



Ranjit Baxi

Building United Nations of Recycling

*From drought to floods, natural calamities are not sparing anyone whether in advanced countries or developing nations. The wrath of nature is due to the climate change caused by uncontrolled pollution and humanity's unsustainable way of living. It is to address these issues that the World Council of Recycling Associations has come together to evolve global cooperation to address these issues of concern. Its driving force is the Bureau of International Recycling (BIR), the first federation to support the interests of the recycling industry on an international scale. Founded in 1948, it now represents over 760 member- companies from the private sector and 36 national associations in more than 70 countries. BIR President Ranjit Baxi in an interview to **Tyre Asia** explains the idea behind BIR and the World Council which he describes as the United Nations of Recycling*

TA News Bureau

One of the landmark initiatives that global recyclers took was during the World Council of Recycling Associations meeting in Amsterdam last October where members reached the next level of sustained co-operation. It decided to give a unified voice to the international recycling industries in a bid to develop awareness among policy-makers, legislators and the general public of the economic, social and environmental contributions of the recycling industry.

It was decided to help promote best sustainable practices around the world – particularly in developing countries – and assist them in building their recycling programmes. It decided to spearhead the drive for further academic studies and research that would provide independent factual and statistical confirmation of the recycling industry's contributions to, for example, promoting GDP,

employment and landfill reduction.

"The World Council will also promote free trade in recyclables as well as the environmentally sound management and use of recycled materials, while encouraging manufacturers to design their products with a heightened focus on recycling," says BIR President Ranjit Baxi in an interview to **Tyre Asia**. "It'll also co-ordinate actions in defending the interests of the industry as a whole," he says.

Describing their collective efforts like in the UN, he said they have also come up conflict resolution mechanisms. "It is only at the very highest level, with like-minded stakeholders, that open discussions can lead to fruitful actions," he reminds.

It is only by encouraging dialogue that any conflict can be resolved. Obviously, everybody must be prepared to make compromise from time to time, but everybody

has the well-being of the recycling industry at heart. "Therefore, I don't see any problem in reaching constructive agreements."

In order to spread the message of sustainability and environmental protection, the World Council is pushing the observance of a Global Recycling Day in order to increase the profile and awareness of recycling worldwide. It will also be an occasion to underline the contributions of the recycling industry towards safeguarding the future of planet Earth.

"We have decided that all delegates should speak to stakeholders in their own countries to promote the concept of a Global Recycling Day. We are currently in the process of finalising a bespoke website, and are simultaneously seeking support from the United Nations."

It is striving to determine a date on the official UN calendar where the Global Recycling Day would be celebrated. "I'm quite confident



that we can count on their support, but we are obviously prepared to determine the dates ourselves,” Baxi indicated.

Afterwards, the recyclers will embark on global coordination, counting on their vast network of national recycling associations. At the moment, the strategy is to take the issue step by step. It is a huge initiative that will eventually turn into a global movement.

Benefits of recycling

Commenting on the economic, social and ecological benefits of recycling, Baxi said that there are so many. He described the recycling industry as the cornerstone of a global circular economy. On a conservative estimate, it employs more than 1.6 million people worldwide, processing 800 million tonnes of commodities per year and achieving an annual turnover in excess of US\$200 billion.

“You will understand why I stress the word ‘conservative’ when I tell you that a recent study conducted in the USA concluded that recycling in that country alone provides more than 460,000 jobs and generates upwards of US\$90 billion annually in economic activity.”

He noted that secondary raw materials are extremely important for industrial production – they not only account for up to 50 per cent

of the world’s raw material needs, but also reduce the consumption of other resources. An example is iron and steel, where recycling saves 74 per cent of the energy and 86 per

On tyre recycling – now that the population of motor vehicles is projected to touch two billion by 2020 – BIR President Ranjit Baxi said he would like to reiterate what he had said before: with growing demand of consumer goods in general and cars in particular the world needs to further enhance recycling and recyclability in the field of automotive production. Tyres are a part of this.

cent of the air pollution associated with primary production.

