

Botswana intent on selling more diamonds without De Beers

By [Brian Benza](#)

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Botswana will not drop its demand to sell a bigger share of the diamonds produced by its joint venture with De Beers, President Mokgweetsi Masisi said on Thursday, 9 March, raising the stakes in talks to renew a sales deal that expires in June.



Rough diamonds displayed at the Botswana Diamond Valuing Company in Gaborone. Source: Reuters/Juda Ngwenya

Botswana and De Beers mine diamonds under an equally-owned joint venture, Debswana.

Three-quarters of Debswana's production, which was 24 million carats in 2022, is sold to De Beers. The balance is sold to state-owned Okavango Diamond Company(ODC), which was set up under the current 2011 sales deal as Botswana sought to market gems outside the De Beers system.

Botswana supplies 70% of De Beers' rough diamonds.



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Botswana wants a larger share from the joint venture

Last month, Masisi threatened to walk away from talks to renew the sales deal unless Botswana gets a larger share of output from the joint venture. He did not specify the size of the share it sought.

Masisi told reporters on Thursday that Botswana had denied itself the opportunity to sell its own diamonds through the 54-year-old joint venture agreement.

He added that the experience of selling diamonds outside the De Beers system, which sells unpolished, or rough, stones, had shown that Botswana could get more revenue.

"Besides the fact that the diamonds are ours, it doesn't make sense for us to continue to relegate ourselves to participating in the rough space only. So, it's only logical that we want more and we are going to get more. But through negotiation," Masisi said.

Masisi and Cook meet to discuss the future

De Beers chief executive officer Al Cook, who met Masisi in Gaborone on Friday morning, 10 March, said he had a "constructive discussion" with the president.

"It's very clear that front and foremost in the president's mind is the interest of the Botswana people. We as De Beers want to play our role in a strong, strategic partnership. I'm very confident that this partnership will go forward in a very good way," Cook told reporters after the meeting.

De Beers says Botswana's government receives more than 80% of returns from Debswana, including taxes and royalties.

The Anglo American Plc unit, which also has mines in Canada, Namibia and South Africa, sold rough diamonds worth \$4.3bn in 2022, a 13% increase over the 2021 sales. ODC's sales were \$1.2bn in 2022, up from \$963m in 2021.

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