

BIR celebrates its sixtieth birthday in Monte-Carlo

Recyclers lauded as climate and environment 'heroes'

In recent years, the environmental debate has become ever more carbon-centric. However, the recycling industry's contribution to reducing carbon dioxide emissions has not attracted much of the international spotlight – until now, that is. At the latest BIR Spring Convention, staged at the Fairmont Hotel in Monte-Carlo, the enormity of its role in cutting emissions of damaging greenhouse gases was brought into sharp focus.

The 2008 Spring Convention of the BIR world recycling organisation was a triumph on so many levels. In addition to attracting a record attendance of some 1300 registered delegates and 400 accompanying persons, the event's centrepiece – a gala dinner in celebration of BIR's sixtieth birthday – was a truly dazzling success that lit up the Monte-Carlo sky. The convention programme itself featured 27 guest speakers and served to highlight the

vast contribution of the recycling industry to the planet's well-being. Rarely, if ever, has the inextricable link between recycling and carbon dioxide emission savings been so clearly drawn. And rarely, if ever, has the recycling industry attracted such unequivocal support from an environmental big hitter. Lord Nicholas Stern of Brentford, famous around the world for authoring the renowned Stern Report on climate change, listened to previous speakers at

BIR's General Assembly in Monte-Carlo and then declared in his keynote address that he was 'very impressed by what I have learned today'. In terms of the battle to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and thereby avoid drastic climatic consequences, recyclers 'should be the heroes of this story', he insisted. 'You have got a splendid story and I would encourage you very strongly to tell it.'

Temperature warning

Lord Stern had earlier outlined his interpretation of the world's current predicament. Growth in the stock of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was accelerating because of the planet's reduced ability to absorb it. If no action were taken, this stock was on course to climb from its present level of around 430 parts per million (ppm) carbon dioxide equivalent to upwards of 800 ppm by the end of the current century, opening up a '50/50 probabil-





A Ferrari has hit a lamp-post and is about to become an ELV - an unusual sight even in Monaco where a Ferrari is as common as a Mercedes in many other countries.



Adriano Assi, Publisher and Editor of the Brazilian recycling magazine Reciclagem Moderna, is a Formula-1 aficionado and here is standing in front of the famous hairpin bend on the Monte-Carlo racing circuit.



One of Monte-Carlo's many statues.



Jim Schwartz of Metso Texas Shredder and his wife Cynthia.



From left: Antonella Duranti, US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries' President Robin Wiener, and Fernando Duranti of Leghe & Metalli of Italy.



In Monte-Carlo, Robert Voss of the UK (right) was a very happy man. He won a Niton hand-held analyser in a draw run by Thermo Fisher Scientific. Thermo's Olaf Haupt (left) presented Mr Voss with his prize.



The Formula 1 Grand Prix in Monte-Carlo is one of Monaco's main tourist attractions.



Monaco at a glance

This year's BIR Spring Convention took place in the Fairmont Hotel in Monaco - or officially the Principality of Monaco, a small sovereign city-state located on the northern coast of the Mediterranean Sea and completely surrounded by France. It has a surface area of 1.95 sq km, which is about three times the size of The Mall in Washington, DC. With 32 796 inhabitants, Monaco is the world's second most densely populated country, surpassed only by the Macau Special Administrative Region in south-east China. Monaco is also the smallest French-speaking country in the world and, since 2005, this constitutional monarchy and principality has had Prince Albert II as its head of state. He belongs to the Grimaldi family which has ruled Monaco since 1292.

Monaco's economic development was spurred in the late 19th century with a railroad link-up to France and the opening of a casino. Since then, the principality's mild climate, splendid scenery and gambling facilities have made it world famous as a tourist and recreation centre. The principality is also a major banking centre and has successfully sought to diversify into services and small, high-value-added, non-polluting industries. The state has no income tax and low business taxes and thrives as a tax haven both for individuals who have established residence status and for foreign companies which have set up businesses and offices. The state retains monopolies in a number of sectors, including tobacco, the telephone network and the postal service. Living standards are high, roughly comparable to those in prosperous French metropolitan areas.



BIR's Spring Convention took place at the Fairmont Hotel in Monte-Carlo.