In the case of tyre recycling, Baxi pointed out that tyre-derived rubber granulates are used in sports pitches. It has now become

a focus of more mass-media attention. “During our recent convention in Amsterdam, this important issue was extensively discussed. Leading industry bodies such as the European Tyre & Rubber Manufacturers’ Association would now be revisiting this topic with further research while BIR will maintain a strong involvement and co-operate in any way.”

The matter needs to be taken extremely seriously at the highest level and is enormously important for the tyre recycling industry. According to BIR’s US American member association ISRI, crumb rubber and its acclaimed health effects has been an issue in the USA for the last two years, over which period there has been a 30 per cent decline in the market for this material. And yet more than 90 related studies carried out by the government, industry and academia have concluded that there was no link between cancer and crumb rubber in synthetic turf. Further studies would need to be put into place, ideally together with the tyre industry.

He said the pace at which both global population and consumer demand is growing with increasing growth of middle classes, one wonders how the world will be able to satisfy the growing raw material needs to produce the demanded products.

“To me we can only achieve this by promoting increased use of

recyclables – an important raw material source that our recycling industry supplies. The environmental benefits of recycling and to our climate are well known.”

Baxi said that he is really proud that in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has embarked on the mission of Swach Bharat (Clean India Movement) across the country. “To me it’s fundamental for the growth of the Indian economy in helping it to not only meet and satisfy some of the UN 2030 Sustainable Goals but also promote growth of Smart Cities which also are an area of focus in his vision.”

The world needs more and more of these initiatives promoted globally, especially in the emerging economies like Africa. BIR is and will continue to support all such initiatives to ensure that we promote recycling globally for building up of smart sustainable cities.

Our future

On his groundbreaking study ‘*Recycling our Future: A global Strategy*,’ Baxi said it contained his reflections on the future. “In the last 40 years of my working life promoting recycling, I felt that the great work being done by our industry for the benefit of our Planet has not been really shared and understood well across all the continents of the world.”

The simple message is that the

recycling industry alone saves over 700 million tons of carbon. But world leaders tend to be focusing on promoting businesses that are reducing carbon. All the climate change conferences are always talking of carbon reducing industries but they don’t seem to credit the world of recycling that is saving carbon. “I therefore strongly believe that our story of recycling is still an untold story,” Baxi notes.

He said his book was a small attempt to share with the civil society, business leaders and the political leaders who decide our future the recycling story. In the last chapter he has endeavoured to share the Seven Steps of working with waste collection, recycling solutions and providing the world with high quality sustainable raw materials in the form of recyclables.

With a growing world population recycling is gaining importance by the minute. In order not to exploit our planet’s primary resources, recycling is a must for future industrial growth, he believes.

With regards to faster obsolescence, recycling is vital for the health of planet Earth. Still, a major part of the waste goes into landfill and turns the world into a dumping ground. This must be avoided by all means.

It is only through investing in recycling technology to develop more improved methods and

re-manufacturing can the world strengthen the recycling industry world. It has gained the necessary know-how over many decades, and even centuries.

Tyre recycling

Commenting on tyre recycling now that the population of motor vehicles is projected to touch two billion by 2020, Baxi said he would like to reiterate what he had said before: with growing demand of consumer goods in general and cars in particular the world needs to further enhance recycling and recyclability in the field of automotive production. Tyres are a part of this.

As mentioned in the ***Tyre Asia*** interview with Chairman of the BIR Tyres & Rubber Committee Ruud Burlet of Rubber Resources in the Netherlands, tyre manufacturers and recyclers need to cooperate more closely to see used tyres as a valuable resource for further production.

On the specific global initiatives that are needed to be taken by the industry and government to ensure sustainability through environment-friendly legislations and building of people’s awareness, he said primarily the world needs to promote free and fair trade, equal access to raw materials, raising global awareness regarding the benefits of recycling, in particular in emerging economies is the answer. ▲