

Community Spotlight



In each newsletter, Sims Recycling Solutions provides a featured interview of a customer, partner or colleague within the field of IT asset disposition or recycling. These interviews provide an opportunity to learn about the different aspects of electronic equipment disposal or recycling from an economic, environmental or social perspective. This issue profiles Arnould Brunet, director general of the Bureau of International Recycling.

What is the Bureau of International Recycling (BIR)? Tell us about its history and goals?

Founded in 1948, BIR is the only federation to support the interests of the recycling industry globally. We are hence going to celebrate our 70th anniversary next year. Today, BIR represents some 750 member companies from the private sector and 34 national associations in more than 70 countries. Our members are in the businesses of non-ferrous metals, ferrous metals, paper, textiles, stainless steel and special alloys, plastics, tyres and e-scrap. Our structure reflects these businesses and our services to the members as well. BIR provides a dynamic forum for its members to enhance and create business opportunities, and to share their knowledge and experience. It serves as a platform to establish successful business relations and to promote recycling among other industrial sectors and policy makers.

BIR promotes materials recycling and facilitates free and fair trade of recyclables in a sustainable and competitive world economy. Our missions are also to raise public awareness of their economic and environmental contributions, such as the reduction of energy consumption and of greenhouse emissions, to promote free trade, the environmentally-sound management of resources and the use of recycled materials worldwide to encourage manufacturers to design products with a better understanding of the possibilities for recycling. BIR offers its members timely information about the international recycling markets, their legislative context and the latest technologies.

Just before joining BIR in June you attended their Hong Kong Conference. What was your impression?

I was impressed by the uniqueness and the pace of the event, as well as its top class standard. It is amazing to see the global recycling industry meet twice a year to trade, network, discuss their businesses and receive the latest information about the markets and regulatory environment. It is professional, dynamic and fun at the same time.

What did you do before joining BIR?

I am a lawyer by education and I have been in-house Counsel for “blue chip” companies (Esso, IBM and Sony) for many years. Most recently I was heading the European Government and Industry Relations team of Sony Europe. I have a long practice with national and international professional associations whether as a board member, general secretary, President or else.

How does your new position fit with your former responsibilities?

As I said, I have been immersed in the world of industry and government relations for many years, active in professional organizations. Heading one was a challenge I wanted to tackle. And in my previous responsibilities, I have been much involved in the WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) European Directive discussions and implementation for the producers. I participated in the creation of compliance schemes for end-of-life batteries and WEEE. Consequently, I am now back in the recycling business.

BIR is as an advocate for the global recycling industry, what other issues do you and your team cover?

We indeed run a truly global organization. We are an “Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif” but I want to make sure that we act with the mindset of a global corporation. All our actions are aimed at delivering the best service to our global members, whether they are corporate members or National Associations. As you said, much is about defending the interests of our industries by engaging with those who set up the policies that may affect our businesses, whether in the domains of environmental or trade regulations. But we want to act as partners to the intergovernmental and global bodies as well as national governments with the help of our members. Also, we need to raise public awareness about our industries. We work for the future of the planet and this has to be more recognized by the general public and the various stakeholders.

The First Global Recycling Day that we will launch in March next year is a major step in that direction. Importantly we organize twice a year conventions and exhibitions where the business leaders from BIR companies run their Divisions, Committees and Special Committees governing the organization and providing topical information. The Conventions are also where business people from the world's leading recyclers meet to do networking and create business opportunities, besides meeting their national representative bodies to address issues of concern. Those events are much awaited by our members and we must meet their expectations each time. As mentioned previously, we are going to celebrate our 70th anniversary next year, however my goal is to make sure that we maintain a fresh mind and spirit for the next 70 years.

What are your key priorities at BIR?

BIR leadership (President, Executive Committee) wants to strengthen and develop BIR's position as the voice of the international recycling industry. So I have a clear mandate and my priorities are simple:

- Defend the interests of our members,
- Deliver them the best services they deserve,
- Create business and networking opportunities for them,
- Partner with the stakeholders,
- Raise public awareness about the positive environmental, social, and economic impact of our industries,
- Promote best practices, and
- Promote free and fair trade.

Yes, I know, it's a long list, and I may have forgotten some.

What are BIR's thoughts on China's recent announcements regarding 2018 scrap import bans?

Anything that happens in China has potentially a global impact and cannot be ignored. It is particularly true for our industries which have, in the last years, accompanied the economic development of China by providing their industries with vital resources. China is now announcing its intention to make the import rules for certain scrap categories stricter, or even ban them. However there is still a need to fully understand what is exactly at stake. BIR is traditionally supporting free and fair trade, as well as promoting best practices and quality trade. This is why BIR has expressed some concerns to the Chinese government via the World Trade Organization, and offered to work as a partner with the Chinese authorities. To that respect BIR will coordinate the expertise of its members and Committees to engage such a dialogue.

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When and what is the Global Recycling Day?

Our recycling industries need and deserve more visibility and recognition for what they do for the planet. We are recyclers and this is good and important. In a way, we “recreate primary resources” from used ones. Through our industrial activity we fight against global warming and substitute primary raw materials with secondary raw materials, saving energy and reducing Co2 emissions. The Global Recycling Day which is taking place for the first time on March 18, 2018 is the start of a new way of communicating to a larger audience, for the benefit of our members. The Recycling Day is global and will be initiated through activities in a selected number of cities, before extending through continents. Under the strong leadership of BIR President Baxi and the Executive Committee, let us all make it a success! Please follow us on Twitter @BIRworld; www.bir.org and soon on a dedicated website. Stay tuned.

Who's your favorite football team?

To be honest...a soccer one...the one that my boys support: Paris Saint Germain.

What book are you reading right now?

I am reading again “Cyrano de Bergerac” by Edmond Rostand. So French.

What's your go-to spot to get away?

Allow me to keep it secret. Otherwise it's not a paradise anymore.

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