

Press Release – 8 November 2013

## Annual meeting of the World Ceramic Tiles Forum in Brazil



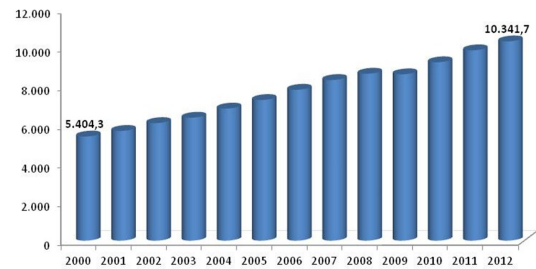
The 20<sup>th</sup> **World Ceramic Tiles Forum (WCTF)** was hosted by Anfacer, the Brazilian Association of Ceramic Tile Manufacturers, from 5 to 8 November 2013. Representatives of the ceramic tiles industry came from all corners of the world to discuss issues of common interest in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The WCTF was created in 1994 and is the annual meeting of the ceramic tiles manufacturers worldwide. With active countries including Australia, Argentina, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Spain, Taiwan, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates and the US, participation has continuously increased in recent years. Members represent around 90% of the global production.

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This year's WCTF revealed **upwards trends in global consumption and production** and provided an update of the current process in the World Customs Organisation (WCO) to review the **outdated Harmonised System (HS) classification** determining customs codes for ceramic tiles. Moreover, this session of the Forum presented an opportunity to discuss the **developments in standardisation** at national and international level. Participants also used this fitting occasion to share key trends, challenges and experiences in trade from their respective countries.

The consistent rise in consumption and production reflects a healthy and **growing global market** for ceramic tiles. Global consumption in 2012 has increased by 4.7% compared to 2011, representing a rise of over 91% compared to 2000 levels (*see chart*). Moreover, production in 2012 has exceeded 2000 levels by over 89%, equivalent to more than 10.3 billion square meters of ceramic tiles.



World Consumption between 2000-2012  
Source: Confindustria Ceramica

Regarding HS codes, World Forum members were pleased that **the agreed proposal was submitted to the WCO** in July 2012 and is being addressed under the 5<sup>th</sup> HS review cycle. **Successful review of old codes (HS 6907/6908) applicable to ceramic tiles will provide more reliable customs classification and international trade statistics in line with the reality of the production and markets.**

The WCTF provided an occasion to explore the developments in **international standardisation (ISO)** and the activities of the ongoing working groups (WGs) under ISO TC 189. The discussion notably addressed the topic of water absorption and the potential to establish a single global test method through the ISO route. **At the EU level**, steps have been taken towards creating **harmonised Product Category Rules (PCRs)** for ceramic tiles. This project, which is now at an advanced stage, will promote the interoperability of Environment Product Declaration (EPD) schemes in Europe. The WCTF agreed to **launch a working group aiming at reaching a consensus on internationally accepted PCRs**. A working group will also be initiated to **further improve the consistency of production and trade statistics at international level**.

Lastly, the WCTF provided an overview of market access issues, which are increasingly hampering the development of trade in the ceramic tiles sector. **The WCTF reiterated its support for the further liberalisation of trade through multilateral and bilateral agreements in order to reduce the impact of tariff and more particularly technical barriers to trade. Mandatory certifications, disproportionate labelling requirements and national standards diverging significantly from international standards are particularly harmful to trade and should be considered as infringing the WTO TBT agreement.**

The WCTF is a platform open to all ceramic tiles manufacturers in the world. Any producer or association of ceramic tiles producers willing to participate is invited to contact the WCTF secretariat. The next meeting of the WCTF is scheduled for 12 to 15 November 2014.

### World Ceramic Tiles Forum

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