

Three New Members Join the Berne Union

The world's leading export credit and investment insurance agencies met in Taipei from 11 to 15 October 2004 for the AGM of the International Union of Credit and Investment Insurers (Berne Union) where they discussed the main issues that affect this industry following the economic, regulatory and political developments during the year.

The discussions at the meeting focussed on high-level professional and technical points including Basel II, Berne Union values, co-operation on technical issues with the OECD and reinsurance market prospects for 2004/2005. External guests at the meeting included representatives from EBRD and ADB, and speakers included representatives from Standard & Poor's, Hannover Re, JLT Risk Solutions, Calyon, Après Consult, Citibank and ANZ Bank.

Latest Figures Show Rise in Export Credit Business

The importance of the role that Berne Union Members play in assisting cross-border trade was affirmed with the publication of the latest combined figures.

In 2003, Berne Union members supported US\$ 632 billion of exports and backed US\$ 15 billion of investments, which represents an overall increase of 30% over 2002, due to improved business conditions as well as adjustments in group reporting. The countries with the largest commitments for medium and long-term business were China, Iran, Turkey, Indonesia and Mexico.

New Officers

Dr. Hans Janus of Euler Hermes Kreditversicherungs-AG (Euler Hermes Germany) was re-elected as the President. At the AGM, he commented: "Seventy years after its foundation, the Berne Union is a young and vital organisation with a rapidly growing membership. We continue to tackle our primary task to organise the flow of information, the exchange of experience, the gathering of knowledge and expertise – and with growing importance – to communicate with others to make our industry voice heard and our activities better understood."

Ms. Piper Starr of the Export-Import Bank of the United States, US EXIMBANK was elected Vice President. Before assuming her current position as Coordinator - Special Projects in the Policy group, Ms. Starr was Vice President of US EXIMBANK's Export Credit Insurance Division as well as a Senior Program and Policy Analyst in the Policy and Planning Division until 1998.

Mr. Walter Blom of OND, Belgium and Mr. Daniel Riordan of ZURICH, USA were elected as Chair and Vice Chair of the Investment Committee and Mr. John Salinger of AIG, USA and Mrs. Alev Arkan of TURK EXIMBANK, Turkey were elected as Chair and Vice Chair of the Short Term Committee.

New Members

During the course of the week-long meeting, three organisations were accepted as new observer members of the Berne Union: Chubb Political Risk, Export Credit Insurance Corporation of South Africa Limited and Export-Import Bank of the Slovak Republic. This brings the total number of Berne Union members to 54.

Ms. Kimberly Wiehl, Secretary-General, stated: "The addition of new members from both the public and private sector from three different countries reaffirms the Berne Union's leading position in serving the needs of export credit and investment insurers around the globe, be they long time players in the market or newly established government agencies."

Berne Union Value Statement

For several years, various members of the Berne Union have been developing and implementing new methodologies and procedures which enhance their ability to sustain long-term operation. This has included work in areas such as the environmental, social and ethical assessment of projects and measures to combat bribery.

Berne Union members fully appreciate the importance of communication and transparency, of good governance and of adopting strong ethical values in international trade. An important part of the Berne Union work is devoted to exchanging information on these practices, therefore contributing to their acceptance and adoption throughout the industry.

The following Value Statement was supported by Members at the AGM:

“We are committed to operate in a professional manner that is financially responsible, respectful of the environment and which demonstrates high ethical values - all in the best interest of the long-term success of our industry.”

According to Peter Silberschmidt, President of ERG Switzerland: “This statement reflects the on-going commitment and work of Berne Union members to support global trade on a professional, responsible and sustainable basis. It is the Berne Union’s intention to regularly review its value statement and when needed to extend or adapt the value statement to reflect the ongoing changes in our society, in our industry and in our cooperation with other leading institutions.”

Industry Co-operation

In anticipation of parallel general meetings of both the Berne Union and ICISA (‘International Credit Insurance & Surety Association’) being held at the same time in Amsterdam in Autumn 2006, the two organisations will cooperate in identifying issues affecting the industry as a whole, as well as technical matters of mutual interest.

Note to Editors:

The Berne Union is the leading international organisation in the field of export credit and investment insurance. Members obtain valuable knowledge through interaction and the sharing of professional expertise with each other.

The Berne Union was founded in 1934 as an international non-profit, organisation with the aim to facilitate cross-border trade by providing a forum for professional exchanges between its members and by actively supporting international acceptance of sound principles in export credits and foreign investment.

The Berne Union is made up of a mix of public and private member organisations, their main roles being to support exports and/or investments to both highly developed and emerging markets. They do this by providing insurance or guarantees to protect exporting companies and/or financing banks, against political and/or commercial risks in export transactions or foreign investments.

The Secretary-General of the Berne Union is Ms Kimberly Wiehl, and the Secretariat is based in London.

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