Monte-Carlo's Grand Casino reflected in a sculpture.



ity' of temperatures exceeding their 1850 levels by 5 degC, according to Lord Stern. Such a temperature hike would result in elevated sea levels, storms, flooding and droughts, and would result in a huge movement of people to more habitable parts of the globe.

Stabilising the stock level at 500 ppm carbon dioxide equivalent would result in 'a massive reduction in risk', Lord Stern continued. Measures to achieve this end should include a global carbon emissions trading scheme and a halt to deforestation. And he added: 'The really fast stuff will come through energy efficiency - and that is where recycling is so important.'

And to the many people who continued to deny the signs of climate change, Lord Stern offered this memorable observation: 'Anyone who has a greenhouse knows there's a greenhouse effect.'

Emission savings through recycling

Recognition of the recycling industry's achievements spilled over into the subsequent meeting of the International Environment Council (IEC) where the positive impact of recycling on greenhouse gas emissions was put in even starker terms by Roger Brewster, Managing Director of UK-based Metal Interests Ltd. Through research conducted at Imperial College in London, he explained, the recycling of paper and seven metals - namely aluminium, copper, ferrous, lead, nickel, tin and zinc - was found to lead to global carbon dioxide emission savings of 551 million tonnes per annum. Based on 2006-07 world-wide production figures, this is equivalent to 1.8% of worldwide fossil fuel emissions and was valued by Lord Stern at US\$ 20 billion.

For one, the Belgium-based International Iron and Steel Institute (IISI) clearly believes the figure of 551 million tonnes may be an under-estimation. In his guest presentation to the BIR Ferrous Division meeting in Monte-Carlo, IISI's Deputy Secretary General Mika Saariaho suggested that steel recycling alone saves some 900 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions every year.

Against this backdrop, BIR has taken the decision to measure its carbon footprint and to establish a 'Statistical Observatory' to benchmark and compare its achievements from year to year, it was confirmed at the General Assembly by BIR's World President Dominique

Maguin of France. He also noted the organisation's intention to form an International Trade and Arbitration Council which would adopt a 'proactive' approach to issues regarded as harmful to free trade such as the imposition of duties and import/export bans.

Recycling 'dynamism'

Other guest speakers at the General Assembly contributed to the decidedly upbeat tone of the event. The 'dynamism' of the recycling industry's activities was praised by Robert Calcagno, the representative of His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco who had extended his patronage to the BIR Spring Convention. The Government Advisor on Equipment, Environment and Urban Development also noted that Prince Albert had approved policies designed to boost the principality's recovery and recycling rate from 6% in 2007 to more than 20%.

Meanwhile, Professor Philippe Chalmin, Chairman of the CycloPe commodity market research institute in France, described high commodity prices as a 'gift from heaven' which would foster greater wisdom in resource utilisation and therefore increased recycling.

Ikbal Nathani's BIR joke

Being peed off

During the BIR Convention in Monte-Carlo, three men - a German, an American and a guy from India - were standing next to each other in the lavatory and peeing in silence. When they were finished, they headed for the washbasins. The German washed his hands at least three times, carefully dried them and said: 'My mother taught me to wash my hands very carefully after peeing.' The American not only washed his hands but also scrubbed them until they glowed pink. As he dried his hands, he said: 'My mother taught me always to wash and scrub my hands very thoroughly after peeing.' The Indian guy headed straight for the exit without even bothering to wash his hands. As he was heading for the door, he said over his shoulder to the other two: 'My mother taught me never to pee on my hands.'



Recycling International celebrates its 10th anniversary

Recycling International was launched ten years ago at the BIR Spring Convention in Paris. In Monte-Carlo, where the world recycling body celebrated its 60th birthday, the magazine unveiled its 100th edition - the first to appear after a major re-design. Moreover, to demonstrate its strong links with BIR, Recycling International sponsored the hospitality lounge and organised a cocktail party for delegates and exhibitors, with hundreds of delegates gathering for drinks, snacks and a chat. Recycling International also prepared a special gift for all BIR delegates: a book called 'Boobs, beads and bourbon and other recycled stories' containing the best Viewpoints written by Editor Manfred Beck over the last decade.



From left to right: Sales Manager Jan-Willem Ypma and Magazine Administrator Helga Fresen of Recycling International presented the 100th edition of the magazine to BIR Director General Francis Veys and World President Dominique Maguin.



