

PRESS RELEASE

Recent BIR World Recycling Convention & Exhibition in Miami (1-4 June 2014)

International Textile Recycling Summit.

Stakeholders converge on ground-breaking International Textile Recycling Summit

Brussels, 18 June 2014

Approaching 100 companies attended the first-ever International Textile Recycling Summit, co-organised by the BIR world recycling organisation, the Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association (SMART) and the Council for Textile Recycling (CTR). Held during BIR's latest World Convention in Miami on June 2, the event brought together a range of major players at a moment in time described as "an inflexion point" for the textiles recycling sector.

SMART Vice President and CTR Chair Eric Stubin of Trans-Americas Textile Recycling Inc. in the USA told the Summit's panel-based afternoon sessions* that this "unique" gathering constituted a significant contribution to the "catalytic conversations" now being held among stakeholders with regard to increasing the diversion of post-consumer textiles from landfill.

Mr Stubin called on clothing and footwear producers to "assume their fair share of responsibility for the products they manufacture and sell". At present, "relatively few companies incorporate reuse and recycling into their ethos, their messaging and their business model", he contended. "We need apparel and footwear companies en masse to take an active role in messaging and work with an extremely efficient reverse supply chain to increase diversion rates."

The three panel sessions - covering global issues, sustainability and future trends - featured speakers from around the world. Offering a US perspective, several contributors argued

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that grading operations lost to countries with cheaper overall costs were unlikely to return, although Nir Katz of Whitehouse & Schapiro anticipated the development of “certain niche opportunities down the line” owing to growth in America’s thrift, vintage and boutique industries.

For Europe, newly-installed BIR Textiles Division President Mehdi Zerroug of Framimex was one of several speakers to comment on France’s EcoTlc levy scheme to support sorters, research & development and awareness campaigns - an initiative which, he said, had led to significant change within the country’s collection and sorting sectors. EcoTlc’s Communications Manager Laurianne Tiard said that the collection rate in France was at 25% but needed to reach 50% in six years, and thus would generate substantially larger volumes of textiles for reuse and recycling.

China could emerge as “a new outlet” for some of the additional fibre collected in France, added Ms Tiard. According to Sun Huaibin, who is Vice President, Vice Executive Secretary and Director of the China Textile Economy Research Centre of the China National Textile & Apparel Council, his country’s collections of used textiles were generally donated to less fortunate members of the community or were recycled for use within the clothing, construction and automotive industries. As regards exports of recycled textiles from China, he said: “We are not doing that much as of right now.”

Also at the Summit, US companies Cotton Incorporated and Levi Strauss & Co. were named as winners of Recycling Innovator Awards for Leadership in Sustainable Apparel. The former was recognised for its Blue Jeans Go Green programme through which denim is transformed into housing insulation, and the latter for its efforts in encouraging consumers to reuse/recycle and in working with other stakeholders towards increased landfill diversion.

* A press release on the morning session of the International Textile Recycling Summit was issued by BIR on June 6.

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