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This Annual Report was completed several weeks before the scale of the Coronavirus pandemic became apparent. Therefore, the content does not reflect recent dramatic events and their impact on the markets and recyclers around the world.
Words from the President

From personal recollection, few if any BIR Presidents have begun their tenure at a time when the outlook for the recycling industry was generally rosy and problem-free. Just a few months have passed since I had the honour to become President of an organization I have known from my youth and for which I have always felt the utmost passion and respect; however, even that short period in office has provided many examples of the breadth and scale of problems we are encountering with seemingly inevitable regularity.

Issues to cloud our working lives have included most notably: the US/China trade war and its effect on the global economy; regulatory uncertainty in China, spreading to other countries in the same region; the destabilizing impact of Brexit; and a host of other unforeseen events with wider geopolitical ramifications, each in its turn serving as a trigger for renewed market volatility.

The list of challenges confronting our industry is, and has always seemed to be, endless. Of more specific relevance to our recycling community, BIR and national associations have continued to muster their forces to defend the interests of members over such fundamental issues as what legally constitutes a recycler. The importance of BIR’s advocacy work on these vital campaign fronts cannot be overstated.

Having said all of this, the period since I became BIR President has not been without its plus points and rays of hope. For example, we received the welcome news in December of China’s reclassification of a number of non-ferrous grades for the purposes of importation. This was greeted with great relief and optimism within the recycling community as a sign that China does not intend to turn its back on high-quality recyclables from overseas. Such a move bodes well for an improvement in trading conditions in 2020.

Also on the upside, our 2019 Conventions in Singapore and Budapest were a resounding success, attracting larger-than-anticipated delegate numbers and a high quality of presentations. It could be argued that attendances should indeed increase at times when trading conditions are more difficult because delegates will be keen to obtain latest, first-hand updates on all of the issues impacting their day-to-day businesses. However, it is equally true to say that they would not make the financial and time commitment to attend a Convention if they did not feel they were getting the fullest value for money. In effect, our twice-yearly gatherings remain a “must” for recycling professionals.

As I stated in my opening address as your President in Singapore last year, one of my key objectives will be to ensure that BIR continues to position itself as the global recycling body, working closely with its national association members around the world and drawing on their support. In December, a visit to the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries proved extremely productive and instructive.
I look forward to further positive interactions with national associations throughout the course of 2020.

As a world organization, we continue to make progress on a number of the priority fronts I outlined several months ago, notably **territory expansion** and **database enhancement**. With regard to the latter, the new website launched by BIR at the start of this year has been updated to widen its outreach as well as to revitalize its core messages and statistical content.

Furthermore, our association is currently selecting appropriate candidates to support our Brussels secretariat in its collation of latest data aimed at fulfilling our objective, set out in Singapore, of making BIR the “go-to” source for recycling facts and figures. Such data are essential not only to underpin our arguments in support of our industry’s interests but also to benefit those outside our sector who want to learn more about BIR and about the crucial role of recycling.

Of course, the **Global Recycling Day** initiative launched by BIR under the leadership of my predecessor as President, Ranjit Singh Baxi, remains our main education and awareness programme. Once again in 2019, this was a great success. It is truly staggering, and bears eloquent testimony to the skills of all involved, that approaching **670 million people worldwide had the chance to hear the Global Recycling Day message through media coverage alone** — and this in only its second year.

For too long, our industry has not received anywhere near sufficient credit for its tireless efforts in helping to safeguard the future of our planet through overcoming or alleviating environmental problems. We as an organization are now **fully engaged in initiatives designed to turn up the volume on our key messages** so that everyone will come to understand and appreciate the profound environmental, social and economic benefits of recycling.

BIR’S FINANCIAL SITUATION

I am humbled and honoured to be BIR’s current Interim Treasurer and look forward to tackling the new challenges that may come along.

Politics and climate change played a major role in our markets last year. As the global recycling industry, we have to **react fast and adapt** to the ever-changing demands and challenges these bring.

I am happy to report that both of our Conventions in 2019 were a success and represent the leading factor in retaining membership and in continuing to attract new members in a difficult market environment. **A small / moderate financial surplus** has been generated not only by attendance levels at the world-class Conventions in Singapore and Budapest but also by skilful cost management on the part of our secretariat while continuing to offer a high level of member services.

**Investments in people and services** are an ongoing theme, such as through the successful launch of the new website in early 2020 and the implementation of the CRM System.

We have weathered the storm in the past and are continuing to successfully navigate through the ever-fluctuating tides and waves of the markets in order to **accommodate the needs of our members** and to continue to create a successful platform for the world recycling industry.
As all of us will have noted, international tensions – including those affecting our industry – did not cool down in 2019.

The situation regarding Chinese imports is now hard fact; we have got used to it, or rather, we have adapted. The good news came in late December with a change to the Chinese standards for some metal categories. Let us see how this will energize the market again in the second half of 2020 once these standards take effect.

The background noise in 2019 was that markets were unstable at best and that the future looked uncertain, perhaps tough. Yet I saw many industry members identifying and seizing opportunities. There was a kind of paradox here. Never have questions relating to the environment been so present in the public debate, covering climate change/global warming, the circular economy, sustainable development, pollution, etc. And still, we have the feeling that the recycling industry is not central enough in the discussions and that our industry is still underestimated and not recognized for what it is – a key player in solving environmental problems. It will be a long road to achieving this.

With Tom Bird, our new President, we not only continued the strategic initiatives that his predecessor Ranjit Singh Baxi had masterminded, starting with Global Recycling Day, but also unveiled new ones in response to the many challenges that were, and still are, ahead of us.

BIR did reasonably well in 2019, but let’s admit it was not easy. We had two very successful Conventions where our delegates and guests were able to enjoy high-quality presentations in first-class venues: the first in Singapore attracted 935 participants and featured excellent content and breathtaking social events; and the second in Budapest was equally successful, bringing in 923 participants.

Our financial situation is consistent with our expectations: in 2019 we achieved our revenue forecast and generated a moderate surplus. But membership revenue collection remains a challenge despite the great efforts of our leaders, Brussels secretariat and Ambassadors. However, with satisfactory Convention surpluses and tight control of expenses, our finances are sound and will give us room to invest in new human resources and vital industry studies in 2020.

Maintaining membership growth is and will remain an everyday battle. Like in business, we face competition and it is our duty to demonstrate that we give best value for money. In 2019, membership numbers stabilized but we welcomed more national associations, meaning more indirect members.

General media attention on BIR had perhaps never been higher than during the summer of 2019. The topics of China and ocean plastics have put us under the spotlight and, together with the leaders of BIR, I have made sure that no opportunity is missed to plead our industry’s case and cause.

By the end of last year, we had finalized our brand new BIR website, which was officially launched in the early days of 2020. Many of you have contributed to the design of this important tool and deserve great thanks. We are very pleased with the result, which not only provides useful, up-to-date information to our
members but also presents a brand new face for our industry to a large range of stakeholders, including the public, the authorities, regulators and the media.

As expected, the advocacy agenda was intense in 2019 at United Nations, OECD and EU levels. BIR has been extremely active on all fronts and in all necessary fora, often taking the lead in key working groups. Let me give a few examples:

The “legal identity as recyclers” of our members that collect, sort and mechanically process scrap has been threatened at the UN-EP Basel Convention. BIR has participated in an Expert Working Group and obtained the support of some leading countries to explicitly include “mechanical treatment” as recycling operations for all types of materials.

We have also been very much involved in the legal debate about “when a waste ceases to be a waste”. In this respect, China’s recent development of standards by which aluminium, copper and brass “cease to be waste” are extremely important.

Our organization has also taken on the co-chairmanship of the Plastic Waste Partnership at the UN-EP Basel Convention. And at OECD level, BIR has proposed solutions to continue to support the intra-OECD agreement for trade in certain wastes and scrap because the plastic waste list changes at the UN-EP Basel Convention caused serious disagreement among OECD member countries. At the EU level, BIR continues to engage with the European Commission and its Member States to resolve issues surrounding transboundary movements of waste and scrap, especially textiles.

All these actions will continue into 2020 and beyond. Advocacy is a marathon, not a sprint.

We have also focused on co-operation with our National Association members. BIR’s solid National Association network is one of its greatest strengths. It is with a unified voice that BIR will strongly advocate our members’ opinions and interests at a global level.

In closing, let us agree on one thing: our industry needs a strong, successful, influential supra-national body that represents the interests of its members at a level that no single organization can ever reach with the appropriate legitimacy and neutrality. By supporting BIR, you protect your own interests. Be confident that your leaders, Secretariat and Director General are committed to this – with absolute passion, professionalism and dedication.

