



**DIASPORA CONCERNED KONOS**

**KONO PROGRESSIVE UNION USA**



Kono District Development Association UK

**& KONO UNION USA, INC.**

Press Release Dated: 20th April 2016

**KONO DISTRICT DESCENDANTS WORLDWIDE DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST OCTEA MINING AND TIFFANY & CO.**

KONO DISTRICT DESCENDANTS are calling for a global demonstration this Saturday, 23rd April 2016 to protest Tiffany & Co.'s financial partnership with Ocea Group. Ocea is the sole owner of Koidu Holdings Ltd, which is the subsidiary company that mines diamonds in Kono District and is the largest diamond mining company in Sierra Leone.

In a recent court ruling in Sierra Leone, the high court determined that Ocea is not entitled to pay taxes because the Parent company is not legally registered to do business in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, the same court determined that Koidu Holdings is exempt from paying taxes to the local community. This ruling is an egregious affront to the ordinary citizens of Sierra Leone, one of the poorest countries in the world; and, specifically to the long suffering multiethnic, indigenous peoples of Kono District, which is the least developed region in the country.

Koidu Holdings is headed by Jan Joubert, a South African mercenary from Executive Outcomes who formed the company at the end of the protracted civil war in Sierra Leone. The then Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) allegedly promised payment to these fighters-for-hire with illicit "blood diamonds" from Kono that had fuelled and funded both sides of the devastating war in our country.

Tiffany & Co., a prestigious international diamond retailer, has recently deferred a USD 50 million loan that it provided Ocea/Koidu Holdings to initiate kimberlite mining and is contracted to buy up to 60% of Ocea/Koidu Holdings' raw diamonds from the embattled region of Kono. The Kono District Descendants Worldwide (KDDW) movement and Concerned Konos Inc. want the world to know that many of the beautiful, shiny, encased rocks in the company's luxury boutiques in first world cities are the stolen, tax-free, "blood diamonds" from the soil of our land and impoverished people.

That a foreign based mining company wholly owned by an Israeli billionaire, Benny Steinmetz, can operate in collaboration with postwar mercenaries from South Africa without a license and tax-free in one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world defies all national and international legal norms and ethics governing mining trade as well as common sense.

This court ruling in Sierra Leone exposes Tiffany & Co's apparent complicity – whether intentional or not - in alleged official corruption involving these mercenaries, Mr. Steinmetz and traditional authorities within Kono District who are the supposed custodians of our homeland as well as the highest level of the GoSL.

Join us on Saturday 23rd April 2016 in Chevy Chase Maryland; 5th Avenue New York City; Walnut St in Philadelphia; 400 Oxford Street & 145 Sloane Street in London, UK; to end Tiffany & Co.'s financing of suffering, exploitation and corruption within our indigenous communities and the environmental degradation of Koidu City. On behalf of the indigenous peoples of Kono District, we aim to shut down Ocea/Koidu Holding's illegal mining of stolen diamonds once and for all in Sierra Leone!

For further information, Contact:

Aiah Yornie Sodengbe (UK): +447904942268/asodengbe@hotmail.com; Dr. Fuambai Sia Ahmadu (USA): +12029040023/fahmadu@hotmail.com; Tamba Gborie (UK): +447506516063/tgborie@hotmail.com; Aiah Fanday (USA): +12408213641/fanday@aol.com