



**U.S. Department of Justice**

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **PIRELA OF UNIQUE GEMS INTERNATIONAL IS SENTENCED**

Marcos Daniel Jiménez, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, and Hector M. Pesquera, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, announced today that United States District Court Judge Ursula Ungaro-Benages sentenced Enrique Pirela to 168 months' (14 years) imprisonment and ordered him to pay \$30,236,523.63 in restitution in connection with the Unique Gems International fraud case.

The Indictment alleged that from September 1995 through March 1997, Pirela served as President of Unique Gems International Corp. (UGI) in Miami. Pirela admitted he induced people to deposit approximately \$90,000,000 in UGI as security for a work-at-home jewelry scheme. The Indictment alleged that victims were told that they would be paid as much as \$60 per piece to assemble jewelry. The victims were directed to make a deposit of \$3,000 with UGI, and that they would receive a jewelry kit equipped to make 30 necklaces. The actual value of the kit was approximately only \$100. The Indictment further alleges that Pirela and the other defendants laundered the proceeds of the fraud through the accounts of businesses in Liechtenstein, which were owned by some of the defendants. Near the end of the UGI scheme, Pirela withdrew \$1,000,000 in cash from the UGI account at First Union National Bank in Miami, Florida, and caused it to be deposited into a UGI account at Bank von Ernst & CIE AG, Zurich, Switzerland.

Pirela pleaded guilty on January 13, 2003, to a count of conspiracy to commit money laundering and to a count of conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud.

Mr. Jiménez commended the investigative efforts of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Kerry S. Baron and Ellen Cohen.

[Return to Press Release Page](#)

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