“Our industry needs a strong, successful, influential supra-national body that represents the interests of its members at a level that no single organization can ever reach with the appropriate legitimacy and neutrality.”
Western Europe
Austria
Belgium
Cyprus
Denmark
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Italy
Luxembourg
Netherlands
Norway
Portugal
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
United Kingdom

Central & South America
Brazil
Chile
Cuba
Haiti
Honduras
Mexico
Trinidad and Tobago
Uruguay

Turkey & Middle-East
Bahrain
Israel
Jordan
Lebanon
Oman
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
Turkey
United Arab Emirates

North America
Canada
Panama
USA

Asia
Bangladesh
China
India
Iran
Japan
Malaysia
Pakistan
Philippines
Republic of Korea
Singapore
Sri Lanka
Taiwan (China)
Thailand
Vietnam

Russia & Eastern Europe
Belarus
Bulgaria
Czech Republic
Georgia
Hungary
Latvia
Lithuania
Poland
Romania
Russia
Serbia
Slovak Republic
Slovenia
Ukraine

Australia & Pacific Rim
Australia
New Zealand

Africa
Egypt
Reunion Island
South Africa
Tunisia

MEMBERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Around 760 BIR Members all over the World!

61 New Members in 2019

36 National Federations

71 Countries

More than 40% Members outside the European Continent
LIST OF BIR MEMBER FEDERATIONS

AUSTRIA
Austria Recycling

BELGIUM
COBEREC Textiles

BRAZIL
INESFA – Brazilian Association of Iron and Steel Scrap Companies

BULGARIA
ARTSHC – Association of Recyclers and Traders of Second Hand Clothes
BAR Bulgarian Association of Recycling

CANADA
Canadian Association of Recycling Industries (CARI)

CHILE
Asociación Nacional de la Industria del Reciclaje AG (ANIR)

CHINA
China Association of Metal Scrap Utilization (CAMU)
China Nonferrous Metals Industry Association Recycling Metal Branch (CMRA)
China Scrap Plastics Association (CSPA)
China National Resources Recycling Association (CRRA)

CUBA
Grupo Empresarial de Reciclaje

EUROPE
European Recycling Industries’ Confederation (EuRIC)

FRANCE
Fédération des Entreprises du Recyclage (FEDEREC)

GERMANY
Bundesvereinigung Deutscher Stahlrecycling- und Entsorgungsunternehmen e.V. (BDSV)
Bundesverband Sekundärrohstoffe und Entsorgung e.V. (BVSE)
Verband Deutscher Metallhändler e.V. (VDM)
HUNGARY
Hungarian Waste Management Federation (HOSZ)

INDIA
Inland Importers & Consumers Association (IICA)
Material Recycling Association of India (MRAI)

ITALY
ASSOFERMET

JAPAN
Japan Iron & Steel Recycling Institute (JISRI)

THE NETHERLANDS
Dutch Waste Management Association (DWMA)

POLAND
Economic Chamber of Non-Ferrous Metals and Recycling (IGMNiR)
Scrap Economy Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IPHGZ)

ROMANIA
Organizația Patronală Și Profesională „REMAT”

SOUTH AFRICA
Metal Recyclers Association of South Africa (MRA)

SPAIN
Federación Española de la Recuperación (FER)
Gremi de Recuperació de Catalunya
Asociación Española de Recuperadores de Papel y Cartón (REPACAR)

TURKEY
TÜDAM Değerlendirilebilir Atık Malzemeler Sanayicileri Derneği

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
Bureau of Middle East Recycling Inc. (BMR)

UNITED KINGDOM
British Metals Recycling Association (BMRA)
The Recycling Association
Textile Recycling Association

UNITED STATES
Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, Inc. (ISRI)
Divisions and Committees

Each Commodity Division and Committee represents a specific material and is headed by a president/chairman who in general is supported by an elected board. Two additional BIR committees cover cross-commodity issues pertaining to trade and environmental matters: the International Environment Council and the International Trade Council.
Nowadays, a backward look at the old year always seems to be accompanied by a list of what made life ever more difficult for our business community. The world economy and the global markets do not enjoy uncertainty, and neither does the business world; we always seem to be trying to gain traction on shifting sands. Last year was no different...

...Besides the standard fare of price turbulence and rising costs, we had to manage the repercussions of trade wars, quotas and tariffs. In addition, Brexit continued to undermine market confidence in 2019.

As I said at our meeting in Budapest last October, quotas and tariffs are perhaps the most potent threat to our scrap industry at the present time. The perils of government intervention rather than free and fair trade were perfectly illustrated at that meeting when guest speaker Viktor Kovshevny of Russian recycling association Ruslom.com explained how delays and indecision over the best way forward on exports had cost the domestic scrap industry hundreds of millions of US dollars.

Rest assured that BIR, the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries and other major bodies around the world are working hard to ensure that the interests of the recycling industry are represented where such matters are under discussion.

Global economic turbulence did not prevent 2019 from being yet another record-breaking year for crude steel production with a gain of 3.4% to 1.87 billion tonnes, according to worldsteel. But the same organization’s late-2019 short-range outlook is suggesting that China’s slowing economic momentum will trim its steel demand growth from 7.8% last year to perhaps 1% in 2020. Of course, China’s overall demand performance will be guided to some extent by the progress – or otherwise – of trade negotiations with the USA. At the time of writing, there is more reason to be optimistic that these two major economies will be able to resolve their issues and thereby boost confidence worldwide.

Pulling all of the worldsteel data together, it was projected that global steel demand would grow by 3.9% to 1.775 billion tonnes last year and by a more muted 1.7% to 1.806 billion tonnes in 2020. As worldsteel put it: “Global steel demand remains resilient despite an uncertain global economic environment.”
“Quotas and tariffs are perhaps the most potent threat to our scrap industry at the present time.”

However, a key takeaway from this outlook is that the improvement in steel demand this year is thought likely to be driven by growth of more than 4% among emerging and developing economies excluding China. Conversely, the envisaged demand increase of just 0.6% for the developed world in 2020 would follow a 0.1% contraction in 2019, largely as a result of weakness in the manufacturing sector.

On the positive side of the equation, there has been no sign of pause in the rising global demand trend for our steel scrap – as underlined by the invaluable figures that continue to be collated by our statistics expert Rolf Willeke. In his update of the 10th edition of “World Steel Recycling in Figures”, he highlighted a year-on-year leap of 20.7% in China’s steel scrap usage for crude steel production in January-June 2019 as a consequence of higher pollutant emission standards set for China’s steel industry, a hike in most of its BOF mills’ scrap inputs and increasing domestic emphasis on electric furnaces.

In Budapest, Becky E. Hites of Steel-Insights LLC forecast that China’s scrap-intensive electric furnace production would soar from less than 80 million tonnes in 2017 to 142.6 million tonnes by 2022. At our earlier meeting in Singapore, growth in China’s usage of steel scrap was hailed as a major market factor by guest speaker Dr. Steven Vercammen of worldwide management consulting firm McKinsey & Company.

The latter also reminded us and the rest of the world about why our industry is so vital to the future of our planet. Only a few weeks ago, experts from various leading research organizations insisted that carbon emissions from human activities are the main cause of the worryingly sustained temperature gains seen in recent years. By raising the electric furnace share of world steelmaking to 40%, carbon dioxide emissions would be slashed by 400 million tonnes per annum, declared Mr Vercammen.

In his own words, using more scrap is a “no-brainer”.

Key Facts

Rapid growth in China’s steel scrap usage for crude steel production:

103.28 million tonnes in the first six months of 2019
187.8 million tonnes for 2018
147.9 million tonnes for 2017
...Whether it was the US/China trade war, China’s import controls, Brexit or the changing regulatory landscape among emerging markets, our industry found itself trying to conduct its normal, established business activities amid a squall of uncertainty, not knowing – and powerless to control – what might happen next.

The only absolute certainty about 2020 is that it will be another year of change. And regarding China, this change is likely to be tumultuous given that, several years ago now, the government identified 2020 as the year in which solid waste imports would be phased out completely. To this ultimate end, China’s import quotas continued to dwindle throughout the course of 2019.

However, there has been some more encouraging news from this quarter. The Chinese authorities have been laying the foundations of a new classification system to ensure its industry can continue to source overseas volumes of the high-quality scrap it needs. Thus, recycled brass, copper and aluminium meeting standard requirements will be treated under the import management system applying to general raw materials.

