



Analysis

Textile industry 'united in recovery'

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The global textile industry requires cooperation across national borders on the road to recovery, said Josué Gomes da Silva, retiring president of the International Textile Manufacturers Federation (ITMF) in his opening address at the Annual Conference 2014, in Beijing, China.



"There is no question that the global economy is still in a recovery mode," said Mr Gomes da Silva. "The US is steadily getting back on track due in great measure to the unprecedented drop in energy prices allowed by the new technologies to explore the shale gas. They are experiencing a reindustrialisation of the country in almost every sector."

"Although less frequent than a couple of years ago, waves of pessimism are still arriving on European shores, especially Mediterranean ones, melting market confidence and eroding assets value."

He added that global recovery was fragile and uneven and that there were no easy answers to put the global economy back on a stable and sustainable growth path.

The general theme of the conference, 'Shared Responsibility – Shared Opportunity', was an indication that the global textile industry could not be looked at and analysed in an isolation. With a long and complicated supply chain, the industry as a whole was responsible for making it efficient and sustainable, offering opportunities to all stakeholders.

However, Mr Gomes da Silva added that the setting of this year's conference meant it would take a special look at China's economy in general, and especially at its fibre, textile and apparel industry.

Wang Tiankai, president of the China National Textile and Apparel Council (CNTAC), tackled the issue of the Chinese textile industry 'slowing down', stating that China was undergoing a transformation from a country of mass production to a place where product quality was a key factor. These changes in the textile industry presented new challenges. This refocusing on to quality had been seen across many sectors, with the European textile industry, from machinery to man-made fibres, feeling pressure from this market giant.

China's textile growth dropped from 10.8% in 2012 to 8.3% in 2013, with further falls expected for 2014, according to Mr Wang. However, he said this producer was still firmly on the global spectrum, accounting for 37.1% of all textiles produced worldwide and 80% of all man-made fibres in 2013. From January to June that year, the profit of the Chinese textile industry had totalled around \$25.7bn, up 15.53% year on year.

The change in the country's textile industry was also one towards sustainability, as China looked to tackle the pollution problem and low labour costs, which had for years been associated with East Asia. Mr Wang said Chinese labour costs were now higher than those of the country's neighbours, and that China was striving to catch up to Western economies and its own government's expectations in terms of efficiency.

As well as Mr Wang's, keynote addresses were given by Yi Xiaozhun, deputy director general of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Switzerland, who discussed world textile trade and the WTO, and Liu Shijin, vice-president of the Development Research Centre of the State Council, China, who spoke about the global economic situation and outlook.

During the conference, on October 16-18, the Committee of Management of the Federation unanimously elected Mr Wang as the new president of the Federation for the next two years, taking over from Mr Josué Gomes da Silva.

Jaswinder Bedi was elected vice-president and Peter Gnägi was reconfirmed as treasurer. Mr Gomes da Silva was appointed Honorary Life Member of the Federation in recognition of his outstanding contribution during his six years of service as ITMF vice-president (2008-2012) and ITMF President (2012-2014).

Mr Gomes da Silva said holding the conference in China on the 110th anniversary of ITMF was an ideal choice. "It is quite timely to transmit the presidency of ITMF to Mr Wang, who is well suited to reinforce the foundations so that ITMF may continue to succeed for many more years to come. China's growing importance and clout on the textile industry will certainly help him in this important endeavour," he said.

Hosted by CNTAC, October's conference took place in China for the second time, having previously been held in Shanghai in 2009. The conference covered fibres, the textile supply chain, retail, technical textiles and nonwovens and textile machinery, with approximately 400 participants in attendance.

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