

PRESS RELEASE

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2008 World Recycling Convention & BIR's 60th Anniversary Celebration Monte Carlo, 2-4 June 2008

BIR study reveals: Considerable CO₂ saving through recycling

Recycling activity is responsible for saving well over 500 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions each year, according to research discussed at the International Environment Council (IEC) meeting in Monte-Carlo.

Based on 2006-07 worldwide production figures for seven metals (aluminium, copper, ferrous, lead, nickel, tin and zinc) and for paper, the global carbon dioxide emission savings attributable to recycling in these sectors amount to 551 million tonnes - equivalent to 1.8% of worldwide fossil fuel emissions. This impressive statistic was derived from research conducted at world-renowned Imperial College in London and was revealed to IEC delegates by Roger Brewster, Managing Director of UK-based Metal Interests Ltd, who described the outcome as "fantastic" for the recycling industry.

According to Henrik Harjula of the Environment Directorate/National Policies Division of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the role of recycling "is becoming more and more important all the time" given that population growth will place increasing strain on the environment and natural resources. "Your role will be key in trying to provide for this increase in consumption," he said.

And the guest speaker drew spontaneous applause when declaring that he would like to see non-hazardous recyclable materials exempted from waste legislation. Calling for controls on such materials to be the same as those covering normal transactions,

he added: "Unfortunately we are not there yet, and unfortunately it could take some time to get there."

Mr Harjula went on to praise the BIR for producing "Tools for Environmentally Sound Management", a document designed to assist recovery and recycling companies in implementing an ISO-compliant environmental management system incorporating the OECD's Core Performance Elements. There was strong evidence to suggest that companies adopting an ESM-based approach to business would derive financial benefit in the long run, he said.

The speaker also noted the beginnings of "a paradigm shift from cradle-to-grave to cradle-to-cradle", with activities already targeting sustainable materials and closed material cycles. "Recycling will be key in this transition to a new material economy," Mr Harjula insisted.

Dr Katharina Kummer Peiry, Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, expressed her approval at the lead role taken by BIR in addressing the issue of waste from electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE). She also praised the positive input of BIR with regard to the Basel Convention's partnership initiative which had led to guidelines on dealing with end-of-life mobile phones. A similar initiative covering computer equipment, to which Eric Harris of ISRI had contributed substantially, would be launched shortly, she added.

Dr Kummer Peiry recognised on-going concern within the recycling industry surrounding the lack of distinction between secondary raw materials and waste, adding that she would welcome a continuing strong input from BIR and other recycling stakeholders on this issue.

In a submission prepared for the IEC meeting but ultimately not delivered owing to time constraints, BIR's Environmental and Technical Director pointed out that an official European Commission document was due to appear shortly and that this would elucidate the position of recyclers in relation to the EU's REACH regulation covering registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals. According to Mr Bartley's interpretation of current European Commission advice, the recycling industry has no reason to adopt panic measures in relation to REACH but might well consider certain precautionary action.

The IEC meeting in Monte-Carlo marked the final appearance of Alvaro Rodriguez Martinez of Spain-based Energis SA as its Chairman. After six years in the role, he will be succeeded by Olivier François of NV Galloometal of Belgium.

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