As emphasized at our meeting in Budapest last October, the changes brought about by China’s new import policy are irrevocable. Guest speaker Perrine Faye of Fastmarkets insisted that the shift in scrap flows away from China was far from temporary – most notably on the copper side – because of the level of processing capacity investment already made elsewhere in the world. For those among us still harbouring hopes that the world will return to the days when China accepted everything on offer, our own board member Murat Bayram of European Metal Recycling left no doubt when saying in Budapest: “There is no way back.”

It would also be true to say that emerging markets for our scrap are replacing traditional Chinese outlets more slowly than expected, partly because governments in South Asia and South East Asia are facing their own challenges in regulating the growing number of small scrap processing facilities setting up locally. Eric Tan of Malaysia-based
“The only absolute certainty about 2020 is that it will be another year of change.”

SDM Specialty Chemicals Sdn Bhd told our meeting in Singapore last May about how much more scrap had been entering his country following the change in China’s import policy, adding that there was still significant confusion surrounding the hazardous or non-hazardous status of some of the unfamiliar types.

In effect, we are currently in a period of transition. But as large firms of an established scrap pedigree widen their presence in the region, there must be the hope that this transition will be relatively smooth. There are growing markets for scrap outside of Asia too: at our Budapest Convention, for example, Andriy Putilov of Ukraine-based MZ Ltd explained how his own country was looking to create favourable conditions for the domestic recycling industry and for overseas suppliers of scrap.

Despite such positives, we must approach 2020 with a degree of caution – and for some very good reasons. Although progress has been made in US/China trade negotiations, a shadow will continue to be cast over the world’s economies and markets until the dispute is fully resolved. Also, 3.1 million units were wiped off global car sales in 2019 – a larger drop than in 2008 – and the current year is also expected to be difficult for this major scrap consumer. Furthermore, we have to contend with the consequences of the US dollar becoming ever stronger in 2019.

Amid all of these negative macro developments, primary metal prices have been heading generally higher whereas many forms of scrap have been charting an opposite course. At a time when the world is looking to more environmentally sound solutions to its soaring resource consumption, such a trend seems counter-intuitive to the point of bizarre.

In Singapore, Thomas McMahon of Dillon Gage Asia stressed how metals recycling was responsible for conserving natural resources and reducing greenhouse gas emissions in a world where industrial pollution kills millions of people every year. So as recyclers, we are most definitely in the right place at the right time. It is just that the world’s policy-makers are slow to reflect the monumental importance of our activities to the well-being of our planet.

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<th>Key Facts</th>
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## Chinese scrap imports in 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tons</th>
<th>Year-on-year change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copper</td>
<td>2.41 million -32.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aluminium</td>
<td>1.56 million -28.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc</td>
<td>16,000 -8.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CMRA
In Singapore last May, guest speaker Dr Gloria Lei Yao of the Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel (HKRITA) wowed the audience with her insight into the organization’s wide-ranging research, development and technology transfer initiatives in the mechanical, chemical and biological recycling of post-consumer textiles. HKRITA has been working with such high-profile brands as H&M in a bid to find practical solutions to converting blended textiles into new fabrics and yarns. And it has even developed a dry upcycling process that completes the garment-to-garment recycling chain within the confines of a standard-size, double-glazed shipping container.

This is not a stand-alone example of innovation. Companies and research institutes around the world are exploring techniques for streamlining the recycling of used textiles.

For a number of years, BIR’s Textiles Division has been underscoring the importance of research and technological developments if our industry is to keep moving forward. In particular, we need scientific expertise to guide us to new applications for that proportion of our material which does not command prices from which a profit can be derived. In effect, collection and sorting of used textiles continue to be financed by the resale of second-hand goods.

As a result of such mega trends as fast fashion, there has been a decline in quality as a result of inferior handling practices leading to a lower proportion of marketable second-hand textiles. We are also confronted by the potential for trading disruption as a result of wider geopolitical developments such as Brexit; payment problems across a significant proportion of our customer base; and the ever-rising costs associated with running any company. As with most other years of late, the negatives of doing business in our sector seem to outweigh the positives.

Against this backdrop, society as a whole needs to concern itself about who will pay for collection and sorting services if this quality deterioration were to continue without some compensatory profit from the remaining portion of what we handle. This point will become ever more pertinent given the EU’s requirement for mandatory separate collection of used textiles by 2025. Another possibility is that...
“There has been a decline in quality as a result of inferior handling practices leading to a lower proportion of marketable second-hand textiles.”

**extended producer responsibility on clothing and textiles** could be expanded beyond France to other countries.

At our October 2019 meeting in Budapest, our own General Delegate Alan Wheeler showed other ways in which our industry is seeking to innovate. His organization in the UK – the Textile Recycling Association – has embarked on two schemes: firstly, a partnership with the National Bed Federation to create a **Register of Approved Mattress Recyclers** in a bid to provide commercial advantage to legitimate operators as well as to assist new businesses in understanding what is required to achieve a high standard in mattress recycling; and secondly, the TRUST accreditation scheme **to promote best business practices among collectors and sorters**, covering such areas as health & safety, employment law and environmental legislation.

Such initiatives bring multiple advantages, not least boosting the overall quality of recycling operations and enhancing the profile of our industry as a solution provider for the wider benefit of the environment.

Earlier in Singapore, Mr Wheeler had highlighted the strategy document for England entitled “Our Waste. Our Resources”, which covers a number of problem areas including water pollution from processes such as dyeing, overconsumption of water and the shedding of microplastics when clothes are washed. We cannot escape the fact that **textiles production has huge resource usage ramifications** and that global apparel consumption is expected to soar beyond 100 million tonnes per year by 2030. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation estimates that the global fashion industry accounts for around 10% of all global carbon emissions – more than the aviation and maritime industries combined. WRAP estimates that the industry has the fourth biggest environmental impact in the UK behind housing, transport and food.

The textiles recycling and reuse industry has a huge role to play in mitigating the environmental impact of these realities. But to be most effective in this regard, we must keep our eyes and minds open to fresh possibilities and ways of working.

We may be an old industry, but we must remain receptive to new ideas.

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**Key Facts**

**Recycling rates for used textiles:**

- **26%** in Europe
- **15%** in China
- **12%** in the USA
- **4%** in Hong Kong

*Dr Gloria Lei Yao of the Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel, Singapore, May 2019*
...But as an industry, we have always seen challenges as opportunities. Moments after outlining the daunting scale of the decline in China’s overseas fibre purchases, Mr Yürekli from the national association of Turkish paper and plastic recyclers and collectors (TÜDAM) was focusing on possible alternative outlets. His own country, he revealed, is expecting domestic paper industry capacity to jump from around 4.2 million tonnes in 2019 to between 6 and 7 million tonnes by the year 2023 – and yet the country is struggling to push its collection rate beyond 40%. Turkish recovered fibre imports have already soared from just over 300,000 tonnes in 2015 to nearer 1 million tonnes in 2019, with further growth to perhaps 2 to 3 million tonnes envisaged by 2023.

As noted at our meeting in Singapore last May, 2019 also brought a significant increase in sales opportunities in other countries too, including most notably India, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Such observations provide us with much-needed hope for the future given that, in Europe for example, there is a differential of almost 8 million tonnes between the 56.7 million tonnes of paper and board collected for recycling each year in Europe and the 48.8 million tonnes consumed. This surplus is structural in nature, with exports to markets outside of Europe representing the only obvious pressure valve.

Even though China was buying in 2019, its focus was on purchases of US material. Thus, last year was characterized largely by a combination of high stocks along the chain, difficulties in finding export markets for our fibre and pressure on prices. Indeed, values close to zero or even into negative territory have been widely mentioned by industry members, alongside comments about the near impossibility of imposing recycling fees on suppliers to render viable some of our more marginal sorting and processing operations.
“Our point of difference must be production of high-quality materials that conform absolutely to the standards, needs and expectations of our individual customers.”

The bottom line is that margins have been so compromised on certain grades that there has been no incentive to sort. Was this in the dream scenario when the circular economy was first envisaged? And how should we as an industry respond to such challenging market conditions? More than ever before, our point of difference must be production of high-quality materials that conform absolutely to the standards, needs and expectations of our individual customers. If we fail in this regard, a significant proportion of materials will struggle to find profitable outlets or, indeed, any outlets at all.

As pointed out in Budapest by our General Delegate Sébastien Ricard of Paprec Recyclage, the purchase of manufactured goods from China and the subsequent return of the recyclable packaging to that same country for production of new packaging materials had created over many years the perfect example of a circular economy. But there has been little credit or appreciation for the carbon dioxide emissions saved in this way.

