

PRESS RELEASE

Recent BIR World Recycling Convention & Exhibition in Singapore (23-25 May 2011)

International Environment Council: Major end-of-waste boost for EU recycling industry

Brussels, 1 June 2011

"I want to provide you with some good news" is how Ian Hetherington of the British Metals Recycling Association embarked on telling delegates to the International Environment Council (IEC) meeting on 24 May 2011 in Singapore about a major breakthrough for the recycling industry in the EU.

Only a matter of weeks before the world body's 2011 Spring Convention, agreement had been confirmed on end-of waste criteria for iron/steel and aluminium scrap. "This is clearly to be welcomed," said Mr Hetherington. "The nub of it is that there are some real commercial advantages emerging from end-of-waste." These include the elimination both of the "very substantial costs" associated with satisfying waste legislation and of the negative image of "changing waste into waste". He added: "Scrap metal processors regain the right to be a recycler once again. This is a big change for our industry."

Similar end-of-waste provisions are expected to be made in the near future for copper scrap and recovered paper, noted Mr Hetherington. For all recyclables for which such criteria are to be developed, the emphasis is on cleanness, compliance with maximum "foreign" material content levels, and no overall adverse environmental or human health impacts. The recycler/customer determines when sell or buy waste or non-waste, he added.

The IEC meeting also featured two guest presentations, the second of which provided an outline of emerging recycling initiatives in China, including the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment

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(WEEE) Recycling Management Regulation implemented on January 1 this year. This is a response to the fact that household equipment scrap arisings in China are expanding at an annual rate of 20%, reported Ma Hongchang, Vice Secretary General of the China Nonferrous Metals Industry Association Recycling Metal Branch (CMRA).

Meanwhile, China's Secondary Nonferrous Metals Industry Development Promotion Plan published earlier this year establishes a number of goals for the country's current Five-Year Plan, including a gross annual output target of 12m tonnes for secondary non-ferrous metals by the year 2015. The plan also calls for the scaling-up of industrial enterprises and for "great progress" in the technology they use. Further efforts will be made to eliminate enterprises with lower capacities, he added.

Progress in the promotion of recycling was also the theme of the first IEC guest presentation, delivered by Andrew Tan, CEO of Singapore's National Environment Agency (NEA). Last year, the city state "recycled 58% of our total solid waste and converted another 40% into energy", he noted. "Recycling rates in 2010 were as high as 99% for construction and demolition waste and used slag; 95% for ferrous metals; over 70% for wood waste, tyres and non-ferrous metals."

Mr Tan also highlighted promising r&d projects funded under the NEA's Environment Technology Research Programme, including the conversion of mixed plastic waste into higher-value biodegradable polymers.

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