

Using initiative

Nadine Firth* spoke to the Aluminium Stewardship Initiative's new Executive Director, **Dr Fiona Solomon**, about the next step for aluminium.

Recently appointed Dr Fiona Solomon (pictured) brings nearly 20 years of experience in sustainability, corporate social responsibility and independent third party certification in the mining industry and downstream precious metals sectors.

Q. What was behind the launch of the ASI?

A. In 2009, a global group of aluminium industry and NGO stakeholders joined forces to assess industry-specific sustainability challenges, opportunities and needs. Participants included the aluminium industry, civil society, policy makers, retailers and industrial users of aluminium.

A product assurance consultancy, Track Record Global, was commissioned to develop a report that summarised the industry's environmental, social and governance sustainability-related risks and opportunities. The report also underscored the need for a transparent worldwide multi-stakeholder approach to complement existing sustainability programmes throughout the aluminium industry.

This initial scoping work led to the creation of the Aluminium Stewardship Initiative (ASI) in 2012. At the end of 2012, IUCN were invited to be the host and co-ordinator for the standards setting process. A Standards Setting Group was convened, resulting in the launch of the ASI Performance Standard in December 2014.

Q. What is the objective of the ASI?

A. ASI seeks to mobilise a broad base of stakeholders to establish and promote responsible environmental, social and governance practices across the aluminium value chain. It is developing a certification programme covering both performance of operations through the value chain, and chain of custody for flows of material produced in conformance with ASI standards.

Stakeholder consultation and pilot testing will continue through 2015 and 2016. The aim is to launch the full ASI certification system in 2017.

Q. How does the ASI work with the aluminium industry?

A. ASI welcomes more interested

companies from all parts of the aluminium value chain to become involved in the 2015 work programme. Participation is open to any company with a stake in the aluminium value chain, including mining operators, alumina refiners, primary and secondary metal producers, transformers, and downstream users. Industry associations are also welcome.

For more information on membership, see: www.aluminium-stewardship.org/about-asi/join-asi/

ASI will also be continuing and expanding engagement with the industry through regular communications, engagement and outreach, so as to inform the ongoing development of ASI's programme.

Q. What are the main challenges the ASI is experiencing when working towards a sustainable aluminium industry?

A. ASI is still at an early stage of its development as a standards body. Many initiatives like this face challenges of working with limited resources at a global scale with multiple stakeholder groups, and ASI is no exception. Our challenges for 2015 include growing industry and

*Editor, Aluminium International Today

stakeholder engagement and awareness, increasing participation and uptake at all parts of the value chain and in additional downstream sectors, and working through the detail of developing appropriate governance and assurance models. We are looking forward to working collaboratively on these challenges.

Q. In what areas does the aluminium industry need to focus on with regards to sustainability?

A. Priority issues that have been identified during the standards setting process are:

- Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for refining and smelting;
- Bauxite residues, spent pot lining (SPL) and dross for refining, smelting, remelting and casting;
- Biodiversity management for bauxite mining;
- Indigenous Peoples rights for bauxite mining and smelting;
- Material stewardship for semi-fabrication, material conversion, remelting and consumer/commercial goods suppliers.

Q. Is the industry doing enough to address the environmental, social

and governance aspects of the aluminium value chain?

A. The aluminium industry has many leading companies that are very proactive on these issues. As is well known, aluminium provides environmental benefits in many of its applications. Its light weight helps improve the fuel economy in transport sectors, reducing emissions. Its use in packaging prolongs shelf life thus delivering health and food distribution benefits. And because aluminium is infinitely recyclable, 75% of all aluminium ever produced is still in use.

However, the aluminium industry is still working hard to improve its sustainability performance. For example, reduction of GHG emissions from energy use and from the electrolysis processes remains important to reduce the overall carbon footprint of primary aluminium.

There are opportunities to minimise the generation of SPL by extending life times of the pots, as well as to ensure proper handling of SPL waste through treatment or use by other industries, such as the cement industry.

And in order to optimise and improve collection and recycling of post-consumer aluminium scrap, products can be

designed in a way that enables and supports efficient collection and recycling.

Q. What is the next big step for the ASI?

A. In 2015, ASI is focusing on:

- Creating a formal ASI legal entity, including governance system, membership structure, 2016 income model, and secretariat functions to manage the programme.
- Developing the assurance model and normative documents for a third party certification programme.
- Further developing the Chain-of-Custody Standard for the flow of ASI-compliant aluminium through the value chain.
- Led by IUCN, developing a first draft of performance indicators.

These activities will be informed by consensus building with participating companies, stakeholder engagement meetings, expert input and pilot testing of proposed models.

To keep up-to-date with ASI activities and opportunities to be involved, join the mailing list at: www.aluminium-stewardship.org/stay-informed/ ■