What these people should also know is that mills and governments throughout the world – not just in China – have become increasingly demanding with regard to the quality they are prepared to accept. Quality is not an add-on extra; it is an absolute necessity if business is to be done.

With more limited export options and new capacity developments insufficient to absorb a recovered fibre surplus, it is clear that Europe and other traditional exporting regions of the world will need to devote more time and research to developing new markets – and potentially new product outlets – for recovered fibre. It was therefore interesting and encouraging to hear from our Division’s Vice President Martin Leander that the insulation and hygiene sectors in Sweden have been trialling wider use of recovered fibre in their products.

Another inspiring thought was voiced in Singapore by our Honorary President Dominique Maguin. Overall demand for paper would expand as a result of global population growth, he said, and the best way to produce that paper would be from recycled fibre because it was less expensive and less polluting.

Key Facts

**Chinese imports of recovered fibre:**

- **2017** 28 million tonnes
- **2018** 19 million tonnes
- **2019 (estimated)** 7.2 million tonnes
- **2020 (forecast)** 5 million tonnes

Ercan Yürekli of TÜDAM, Budapest, October 2019
CASE STUDY

BIR’s website: Fit for the new decade

For our industry and world organization, the BIR website is our main and most-used form of interaction with all those people who impact on us and on whom, in turn, we can have a meaningful influence. Unlike the corporate brochures of the past, this electronic calling card can be updated instantly and provides a direct means of expressing who we are and what we are doing. It shows our history – but its sharpest focus is on the here and now...

...The new website developed throughout 2019 and unveiled at the very start of 2020 has been designed to show off BIR’s scope and standing to the full. Its home page, which reflects the multiple facets of the recycling industry and of our world federation, is now targeted at a wider audience, including the general public, the younger generation, politicians, legislators, policy-makers, the media, NGOs and other interest groups. This has been done to reflect the widening of the environmental debate and to underline the crucial role of recycling in delivering solutions to such globally high-profile issues as greenhouse gas emissions, depletion of primary resources and ocean plastics.

The commodity section of the website has always carried key messages to spotlight the magnitude of the recycling industry’s environmental, social and economic contribution. These data have been updated and now appear alongside the relevant texts from the latest Annual Report, giving a summary of the key developments from the previous year.
“The new website developed throughout 2019 and unveiled at the very start of 2020 has been designed to show off BIR’s scope and standing to the full.”

At the same time, the website’s library and archive are more easily navigable than before, and feature the latest relevant publications and statistics as well as historic documents that have continued importance to the work we all do.

The dedicated Members Area offers access to two important portals: firstly, the “Manage my account” portal allows members to pay their annual subscriptions, register to attend Conventions, update their personal details, change or add contacts, and download their membership certificates; and secondly, the “Members Only Information” portal provides access to the full BIR Membership Directory, to documentation and legislation updates restricted to BIR Members, to Convention proceedings and presentations, and to a dedicated national association workspace and relevant data files.

Of course, one of the most telling ways in which a website can make a meaningful statement is through its visual impact. An array of attention-grabbing illustrations shows off the recycling industry’s endless practicality, its ability to innovate and the scale of its investment geared towards finding technological solutions to what might otherwise become environmental problems.

The website will be constantly changing to take on board news updates, legislative eBriefs, Mirror market reports from around the world, etc. And it will be infinitely expandable to reflect changes within the industry and to the forces acting upon it. Such innovations could include position papers on major emerging topics that establish us as an organization that leads the debate rather than reacts to it.

The website will evolve to reflect not only what we are doing as an association and as an industry, but also the updated services that we can offer you as members. So please, watch this e-space…
In turbulent times, the value of listening to experts share their reliable data and insights cannot be overstated. In going about our day-to-day business, we are generally focused on problem-solving and the here-and-now of market circumstances rather than dwelling too much on what lies some way further down the road. However, a longer-term view is always interesting, often enlightening and can help inform our decisions when plotting the course ahead...

...And so it was highly appropriate in last year’s challenging business environment to have guest speakers at our meetings who really lifted the lid on latest market developments and provided us with at least some vision of what was likely to confront our businesses in the short to medium term.

At our most recent meeting, held in Budapest last October, Natalie Scott-Gray of INTL FC Stone Ltd suggested stainless steel production in 2019 would be below the average for recent years but still acceptable in the light of a more depressed world economy. Subsequent data from the International Stainless Steel Forum (ISSF) for the first nine months of last year reveal a year-on-year increase of 3.4% in global melt shop production despite significant declines across Europe, the USA and most of Asia.

These data support the contention featured in our final Mirror publication of 2019 that Chinese-led production of stainless steel – especially in Indonesia – has blossomed largely at the expense of producers elsewhere in the world through a seizing of their market shares. Indeed, Ms Scott-Gray insisted that Indonesia would become the dominant force in the stainless steel market at some future point.
“We can certainly confirm from personal experience in Europe that our customers were applying relentless downward pressure on our scrap prices during the course of 2019.”

Of course, when mills’ market shares and profitability are under pressure, their immediate reaction is to look for ways to cut costs. We can certainly confirm from personal experience in Europe that our customers were applying relentless downward pressure on our scrap prices during the course of 2019.

Ms Scott-Gray also predicted that stainless steel demand would jump by 16% over the coming five years. Again, more recent figures – released by the ISSF last October – confirmed that stainless steel consumption was on course to increase by 2.4% for 2019 as a whole, exactly half the growth recorded in the previous year. For 2020, however, the ISSF expected the pace of consumption to quicken once again for year-on-year growth of 4.4%. Interestingly in light of earlier comments, consumption growth is forecast to be particularly healthy in China this year at 7.2%, with far lower gains anticipated for the rest of Asia (+2%), the Americas (+1.6%) and Europe/Africa (+0.4%).

In Budapest, we had the benefit of hearing from Olivier Masson of Roskill Commodity Research, Consulting & Events. He offered us encouragement through his suggestion that the USA, Europe and India were likely to maintain their firm reliance on scrap for stainless steel production.

At the same time, however, he pointed out that the major growth centres of China and Indonesia were heavily geared towards the use of nickel pig iron as their major raw material.

In Singapore, guest speaker Robert Messmer of Steel & Metals Market Research revealed an intercontinental trading share of 8% for stainless steel scrap in 2018, with the bulk of this volume destined for Asia and mainly India.

And while he hailed scrap as the lowest cost option, he also acknowledged that our raw materials had scope to suffer further price declines. This is despite the fact that, in the process of making stainless steel, scrap produces less slag and leaves a smaller carbon footprint when compared to ferroalloys-based production.

The bottom line, therefore, is that some countries will continue to make scrap their raw material of choice for stainless steel production; in general, unfortunately, these countries are losing market share to nations where scrap is not so favoured. So even though the outlook for global stainless steel demand remains extremely positive, many of us can expect yet more difficult years ahead.
2019 was a challenging year for the plastics recycling industry. The US/China trade war, stricter legislation and other global political issues combined to create a climate that may well lead to a recession...

...The many uncertainties in 2019 meant a drop in confidence in the economy, which has led to a **global reduction in demand for commodities**. A recovery in that demand was anticipated for some of our materials after the holiday months but this turned out to be much weaker than had been hoped. This put great pressure on prices, which fell by between 30% and 50% for general commodity plastics and engineering plastics.

Last year, many other Asian countries joined China in halting imports of plastic waste, leading to a **drastic decline in exports and a significant drop in prices** for these qualities. For many businesses, this has meant that it is no longer worth separating materials and a great deal of plastic is now going to local incinerators.

Owing to the stagnation of the Chinese economy, sales of European recycled material into Asia are under pressure, resulting in **relatively large stocks** for recyclers within Europe.

The European automotive industry is also in a bad way, with production of new cars thought to have dropped to their lowest levels since 1997. This malaise has put many suppliers of recycled material under increasing pressure because the recycling industry is a major supplier to the automotive sector.

As discussed in detail at our meeting in Budapest last October through our guest speaker Rob de Ruiter of TNO, **chemical recycling is the new hot topic** – especially for petrochemical companies. Following Sabic’s announcement of a venture in the Netherlands, a desire to develop chemical recycling projects has also been confirmed by BASF, Dow Chemicals, Petronas and LyondellBasell. Most virgin resin producers are conducting work in this field but they still have to demonstrate viability in terms of economics and industrial scale-up.

