BIR

Bureau of International
Recycling

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

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Textiles Division:
Over-optimism not appropriate

The textiles recycling sector should guard against over-optimism and pay even closer attention to prompt payment given the current squeeze on margins, Olaf Rintsch of Textil Recycling K&A Wenkhaus GmbH in Germany urged the BIR Textiles Division in his capacity as President. Speaking in Istanbul, he expressed particular concern at the debt crisis currently afflicting many parts of Europe.

Subsequent reports mirrored this sense of unease. For example, the division's Honorary President Klaus Löwer of Germany-based Hans Löwer Recycling GmbH warned that it was "untenable" for the textiles recycling industry to finance its operations solely through its used clothing activities. Winter clothes were a particular "problem child" in Japan while margins for recyclers in the USA were "not adequate", he added.

In his report on the Italian market, Sauro Ballerini from the company of the same name spoke of greater interest in

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European goods from African countries in the wake of the strengthening of the US dollar in relation to the Euro. On the downside, he complained of on-going payment problems in Africa and of second-hand feathers having reached "ridiculous" values - a situation aggravated by imports of new feathers from China at competitive prices.

Divisional Vice President Mehdi Zerroug of France-based Framimex confirmed that the first payments to sorters under the French eco-levy system were completed last year on the basis of volumes sorted in 2007. The same speaker also alluded to "signs of optimism" in the domestic wiper sector before adding: "But prices are very low."

A report resulting from the UK government-inspired Sustainable Clothing Roadmap initiative had called for improved sorting and for keeping textiles separate during collection, it was noted by Gerald Cemmell, President of the UK's Textile Recycling Association (TRA). His market report also acknowledged increasing interest among major retailers in promoting recycling and in "who is operating textile banks on their sites". The TRA had been chosen by Asda to have association members' banks on this leading supermarket chain's sites, he noted.

In reference to the end-of-waste criteria debate at EU level, BIR Textiles Division's General Delegate Alexander Gläser of Germany-based Fachverband Textil-Recycling eV argued that collection containers were a conduit to recycling. A member of the public placing clothes in such a container clearly intended these items to be worn by someone else - otherwise he or she would have consigned them to a refuse bin, he contended.

A guest presentation from Carlo Longo, President of the Prato Chamber of Commerce in Italy, covered the Cardato Regenerated brand developed by his organisation to signify a product's CO_2 neutrality. Significant interest in the brand had already been received from the fashion sector, delegates learned.

Also at the meeting in Istanbul, Deepak Goel of Geetanjali Woollens Pvt Ltd asked for the help of BIR in convincing the United Nations to resume its purchases of blankets made from recycled wool. Two years ago, he explained, this high-profile

organisation had switched from wool to polyester blankets, leaving suppliers of the former with huge stocks.

Mr Goel also requested BIR's assistance in reopening India's free-zone areas to the recycling of textiles.

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