



# Special Report: 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Industrial Packaging

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## 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference: An Inspiring Success

More than 230 people from 14 nations traveled to Tokyo, Japan in September to take part in the 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Industrial Packaging. Hosted by the Japan Drum Reconditioners' Association (JDRA), the meeting was a joyous global gathering of container reconditioners, manufacturers and industry suppliers.

The theme of the three-day event was "Onko-Chishin," which means "Studying the Past for Our Better Tomorrow." Conferees stayed in the gorgeous Hotel Chinzanso Tokyo, which is located in the heart of Tokyo, giving visitors easy access to all parts of the historic city.

The Conference got off to a great start on Tuesday, September 18, with a tour of Nippon Drum Co., Ltd. Teruhiko Motono, President of this modern and highly efficient steel drum reconditioning facility, welcomed nearly 100 visitors with a traditional Japanese lunch followed by a guided tour.

The following evening, guests attended a welcome reception in the hotel featuring music played on traditional Japanese instruments. A highlight of the party was witnessing the often futile efforts of numerous guests seeking to coax a respectable sound from these hard-to-play instruments.

On Thursday, Conference Chairman Shiro Kobayashi welcomed everyone to Tokyo and the 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference. He



*Conference Chair S. Kobayashi and ICCR Chair P. Rankin*

thanked delegates for their willingness to travel long distances to take part in the meeting and hoped that their stay in Japan would be highly enjoyable. Following opening comments from individuals representing each of the participating associations the business portion of the Conference got underway.

A representative of the Japan Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry opened the meeting with an excellent talk about the country's growing interest in reuse as a way to both improve the environment and grow the national economy. This was followed by an interesting presentation by Mr. Manabu Kuroiwa of Zeon Corporation. The firm is a huge global chemical manufacturer that purchases tens of thousands of industrial packagings annually, including steel and plastic drums and many types of flexible and rigid intermediate bulk containers. Mr. Kuroiwa talked about his firm's packaging priorities in the coming years.

Mr. Kiyosumi Fujii, Chairman of the Association of Asia-Oceanic Steel Drum Manufacturers (AOSD), spoke about market trends in Asia for new steel drums. He noted that sales of 220 liter drums in AOSD countries increased from 192.2 million in 2012 to



*L - R: E. van den Boogerd, B. Evoy, M. Bank, S. Stewart, P. Janus*

232.9 million in 2017. Mr. Fujii was very upbeat about the future of steel drums in the coming years. [Fujii](#)

Mr. Cody Stavig gave an excellent talk focusing on new steel drum production in North America and Europe, as well as related issues such as trends in steel drum thickness. Stavig showed a chart indicating about 26 million new steel drums were produced in North America in 2017, representing an increase of nearly 1 million drums from the prior year. He noted that steel drum production in Europe is relatively stable at about 30 million per year. [Stavig](#)

Speakers from five reconitioner associations offered views on market trends for reconditioned packagings. RIPA's Brian Evoy presented an excellent overview of the North American reconditioning market, including an interesting summary of threats and opportunities facing the industry. [Evoy](#)



*RIPA Chair Brian Evoy*

SERRED Chairman Pim Janus provided insights into the European container reconditioning market. He is concerned that the number of steel and plastic drums being sold by SERRED members is gradually declining. A key reason behind this sales decline is the prevalence of very light gage drums that tend to be scrapped at a high rate. However, on a positive note, the volume of composite IBCs being reconditioned in Europe is growing every year. [Janus](#)

Mr. Yasutaka Honda, JDRA, indicated that sales of reconditioned steel drums in Japan have increased in each of the past three years, but are still below historic highs. [Honda](#)



*SERRED Chair Pim Janus*

Following a fascinating talk on the history of ICCR by Teruhiro Obata, ICCR Chairman Paul Rankin hosted a panel discussion on “The Past and Future of ICCR & the International Conference.” Featuring former ICCR Chairman Brian Chesworth, recently retired ICCR Treasurer Frits Janus and JDRA Secretariat Isao Hiramatsu, the panel offered their candid views on the value of the association to the global reconditioning industry and the many benefits of holding an international meeting every three years.