We witnessed the development of several new trends in 2019. For example, large European waste collectors have been taking over many recycling companies in order to process their own collected plastic waste. In addition, these companies have been looking to
“There are opportunities galore for us to become part of a new circular economy.”

collaborate with the plastics industry to bring new circular products into the market. Meanwhile, European recycling companies have been investing heavily in washing and extrusion lines.

The increasing interest in recycling taken by major multi-nationals was illustrated at our meeting in Singapore last May where Unilever’s Aurore Belhoste spoke about her company’s initiatives in its pursuit of deriving 25% of its plastic packaging from post-consumer resins by the year 2025. Some of its products are already in packaging with a 100% recycled content and the plan that others will follow.

Partly in response to the tidal wave of anti-plastic sentiment, many consumer product companies have started up their own programmes for incorporating more recycled material into their products by means of a circular concept. Also on a positive note, they have been forced to think about the recyclability of their packaging as early as the design stage.

The plastics recycling market is currently in a transition phase where the existing linear business approach is being replaced by new circular models. We will have to accept that old models are no longer sustainable and that the shipping of large amounts of plastic waste may cease to happen in the future. But this transition from the comfort zone of the familiar towards the less familiar must not paralyse us as an industry; there are opportunities galore for us to become part of a new circular economy. One of the key ingredients for the development of the circular economy is collaboration – no single government or business is large enough to operate alone in this transition phase.

At first glance, some of the developments seen in 2019 may not seem to bode well for us, but we must surely dwell on the positives and on the opportunities that change brings. Price fluctuations and cooling economies have always been with us: there is nothing new about them. What is new, however, is that the recycling industry is taking on its role in the circular economy and is co-operating with the producers of finished products in order to create new value chains, thus offering us huge potential as an industry.

So our new mantra should be: Think Global, act Local.

Key Facts

Projected growth rate for global plastic recycling market in the medium term:

6% per year

OECD estimate of global plastics recycling rate:

14 to 18%
2019 marked a turning point for the tyre and rubber recycling industry. Having been under great threat for the past few years, it looked last summer like the European Commission was about to announce the end of tyre granulate infill, currently the major outlet for end-of-life tyre (ELT) recyclers. Contrary to expectations, however, EU’s executive spokesperson Natasha Bertaud confirmed last July that “no such proposal is under preparation from the Commission”, thus refuting media reports that the Commission was planning to ban artificial turfs. A similar decision was announced shortly afterwards by the US Environmental Protection Agency...

...Nevertheless, the last two or three years have seen an explosion in negative publicity within Europe and America surrounding the use of ELT-derived rubber granulate, leading to a considerable drop in demand for such material. States and municipalities in the USA and Europe have continued to propose bans or other sanctions on the incorporation of crumb rubber in playgrounds and sports pitches despite over 100 separate studies reaching the conclusion that its use in these applications carries no proven risk to humans or to the environment.

Therefore, it is more essential than ever before that other applications for ELTs are considered, developed or expanded.

In the past two years, national and European waste policies have begun to shift away from the linear model of “take, make, use and dispose” to a more circular approach whereby the value of resources is maintained for as long as possible. A mandatory minimum recycled content of over 25% has been adopted for certain plastics, giving an unprecedented boost within Europe to the markets for recycled plastics. It is clear that Europe’s market for recycled rubber will never improve unless regulators make a decisive move and impose minimum recycled contents for new products.

Ten years ago, professional bottlers would have said it was not only impossible but also dangerous to incorporate recycled PET in beverage bottles. Now, with the help of the legislator, major water and soda bottlers incorporate 25%, 50% and, in some cases, 100% rPET in their manufacturing processes. Without the help of the legislator, it is too hard to shake preconceived ideas, conventional wisdom and powerful industrial lobbies.
“Without the help of the legislator, tyre and rubber recycling will remain the ‘poor relation’ of the recycling industry.”

Fifteen years ago, rubber regeneration was limited to often-polluting and high-energy-consuming thermochemical processes. In the past decade, **breakthroughs have been made** – especially in China – with non-polluting processes that have doubled the mechanical properties of the regenerated compounds; we are getting closer and closer to real devulcanization and, with current technologies, it is possible to incorporate around 10% regenerated rubber in a new tyre without really affecting its properties. The proportion can be as high as 70% for technical parts in a closed-loop system.

Rubber is definitely more complicated to regenerate than plastics or metals – but without the help of the legislator, tyre and rubber recycling will remain the “poor relation” of the recycling industry.

In Europe and the USA, tyre scrap is generally treated as a low-value-added material which is turned into **either energy or used as a filler** for turf infill, mixed with asphalt or used to make cheap furniture, etc. Less than 1% in Europe is regenerated into reclaimed rubber. In China, by contrast, more than 95% of ELTs are turned into **high-value-added reclaimed rubber**; the rate is similar in India and demand for reclaimed rubber is greater than supply, thus forcing many major players to import European tyre scrap which is generally considered of higher quality than local material.

In a world where exports of all types of scrap are being restricted, it is important to start giving consideration to adding value to rubber scrap in its country of origin and exporting it only after reprocessing. This is already the trend for plastics and metals, and it should be followed by rubber too.

Europe has one of the best feedstocks in the world for making regenerated rubber; the European Parliament should step in – just as it did for plastics – in order to change mindsets and force European rubber industries to incorporate a minimum **recycled content** in their production so long as the properties of their end products are not greatly affected.

We believe mandatory recycled contents of 5-10% for tyres and 10-20% for technical rubber parts are definitely workable.

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**Key Facts**

**Average end-of-life tyre recovery rate across Europe, the USA and Japan:**

90%
When we list the principles for which BIR stands, free and fair trade always comes close to, if not at, the top. But as we were reminded so succinctly at our meeting in Singapore last year, “free and fair trade is not free from regulation”.

These words from Adina Renee Adler, Senior Director for International Relations at the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, were accompanied by the example of industry attempts to achieve an exemption from prior notification procedures for transboundary movements of electronics destined for reuse; these efforts were rejected at the Basel Convention because of concerns that disreputable traders would hide behind claims of “reuse” when, in reality, they were looking to dump in countries with insufficient or inadequate handling capacity.

While principles are important, the realities of delivering on them can be extremely complex. BIR has always understood that environmental protection must be put before naked business interests; indeed, there is no more environmentally-minded industry on this planet than the recycling sector. Nevertheless, industry, policymakers and legislators must work diligently together to ensure that the right balance is struck and that legitimate recycling activity is not excessively hindered by over-zealous or badly-worded regulation.

Undoubtedly, significant efforts are required to remove those controversial elements from within existing international law that are hindering the universally beneficial utilization of secondary raw materials and materials for reuse – often in those countries that the law is seeking to protect.

In order to meet the demand for high-quality recycling products, the process involved in moving materials around the globe needs to be as simplified as possible. For the legislators to deliver this, however, everyone devoted to the maximization of recycling must strive to ensure that we eliminate those operators who are prepared to endanger the environment as well as the prospects of the legitimate recycling industry in their search for...
“Industry, policy-makers and legislators must work diligently together to ensure that the right balance is struck and that legitimate recycling activity is not excessively hindered by over-zealous or badly-worded regulation.”

a quick buck. Only by shining a light on the darker corners of this trade will we win the trust and support of regulators and of the governments which we are trying to persuade to accept our valuable secondary raw materials into their respective countries.

In Singapore, the China Scrap Plastics Association’s Executive President Dr Steve Wong provided the example of several countries in South East Asia which had implemented tight controls in a bid to crack down on illegal operators, with some governments blocking imports of post-consumer material.

Similar themes were addressed at our second meeting of 2019, held in Budapest, where Chris Slijkhuis of Austria’s Müller-Guttenbrunn Group reported that approximately 30% of the e-scrap generated within Europe remains unaccounted for. This represents a great risk to the environment and to the sustainability of our industry; unless these materials can be brought back within the sphere of control, it will be much more difficult to persuade legislators to adopt a lighter regulatory touch.

Of course, the corollary to punishing and/or eliminating disreputable operators is to incentivize legitimate players, such as within the framework of extended producer responsibility schemes. Mr Slijkhuis listed just some of the pressures on legitimate businesses as: material losses through illegal scavenging, collections and exports; difficulties associated with the linking of EU waste and chemicals legislation; and instances of unacceptable delays in the notification process for moving material across borders. Shady operators opting to circumvent such time- and cost-consuming regulations clearly gain a competitive advantage over their legitimate counterparts. This is a cycle which, with the help of legislators and enforcement agencies, we must try to break.

