

PRESS RELEASE

Recent BIR World Recycling Convention in Paris (27-28 October 2014)

International Environment Council:

Landfill bans set to help recycling

Brussels, 3 November 2014

Olivier François of Group Galloo, Chairman of the BIR's International Environment Council (IEC), had two items of "good news" to share with delegates at the meeting in Paris on October 28.

"We can hope for good consequences for our work on recycling," he commented. In what he described as "a convergence" of legislation, France introduced a new law on October 14 calling for a 50% landfill reduction by 2025 while the EU has proposed the objective that "landfilling of all recyclable waste shall be prevented by 2025".

But in the first of two presentations relating to the UN-EP Basel Convention, BIR's Environmental & Technical Director Ross Bartley expressed concern at the different benchmarks that existed for Environmentally Sound Management (ESM) at the world level for industrialised countries and developing countries. "The bar is shifting depending on what wastes you are dealing with between countries and regions," he told the meeting. It was also clear, he said, that close attention would need to be paid to whether the Basel Convention adhered to its original remit of solely hazardous wastes and wastes from households.

Eric Harris, Associate Counsel/Director of Government & International Affairs at the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, focused his presentation on draft technical guidelines on transboundary movements of e-waste and used electrical and electronic equipment, with particular regard to the distinction between waste and non-waste under the Basel Convention. Two options had been put forward: the first entailed a set of specific conditions under which non-functional used electrical and electronic equipment would normally not be considered waste; while under the second, so-called "fall-back" option, parties would be able to define the conditions under which such non-functional equipment would not be considered waste, and should inform the Basel Convention's Secretariat about any such conditions.

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Having noted that parties had been invited to submit comments to the Secretariat by the end of February next year, Mr Harris added: “There is now a real desire to move things forward.”

The IEC meeting in Paris also dwelt on the issue of extended producer responsibility (EPR). As a “pillar” and “free asset” of EPR schemes, the recycling industries should be part of their governance, it was argued by the Executive Director of French recycling federation FEDEREC, Alfred Rosales. He also reiterated his call for independent monitoring of company data to avoid confidentiality issues.

There were already some 400 EPR schemes across the OECD spectrum and their development would continue, Mr Rosales contended. Of those that were already in operation, around 90% were based either in Europe or the USA while some 35% of the total related to waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE).

Alicia García-Franco Zúñiga argued that positions of power were being “abused” through EPR schemes in Spain, notably in the cases of end-of-life tyres and WEEE. The Director General of the country’s recovery and recycling federation FER contended that take-back schemes were required “when the waste generators are dispersed”, but not when the generators were traceable and when there was a proper control of public authorities.

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