

## **6<sup>th</sup> EPD Conference Opening Welcome – Buks Botes, MMC**

As Vice-Chairman of IMnI's EPD Committee and on behalf of EPD Committee members, I want to welcome everyone to this year's China Conference, the 6<sup>th</sup> of its kind to be held by the IMnI in China. Our Chairman Pietro Amico, who unfortunately is unable to be here today, sends his regards; he has sent two representatives from Erachem Comilog in his place.

We have continued to build on the success of our previous conferences and truly believe that today's event will be the best one yet. This is due to the co-operation received by the key Chinese industry associations in the field of manganese electrolytic products. The IMnI wants to welcome and thank the following associations for their presence today and for being co-organizers of this event:

- The National Committee of Manganese Industry Technology, we welcome the Director, Mr. Zhang Jingsheng and also Mrs. Tang Xiaozhuang.
- The National Friendship Association of Electrolytic Manganese Metal, we welcome the president, Professor Tan Zhuzhong.
- The National Friendship Association of Electrolytic Manganese Dioxide, we welcome Mr. Li Tongqing.

The IMnI wants to grow the extent of interaction by the Chinese manganese industry in the international forum, due to China's leadership position in the production and consumption of manganese products, from ore to alloys to electrolytic products. We believe with the participation of the mentioned co-organizers of today's conference, we have the best opportunity to further the interests of manganese producers on a global basis.

The IMnI also welcomes and thanks Huacheng Metal Exchange Shanghai Ltd for their participation in the planning and arrangements of today's conference. We appreciate the efforts by their Director Mr. Gao Ming.

As everybody in this room would know, the manganese industry has experienced such changes over the past year that it is almost unrecognizable today. Seaborne manganese ore prices peaked in July last year at a value almost 10 times over the long term average, and yet by December all shipments of ore to China were stopped due to overstocked ports and zero demand. The prices of Mn-alloys and Mn-metal were very volatile and yet during the second quarter of last year, China's production of alloys showed an all time peak. Yet today we have many factories operating at half capacity or even shutdown completely, due to the impact of the most severe global economic crisis since the 1930's.

How will the markets develop this year? Will the companies and organizations represented here today still be in business in one year from now? I believe that we, as the key players in the electrolytic manganese products industry, have the opportunity to influence the destiny of this

industry, by taking responsible and sustainable actions in order to secure the viability of our companies. The responsibility is on us to manage the industry through these difficult times. All of us are facing the same challenges, regardless of our geographical locations or other factors and it is only amongst ourselves that the answers to so many questions lie. We are the champions of this industry and we know best how to deal with the challenges facing us.

A number of papers will be presented here today by various speakers who are indeed specialists in their field. It is the wish from the IMnI that the messages from the speakers and through interaction and dialogue in forums like this here today we may find the wisdom and vision to navigate our businesses through turbulent and icy waters.

Thank you.