



GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS
For a Sustainable Recycling Sector



National
Research
Foundation



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PETCO'S INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM WITH EPRO SETS THE STAGE FOR GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR A SUSTAINABLE RECYCLING SECTOR

Cape Town, November 28, 2013. “There is no Planet B. We are all a part of the global market and live on a planet with finite resources. We have the same aspirations and visions but will have to find a unique strategy when it comes to our waste management and recycling challenges”.

This was the message that came out of the first South African and European colloquium on recycling that took place in Cape Town, entitled “*Global Partnerships for a Sustainable Recycling Sector: Sharing. Dialogue. Action*”, hosted by PETCO, the PET Recycling Company.

Addressing just short of 200 delegates who attended the conference via video-feed, Janez Potočnik, European Union Commissioner on the Environment, congratulated PETCO on taking the initiative to host the conference. He further highlighted the value of waste as a resource and that it should not be landfilled or burnt, the need for a transition to a circular economy as a more sustainable economic growth model, and encouraged joint efforts and initiatives aimed at increasing material recovery and reducing the impact of litter on the environment on a global scale.

Potočnik's address was followed by six plenary sessions during which 15 members of the European Association of Plastic Recycling and Recovery Organisation (EPRO), and 15 of South Africa's experts on recycling, waste management, recovery and sustainability delivered papers on the challenges, opportunities, latest trends and innovations in their respective areas of expertise. These and other points of discussion were debated and discussed in depth during a concluding panel debate, which allowed members of the audience to pose their questions and comments to local and international experts.

“South Africa can be proud of its accomplishments in the area of plastics recycling, which is one of the key building blocks of a Green Economy”, said Cheri Scholtz, CEO of PETCO. Explaining the importance of the South African / European colloquium for future partnerships she added, “ South Africa is clearly leading the rest of Africa in this regard, and is not lagging far behind its European counterparts with its impressive recycling figures and innovative solutions developed for recycling and waste recovery. Imagine the impact we can have if we take hands across the globe and find ways to recycle better, smarter and more efficiently? The goal of inviting EPRO to South Africa to have their first ever General Meeting on African soil and to participate in this pioneering international recycling colloquium was to create a platform for the sharing of ideas and set the stage for future global partnerships that would make this possible”.

According to Scholtz, the international delegation made it clear from the outset that they were not only eager to share with South African audiences their wealth of knowledge and the valuable lessons they had learnt in Europe and the United States, but that they also wanted to learn from our experiences across all packaging streams in Southern Africa, the BRICS and other developing countries who were represented on the programme.

“Countries are all somewhere on the recycling continuum,” Scholtz explained. “They are either in start-up phase, or could be years down the line with elaborate setups for recycling and many products containing recycled material that have market acceptance. In developing countries, like South Africa, where in 2012 we achieved a 50.5 % packaging and paper recycling rate, the recycling industry is often seen as a means to provide income, skills development and create sustainable livelihoods. For this reason, waste management in South Africa, as a major element of the Green Economy, places a lot of emphasis on job creation and service delivery. However, it is also important for us to learn from developed countries and to avoid making costly mistakes that could otherwise have been avoided as we transition from a change society into a circular society, backed by Extended Producer Responsibility, consumer commitment and cooperation from all stakeholders in the value chain,” she said.

This sentiment was confirmed by Peter Sundt, Secretary-General of EPRO who had led the European delegation on their South African trip. “We were very impressed by the innovation and commitment seen on South African shores. As is the case in Europe, Extended Producer Responsibility is the main driver to stimulate collection and recovery of materials, where we achieved a recycling rate of 34 % for plastic packaging in the EU in 2012,” Sundt said.

He added that the group enjoyed discussing recycling issues and initiatives with their South African counterparts, and having the opportunity to visit various recycling plants around Cape Town on the last day of their visit. "It was a highly successful colloquium which increased the total intellectual capacity of all in attendance," he said.

Looking ahead, Scholtz says "the colloquium has set the stage for on-going partnerships, dialogue and joint initiatives to fuel our pursuit of a resilient, innovative and sustainable recycling sector. Our thanks goes one again to the sponsors who helped us make this colloquium a reality, including the National Research Foundation, City of Cape Town, POLYCO, MPact Recycling and Plastics|SA who through their support, have showcased how we can work together and support our industry as a driver of the Green Economy".

THE CONFERENCE IN NUMBERS

- **2** NGO's
- **2** leading retailers
- **3** leading South African universities
- **4** bottlers from South Africa and Namibia
- **7** government departments
- **11** local converters
- **14** nations (including SA, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Namibia, Belgium, Norway, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, UK and the USA)
- **18** international and local industry bodies,
- **26** recyclers,
- **200** delegates

CAPTION TO PHOTOGRAPH:

CHERI AND EPRO LEADERS: PETCO CEO Cheri Scholtz, flanked by - Francis Huysman:EPRO co-chairperson/ Val-I-Pac to left and - Geraud Delorme: EPRO co-chairperson/ Valorplast and EPRO Secretary General: Peter Sundt to right.

ENDS

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