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Intel: Undermining the Conflict Mineral Industry¹

Introduction

The Consumer Electronics Show (CES) was the world's premier technology exhibition. It acted as the main forum for companies seeking attention within the industry. Held annually in January in Las Vegas, the event attracted more than 100,000 attendees interested in learning about the latest products and ideas in the consumer electronics industry.² Of those in attendance, more than 40% were senior-level executives of electronics companies.³ In fact, more journalists covered the 2014 CES than that year's Super Bowl in New York City.^{4,5}

Intel's CEO, Brian Krzanich, was slated to give the conference's 2014 opening keynote address.⁶ The eyes of the entire consumer electronics industry would focus on him. Since assuming the role in May 2013, this was his first opportunity to speak to the entire industry about Intel's vision for the future of the consumer electronics market.⁷

Krzanich began his address by announcing the company's significant move into wearable technologies by demonstrating a new smart watch and earbuds with a built-in heart rate monitor.⁸ He went on to talk about new digital security initiatives and a dual-OS platform that would allow customers to run Windows and Android. Krzanich's final revelation was "...to think about the impact of the supply chain and the potential issues...[the industry] caus[es]. This [was] not an issue [Intel] would normally be talking about at CES...—conflict minerals."⁹ Krzanich was passionate about opening an industry-wide discussion of conflict minerals. "Every Intel microprocessor...manufacture[d] in 2014 will be conflict-free. [Intel is] inviting the entire industry to join [Intel] in this journey."¹⁰

Sitting in the audience, Gary Niekerk, Intel's director of corporate citizenship, couldn't help but reflect. Krzanich was commenting to the entire consumer electronics industry and its global audience about conflict minerals in technology supply chains, which reflected the value Intel placed on social responsibility.

¹ Conflict minerals are minerals or its derivatives as determined by the secretary of state that finance conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or an adjoining country.

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