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## News Release

10 September, 2017

### Global Leather Coordinating Committee meets in Shanghai

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 LeatherNaturally!, UNIDO, Nothing-to-Hide, the Leather Working Group, Tannery of the Future etc to 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 events aimed at the scientific leather community:

- 121<sup>st</sup> Society of Leather Technologists and Chemists (SLTC) International Conference and Dinner Dance which will be held in Northampton, UK 21 April 2018
- 114<sup>th</sup> 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.

### end press release ###

**Notes:**

1. 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).
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