Recycling International's Publisher and Editor Manfred Beck got writer's cramp because of the number of requests from delegates to autograph his book 'Boobs, beads and bourbon and other recycled stories'.



'Eurotrash': after a dinner party near the castle in Monaco, it rained cats and dogs. Since Kent Kiser, Publisher/Editor of ISRI's 'Scrap' magazine, and his wife Penny could not get a taxi, they wrapped themselves in trash bags provided by the restaurant prior to the 20-minute walk back to their hotel.



From left to right: Recycling International's Financial Director Esther van de Boogaard; Marije Berrevoets; and Recycling International's Deputy Editor Gert-Jan van der Have.



Henrik Harjula of the OECD's Environment Directorate/National Policies Division: 'Non-hazardous recyclable materials should be exempted from waste legislation.'



Nicole Bauwens of Belgium-based E-Crane International.



Central keynote speaker at BIR's General Assembly was Lord Nicholas Stern of Brentford, who led a review on the economics of climate change and the likely consequences for current and future generations. This resulted in the publication of the renowned 700-page Stern Review Report.

There was a standing ovation at the General Assembly for outgoing BIR Treasurer Anthony Bird of the UK-based Bird Group of Companies who was confirmed as a Lifetime Honorary Member of the world organisation. He is to be succeeded as Treasurer by Bjorn Grufman of M V Metallvarden AB of Sweden.

During the General Assembly, Fred Nijkerk of the Netherlands was also awarded a Lifetime Honorary Membership for his many merits for the recycling industry.

Exemption call for recyclables

Spontaneous applause was also to be heard at the IEC meeting when Henrik Harjula of the OECD's Environment Directorate/National Policies Division insisted that he would like to see non-hazardous recyclable materials exempted from waste legislation and covered only by those controls applicable to 'normal transactions'. But he added: 'Unfortunately we are not there yet, and unfortunately it could take some time to get there.'

Mr Harjula went on to praise the BIR for producing 'Tools for Environmentally Sound Management', a document designed to assist recovery and recycling companies in implementing an ISO-compliant environmental management system incorporating the OECD's Core Performance Elements. There was strong evidence to suggest that companies adopting an ESM-based approach to business would derive financial benefit in the long run while also enhancing their environmental credentials, he said.

The speaker also noted the beginnings of 'a paradigm shift from cradle-to-grave to cradle-to-cradle', with activities already targeting sustainable materials and closed material cycles. 'Recycling will be key in this transition to a new material economy,' Mr Harjula insisted.

Computer equipment initiative

Dr Katharina Kummer Peiry, Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, welcomed the positive input of BIR and the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI) with regard to a partnership initiative resulting in guidelines on dealing with end-of-life mobile phones. A similar Basel Convention initiative covering computer equipment would be launched shortly, she added.

Birthday party lifts the roof

As BIR itself expressed it: 'Unique occasions call for unique celebrations.' And the organisation's stylish 60th Anniversary Gala Dinner in the Salle des Etoiles of the Monte-Carlo Sporting Club certainly merited use of the word 'unique'.

Some 700 guests were treated not only to a high-quality dinner but also to an extravaganza of entertainment culminating in a live performance from global superstars Chico and the Gypsies - the group formed by Gypsy Kings' founding member Jahloul 'Chico' Bouchikhi. Their stunning musical display lured huge numbers of revellers on to the dance floor.

And the evening reached truly spectacular heights when the roof of the Salle des Etoiles slid silently open to allow diners to enjoy a fantastic firework display, with lasers tracing the name of BIR and its logo on the night sky over Monte-Carlo. Organisers of BIR's next big birthday bash have got a truly astronomical act to follow!

Fabio Bertelli (left) and Dr. Guido De Santis of Italian magnetic systems specialist Gauss Magneti.



At the BIR exhibition in Monte-Carlo, Björn Giesbers (left) and Marc van de Wijdeven of Dutch recycling equipment supplier MaTech introduced their new MiniSort Scrap Pro hand-held metals sorter.



John Schofield (left) and Jim Jagou of Harris Waste Management are heading back home after the show.



Jean-François Equey of Metallo in Belgium (left) and Herbert Bach of the Switzerland-based Dietiker Group.