Mr Slijkhuis also highlighted another way in which legislators can help the recycling industry: by adopting a “risk” rather than a “hazard” approach to market access for recycling products. So much independent research has been carried out in this area that the risks are very well known and understood. By using risk as the basis for material movement requirements, recycling would be given the potential to expand its already massive contribution to boosting resource conservation and cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

According to the United Nations, the world produces as much as 50 million tonnes of electronic and electrical waste a year, worth over US$ 62.5 billion.

However, around 30% of the WEEE generated in Europe remains unaccounted for (CWIT Study)
While an ever-growing proportion of the general public fully grasps the importance of recycling in achieving greater sustainability, the decision-makers of the world have been slow to reflect this critical role in their policies and regulations.

Never was this more apparent than with the release in September 2019 of Germany's new climate package in response to the huge environmental protests triggered by Greta Thunberg. This package contains a wide array of proposals – from the phasing-out of coal power by 2038 to increasing renewable energy's market share to 65% by 2030. About recycling, however, there is not a single word.

At BIR's Budapest Convention last October, Murat Bayram of European Metal Recycling described the omission of recycling from the 23-page document as “a shame”. I would go further: given all of the efforts of our industry and of other environmentally savvy people to position recycling at the top of the “green” agenda, the German government's failure to include even one mention of it in its much-heralded climate package is nothing short of a disaster.

Does the German government not understand that the replacement of ores, coal and petroleum by recyclates brings huge carbon dioxide emission savings? For example, steelmaking contributes 7% of global CO₂ emissions because it is still produced using mainly iron ore and coal. Roughly 2 tonnes of carbon dioxide are emitted for every tonne of steel produced using coal whereas the scrap route generates just 500 kg of CO₂. Coal-based steel output still accounts for 1.3 billion tonnes of global annual output as compared to only 500 million tonnes produced from scrap, so the potential for even greater emission savings through recycling are enormous.

These astronomical numbers are not limited to steel. As far back as 2008, the BIR commissioned Imperial College London to study the effects of replacing virgin raw materials with secondary alternatives, with an update in 2015 concluding that the recycling of aluminium, copper and ferrous metals alone achieved annual CO₂ emission savings of 572 million tonnes. BIR estimates that emissions saved through recycling activity as a whole amount to well over 1 billion tonnes per year.

As a matter of urgency, politicians and policy-makers need to understand this message about the huge carbon dioxide emission savings achieved through using recycled metals, plastics, paper and other materials. To this end, more attention needs to be paid to our industry, the experts in recycling. In Budapest, therefore, it was encouraging to hear from Jeffrey D. Kimball of Loacker Hulladékhasznosító Kft that the Hungarian government had committed to discussions with the industry about co-operation in meeting recycling targets.
“As a matter of urgency, politicians and policy-makers need to understand this message about the huge carbon dioxide emission savings achieved through using recycled materials.”

Expertise in delivering technical solutions to knotty recycling problems was highlighted at our meeting in Singapore last May when Dr Gloria Lei Yao, Director of the Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel described her organisation’s wide-ranging research, development and technology transfer initiatives in the mechanical, chemical and biological recycling of post-consumer textiles. Our industry’s own technical prowess is particularly apparent in plastics where, over recent decades, it has succeeded in creating compounds from recyclates that are of exactly the same quality as their petroleum-based equivalents. There is no technical reason, therefore, why the European Parliament should not accelerate its move towards far greater use of recyclates in packaging, as signalled by its Single-Use Plastics Directive.

The advent of binding targets for recycled content plastic has already become a game-changer, we were told in Budapest by Emmanuel Katrakis of the European Recycling Industries’ Confederation. However, it is essential that the “pull” policy is extended from a voluntary agreement to a mandatory obligation on manufacturers to incorporate recyclates. If Renault is choosing to use 50 kg of recycled plastics in each of its new cars, then this blue-chip company is clearly confident of no loss of quality when compared to virgin polymers. Even the price is competitive once the value of a barrel of crude oil barrel rises above US$ 60.

The only major roadblock to greater use of recycled plastics is regulation. If politicians were to set mandatory obligations for use of recycled polymers, this would undoubtedly divert huge quantities of plastics from landfill or, even worse, from littering our oceans.

Key Facts

**CO₂ emission savings** achieved through recycling

- Aluminium > 92%
- Copper > 65%
- Ferrous > 58%
- Paper > 18%
- Nickel > 90%
- Zinc > 76%
- Lead > 99%
- Tin > 99%

Source: BIR
If there is one particular skill that the recycling industry has honed through necessity over many decades, it is the ability to remain resilient in the face of shape-shifting adversity. Once again in 2019, we were forced to confront a plethora of obstacles – some of them well-established, others brand new – as we attempted to navigate a successful course for our businesses. And once again, it is China that has been at the forefront of our thoughts and our debates...

...At the BIR Convention in Barcelona in May 2018, the ITC held the first of several panel discussions at its Conventions, specifically to address the then emerging spectre of apparently potentially draconian measures regarding the import of solid waste that was likely to encompass the import of most items of recycled scrap materials handled by our members into China. At that meeting, while much legitimate concern was expressed, Michael Lion in his capacity as Chairman of the ITC and a veteran of the China metals markets suggested that due to the crucial role of recycled metals in particular to China’s raw material supply chain and thus economy, it was likely over a period of time and review, combined with pressure from their consumer base, this could well eventually lead to a revision of the position.

The BIR, its ITC and many of the organization’s National Association members coordinated by our Brussels secretariat for its part have maintained a relentless and persistent advocacy to regulators that our recycled materials were not Waste, but Raw Materials.

As a result of both consumer pressure and our advocacy, an enlightened and pragmatic resolution, at least as far as non-ferrous metals, which by volume and value are impacting the largest part of our membership, appears to have been achieved, as the Chinese authorities have undertaken a reclassification process, entitling a number of forms of non-ferrous recycled materials as “Recyclable Raw Materials”. This should pave the way for recycling materials meeting their specifications to be managed in the same way as product imports, with standards for brass, copper and cast aluminium alloys already on the table. While full implantation and interpretation, as well as the long-term retention or otherwise of import quotas, are yet to be fully clarified, these developments during the course of 2019 showed that fears of China’s demise as a factor in the international trading of recyclables were indeed premature.

During the period of redirection of material flows away from China, a consequent precipitant adjustment of major capacity investments not only in other countries within the same region but also among traditional exporting nations worldwide emerged.

There has been a migration of Chinese-run recycling enterprises to other countries, most notably in the case of plastics, which as of now has not been the subject of the reclassification position now occurring for metals. At the same time, and of great concern to our sector, some of the emerging Asian markets have been adopting – to a greater or lesser extent – the import restriction template set by China.

Hopefully, many more recyclables will be redefined as in the instance of non-ferrous metals, enabling China to remain open for the...
many other secondary raw materials of overseas origin on which its own industry has come to rely.

Another major topic for the world economy and for our global markets in 2019 was the US/China trade war. In October, the International Monetary Fund’s Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva suggested that, by 2020, tariffs already imposed or announced would shrink global GDP by 0.8% – equivalent to the entire economy of Switzerland. Here too, there has been some recent positive news. At the time of writing, the USA and China have just signed the Phase One trade agreement, raising the hopes of the world that these two powerhouses will succeed in bringing this entire dispute to a successful conclusion in the near term, including hopefully the cancellation of prohibitive duties currently imposed for the import of copper and aluminium scrap into China from the USA.

While these macro issues dominated our thoughts in 2019, there were many other problems encountered last year which may seem humdrum by comparison but which, nevertheless, have a huge impact on the day-to-day running of recycling businesses. In Poland, for example, a hike in social contributions payable for workers could result in a 10% increase this year in the cost of employing someone – a move that would be especially detrimental to the many small businesses that populate the recycling sector.

At our ITC panel discussions in Singapore in May 2019, several panellists commented on the continuing, unwarranted image problem encountered by our industry. The BIR-led Global Recycling Day initiative has indeed assisted in improving the industry’s profile. But as the positive developments in revision of the metals import procedures illustrates, BIR on behalf of its members achieves most by constantly underscoring and evidencing, especially to regulators, that the commercial and economic realities of our industry’s positive impact combined with the sustainability and environmental benefits of our recycled raw materials are unsurpassed in their role in the global supply chain, contributing in the process hundreds of billions of dollars to global GDP each year while also preventing an estimated one billion tonnes of carbon emissions.
Special Committees

The BIR Special Committees deal with organisational and administrative matters concerning the general structure of the organisation.
Imagine those people who are not afraid to climb the highest mountains: even if they were to fall, they would see fearless individuals building a plane on the way down. As the old quote goes, I survived because the fire inside me burned brighter than the fire around me. This is a perfect analogy for the Convention team at BIR. They show time and time again just how much they love what they do.

