

01-GS-16 VOTED with abstentions: The Twenty-third General Synod adopts the resolution, "Conflict Diamonds in Sierra Leone."

RESOLUTION ON CONFLICT DIAMONDS IN SIERRA LEONE

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

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;

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

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

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-third General Synod of the United Church of Christ meeting in Kansas City in July 2001,
Calls on 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 to legislate a ban on the importation of diamonds from any country that does not have "rough controls" in place to prevent the marketing of conflict diamonds;

Calls on our congregations to reflect on this critical issue and advocates 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. Government and Congress, 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, such a hindrance harming the economies of such nations as Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa;

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

Requests the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ to communicate

this resolution to 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 Africa, and the United States.

Funding for this action will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.