CIBJO highlights the harsh impact of COVID crisis in developing nations, in statement prepared for special session of UN General Assembly

MILAN, ITALY: DECEMBER 7, 2020 — CIBJO, the World Jewellery Confederation, has participated in a special session of the United Nations General Assembly, which took place in New York on December 3 and 4, 2020, looking at the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on people, societies and economies, and discussing the multifaceted and coordinated response required to address the crisis.
CIBJO was invited to participate in the session as the jewellery and gemstone industries’ only representative in the UN’s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), delivering a written statement that was presented to the body on December 3 and posing a question that was addressed in the panel discussions that took place on December 4.

The COVID-19 pandemic was described as the greatest global health crisis since the creation of the United Nations 75 years ago, with fundamental humanitarian, socio-economic, security and human rights implications. To date it has claimed more than 1.3 million lives, infected more than 54 million people and upended the livelihoods billions all over the world. Significantly, it has exposed vulnerabilities and exacerbated inequalities within and between developing and developed countries, hitting the poorest and most vulnerable people particularly hard, the UN General Assembly was told.

“As was the case with almost all business sectors, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the jewellery and gemstone industries presented a range of challenges that had never really been considered, let alone prepared for,” CIBJO President Gaetano Cavalieri noted in his statement to the UN General Assembly. “What was clear was that the potential fallout, both from the health crisis and its economic effects moving forward, would extend considerably beyond the luxury markets.”

“Hundreds of millions of individuals, mainly living in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, are dependent upon the revenues generated by the extraction of precious metals, diamonds and coloured gemstones for their livelihoods. Many of them are involved in artisanal and small-scale mining, and lack the protections afforded to employees of the larger, industrialized mining operations,” the CIBJO President’s statement continued, echoing the call made by others for special attention to be paid to countries and regions that may lack the capacity to provide relief for their citizens during the crisis.

Inequalities within and between developing and developed countries were also addressed in the question that CIBJO posed during the panel discussion. Noting the massive costs associated with purchasing, importing, shipping, handling, delivering and administering the new COVID-19 vaccines, CIBJO asked how can the international community, using multilateral cooperation, ensure that any vaccine that is developed be distributed in a full and fair way to the populations of all countries who need it, and not just the advanced Western nations. “Where will international finance come from to aid the poorest countries in vaccine distribution?” CIBJO asked.

“Although we operate in the luxury sphere, we in the jewellery and gemstone sectors have a particular perspective on the less developed regions of our globe, largely because they are the source of many of the raw materials that we use,” said Dr. Cavalieri, speaking after the UN session. “As a community we have a responsibility to serve the social and economic interests of all our stakeholders, and this is particularly acute during the type of crisis that we are all are living through, although we are not necessarily as affected to the same degree.”

To download CIBJO’s statement to the UN General Assembly, PLEASE CLICK HERE.

CIBJO is the international jewellery confederation of national trade organisations. CIBJO’s purpose is to encourage harmonisation, promote international cooperation in the jewellery industry and to consider issues which concern the trade worldwide. CIBJO’s chief mission is to protect consumer confidence in the industry.