests Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ to provide educational and advocacy resources to interested Disciples and United Church individuals and entities on conflict diamonds in Africa, and

Mandates the General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U.S.A. and Canada to communicate this resolution to the Prime Minister of Canada, the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, the U.S. President, Secretary of State, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, U.S. Trade Representative, the General Secretary of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa and the General Secretaries of the All Africa Conference of Churches and the councils of churches in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Botswana, Namibia, South African and the United States.