

## PRESS RELEASE

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### *Recent BIR World Recycling Convention & Exhibition in Barcelona (27 - 30 May 2018)*

#### *International Trade Council:*

**“We need your feedback,” industry leaders urge recyclers**

**Brussels, 1 June 2018**

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“I have been in the business for 50 years and have never seen circumstances facing the international recycling industry that compare to the issues and problems we face at the moment,” declared Michael Lion of China-based Everwell Resources Ltd in his role as Chairman of the BIR’s International Trade Council (ITC). His comments prefaced an ITC meeting in Barcelona on May 29 at which a panel of recycling experts analysed latest trade tariff conflicts and the wider regulatory environment.

Inevitably, China’s stricter regulation of imports was one of the main points of debate. Robin Wiener, President of the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, reminded delegates that the Chinese government’s policy direction had been consistent since the issuing of a six-part strategy in July 2017, the goals of which included an increase in domestic recycling and a ban on imports of those solid wastes that attract “intense public reaction”. In other words, she said, the Chinese government had been “up front” about its desire to: grow its domestic recycling industry; and to respond to public pressure at home concerning the country’s “severe environmental crisis”.

BIR World President Ranjit Singh Baxi of J&H Sales International agreed that the Chinese government was “doing everything possible” to promote its own recycling industry.

While China had not deviated from its policy course, the main problem for the recycling industry had been the timing and the details of its regulatory actions, according to Ms Wiener. Some of the wording was hard to interpret and required clarification that was often difficult to obtain, such as

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**BIR – REPRESENTING THE FUTURE LEADING RAW MATERIAL SUPPLIERS**

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the meaning of “carried waste” in the contamination thresholds applied to imports of many recyclables.

Given the latitude for interpretation, officials on the ground were always likely to “err on the safe side” and opt for rejection over approval, Mr Lion suggested. For his part, William Schmiedel of Sims Metal Management Global Trade Corporation suggested that China’s drive to clean up its environment was “here to stay”, adding: “Beijing is very serious about this. We must act with a sound environmental conscience.”

According to BIR Plastics Committee Chairman Surendra Patawari Borad of Belgium-based Gemini Corporation, China’s restrictions on plastics scrap imports had resulted in significant volumes being redirected to Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia. “Exports to these countries have increased many times over,” he said. “However, there is a lurking fear of some sudden change in their import regulations - a scenario which would again push international trade into a tailspin.”

Ms Wiener was joined by Mr Lion and BIR’s Director General Arnaud Brunet in calling on the recycling industry to come forward with details of its experiences relating to new rules and regulations. “We need to get feedback from you,” said Mr Brunet. “The more feedback we get, the better we can react.” And Ms Wiener elaborated: “We want to hear from you - and not just about China.” Expressing concern that the messages emanating from China could be adopted by other countries, she added: “We need export markets. If you hear of something happening in other markets, then let us know.”

Several speakers alluded to the pace of new developments regarding regulations and tariffs. On the very day of the ITC meeting, news emerged of a widely unexpected escalation of the US/China trade dispute and of China’s latest move to centralise responsibility for the supervision and administration of pre-shipping inspection agencies under the General Administration of Customs.

Tom Bird of China-based Chiho Environmental Group agreed with fellow panellist Murat Bayram of EMR that, ultimately, “the market is the market, and we have to deal with it”. Mr Bayram had earlier lamented the fact that governments tended to pay insufficient attention to the concerns of the recycling industry. He expressed the hope that the BIR-inspired Global Recycling Day would help governments and the public to understand that the recycling industry represented an environmental “problem solver” rather than “problem maker”.

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