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Corrugated packaging leading circularity in Athens!

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FEFCO Summit themed “Leading Circularity” welcomed more than 250 participants in Athens (16-17 May). The conference addressed essential matters for the corrugated cardboard packaging industry.

High-level political representatives from the Greek government addressed the audience. Greek Minister of Development Konstantinos Skrekas highlighted paper and board as the most eco-friendly packaging solutions, noting that corrugated cardboard achieves a 90% recycling rate. He underscored the critical role of political strategy in advancing sustainability in the corrugated cardboard sector.

Emmanouil Grafakos, Secretary General for Waste Management at the Greek Ministry of Environment & Energy, emphasized the importance of political leadership in driving positive change. He highlighted the role of policies like the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) and Greece's commitment to promoting EU industrial competitiveness. Maria Spyraiki, Member of the European Parliament (MEP), highlighted the need to turn a circular vision into actions to accelerate the shift to a more sustainable society.

Vassilis Exarchos, President of the Hellenic Paper Packaging Association (HPPA), welcomed participants to Greece and highlighted the important role of the corrugated cardboard sector in enhancing the competitiveness of various industries, supporting tourism, and driving innovation.

Distinguished speakers such as Professor Nikos Vettas, General Director of the Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research (IOBE), and Professor Ioannou from the Athens University of Economics and Business, along with fellows from associations, NGOs, and industry, provided valuable insights. They discussed the value of collaboration within the entire supply chain, decarbonisation, and provided a comprehensive global economic outlook.

The recent EU PPWR legislation, the most impactful regulation for the corrugated and packaging industries, occupied a central session at the summit. During the panel, Smurfit Kappa CEO Europe, Saverio Mayer, highlighted continuous progress in improving packaging design. He noted that the new packaging regulation provides an excellent opportunity to advance further and become even more fit for purpose, exemplifying circularity. Alexander Enzenberg of Dunapack Packaging said, “By optimising material efficiency, recyclability, and recycling, we can create a more sustainable and profitable value chain. Corrugated isn't waste; it's a valuable secondary raw material that can be recycled multiple times.” Alex Manisty from DS Smith mentioned the industry's role in creating high-performance lighter materials, noting that PPWR is an opportunity to innovate and significantly reduce the average weight of corrugated cardboard.

Additionally, speakers and panellists emphasized the importance of clear and consistent communication in effectively delivering key messages to relevant audiences.

Furthermore, encouraging behaviour change and sustainable practices in society is essential to building a better future. The corrugated cardboard industry embodies a powerful story of circularity and sustainability.

Eleni Despotou, FEFCO Director General, concluded that the corrugated cardboard packaging sector already leads in circularity. While PPWR presents challenges, it also unlocks opportunities. "Let's join forces to build a better tomorrow, where our commitment to circularity and sustainability sets the standard for success." she said in her closing remark.

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Note to the editors

FEFCO (European Federation of Corrugated Board Manufacturers) represents the voice of the European Corrugated Board Manufacturers. Headquartered in Brussels, FEFCO has 17 Association members, all European national corrugated packaging organisations comprising 373 companies, 646 plants and accounting for around 100,000 jobs. Corrugated cardboard packaging is circular by nature: it is based on a renewable resource; it is recyclable and recycled in reality. The role of the Federation is to investigate economic, financial, technical and policy issues relevant to the corrugated packaging Industry.