

BIR is the international trade association of the recycling industries. Around 70 countries are represented through their national trade associations and individual companies which are involved in recycling. BIR comprises four commodity divisions: iron and steel, non ferrous metals, paper and textiles, and has committees dealing with stainless steel and special alloys, plastics and rubber. BIR's primary goals are to promote recycling and recyclability, thereby conserving natural resources, protecting the environment and facilitating free trade of secondary raw materials.

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Brussels, 5 November 2008

BIR Autumn Round-Table Sessions Düsseldorf, 30-31 October 2008

Textiles Division: **Markets disturbed through disrespect of contractual agreements**

As in many of the other commodity sessions in Düsseldorf, failures to comply with contractual agreements were highlighted at the BIR Textiles Round-Table. Honorary President Klaus Löwer of Germany-based Hans Löwer Recycling GmbH insisted: "People need to adhere to contracts. Compromises must be found. Unethical behaviour ultimately leads to a dead end."

Turning his attention to market developments in the USA, Mr Löwer said there is no lack of originals but sorters are "still complaining of price levels that are too high"; meanwhile, a significant proportion of US sorting capacity has shifted to other countries such as Canada and Mexico. And in Asia, Japanese sorters are also worried about the high price of originals while insufficient collection volumes have been prompting South Korea to import non-sorted textiles from Japan, reported Mr Löwer.

Prices of originals have been holding relatively stable in recent months despite high stocks and lower demand, observed Olaf Rintsch of Germany-based Textil Recycling K&A Wenkhaus GmbH in his European market report. At the same time, autumn collection volumes “have remained within the normal averages of recent years”. Wipers are continuing to sell quite well but at lower prices, whereas the feathers market has become “a lost cause” as prices continue to sink, according to the President of the BIR Textiles Division.

Alan Wheeler of the Textile Recycling Association reported that the price of original second-hand clothing in the UK has continued to increase steadily since the previous BIR Convention in early June. His country’s annual exports of used clothing surged from around 200,000 tonnes five years ago to 305,000 tonnes in 2007, with particularly strong growth in shipments to Poland and the Ukraine.

The Round-Table in Düsseldorf also provided an opportunity for Mehdi Zerroug of Framimex to update delegates on the progress of the proposal to introduce an “eco-levy” on new clothing in France. The decree covering the formation of an eco-body was signed in June and - “in theory” - this organisation should be created some time in 2009. Funds are already being collected and work is currently focusing on devising a system for monitoring those companies performing the upgrading operations, he noted.

The guest presentation from Tilman Baehr from Hamburg’s Department of Transfrontier Shipments of Waste underlined that the EU’s new Waste Framework Directive positions recycling above other forms of recovery (eg energy recovery) in the hierarchy of options for dealing with materials designated as “waste”.

Specifically in relation to waste shipments, he acknowledged the recycling industry’s deep concerns over the threat to commercial confidentiality posed by Annex VII document requirements. Mr Baehr also agreed that sorted textiles placed in containers and exported to another country for subsequent sale should be considered products rather than waste because they meet the criterion of satisfying a demand without inflicting damage on the environment.

In a related subject, Mr Rintsch reiterated his belief that an item of clothing placed in a collection bank should not be deemed to be a “waste” given that the person donating it intends for it to be put to further use.

ends