

STATEMENT FOR SPECIAL SESSION OF UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

CIBJO, the World Jewellery Confederation, an NGO in Consultative Status with ECOSOC, would like to commend the President of the General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Volcan Bozkir, in having made a worldwide call to action to address the global pandemic and its impact.

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. 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. Accurate information has been a critical commodity in the unprecedented crisis. A decision was made within CIBJO to create an industry-wide forum that would discuss and address challenges being posed, both health-wise and economically, to the jewellery value chain and its stakeholders. The most effective way to do this it was decided was to create a programme of online webinars.

On April 22, 2020, CIBJO launched an original series of webinars entitled “Jewellery Industry Voices,” running once a week, through July 30, 2020. It concentrated on the economic and social impacts of the COVID crisis. Each webinar took the form of a panel discussion, featuring three or four panellists. Broadcast live, they were also recorded and uploaded thereafter onto CIBJO’s YouTube channel. Many seminars dealt with issues related to responsible sourcing and sustainability. The response to the series was significant, attracting more than 15,000 viewers around the world

A second season of “Jewellery Industry Voices” started on September 2020. It thus far has included webinars, including two broadcasts from the first international industry event to take place live since the COVID-19 lockdown in Europe, which was held in Vicenza, Italy. The first of those considered CSR and sustainability in the jewellery and gemstone sector in the post-COVID environment, and the second was on the growing jewellery industry in Africa and its effort to change the economic paradigm on the continent, where to date almost all raw materials mined are exported and processed elsewhere.

At the grassroots level, a number of jewellery industry companies and organizations associated to CIBJO have conducted individual COVID-related programs, including the production and distribution of PPE in regions where they are active, and the procurement of ventilators and other emergency equipment in rural and undeveloped areas.

We thank you for recognizing that diverse voices should be heard and appreciating that that Civil Society is playing a crucial role in fighting COVID-19.

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