SEVEN OF THE WORLD’S RAREST DIAMONDS TO BE EXHIBITED AT THE SMITHSONIAN’S NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Seven of the world’s most extraordinary diamonds representing a rainbow of colors—red, orange, yellow, pink, blue, blue-green and colorless—will be on view this summer in “The Splendor of Diamonds,” an exhibit at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History, June 27 through Sept. 15.

The exhibit in the museum’s Harry Winston Gallery will include the Steinmetz Pink, a 59.60-carat diamond, considered by some to be one of the rarest, finest, most precious stones the world has ever seen. It was unveiled in May in Monaco and has never before been on public display. The Winston Gallery is the home of the Hope Diamond and other important stones.

Also on view for the first time in the United States will be the 203-carat De Beers Millennium Star, one of the largest diamonds in the world. Other rare diamonds included in the exhibition are the Heart of Eternity blue diamond; the Moussaieff Red, the largest known red diamond in the world; the Harry Winston Pumpkin Diamond; the Allnatt, one of the world’s largest yellow diamonds; and Ocean Dream, the world’s largest naturally occurring blue-green diamond.

- more -
“We are thrilled to be able to offer our visitors an opportunity to see some of the world’s most extraordinary diamonds,” said Cristián Samper, director of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History. “This is truly a once-in-a-lifetime exhibit.”

“The diamonds in this collection represent all the important features that make diamonds special to us—size, color and overall quality,” said Jeffrey Post, curator of the National Gem Collection at the Natural History Museum. “Each of the diamonds is the finest of its kind and together with the museum’s gem collection makes for an exhibit of truly historic proportions.”

**What Gives a Diamond its Color?**

In its purest state, a diamond is composed of carbon atoms and is colorless, like the De Beers Millennium Star. When certain foreign elements replace carbon atoms, they impart tints of color. Yellow diamonds and most blue ones result from nitrogen and boron respectively trapped in the diamond’s structure. Diamonds that are pink to red and orange in color have imperfections at the atomic level that scientists call “color centers.” Green, blue-green, and a small number of blue diamonds are a special case. Their colors result from exposure to radiation over millions of years in the Earth. In all of these cases, portions of white light striking the diamond are absorbed. The remaining portions of light that are not absorbed are transmitted to the eye and result in the color we see.

“The Splendor of Diamonds” exhibition is made possible by the generous support of its principal sponsor, The Steinmetz Group of Geneva, with additional support from the Gemological Institute of America.

The National Museum of Natural History is located at 10th Street and Constitution Avenue N.W. It is the most visited natural history museum in the world welcoming more than 6 million people last year. The museum is dedicated to the maintenance and preservation of the world’s most extensive collection of natural history specimens and human artifacts. The museum is a part of the Smithsonian Institution, the world’s largest museum and research complex. The Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History is open from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. every day. Special summer hours are from 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. every day through Sept. 2. Admission is free.

###

SI-217-2003