Looking from the outside, last year’s highly successful Conventions in Singapore and Budapest could have been underestimated by many in terms of the stresses involved in planning, organizing and realizing such events. As participants, we are all handed a well-structured agenda directing us to all of the speeches and plenary sessions. What we don’t see is how success depends on the ability of skilled individuals to improvise. There were several moments during these two Conventions when I was unsure whether we would be able to guarantee the success of a session; but suddenly, by conjuring up a major work of improvisation like a Phoenix from the flames, someone came up with a solution to the challenge at hand, be it technical or otherwise.

Singapore was an unbelievable location for our first Convention of 2019. Combined with the right venue, this created excellent value for our recycling industry and a total of 935 participants from more than 60 countries attended the event. Usually our Conventions later in the year are quieter in terms of participation but our gathering in Budapest was one of the most successful ever for that time of year, attracting 923 participants. This high number could be seen as a reflection of the fact that BIR maintained a high profile throughout a year of uncertainty for the business community, providing our recycling industry with plenty of helpful information.

Every BIR Convention feels for me like trying to square the circle. Why is that? There are so many issues the Convention team needs to consider that planning becomes more complicated than convincing a mother-in-law you are the right partner for her child. For example, choosing dates that don’t conflict with major holidays or with the leading events of other national and international organizations can drive you crazy. You can’t imagine just how many holidays there are worldwide. Furthermore, our committee meetings can generate 15 really good but different suggestions regarding the right region to hold a Convention, giving us the problem of finding the one location on which everyone agrees.

Looking back, I can say that 2019 was a year in which many right decisions were taken with regard to the geography and excitement factor of our Conventions, both of which featured great speakers and excellent sessions tailored to the individual recycling sectors. The concept of interactive panel discussions and visualization using screens outside of the main meeting room were well received and came across as a positive, modern development.

In closing, I must once again express my thankfulness for having such a great Convention team, through whom we want to offer you even more innovations regarding scale, modernity and possibilities for further expansion.
“BIR maintained a high profile throughout a year of uncertainty for the business community, providing our recycling industry with plenty of helpful information.”
In the same way that the eyes are considered the window to the soul, a **website is the window to an organization**. For several years, BIR’s website had been in dire need of a complete makeover, an undertaking which had always been delayed because large parts of the website’s content were dependent on another major project: the renewal of BIR’s database and customer relations management tool. One could not live without the other being implemented. Finally, at the beginning of 2019, all conditions were fulfilled to start work on this ambitious venture. In the framework of a “**root and branch** review of BIR’s communications activities,” the website was put on top of quite a long list of priorities.

The requirements for the new website sounded quite simple: make it modern; visually appealing; easy to navigate and yet comprehensive in its content; transparent with regard to finding relevant information with a minimum of mouse clicks; responsive and suitable for mobile devices; and last but not least, aligned with the **needs and expectations of our target audiences**.

While BIR’s main target group is, and has always been, its membership, other stakeholders need to be taken into consideration too. The public (including the educational aspect for younger generations), the media as well as political decision-makers were defined as those who should find answers to their questions when consulting the BIR website.

With this long list of requirements on its table, the BIR Communications Department attacked the project straight after our Singapore Convention, in close co-operation with the BIR leadership, the Communications Committee and the divisional boards. The ambitious aim was to finalise the project by the end of the year, and I am proud to say that we achieved this tour de force by launching the new website in the very first week of January 2020.

In my opinion, the result is exactly what we were trying to achieve. Strong, vibrant visuals reflecting our industry and our organization’s projects are combined with **up-to-date content** covering everything from market updates to legislative **background briefs**, via **statistics, project information, Convention timetables and much more**. The Members Only area is gradually being updated with relevant information for our members’ businesses. The website can be consulted on any mobile device and allows members to have access to a wealth of information “in their pockets”, so to speak.

As you know, a website is never truly finished, and changes and improvements continue to be made. I hope that you will be using this new tool extensively and would encourage you to **give us your valuable feedback**.

Of course, none of the other ongoing tasks of BIR’s Communications Department were neglected, and we continued to produce our World Mirrors, statistics, Annual Report,
“The result is exactly what we were trying to achieve. Strong, vibrant visuals reflecting our industry and our organization’s projects are combined with up-to-date content.”

Membership Directory, news bulletins, eBriefs, Young Traders Gazette, etc.

In co-ordination with the Global Recycling Foundation, we celebrated the second edition of our Global Recycling Day on March 18 2019. All in all, 25 official events were held across the world, 671 million people had the chance to hear about Global Recycling Day through media coverage alone, and over 6.5 million people were reached on social media.

In co-ordination with IFAT, one of the world’s biggest trade show organizers, BIR participated with spotlight programmes at IFAT Asia and IFAT Africa to increase our audience and extend our membership spread.

Last but not least, close relations with the media continued throughout the year, with vibrant participation of journalists at our two Conventions as well as keen interest – particularly from the general press – in getting BIR’s take and comments on topics such as China’s import restrictions and plastics recycling, including from the Financial Times, the Wall Street Journal, the BBC, Sky News, Radio Canada, Reuters and Agence France Presse, along with many more.

It has been a truly exciting and productive year full of achievements. None of this would have been remotely possible without the dedication and work of Elisabeth Christ and the rest of the Brussels secretariat under the leadership of Arnaud Brunet.

Thank you too to the members of the Communications Committee who freely make themselves available to participate in conference calls and email discussions, as well as giving up their valuable time at the BIR Conventions to attend meetings.

We are constantly reviewing and discussing our communications work, and in 2020 we will look to new, innovative forms of media to deliver our messages.

Mark Sellier
Global Metals Network Limited (CHN)
Chairman Communications Committee
BIR has evolved and grown over the course of its 72-year history, continuously adapting to the needs of its members. New initiatives, new services, new horizons – these are what BIR continues to offer its members for the benefit of their businesses.

In 2019, BIR monitored developments regarding Chinese import restrictions, represented BIR’s interests within the framework of the UN Basel Convention and the OECD, and organized two highly successful Conventions in Singapore and Budapest. In addition to the great networking opportunities afforded by these international events, BIR continued throughout the year to provide market intelligence and legislative updates for the benefit of its members.

In parallel, BIR has continued to lobby to overcome trade barriers and to facilitate cross-border business and free movement of recyclable materials worldwide. In the new environment in which growth of trade tariffs and protectionism around the world is disturbing free trade and the movement of scrap, BIR again played a vital role in 2019; its continued actions are needed more than ever for the benefit of our industry.

BIR is happy to report that we ended 2019 with 723 member companies and 36 national associations, all from a total of 71 countries. Furthermore, 61 new members joined our ranks, compensating for a number of losses owing to mergers and company closures. These new members come from across the globe: Europe supplied most but was closely followed by Asia (mainly India and Singapore). Although BIR membership had its roots in Europe, these latest statistics clearly illustrate the continuing evolution and global essence of our organization.

We provide added value for companies by giving them the opportunity to join a prestigious federation which sets the highest standards. Indeed, the Membership Committee always seeks to preserve the quality of its membership and so closely examines new applications to ensure candidates comply with the top standards and ethical requirements which are a key feature of the rules and regulations of our world organization and of its membership obligations.

BIR also places a particular emphasis on reshaping its services with the most up-to-date materials and tools for its members. To this end, BIR has switched to a more user-friendly and efficient IT system, with its new CRM allowing members to directly manage their company details and their own contact profiles. BIR members can easily access their membership information in the brand new portal, download their certificate and also register for Conventions. This new system was updated and enhanced throughout 2019 as a result of daily use by BIR staff and also precious feedback from members.
“Although BIR membership had its roots in Europe, latest statistics clearly illustrate the continuing evolution and global essence of our organization.”

BIR’s new CRM tool, combined with the superb new website, has made the member experience much more professional and interactive. These advanced IT processes are the stepping stones towards achieving the next level in providing BIR members with the best and most up-to-minute experience in the fast-growing electronic world in which we live today.

Among its many services, BIR Conventions represent the perfect networking hub, providing members with global reach for reliable business partners. Taking place twice a year in major cities around the world, these enable members to meet and to network, as well as to discuss the latest challenges facing the industry. Many new members started by discovering our Conventions as non-member “observers”, taking the opportunity to liaise with their peers and to enjoy the amazing BIR Convention experience with its beautiful surroundings and perfect conditions for doing business. Based on this, they then decided to join this great adventure by becoming BIR members.

