



B I R M I L A N

Elegant Milan hosts a well-attended BIR Convention

More than 700 people from over 50 countries registered for the BIR's 2005 Autumn Round-Table meetings in Milan. This high attendance figure was seen as a reflection of the sustained spell of healthy market conditions enjoyed by many of the leading recycling sectors. In an extensive series of articles, Recycling International rounds up the highlights from Milan.

By Manfred Beck & Ian Martin



Alvaro Rodriguez Martinez, Chairman of BIR's International Environmental Council, and Robin Wiener, President of the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries.



Enjoying their lunch together are, from left to right, John Crabb, David Hurford-Jones and Tony Bird.



Shannon Brenner of Universal Recycling Co., Johannesburg, South Africa.

Not for the first time, and probably not for the last, the vexed question of waste definitions dominated the meeting of BIR's International Environment Council (IEC), held in Milan. BIR's Director General Francis Veys acknowledged that varying definitions of 'waste' had led to court cases in a number of countries. But he insisted: 'The solution for any framework legislation on waste is not to re-write the definition of waste at the United Nations or at the OECD or in the EU, but to construct a legislative methodology to determine what is not waste and when waste ceases to be waste.'

A suggested case-by-case approach would likely be a time-consuming political process rather than a scientific one, he said. But having noted support among some EU member states for the cases of both steel scrap and paper, Mr Veys urged national association members: 'Don't confuse the issue by talking about changing the definition of waste. Support a legislative methodology to determine what is not waste and when waste ceases to be waste. Support the case for steel scrap and the case for paper.'

IEC Co-Chair Ruggero Alocci of Italian association Assofermet lamented in Milan: 'Different interpretations of the environmental laws are undoubtedly a great limitation to the free circulation of scrap. All this causes difficulties to the management of recovery companies, which are exposed to risks and burdens not relating to their ordinary trading and industrial activity.' He had earlier explained that, in July this year, the European



The Duomo in Milan is the world's largest Gothic cathedral.



BIR President Fernando Duranti presents the prizes of the first BIR Golf Tournament.



Robert Dean of Glasgow in Scotland, representative of US-based Utica Alloys Inc., wore a traditional Scottish kilt at the BIR Welcome Reception. To his right, Wijnand Schoonewille of The Port of Rotterdam Authority.



BIR's Welcome Reception in the Palazzo Reale was sponsored by Lynxs Technologies & Machinery. From left to right: Lynxs' Ben Kebil, Christine Schuler and Tim Christian.

Commission had begun new infringement proceedings against Italy on the grounds that 'secondary raw materials have been taken away from the waste regulation'.

Confidentiality at risk

In his review of legislative developments, BIR's Environmental & Technical Director Ross Bartley argued that some of the proposals put forward as part of the process of revising EU waste shipment regulations were threatening to undermine confidentiality within the recycling sector. Some countries - notably Finland and The Netherlands - had already chosen to publish sensitive information about individual shipments on the Internet, he pointed out.

Mr Bartley also observed that, in response to a Basel Convention Annex IX questionnaire, the authorities in some countries had confirmed a desire to ban imports of some non-hazardous recyclables that were of eminent value to their domestic industries. 'That doesn't make sense,' insisted Mr Bartley.

Alfred Nijkerk - 'Mr BIR Convention'

During the Ferrous Division & Shredder Committee Joint Round-Table, BIR President Fernando Duranti asked delegates to acknowledge an exceptional record. 'It is my pleasure to honour Alfred Nijkerk, one of the best-known figures of our recycling community,' said Mr Duranti. 'I am proud to say that, here in Milan, Mr Nijkerk is present at his one-hundredth BIR Convention.'

On March 18 1948, as an 18 year old student, Mr Nijkerk was present at the birth of BIR in the Amstel Hotel in Amsterdam. Since then, he has missed only fourteen BIR conventions, partly because of circumstances beyond his control. Mr Nijkerk, now 75, has been in the recycling business all of his working life and has also played an active role in BIR. He chaired the organisation's Public Relations Committee for some six years and has been a Vice-President of the Ferrous and Shredder boards.

As a token of BIR's gratitude for everything Mr Nijkerk has done for the recycling organisation, Mr Duranti presented him with books on Milan and on classical music - one of Mr Nijkerk's many passions.



Alfred Nijkerk (left) solemnly promises BIR President Fernando Duranti 'never to visit a BIR Convention again'.



Together with the Republic of Ireland, Italy is one of the EU's two 'non-smoking countries'. Partly as a result of this, the front of the convention hotel regularly drew a crowd of BIR delegates.



Milan had attracted many delegates from Asia. To the left: Joe Zhou of Global Metals, Guangzhou, China.

In response to the greater focus on electronics recycling in the USA over recent months, the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries has formulated a policy calling for the introduction of a short-term financing mechanism to stimulate markets and to promote design for recycling. The organisation's President Robin Wiener emphasised that any such financing regime should be terminated once markets became viable.

IEC Chairman Alvaro Rodriguez Martinez of Holcim SA in Spain warned the recycling community about sidelining environmental issues when business was buoyant. 'The not-so-good years will return and it will be harder to pay your environmental bills,' he said in Milan.

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Future BIR Conventions

2006

May 29-31 Beijing *The China World Hotel*

October 30-31 Brussels *Sheraton Hotel & Towers*

2007

May 21-23 Athens *Hilton Athens Hotel*

October 22-23 or 29-30 Warsaw *Marriott Hotel*

2008

May 30-June 1 Monte-Carlo *The Fairmont Grand Hotel*



Next year, the BIR Spring Convention will take place in Beijing, China.



At the BIR Welcome Reception, the guests were welcomed by servants in traditional livery.