Giving personal time and energy to supporting the leather industry is something that many individuals do willingly and tirelessly – the current IULTCS President Dr Dietrich Tegtmeier is no exception. He has already committed two years as Vice President and now has completed another two years as President but is due to step down from this role at the end of 2017. IULTCS expresses its thanks for the support he has given and now welcomes the next President to take over the mantle – Mr Thomas Yu from the Taiwanese International Leather Association (TILA).

Mr Yu is perhaps not such a well-known face in the global leather industry but has a high profile in Asia and recently enjoyed the role of host at the World Leather Congress in Shanghai, questioning panelists on completion of their presentations. Mr Yu will become one of the youngest Presidents in the long history of IULTCS and brings with him a fresh, energetic approach and is particularly keen to strengthen relationships with other like-minded organisations that represent the industry.

Mr Yu has dedicated more than 20 years to the leather industry promoting and improving leather processing techniques and chemical applications. He joined the Taiwanese International Leather Association in 2008 when the association was founded and has been actively involved in all the leather-related activities including holding positions as associated secretary general (2008-2012), secretary general (2013-2015) and senior consultant (2016-current time). When TILA became a member of IULTCS in 2009 Mr Yu was appointed as their Executive Committee representative and has attended all the IULTCS Congresses and AICLST Conferences from 2009 and catalyzed more Taiwanese chemical and leather companies to participate in these important international events. Beside his works in Taiwan Mr Yu is also an active participant in the China Leather industry. He was the executive member in ZhangQuan Foundation in Sichuan University (2011-2016) and edit commissioner of Leather Science and Engineering (2017-2021). Mr Yu will be President of IULTCS from 2018 – 2019.

Supporting Mr Yu will be the newly elected Vice President, Dr Luis Zugno who has extensive practical and academic knowledge of the leather industry and is a member of ABQTI (Brazilian Leather Association), ALCA (American Leather Association) and AICC (Italian Leather Association). He will also continue in his valuable role as Chair of the Research Commission for IULTCS.

ICT

Global Leather Coordinating Committee meets in Shanghai

The Global Leather Coordinating Committee comprises representatives of the International Council of Tanners (ICT), the International Council of Hides, Skins and Leather Traders Associations (ICHSLTA), and the International Union of Leather Technologists and Chemists Societies (IULTCS).

A meeting of the Global Leather Coordinating Committee (GLCC) took place in Shanghai during the ACLE leather fair. There were 15 representatives present from ICHSLTA, ICT, and the IULTCS organisations including all geographic regions of the world so this was truly a global meeting. Agenda items included ongoing topics of common interest and a general discussion on increasing demands placed on the leather supply chain.

ICT were the recipients of positive feedback following the very successful World Leather Congress (WLC) that had taken place only days earlier with an impressive attendance of over 700 delegates. This highlighted the importance of working together to tackle issues that affect our industry globally – and the ethos behind the GLCC that there are “times to compete and times to cooperate”.

Much of the GLCC meeting focused on what measures could be put in place to proactively reinforce the positive initiatives that are already in place in the leather industry and the best practice that is widely demonstrated. It was agreed that it is all too easy for the small number of organisations and individuals that are against the leather industry to achieve a disproportionate amount of media coverage – particularly via the many social media channels available.

The GLCC is focused on those areas where the leather manufacturing sector can best work together to defend leather as a material and find opportunities to promote leather value and is intent on highlighting the strengths of our industry and the promotion of our sustainable product via education, scientific accuracy and dispelling the myths that appear in the media. Topics such as Transparency, Traceability, Environmental Standards, Chemical Management, Corporate Social Responsibility, and Animal Welfare all need to be included and as part of the discussion agreement was reached to support a statement
on veterinary practice proposed by
ICHSLTA:

“The GLCC believes animal product
and byproduct export or import
requirements promulgated by national
governments, including hide, skin and
leather health certificates, should
be produced in accordance with
the recommendations of the World
Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)
and supported by sound science.
According to the OIE, hides and skins
that have undergone a tanning process,
including wet blue, wet white, crust and
finished leather, do not require health
certificates for export or import.”

