

New scrap lobby group fights for better environment laws

BY CHRISTOPHER CUNDY

■ **BRUSSELS** — A new group that will promote the understanding of waste and its classification to law-makers had its inaugural meeting at the Bureau of International Recycling's (BIR) autumn convention in Brussels last week.

The International Environment Council (IEC), chaired by Álvaro Rodríguez Martínez of Spain's Lyrsa group, will continue and expand the work of the BIR's Environment Committee. The IEC is mandated to be a positive influence on revisions of outdated laws governing the handling and trading of scrap, and on the preparation of new environmental protection initiatives.

"Those that know us well affirm... that we deal with raw materials and not with waste," Rodríguez told the delegates. "Unfortunately, the work of this sector of ours... is not always well understood, and this lack of understanding causes such effects as prohibitions

of the movement of materials, camouflaged trade barriers using the excuse of environmental protection and poor legal definitions."

Rodríguez gave as an example Europe's 27-year old Waste Framework Directive, "which still

causes confusion even after revision some eleven years ago". "It is inexact

and unclear and in many senses erroneous," he said.

The IEC will build links

with national and international legislative bodies, and is to add its

voice to the forthcoming Basel Convention meeting in December.

Pierre Portas, a member of the United Nations Environmental Programme's Basel Convention secretariat, also spoke at the meeting. He outlined three areas, shipbreaking, electronic scrap and lead scrap, which lack international legislation but where the council could usefully contribute.

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Strong Australian market drives Simsmetal profits bonanza

■ **SYDNEY** — Solid operating performances in all its geographic regions, particularly in Australia and the UK, and strong ferrous prices helped scrap merchant and metals recycler Simsmetal boost after tax profits for the third quarter by 80% to A\$18m — its second successive quarterly record.

Group ceo Jeremy Sutcliffe said the Australian operations were particularly strong due to higher than expected domestic sales in a booming construction sector. The result in the UK was also a record, with a slight improvement despite the disruption caused by the closure of ASW, the group's largest UK customer. Simsmetal achieved record shredder production across the group, with a 10% improvement despite the northern hemisphere summer shutdowns. "The result was assisted further by extremely strong non-ferrous recoveries and revenue from the shredding process, reflecting the continued efforts of all regions to improve operational and technological performance," Sutcliffe said.

A strong export order book and encouraging results from the company's Canadian joint venture also helped the North American operations perform better.

The rationalisation of Simsmetal's secondary aluminium business remains largely on schedule despite equipment shipping delays following the recent waterfront dispute on the US west coast. The company is forecasting another sound result for the current quarter, though not at first-quarter levels because of a shortened processing and sales schedule and customer shutdowns running up to Christmas.

Sutcliffe said: "Both ferrous and particularly non-ferrous intake remains sluggish in the US, confirming our view that the economy there has not yet kick-started."

But the company remained confident of exceeding budget and, provided its ferrous shipment programme goes according to plan, it is booking to record operating first half pretax earnings.