This panel was followed by another featuring young leaders of RIPA, JDRA and SERRED. RIPA's Mike Bank talked about the need for ICCR and, in particular, its political representation in global regulatory forums. Mr. Philippe Verstraete, SERRED, echoed this view and also noted that regular meetings like the International Conference are often very good for business. Messrs Yukinobu Tanamura and Toru Yokokawa noted that the 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference was the first such event they had attended and were excited about the opportunity to meet and learn from their international colleagues.

That evening, attendees toured Tokyo Bay on a cruise ship and enjoyed a superb buffet dinner, cocktails and some fabulous traditional Japanese dancing.

## Conference Resolutions

1. ICCR should educate global packaging users about the environmental benefits of industrial packaging reuse, using principles derived from “Circular Economy” theory. These principles include: design for maximum reuse; recyclability when reuse is no longer possible; and consistent global design of industrial packagings.
2. ICCR should rededicate itself to the implantation of Resolution 1 of the 2015 Vancouver, BC Conference, which called for the development of an International ISO standard defining “sustainable industrial packaging.”
3. ICCR should educate global businesses about the environmental problems that arise from the direct scrapping of uncleaned industrial packaging that retains residues of dangerous goods.
4. ICCR should initiate work on safety guidelines that will help reconditioners throughout the world improve plant conditions and ensure worker safety.
5. ICCR should seek to expand its membership globally, with a special emphasis on China and India.

The next day, two speakers addressed issues related to steel drum thickness. Mr. Kenji Yosho, JDRA, talked about the competitive advantages that thicker steel drums enjoy in Japan and how their environmental friendliness is viewed by both government and industry as a highly positive attribute. [yosho](#) Mr. Michael Resch, SERRED, gave an interesting presentation on the growth of lighter-weight steel drums in Europe and how this has negatively affected the reconditioning industry. He noted that since 1992, the average weight of steel drums processed by SEFA members has decreased by about 1.61 kilograms (~3.5 lbs.). [Resch](#)

RIPA President Paul Rankin introduced the association’s new anti-direct-to-scrap program, including a video and associated PowerPoint presentation. [Rankin](#) Ernest van den Boogerd, SERRED, gave a fascinating talk about new technologies being developed by Mauser Packaging Solutions that will improve and make safer the processing of IBCs in reconditioning plants.

Mr. Tetsuzou Ohnishi, JDRA provided a thorough overview of a JDRA life cycle study that shows clearly the environmental benefits of 1.2 mm steel drums over competing products and thinner steel drums. [Ohnishi](#)

Mr. Eddy Schuer, SERRED, gave a wonderful talk about the emergence of Circular Economic thinking in the European Union. SERRED, said Schuer, is working with EU policy-makers to encourage them to recognize formally the benefits of reusable industrial packagings over single-trip containers. [Schuer](#)

The business portion of the Conference concluded with the adoption of five Conference Resolutions that will guide the work of ICCR in the coming year.

That evening, the International Morris Hershson Award of Excellence was presented to Mr. Yashuhiro Yamamoto. Mr. Yamamoto became President of Yamamoto Yoki Co. Ltd, in 1997 after having worked for the firm for nearly 30 years. He also served JDRA in many important roles, most recently as Chairman from 2012 to 2015. Mr.

Yamamoto has the respect of every member of ICCR, all of whom recognize and appreciate his great efforts on their behalf.

The 16<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Industrial Packaging was a resounding success. All conferees and accompanying persons returned home with a deeper appreciation of and respect for the Japanese people and the extraordinary city of Tokyo, Japan. The presentations were all inciteful, thoughtfully prepared and well presented. The social events were great fun and created an atmosphere of friendliness that has become an integral part of these triennial events.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of the Conference was the participation of many younger reconditioners from all over the world. In his closing remarks, ICCR Chair Paul Rankin said, "I hope that the many young men and women who have taken part in this conference – many for the first time – fully appreciate how important these events are for the global reconditioning industry. The future of the industry, and the future of ICCR, is now in your very capable hands."

Go [here](#) for more photographs of the Conference.