Alvaro Rodriguez Martinez, outgoing Chairman of BIR's International Environment Council (left) and BIR's Environmental & Technical Director Ross Bartley in consultation between meetings.



Lindsay Millington of the British Metals Recycling Association and Hans Koning of the Dutch Metals Recycling Federation.



From left to right: Miguel Clavel and his wife Maria Conget of Industrias Hidráulicas 'Moros', their son Marcos Clavel, and Guillermo Del Rio of Recycling Equipos, all from Zaragoza in Spain.



A US gathering of, from left to right, Andy Wahl of Newell Recycling of Atlanta, Bob Stein of Alter Trading and David Chiao of the Uni-All Group.

After six years as Chairman of the IEC, Alvaro Rodriguez Martinez of Spain-based Energis SA has stepped down and will be succeeded by Olivier François, Development Director of Group Galloo.

Successful convention

As mentioned above, the 2008 BIR Spring Convention attracted some 1300 registered delegates and 400 accompanying persons. But Communications Director Elisabeth Christ adds: 'I think there were hundreds of traders in the lobby of the Fairmont Hotel who had not registered but who had come to Monte-Carlo nonetheless, hoping to do business with BIR delegates.'

The recycling exhibition alongside the convention hall featured 36 stands and eight large hospitality booths - also a record for BIR.

The reasons for the success of the entire event were manifold. First, the recycling markets are still strong in many instances, and so traders and recyclers are eager to do business. Second, BIR had put together an especially attractive programme for its 60th birthday. And last but not least, Monte-Carlo is a favourite destination and many BIR members seize the opportunity to take a short holiday in the nearby Provence region of France, on the Mediterranean coast or across the border in Italy. □



A statue comprised of rusted steel and concrete blocks near Monte-Carlo's marina.

Concerns about container shipping

Increasingly, recyclables are shipped in containers rather than in bulk. At the BIR Convention in Monte-Carlo, the problems - and potential solutions - relating to container shipment were discussed during a workshop moderated by Robert Voss of the UK.

The growing gap between exports and imports was identified as the cause of an imbalance in container availability in several parts of the world, thereby leading to a surge in shipping costs. John Chen of the US/Chinese Tung Tai Group observed: 'Two years ago, shipping lines were very eager to send empty containers back. However, the growing US export situation - thanks to a weak dollar rate - and record oil prices make the availability of containers very tight.'

Ikbal Nathani of the Nathani Group of Companies in India said: 'Over the last 12 months, our problems have increased by 200%.' Laying the blame with the shipping lines, he added: 'They make a lot of mistakes in converting pounds to metric tonnes. Bookings are cancelled at the last moment and they make unreasonable demands.'

Ivo Dolk from Marine Inspection and Logistics (MIL) in the Netherlands provided a different perspective. 'Containers are increasingly damaged prior to, during and after discharging,' he said. 'Poor methods are resulting in cracks and dents, which need to be repaired.'

Mr Nathani added that, in many cases, container boxes were refurbished in a far-from-adequate manner. BIR announced that it would be sending a report on these problems to the main shipping lines.



Panellists Ivo Dolk of Marine Inspection and Logistics of the Netherlands.



John Chen of the Tung Tai Group, USA/China.



Tom Bird of the Sims Group, UK.



Bob Garino, Director of Commodities of ISRI and his wife Bert.



Ved Prakash (left) and Surendra Borad of Gemini Corporation in Belgium.

Future BIR Conventions

2008	October 30-31	<i>Düsseldorf</i>	Germany	Hilton Hotel
2009	May 25-27	<i>Dubai</i>	United Arab Emirates	Grand Hyatt Hotel
	Autumn	<i>Amsterdam</i>	Netherlands	Okura Hotel
2010	May-June	<i>Sevilla</i>	Spain	Tentative
	Autumn	<i>Brussels</i>	Belgium	Tentative

The Burj Al Arab (literally 'Tower of the Arabs') has quickly become a landmark in Dubai. It is the only seven-star hotel in the world. At 321 metres (1053 feet), it is currently the tallest building used exclusively as a hotel. It is an iconic structure, designed to symbolise Dubai's urban transformation and to mimic the sail of a dhow, a type of Arabian vessel. Construction of the Burj Al Arab began in 1994 and the hotel cost US\$ 650 million to build.

