



BIR

Bureau of International
Recycling

BIR is the international trade association of the recycling industries. Around 60 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.

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BIR World Recycling Convention & Exhibition Athens, 21-23 May 2007

Non Ferrous Metals Division : Divisional President Marc Natan steps down

When Marc Natan of ECORE/GDE became President of the BIR Non-Ferrous Metals Division in October 2001, LME copper was at its lowest level in more than 14 years at US\$ 1349 per tonne. What were described at the time as “dull and dead” market conditions had led to aluminium, nickel and zinc losing, respectively, 18%, 24% and 25% of their values since the start of that same year. Six years later, Mr Natan told delegates at his final divisional meeting as President, several of the mainstream non-ferrous metals had recently achieved all-time highs. But he warned: “This cycle of prices will turn round sooner or later.”

In his farewell address, Mr Natan praised the “teamwork” from which he had benefitted during his time as President. His successor Robert Stein of Alter Trading in the USA, who was unable to attend the Athens Convention, sent a personal video message in which he praised Mr Natan for his “democratic and practical” guidance and for “setting the standards for those who follow”. Listing among his innovations the introduction of the hugely successful Non-Ferrous World Mirror, Mr Stein described Mr Natan as “a true leader, a true diplomat and a true visionary”.

In Athens, the task of reviewing world developments in the non-ferrous metals field

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fell to Ildar Neverov of Scrap Market Ltd, Russia. For his domestic market, he reported “very strong demand” and rising prices for copper scrap in the Urals. By contrast, high LME prices had led to some offloading of material in India’s copper sector, leading to a drop in prices. Across in China, light metal prices had been “strongly resisting any decline” despite an increased supply of aluminium ingots. In Europe, meanwhile, Mr Neverov noted reluctance among many metal processors to build stocks of scrap, partly “because of high purchasing prices”.

Commenting on the North American market, Andy Wahl of Newell Recycling of Atlanta, USA, acknowledged the continuing struggles of the secondary aluminium ingot sector owing to weak demand from the automotive industry. China and India had been showing significant interest in high-temperature nickel alloys, while export demand for batteries had strengthened during the first quarter of 2007, he added.

The guest presentation at the Non-Ferrous Metals Division meeting in Athens was provided by Elias Sebos, Metal Purchasing Manager for Greek aluminium flat-rolled products producer Elval SA. He noted that domestic scrap volumes were “relatively small” and accounted for around 11% of his company’s raw material purchases in 2006 - a year in which it had sold 195,000 tonnes of flat-rolled products. “Scrap consumers cannot cover their needs for certain grades and therefore it is difficult for scrap companies to grow further and reach the level of international scrap companies in terms of volumes, service and quality.” Low quality compared to international standards - related, for example, to the segregation of scrap - was one of the major problems confronting the industry in Greece, he added.

Stricter implementation of EU regulations covering waste control and environmental protection was likely to lead to consolidation such that only the larger trading companies would survive, he concluded.

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