



Sustainability – A global glass industry priority

Last November, 41 glass industry professionals from nine countries gathered in Columbus, Ohio, to begin a focused discussion regarding the worldwide challenges and opportunities that impact – or will impact – our long-term viability and sustainability. This one-day conference preceded the Glass Problems Conference.

The conference for the first time included glass users. The board had suggested that it would be useful for the GMIC to establish relationships with glass users to better understand current concerns and future needs of our ultimate and intermediate customers.

Eleven speakers addressed a series of topics that focused on technology challenges and developments, either underway or needed:

- Climate change considerations;
- The image of glass as a contributor to climate change relief;
- Resilience as a precursor to sustainability;
- Activities of the International Commission on Glass in support of long-term glass sustainability;
- The status of a European-initiated glass roadmap to help in the development of an industry strategy;
- The needs of glass users;
- Opportunities that exist for glass companies to build competitive advantages by tackling energy and climate change challenges as strategic management issues; and
- Finally, a look at a vision for the global glass industry given several alternative paths we might choose to take: “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly!”

Deborah Harsha, the procurement manager of Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, a purchaser of a variety of glass products, gave us an important perspective to our ongoing efforts to reduce the intensive energy use found throughout the glass industry. She reminded us that a user does not want to be paying an energy surcharge when the producer is “wasting” the energy.

Here are a few of the other significant points made by speakers and participants:

- Current energy costs are certainly temporary. Our planning should continue to focus on dealing with higher energy prices and continued pressure toward reduced greenhouse gases.
- The best technology available today will not be good enough to take us successfully into a future of constraints.

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- We need to explore older approaches for new economic viability.
- We need consistent metrics, including the means to measure success and advances in various aspects of our industry’s production process as well as the impact of our products on the environment and emissions.
- Opinion and policy makers don’t understand our industry and the benefits of our products. We need to correct that. Glass is part of the solution!
- Closer relationships with our users will be very helpful in our strategic planning. A “user forum” at the upcoming PacRim 8 Glass Strength Symposium (June 2009) would be desirable.
- Glass recycling – and the image of glass as a recyclable product – needs to

be revisited.

- We must develop the appropriate confidential mechanism to permit accurate benchmarking of current and evolving emission and energy levels of our industry.
- Incremental approaches to improvement will not be sufficient – we need “disruptive” innovation.
- With new technologies, glass plants can serve as an energy asset for a community region and nation.

The conference again reiterated the importance GMIC members have emphasized for years: The involvement and commitment of corporate senior executives to support industry-wide initiatives will bring significant progress toward sustainability for the industry as a whole.

With this in mind, the GMIC, TNO and the ICG will plan a “Glass Industry Strategic Forum” to be held in conjunction with the 2009 Glass Problems Conference. Details of this forum will be announced soon.

The GMIC has published a CD of the presentations given at this conference. It’s available from our offices at a price of \$25 (for members) and \$35 (for nonmembers), including postage to any destination. Please order from Executive Assistant Donna Ransom at 614-523-3033 or email dransom@gmic.org.

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