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BIR World Recycling Convention & Exhibition Istanbul, 31 May - 2 June 2010

General Assembly: Future brings excellent opportunities for the recycling industry

The recycling sector comprises the world's leading raw material suppliers and offers "the perfect response to growing global awareness of the need for environmental protection", BIR's President Dominique Maguin of La Compagnie des Matières Premières in France declared to the world association's General Assembly in Istanbul on June 1. "Thanks to our determined actions, the industries of the world are supplied each day with almost half of their total raw materials needs."

The recycling industry had become "completely indispensable to the life of our planet" but had not always realised the importance of its mission. "We must therefore ensure that our contribution is understood by the international community so that it can gauge our importance and, in return, respect the interests of our companies," Mr Maguin insisted. "We must therefore communicate more and better."

Mr Maguin was also able to reveal that the Istanbul event had earned the title of “the most successful BIR Convention ever”: it had attracted almost 1600 participants from a total of 59 countries. Partly because of the success of its Conventions, BIR was in a robust financial position which allowed the organisation to “look fearlessly to future missions”, according to the World President. BIR’s financial health also stems from growth in its membership numbers: Membership Committee Chairman Michael Lion confirmed in Istanbul that the total had reached 770 from 69 countries.

In his keynote address to the General Assembly, Hamish McRae - Associate Editor and principal economic commentator of leading UK daily newspaper “The Independent” - praised the recycling industry for “enabling growth to go on without increasing the footprint on the world’s resources”. As the business world increasingly recognised the value of developing a “green” reputation, this would bring “a huge benefit to your industry”, he said.

With the debt legacy driving what Mr McRae described as the current “transition from plenty to austerity”, governments of the world would be forced to “rethink everything” and “do more with less”, he contended. This mindset shift would present the recycling industry with “a wonderful opportunity”.

Doug Woodring, the Co-founder and Director of Project Kaisei, praised the support of BIR for an initiative whose aim is to “remove and remediate” the massive volumes of debris found in the world’s oceans, including a substantial proportion of plastics. Among his shocking statistics, he revealed that a whale caught last year had been found to contain 400kg of debris. It was Mr Woodring’s contention that, in the world today, the footprint left by plastics is larger than that of carbon dioxide. “Its impact on ecology is immediate,” he pointed out.

Professor Philippe Chalmin of the CycLOpe research institute in France presented the findings of the first global BIR commodity survey and emphasised the importance of the shift away from annual benchmark pricing in the iron ore sector. He also argued that it was “very dangerous” for the world to rely so heavily on growth in the Chinese market.

The General Assembly was concluded with the award of a BIR Certificate of Merit to Bob Garino, Commodities Director of the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries. In presenting this accolade, Mr Maguin praised the recipient for his market expertise and dedication to the recycling industry.

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