



## International Cooperation – the Way of the Future

The future and evolution of the global glass industry is a topic of concern for glass professionals everywhere. The recent combined meeting of the International Commission on Glass and the European Society of Glass held in Trenčín, Slovakia, placed a great deal of emphasis on the sustainability of our industry through the 21st century. Attending this meeting showed me that there is considerable convergence between the U.S. glass industry's expressed goals and priorities and theirs.

The major outcome of the week's activities, from an organizational standpoint, was the decision of the Commission to change membership qualification. Previously, membership has been by national associations, with The American Ceramic Society being the official U.S. representative. The Commission voted to open membership to companies, other associations and individuals. This will permit much more focus on the broader needs and interests of the glass industry, itself, as opposed to primarily academic inquiries or a purely technical approach. These changes will perhaps lead to more of a global "Glass Problems Conference" type of approach in the future. (By the way, in the United Kingdom, a similar conference is referred to as "Furnace Solutions." Might the U.S. industry consider adopting a similar, more positive approach?)

At the opening "Round Table" discussion some excellent overviews were given by four leading experts on overall themes of our challenges. (See article describing the presentations on page 32). Following individual presentations,

the round-table began with the stated purpose of responding to questions/comments submitted beforehand by participants. The GMIC had submitted questions relating to the following four basic issues that are the focus in the U.S.: Strength, greenhouse gases, energy and image. As it turned out, all of these issues also were of significant interest to the ICG members. They were discussed in some detail and, in some cases, followed by separate meetings.

**Strength** – It is clear to all that increasing glass strength will have substantial impact on our industry and on society as a whole. A first action agreed to, in principle, was to hold a "Brainstorming Roadmap Workshop" on glass strength. This workshop would have the combined participation of representatives from the United States and Europe. Discussions would start with surfaces and mechanical fracturing of glass and lead to the development of a "Roadmap" identifying a path forward to achieve increased glass strength. Tentatively planned for early 2009, this may be held under the auspices of a European Union initiative by "EFONGA" (European Forum on New Glass Applications).

The next step will be a symposium that is scheduled for the "PacRim/GOMD/ICG" meeting to be held in Vancouver, BC in early June 2009. The symposium is a "sub group" of Symposium 24 (Glass Technology, Energy and Environment) and is being referred to as "Improving Strength in Industrial Glass." A GMIC task force has been nominated to assist in organizing this session. It will be inviting speakers and participants over the next several months. The symposium is intended to lead to action items for glass companies, research institutions, government agencies and glass users relating to the need for increased strength in glass and the development of new products and

markets to utilize and benefit from stronger and lighter glasses.

**Greenhouse Gases** – The EPA has begun a process to identify appropriate thresholds for greenhouse gases, as well as measurement protocols and schedules in preparation of expected future rules and restrictions. The EU already has such rules in place (under the IPPC Regulation and REACH Directive) and the glass industry is carefully moving forward to abide by the rules. However, the industry also will propose changes that would reduce the damage the industry potentially could suffer by fully adjusting to the existing rules. During the "Building a Sustainable Global Glass Industry" Conference on Monday, Nov. 3 in Columbus, Ohio, representatives of European and U.S. glass companies and research institutes will discuss the implications of rules relating to GHG emissions as well as possible alternative approaches that could be developed.

Where emissions remain, reducing them through process improvements have led to increased emphasis on furnace design, glass compositions and recycling. These are all equally seen as priorities in the United States.

**Energy** – Reducing GHG-generating energy required to melt glass is another clear area of focus. Energy not needed, or acquired through alternative mechanisms is another avenue towards global glass sustainability. Work on both sides of the Atlantic is underway on new melting technologies, alternative fuels and waste heat recovery and, hopefully, they will lead to practical means to reduce energy use.

**Image** – GMIC members have long been discussing the potential benefits to be derived by giving the general public and government agencies a better appreciation of the tremendous range and benefits of products that are made of glass – products that in

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many cases have a significant positive impact on creating alternative energy for use in society and industry (solar and wind power), and for reducing energy use in houses, industry and transportation (fiberglass insulation and multi-functional windows in buildings, lightweight textile fiberglass used in wind turbines, new low-energy lighting sources, various glass products used in the automotive industry and many others).

The meeting in Trencín saw the creation of a new technical committee, TC 12 – Glass, Society and the Environment. It will be generating the necessary documentation and presentations to permit industry representatives in any location to begin to demonstrate the important contribution that glass is and will be making to help to resolve the energy and emissions challenges we face around the world. A first presentation will be to representatives of the EU in Brussels in the Spring of 2009.

The global glass industry is on the move! For additional details on these or related topics, or to become involved in any of the above mentioned initiatives, please contact us.

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