

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

#### **General Assembly: Excellent Convention attendance despite economic downturn**

The impact of the global downturn on the recycling industry has been “brutal” but “our businesses will be in the vanguard of the economic upswing”. That was the positive message delivered by BIR World President Dominique Maguin to the organisation's latest General Assembly in Dubai.

He called on the industry to “assess our ability to react, organise and develop” and to “reinforce our professionalism by enhancing the quality of our products, our respect for the environment, and the training and safety of our employees”. Secondary raw materials produced by the industry should conform not only to contractual agreements but also to specifications “of which we should promote the implementation and use by all operators within our industry”. And he added: “We should also redouble our vigilance and our efforts in support of free trade given that the current crisis may lead to protectionist behaviour by certain states.”

Mr Maguin, who now embarks on a second two-year term as BIR President, also underlined the potentially profound importance of work being conducted within the EU towards the setting of “end-of-waste” criteria. BIR and its daughter associations EFR, Eurometrec and ERPA have been asked for their expert input to these deliberations, he noted.

The General Assembly's guest speaker was Dr Rami Khouri - Director of the Issam Fares Institute of Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University of Beirut, as well as Editor-at-large of the Beirut-based Daily Star newspaper. Having congratulated the recycling industry on combining environmental stewardship, global co-operation and the profit motive, he contended that the international media paints a generally negative picture of the Middle East despite the fact that it is "a region of great variety and much change".

Dr Khouri also highlighted a growing awareness of environmental protection issues in the region, particularly among young, well-educated people. In this context, he went on to insist: "There is an enormous opportunity to connect more with people in the Middle East."

Encouragingly, BIR membership has slightly increased since the beginning of the economic downturn in late 2008, according to the organisation's Treasurer Björn Grufman of MV Metallvärden AB in Sweden. "It's actually a net gain in members, and as you can see from this Convention, we have many more delegates than we expected," he said. In total, around 1300 people attended the Dubai Convention, comprising 950 delegates and 350 accompanying persons. In his Treasurer's report, Mr Grufman also observed that BIR's 2008 receipts had reached forecasted levels despite the dramatic global downturn of the fourth quarter.

The upbeat tone of the General Assembly was reinforced by the awarding of three BIR Certificates of Merit. Salam Sharif of Sharif Metals and Fadi Shahrour of Sharmetal Trading Co SARL were recognised for their efforts in promoting BIR in the Middle East; and Augustin Brutus Jaykumar of India received the same accolade for founding the Intercultural Network for Development and Peace as well as the Base for Rural Women Development - two organisations with a strong social, cultural and environmental dimension, which amongst others launched a recycling project called Plastic life.

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