The differences between leather as a
3-dimensional structure compared
to 2-dimensional textiles was also
discussed as this leads to much
confusion in the leather supply chain
when inappropriate requirements
are set, particularly when looking at
chemical management.

In the light of the ever-increasing
development of alternatives to leather —
including synthetic, hybrid and lab
grown materials, and the information
shared at the WLC about the
presentation of synthetic materials in
automobiles — it was agreed that the
industry as a whole should continue
to press for accurate and ethical labelling
and marketing of materials that look
like leather. A separate statement has
been prepared on this topic which
will be posted on GLCC partner
organisations’ websites.

Following recent media coverage of
chromium tanned leather, all sectors
agreed that while some customers
were requesting chromium free
leathers, there was no overall
diminution in demand for chromium
tanned leather. Tanning with chromium
sulphate provides the performance
characteristics necessary for many
applications of leather and, if the
tanning process is carried out correctly,
there are no health or environmental
problems associated with chromium
tanned leather.

A working group comprising
individuals from all three GLCC
partner organisations intend to build
on the relationships that already exist
with initiatives and NGOs such as
Leather Naturally!, UNIDO, Nothing-
to-Hide, the Leather Working Group,
Tannery of the Future etc see how
best GLCC can support them and
push back against those that wish to
harm our industry.

As mentioned education and scientific
knowledge is key to underpinning the
activities of the global leather industry
and IULTCS reported that plans were
well underway for a number of major
evants aimed at the scientific leather
community:

- 121st Society of Leather
  Technologists and Chemists (SLTC)
  International Conference and
  Dinner Dance which will be held in
  Northampton, UK 21 April 2018

- 114th Annual Convention of
  the American Leather Chemists
  association (ALCA) which will take
  place in Illinois, USA from 19 - 22 June
  2018

- 2018 AICLST Congress – the Asia
  International Conference of Leather
  Science and Technology which will take
  place in Xi’an, China 16 – 19 October
  2018

- 2019 XXV IULTCS Congress
  “Benign by Design” to be held in
  Dresden, Germany 25 -28 June 2019

- 2021 XXVI IULTCS Congress
  “Greening the Leather Value Chain”
  which will be held in Ethiopia with
  provisional dates for March 2021

Attention was also drawn to
educational training materials that are
produced by UNIDO for the leather
and footwear sectors and are freely
available for anyone to use just by
registering at https://leatherpanel.org

The next GLCC meeting will be
organized by the ICHSLTA in March
2018 to coincide with APLF.

Growing
demand for
technical
information on
safety

SATRA has reported that a recent
furniture safety event held on 18th
July at the technology centre’s
facility in Kettering received positive
feedback from participants and
suggests a growing demand
throughout the furniture industry
for technical information relating
to safety. The day consisted of
presentations on general product
safety for furniture, REACH and
an introduction to furniture
flammability followed by a tour of
SATRA’s extensive testing facilities.
Those attending took benefit from
a number of practical demonstrations
including flammability and furniture
structural safety testing in accordance
with European and British standards.

Comments received after the
event confirmed that the REACH
presentation in particular was very
helpful in clarifying a complex subject.
The European REACH regulation
concerns the registration, evaluation,
authorisation and restriction of
chemicals. With 64 entries in REACH
Annex XVII and 174 substances of very
high concern (SVHCs) it is important
that furniture manufacturers have an
understanding of their legal obligations
under this regulation.

SATRA has confirmed that this
introductory event will be repeated
later this year on 31st October and is
part of SATRA’s wider ongoing training
programme that includes a more
detailed seminar on REACH on 3rd
October and furniture fire safety on
5th October. For further information
please contact furniture@satra.com