

In keeping with tradition, the BIR Cocktail Party was held in the City Hall on Brussels' Grand' Place.

At the end of October, some 450 delegates from around the world attended the BIR Autumn Convention in the Belgian and EU capital of Brussels. The convention witnessed the launch of the International Environment Council (IEC), whose first Chairman - Alvaro Rodriguez Martinez of Spain - highlighted continued misunderstandings leading to restrictions on the movement of materials. He declared: 'A clear distinction must be made and maintained between recovery and disposal operations.'

**By Manfred Beck
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Markets mirror unsettled weather



On the Sunday before the start of the BIR Autumn Convention, the worst storm in more than a decade swept across Europe. Many BIR delegates who had seized the opportunity to spend a weekend in Brussels prior to the event were probably left wishing they had stayed at home with a glass of port wine. As the storm raged, the streets of Brussels were filled with people fighting to stay on their feet and to avoid flying debris.

The storm had caused many airports throughout Europe to be closed on the Sunday. Adding to the difficulty in even getting to Brussels, many trains were not running and some roads were shut because of fallen trees.

The delegates who had managed to fly in on Sunday were easy to spot among the crowds - they were looking a whiter shade of yellow and green, their bodies still trembling from turbulence and rough landings. As a result, they were drinking perhaps more than usual to calm their shattered nerves.

International Environment Council

It was a red-letter day for BIR as the Brussels convention witnessed the launch of the organisation's International Environment Council

(IEC) in succession to the Environment Committee.

The council's first Chairman, Alvaro Rodriguez Martinez of Spain, explained that the new body would draw on experts from a number of different countries while its twice-yearly meetings at the BIR Conventions would be supplemented by 'continuous communication' via e-mail and the Internet between these experts. At the hub of this network would be BIR's Environmental & Technical Director Ross Bartley.

Input from these far-flung experts would result in 'a well-informed organisation that can provide a



IEC Chairman Alvaro Rodriguez Martinez of Lajo y Rodriguez SA, Spain (right), and BIR's Environmental & Technical Director Ross Bartley.

lot of help to all members of BIR', according to Mr Martinez. As well as drawing on national experiences, the global work of the IEC would focus principally on issues arising from the UN-EP Basel Convention and the OECD.

In his first Chairman's address, Mr Rodriguez highlighted the continued misunderstandings that were leading to restrictions on the movement of materials and added: 'A clear distinction must be made and maintained between recovery and disposal operations.'

The IEC's guest speaker in Brussels, Dr Pierre Portas of the Secretariat of the Basel Convention-United Nations Environment Programme, welcomed the formation of the new council as a 'proactive' move towards the goal of maintaining a positive dialogue between the recycling industry and regulators.

While describing BIR as 'an old friend' of the Basel Convention, Dr Portas acknowledged 'tensions' between the industry and the Convention over the control system covering

transboundary movements of material. But he believed the new annexes to these controls had 'alleviated 80% or more of the problems that the industry may have had with the Convention'.

Tougher EU stance on shipments

Reviewing the activities of the BIR Secretariat in the environmental field, Environmental & Technical Director Ross Bartley welcomed progress towards the harmonisation of the OECD's transboundary shipment control system with that of the Basel Convention, although he regretted the European Union's 'tougher line' in its proposed revision of shipment regulations and the possibility that it would place 'an increasing burden on industry'. He went on to recommend a recently-published UN-ECE report covering the radiation protection aspects of scrap recycling, noting that the



The IEC meeting was co-chaired by Frédéric Peigneux, the new Director General of the Belgian recycling organisation Coberec.



Guest speaker Dr Pierre Portas of the Secretariat of the Basel Convention-United Nations Environment Programme.

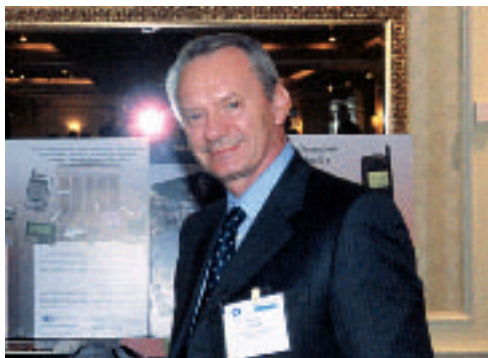
document had benefitted from significant input from BIR itself.

In a submission to the IEC meeting, the Chair of ISRI's Government Affairs Committee in the U.S., Wendy Neu, noted that the board of her organisation would be voting that same week on the formation of a new Electronics Recycling Council 'to better co-ordinate the interests and activities of the more than 350 ISRI members that are currently handling electronics in one form or another'.

Ms Neu also confirmed that ISRI would shortly lodge 'comprehensive' documents with the U.S. Environment Protection Agency outlining 'the adverse impact of the solid waste definition on scrap recyclers'. It would also propose 'a specific solution for finally removing recyclables out from under the definition of solid waste'. □



François Bertollet (left) and Jean-Pierre Forrestier of French scrap shear/baler manufacturer Akros.



Giuseppe Lacchini of Cell-Data Information Systems, Italy, gave a presentation to the Non-Ferrous Round-Table entitled 'Analyses and forecasts regarding prices and stocks'.



Alberto Canevali of the EU Commission's DG Enterprise spoke about 'Latest developments in the steel industry' during BIR's Ferrous Round-Table.