We will strive to ensure that BIR continues to offer the highest levels of quality in order to retain our current members and to enhance the appeal of our global organization to other potential industry partners.

Thank you very much for your ongoing support, and we wish you a successful 2020.

Key Facts

BIR membership as of December 31, 2019

723 member companies

36 national associations

61 new members
Last year wrapped up the decade by combining a multitude of troubles for our industry. Unfortunately, this happened in the midst of an unprecedented change in the geopolitical paradigm. There were significant impacts on all recycling sectors as a result of trade friction between the world’s major economic powers, delivering a profound blow to the global economy.

Having made it through this far, some are saying that “the worst is already behind us” whereas others are warning that “the worst is yet to come”.

Believing in the Circular Economy applies not only for commodities, but also for good and bad times. Over the past few decades, the new challenges of global warming have not been reckoned with. But in witnessing the devastating forest fires in both Australia and California, this must reaffirm the belief that our recycling industry is more important than ever before. Rising emissions of carbon dioxide have been proved to be one of the main causes of increasing global warming, drought, desertification and, last but not least, pollution. According to the World Health Organization, air pollution alone kills an estimated seven million people worldwide every year.

From independent expert studies commissioned by the BIR, it can be estimated that recycling industry activities worldwide save more than a billion tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions each year and, in so doing, broadly offset the negative impact of the global aviation sector. But at a time when recycling rates worldwide could still be improved in many ways, our industry has continued to be undermined by decision-makers who issue legislation that hampers sustainability and, in some cases, the continuity of our industry.

BIR’s Ambassadors are promoting awareness and understanding of the merits of the Circular Economy and emphasising the importance of adopting this non-linear approach, which has recently gained traction with calls from governments and civil society to “close the loop” with the aim of: increasing economic, social and environmental sustainability; spurring economic growth through greater resource efficiency; and preserving natural resources for future generations. Recycling has become an inevitability rather than a matter of choice, and recognition of this fact has been further boosted by the efforts of the Global Recycling Foundation under the presidency of BIR Past President Ranjit Singh Baxi.
“BIR’s Ambassadors are promoting awareness and understanding of the merits of the Circular Economy and emphasising the importance of adopting this non-linear approach.”

We have been working in tandem with BIR President Tom Bird, BIR Past Presidents, the secretariat in Brussels and other BIR committees in developing awareness of recycling’s crucial role through our worldwide network of regional ambassadors, most notably by participating in conferences, symposia and workshops. Nominated to represent BIR in their various regions, our Ambassadors also strive to introduce potential new members to our world recycling association. Following thorough screening and due diligence procedures, new members get to join our recycling fraternity and to learn about best recycling practices and about how to take their businesses to new levels. For many decades, the indispensable networking opportunities provided by BIR have been helping businesses to overcome bad times and to convert them into opportunities.

I have been attending BIR Conventions for the past 33 years and I know how much this association has transformed our family business and lifted it to new heights.

All of Ambassadors take a deep personal interest in promoting BIR and in going the extra mile alongside the Membership Committee to retain existing members, engaging with them personally when their memberships come up for renewal. Along with the Finance, Convention and Communication Committees, the Ambassadors Committee has been active on social media in raising the BIR flag in relation to key events.

No doubt 2020 will be a challenging year too, but also one in which many opportunities may lie.
Speakers at BIR Events in 2019

SINGAPORE, 20-22 MAY 2019

Paper Division
• Brian Taylor, Senior Editor, Recycling Today Media Group (USA)
• Jean-Luc Petithuguenin, Paprec Recyclage (FRA)
• Ranjit S. Baxi, J & H Sales International Ltd (GBR)
• Dominique Maguin, La Compagnie des Matières Premières (FRA)

Non-Ferrous Metals Division
• Thomas McMahon, CEO, Dillon Gage Asia (SGP)
• Henry Van, Senior Analyst, CRU International Limited (SGP)
• Paul Coyte, Hayes Metals (NZL)
• Dhawal Shah, Metco Marketing PVT LTD (IND)
• Shen Dong, Omnisource Corporation (USA)
• Darrell Wong, Chiho Environmental Group, Hong Kong (CHN)
• Wei Liu, CMRA (CHN)

Stainless Steel & Special Alloys Committee
• Robert Messmer, Market Analyst, SMR – Steel & Metals Market Research (AUT)

International Trade Council
• Michael Lion, Everwell Resources Ltd (CHN)
• Tom Bird, Chiho Environmental Group (CHN)
• Murat Bayram, European Metal Recycling Ltd (GBR)
• Ranjit S. Baxi, J & H Sales International Ltd (GBR)
• Henk Alssema, Vita Plastics (NDL)
• Martin Böschen, Texaid-Textilverwertungs Ag (CHE)
• Robin Wiener, ISRI (USA)
• Arnaud Brunet, BIR

Ferrous Division
• Steven Vercammen, Senior Knowledge Expert, McKinsey & Company (BEL)

Shredder Committee
• Torben Hansen, H.J. Hansen Recycling Industry LTD AS (DNK)
• Thomas Papageorgiou, Compliance Director, Anamet SA (GRC)
• Alton Scott Newell III, President, Newell Recycling Equipment (USA)

World Council of Recycling Associations
• Ranjit S. Baxi, Founding President, Global Recycling Foundation

Keynote Session
• Dr Gabrielle Walker, Expert Strategist (GBR)

International Trade Council
• Ross Bartley, Trade & Environment Director, BIR
• Dr Gloria Lei Yao, Director, Project Development, Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel (HKRITA) (CHN)

Plastics Committee
• Aurore Belhoste, Procurement Manager, Unilever (SGP)

Textiles Division
• Dr Gloria Lei Yao, Director, Project Development, Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel (HKRITA) (CHN)
BUDAPEST, 14-15 OCTOBER 2019

Opening Session followed by “Spotlight Discussion on Global Trade”

- **Professor Philippe Chalmin**, Author, Cyclope Commodities Report (FRA)
- **Michael Lion**, Everwell Resources Ltd (CHN)
- **Tom Bird**, Chiho Environmental Group (CHN)
- **Greg Schnitzer**, Schnitzer Steel (USA)
- **David Chiao**, Uni-All Group (USA)
- **Martin Böschen**, Texaid Textilverwertungs AG (CHE)
- **Ranjit Baxi**, J&H Sales International (GBR)
- **Murat Bayram**, European Metal Recycling Limited (GBR)
- **Graeme Cameron**, Sims Metal Management (SGP)

Textiles Division

- **Alan Wheeler**, Director, Textile Recycling Association (GBR)

E-Scrap Committee

- **Chris Slijkhuis**, E-Waste Recycling/Public Affairs, Müller-Guttenbrunn GmbH (AUT)

Non-Ferrous Metals Division

- **Perrine Faye**, Global Base Metals Editor, Fastmarkets (GBR)
- **Andriy Putilov**, Chairman of the Board, MZ Ltd (UKR)
- **Natallia Zholud**, TRM Group (BLR)
- **Dhawal Shah**, Metco Marketing (IND) PVT Ltd (IND)
- **Leopoldo Clemente**, LCD Trading S.R.L. (ITA)
- **Murat Bayram**, European Metal Recycling Limited (GBR)

Plastics Committee


Tyres & Rubber Committee

- **Fazilet Cinaralp**, Secretary General, ETRMA – European Tyres & Rubber Manufacturers Association

International Environment Council

- **Jeffrey D. Kimball**, Commercial Director, Loacker Hulladékhasznosító Kft. (HUN)
- **Emmanuel Katrakis**, Secretary General, EuRIC AISBL (BEL)

Ferrous Division

- **Becky E. Hites**, President & Founder, Steel Insights, LLC (USA)
- **Viktor Kovyshnevni**, Director, Ruslom.com (RUS)

Stainless Steel & Special Alloys Committee

- **Natalie Scott-Gray**, Senior Metals Demand Analyst, EMEA and Asia regions, INTL FCStone Ltd (GBR)
- **Olivier Masson**, Senior Analyst, Roskill Commodity Research, Consulting & Events (GBR)

Calendar of future BIR Conventions

2020

(11) 12-14 October
Istanbul, Turkey
Swissôtel The Bosphorus

2021

(30) 31 May-2 June 2021
City to be confirmed

(24) 25-26 October 2021
City to be confirmed

2022

(29) 30 May-1 June 2022
City to be confirmed

(16) 17-18 October 2022
City to be confirmed

2023

(21) 22-24 May 2023
City to be confirmed

(22) 23-24 October 2023
City to be confirmed