

CHAMPAGNE DIAMONDS SET TO INSPIRE JEWELRY DESIGNERS AND CONSUMERS

ALIKE

ANTWERP, APRIL 2008 – RIO TINTO DIAMONDS, the world's largest supplier of champagne diamonds has released its latest range of champagne diamond promotional materials.

Whilst champagne diamonds are not a new phenomenon, they are gaining considerable cachet with high profile jewelry designers and diamond jewelry retailers around the globe.

“The new range of promotional materials is aimed at supporting the retailer, educating the consumer and opening up new distribution channels.“ comments Jean-Marc Lieberherr, head of Rio Tinto Diamonds NV, the Belgium based company that sells the champagne diamonds from its Argyle mine in Australia's isolated outback.

Rio Tinto Diamonds new material positions champagne diamond jewelry firmly with those consumers who like to express their individuality and appreciate the finer things in life. The brochure, sales training programme, web site and other promotional material are aimed at showcasing the full color palette as well as communicating the versatility and accessibility of these very special gems.,,

Champagne diamonds from the Argyle mine are dated at several million years old, with the coloration due to stress on the crystal lattice structure as it was formed deep within the earth's surface. Today it is this range of color from light champagne to deep cognac that is being embraced by jewelry designers for its timeless elegance. As Swiss designer Suzanne Syz points out

“These diamonds mix and match perfectly, not only with each other but also with other colored diamonds, pearls and a variety of gemstones”.

Rio Tinto Diamonds US representative office will be distributing the new champagne diamond promotional materials as part of its charter to drive demand for this product category in the all important US market. Jewelry manufacturers who are interested in developing and promoting champagne diamond collections will have the opportunity to meet with Rio Tinto Diamonds' marketing team at the JCK Las Vegas trade show.

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For further information, images, access to promotional materials or the opportunity to meet with Rio Tinto Diamonds' marketing team , please contact:

Rebecca Foerster

Manager Rio Tinto Diamonds US Representative Office

Telephone : (1 646) 429 1624

Email : rtd.usa@riotintodiamonds.com

Additional information on champagne diamonds can be obtained at www.champagnediamondcenter.com

Notes to Editors:

About Rio Tinto Diamonds

Rio Tinto Diamonds is the sales and marketing division representing the diamond mines of the Rio Tinto Group, one of the world's leading mining companies, including the **Argyle Diamond** mine in Australia, the Diavik Diamond Mine in Canada and the Murowa Diamond Mine in Zimbabwe. The supply of product from three very different mines has enabled **Rio Tinto Diamonds** to provide a full range of diamond production

Rio Tinto is a world class leader in health and safety. Health and safety is the single most important operating characteristic for Rio Tinto and **Rio Tinto Diamonds'** stakeholders have high expectations of performance in this regard.

Rio Tinto Diamonds is ISO 9001 certified and is a leading supporter of the Kimberly Process as well as a founding member of the Council for Responsible Jewellery Practices.

About Rio Tinto's Argyle Diamond Mine

Rio Tinto's Argyle Diamond mine (100% owned by Rio Tinto), in the remote east Kimberley region of Western Australia, is the world's only consistent supplier of rare pink diamonds and provides a large proportion of the world's champagne and cognac diamonds. Production commenced in 1983 and includes small, coloured diamonds – currently produces around 20 million carats per annum.

The discovery of the **Argyle** diamond deposit is one of innovation, patience, foresight and meticulous attention to detail in an area that is remote, even for Australians. The search for diamonds in the Kimberley region began in 1972 with a number of exciting finds proving uneconomic. However, in October 1979 diamonds were found embedded in an ant hill in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia.

In a classic exploration exercise these discoveries were followed up along a creek bed and led to what is known as the AK1 pipe, the remnant of an ancient volcano and the site of the vast **Argyle** deposit. Today most of the valley floor is occupied by the **Argyle** open pit mine. The Argyle mine is currently transitioning from an open pit mine to an underground mine, which ensures it will continue until at least 2018.

Rio Tinto's Argyle mine occupies the traditional land of the Gidja and Mirriuwong speaking people and neighbouring language groups who believe that the **Argyle** mine was created when three women were trying to trap a barramundi fish, however the barramundi was too clever and jumped through the net and landed at the site where the mine was established. It's believed that the colours of the diamonds come from different parts of the barramundi as the fish wiggled through the net, with the champagne diamonds coming from the scales of the barramundi.