
PRESS RELEASE

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BIR World Recycling Convention 25-27 May 2009, Dubai *Press Releases on Commodity Sessions*

International Environment Council: UAE's Minister of Environment officially visits BIR Convention

A centrepiece of the IEC meeting in Dubai was a presentation from His Excellency Dr Rashid Ahmad Bin Fahad, the United Arab Emirates' Minister of Environment and Water. Describing recycling as "a pillar" of the region's approach to achieving integrated waste management, he said the staging of a BIR Convention in Dubai represents "an important step towards encouraging the institutions of the private sector to pay this industry the attention it deserves".

The Emirates' recycling industry is "still in its early stages", the minister acknowledged, but has expanded to cover an ever-growing number of material and product streams, including paper, plastics, used car tyres, mobile phones and building materials "that constitute the most part of waste products in the country".

The EU's regulation on the Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals (REACH) "will not be the burden we were expecting a year ago", attendees were assured by IEC Chairman, Olivier François of Galloometal in Belgium.

The objective of REACH is to make persons placing materials on the market responsible for understanding and managing the risks associated with their use. At the BIR's 2008 Autumn Convention in Düsseldorf, members had been urged to play safe

by pre-registering their substances ahead of a December 1 deadline - and many had duly taken this advice.

Since then, BIR has attempted to convince officials at the European Commission that recyclers are not producing new materials but rather “mechanical transformers” of existing materials; according to Mr François, the feedback has been that “we are going in the right direction” with this argument. At the same time, the European Council of Ministers supported a general reduction in the administrative burden on the recycling industry given that it has suffered a severe market slowdown.

Mr François also informed IEC delegates that the European Commission is moving ahead quickly with the process designed to lead to “end-of-waste” criteria for a number of mainstream recyclables. The outcome, he reminded delegates, will have potentially massive consequences for world trade in these secondary raw materials. And IEC’s Chairman also confirmed to his audience in Dubai that Imperial College in London will shortly publish its study underlining the recycling industry’s huge role in reducing carbon dioxide emissions worldwide.

The United Nations Environment Programme has begun its public/private Partnership for Action on Computing Equipment (PACE), the aim of which is to develop environmentally sound management (ESM) criteria for used and end-of-life computers and computing equipment. BIR’s Environmental & Technical Director Ross Bartley reminded delegates that input into this initiative would be welcomed both from companies and associations. Definitive ESM guidelines are expected to emerge perhaps three years from now, he added.

Guest speaker Don Smale, Secretary-General of the Portugal-based International Copper Study Group (ICSG), pointed out that secondary copper is leaving countries “with a long history of previous economic growth with a falling share of industrial activity”. Much of this volume is going instead to China, leaving nations such as Germany, Belgium, Italy and Austria to “struggle to get the resource”.

ICSG is to conduct further research on the environmental benefits of copper recycling, including energy efficiency gains when compared to primary copper use. “Secondary copper has a very positive story to tell here,” said Mr Smale.

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