July 2004

OVER THE years, IIMM has been asked to present papers on many occasions and at a wide variety of venues. But it was a first to be invited, with some honour and not a little trepidation, to speak at the European Parliament in Brussels on 13 May. The event was the 10th Anniversary Conference, "Industrial Minerals – Growing with Europe", of the Industrial Minerals Association-Europe (IMA-Europe). The venue was the impressive new building hosting the European Parliament in Brussels.

Since its inception in 1994, IMA-Europe has been instrumental in bringing together the various industrial mineral trade associations of the EU under its umbrella. As such, IMA-Europe is the voicepiece of the industry in its dialogue with the European Commission on relevant legislation, and more widely, with the general public in raising awareness and issues relating to the production, use, and sustainable development of industrial minerals.

The association has grown in stature and size over the years, and a sister organisation, Industrial Minerals Association-North America was successfully launched in 2002.

**Two prong focus**

The focus of the conference was "how one of mankind’s oldest endeavours is actively contributing to innovation, competitiveness, and social development in Europe today."

The one-day programme of seven presentations was split into two sessions: in the morning, underlining the importance of industrial minerals in a competitive Europe; and in the afternoon, the impact of EU legislation on the extractive industry. The topic of EU Enlargement, enacted only days earlier on 1 May, was a common thread through the day’s papers.

An attentive and questioning audience of 80 or so, was drawn from the boardrooms of Europe’s leading industrial minerals producers and processors, and, significantly, from the European Commission and European Parliament. It was clear that the first session was mainly aimed at the EU/EC attendees, while the second session was an opportunity for industry leaders to listen to and debate the latest plans for legislation. So, altogether a most useful forum.

**Stand up, speak up**

Following opening remarks by André Talmon, IMA-Europe President, Michelle Wyart-Remy, IMA-Europe Secretary General, who has tirelessly led and steered the association since it started, outlined how IMA-Europe had adapted to changes on the European regulatory scene over the last decade.

The first paper suitably set the scene: “The European extractive industry within the industrial policy framework” by Patrick Hennessy, Director Directorate E: Environmental aspects of enterprise policy, resource-based and specific industries, of the DG Enterprise, European Commission.

The main thrust of Mr Hennesssy’s talk was to underline the importance and relevance of industrial minerals to the EU and strongly urge the industry to act swiftly and decisively, and warned against

"...if you’re not there, someone else will be," warned Patrick Hennesssey, Director Directorate E, DG Enterprise, European Commission
complacency: “It [dialogue with the EC] can be a slow and frustrating but important process, but if you’re not there, someone else will be.” In other words, the industry needs to stand up and be heard. He reaffirmed that raw materials and energy are major issues on the EU agenda for the next 4-5 years, and reminded that “Downstream sectors are nervous of security of supply of high quality raw materials… but before political judgements are made, full information on their implications are required [ie. from industry].”

Mr Hennessey also touched on the issue of European enlargement, highlighting the issues of new resources, the gap in quality of materials and development of industries. He concluded by saying that the minerals industry needed to “Fix its goal and use flexible instruments to meet this goal.” (Mr Hennessey’s paper will feature in Legal Eye in IM August ‘04).

The session was completed by papers from:

- Mike O’Driscoll, Editor, IM, “The economic importance of industrial minerals” – highlighting the structure of the industry, contribution of minerals to high value markets of the EU, the impact of China, EU enlargement, and new growth markets.
- Thierry Salmona, Executive Vice President, Imerys Specialty Minerals, “The mineral industry in Europe – the example of Imerys” – looking at sustainable development, risk management, the search for competitiveness, industry consolidation, and EU enlargement.

After lunch, three papers focused on legislative issues relevant to the minerals sector:

- “Major mining accidents and EU environmental policies” by Timo Mäkelä, Director Directorate G: Sustainable Development & Integration, European Commission, DG Environment
- “European Sectoral Social Dialogue – gaining in importance” by Jean-Pierre Klapuch, Deputy Secretary General, European Mine, Chemicals & Energy Worker’s Federation (EMCEF) and Jackie Morin, Head of Unit Inter-professional Social Dialogue, Industrial relations and Adaptation to Change, European Commission, DG Employment & Social Affairs.

All three presentations sparked questions and debate, in particular the New Chemicals Policy, which is intending to implement REACH (Registration, Evaluation, and Authorisation of Chemicals – see Legal Eye IM December ‘02, p.73). Although certain minerals are exempt from REACH, there still appeared to be some clarification required with regard to the wording of this exemption (eg. “not chemically modified”, associated minerals, synthetic versus natural).

André Talmon concluded the day’s programme by commenting on what the next ten years might hold for the industry, and underlining the growing importance of Social Dialogue for the industry. The following day, at the IMA-Europe AGM he handed over the presidency to Claude Stenneler, COO of Luzenac Group.

A fine dinner at the Château de Ruisbroek rounded off a highly informative and stimulating day, and came with a thought-provoking speech on EU Enlargement from former EU Commissioner for Competition Policy, Karel Van Miert. Mr Van Miert commented on the various problems that might arise, but were not insurmountable, considered that it was indeed a welcome and long-awaited process, and emphasised that the next issue of Turkey’s application for EU membership would perhaps be the toughest and most controversial subject the EU had yet faced.

Speakers relax after the first session, from left: Thierry Salmona, Mike O’Driscoll, Michelle Wyart-Remy.