

RJC Head Iris Van der Veken Resigns



RAPAPORT... Iris Van der Veken has resigned as executive director of the Responsible Jewellery Council (RJC) over the organization's handling of Alrosa's membership during the Russia-Ukraine war.

Van der Veken, who this week celebrated her three-year anniversary at the RJC, submitted her resignation letter to the board of directors on Tuesday, three sources close to the matter confirmed to *Rapaport News*. She was dissatisfied with the body's failure to suspend Russian miner Alrosa.

Established in 2005, the RJC is mandated to set supply-chain and sourcing standards for the jewelry and watch industry. It has more than 1,500 members.

Alrosa voluntarily stepped down as vice chair of the RJC board following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the [RJC announced](#) on March 3, its first and only communication on the issue. Many within the organization and in the trade have called for a stronger stance, questioning why Alrosa remained a member considering the Russian government owned 33% of the company.

Brad Brooks-Rubin, who serves as the RJC's strategic adviser for North America, highlighted the discontent in a personal [LinkedIn post](#).

"The decisions (or, more specifically, the lack thereof) from the RJC regarding this

company [Alrosa] and [the] overall crisis so far are insufficient to address the ongoing issues and their implications for the Code of Practices [COP] and other standards,” he wrote. “But this is a very important moment for the future of the COP and the organization, and failure to act in a different way in this situation threatens the integrity of the COP.”

Earlier today, [Pandora announced](#) its decision to leave the organization over the RJC’s failure to suspend Russian companies’ membership and urge its members to halt business with the country.

“The war requires all businesses to act with the utmost responsibility regarding any interactions or business dealings with Russia or Belarus,” said CEO Alexander Lacik. “Pandora cannot, in good faith, be a member of an association that does not share our values.”

Luxury jewelry and watch house Richemont also stepped down from the organization, citing its commitment to human rights via the RJC’s code of practice and to supply chain due diligence. “Richemont and its maisons do not wish to be members of an industry organization that includes companies that contribute to financing conflicts and wars,” read a statement from the group, which includes Cartier, Van Cleef & Arpels, and Buccellati.

RJC chairman David Bouffard said the board began an “arm’s length, independent, third-party legal assessment” at the start of the military conflict.

The process to consider the status of Alrosa as an RJC member was undertaken while respecting the principles of natural justice and importantly, that it was within the powers of the board, he explained in a statement sent to *Rapaport News*.

“The RJC appreciates that the pace of this process may be frustrating, but this is an unprecedented situation, which is constantly changing and requires that the time be taken, to ensure that due process is followed as exhaustively as possible,” the statement read. “It will, however, be concluded imminently.”

This story was updated to include the statement from the RJC and the report regarding Richemont.

Image: Iris Van der Veken. (RJC)