

Plans to Launch a “World Council of Recycling Associations”

The Bureau of International Recycling (BIR) is spearheading the formation of a new body “to take forward the message of facilitating free and fair trade of recyclables with minimum regulatory controls,” it was announced at the body’s Annual General Assembly in Berlin.

According to BIR President Ranjit Baxi of UK-based J&H Sales International, the “World Council of Recycling Associations” would bring together the presidents of the various recycling associations of the world in an initiative that would enable them to “work together to tackle the challenges facing the global trade of recyclables.” He also noted that people from 57 countries were participating in the BIR Convention in Berlin – “a great result” given that “our industry is currently going through one of the most testing times we have ever experienced” in terms of the pressure on demand and margins.

Ranjit Baxi expressed also the hope that BIR efforts to launch a “Global Recycling Day” would come to fruition in 2017; this event would be designed to celebrate the importance of recycling and to promote the major environmental contribution of the recycling industry. In this latter regard, BIR’s updated report on “The Environmental Benefits of Recycling” had concluded



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that 572 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions were avoided each year by the recycling industry’s global activities in just three areas, namely ferrous, aluminium and copper. By extension, therefore, the recycling industry’s efforts across all the commodity sectors could be reducing

such emissions by well over 700 million tons per annum, he estimated.

Recycling and the circular economy

Following the Annual General Assembly in Berlin, the Convention’s Key-note Speaker Klaus Töpfer, a former German Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (1987 – 1994), underlined the progress of the last 30 years towards making the closing of material cycles “a business case” rather than an environmental issue. Also as a former Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, he identified a shift towards “a sharing economy” in which companies would start to insist that products were returned to them at end-of-life.

The guest speaker expressed the conviction that recycling represented “a huge pre-condition” for furthering the pro-climate agenda and that the “stigma” must be removed from recycled products.