By Stella Layton, President
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The Precious Metals Commission has continued to pursue its programme of international initiatives throughout 2014 and 2015.

Key issues remain conflict minerals legislation and the European REACH regulation, which continues to impose additional restrictions on the precious metal jewellery industry.

Conflict and its unintended consequences

Concerns were raised and discussed at the 2014 CIBJO Congress in Moscow regarding the possible unintended consequences of conflict minerals legislation, particularly in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

It was reported that there is evidence that compliance with the USA’s Dodd Frank Act has resulted in the closure of legitimate mines in
the DRC and neighbouring states, providing even more opportunity for exploitation, child labour and human rights abuses.

CIBJO members were keen to ensure this was not further exacerbated by European legislation particularly as the draft EU bill covers all areas suffering conflict.

The lobbying undertaken in early 2014 by the CIBJO President and the President of the Precious Metals Commission, along with other stakeholders, appears to have had some impact. The EU Conflict Minerals Regulation will mirror the USA’s Dodd Frank Act in its application to tin, tungsten, tantalum and gold. However, a briefing issued in December by the European Parliament suggested the EU regulation could be delivered by voluntary self-certification.

The EU regulations will evidently have far reaching consequences on many sectors, with a much wider scope than just the precious metal jewellery industry.

The European Parliament are expected to vote on this in March 2015, led by advice from the Committee on International Trade and taking opinion from the Committee on Development and the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The European Commission and Parliament are co-legislators and the decision could still go either way. CIBJO members need to remain active in this debate.

**Progress on Nickel Regulation**

Following lobbying by the Precious Metals Commission during 2013 and 2014 the prescribed method for nickel release testing in accordance with the REACH regulation has been reviewed by CEN.

As recommended by the Commission at its Tel Aviv meeting in 2013, the proposal is that the “No clear decision category” be abolished and the compliance level becomes less than 0.88 micrograms per square centimetre per week for items intended to come into prolonged and direct contact with the skin, and less than 0.35 micrograms for post assemblies intended to pierce the body.

The deadline for voting on the draft is May 5, 2015, the very same day as the Precious Metals Commission Meeting at the upcoming CIBJO Congress in Brazil. It it is hoped changes to the method will be approved.

**New Platinum Fineness Standard Approved**

Further to discussions at the Moscow Congress,
the ISO standard for Fineness of Precious Metal Alloys has been updated and now includes a 600 standard for Platinum.

ISO 9202, originally published in 1993 has been updated to ISO 9202:2014. It now recognises finenesses of 500, 600, 850, 900, 950, 990 and 999 for Platinum along with the recommended analysis methods. This is immensely helpful to the industry.

While different nations may elect to recognise different standards, they can all refer back to one international standard and appropriate test procedure, which is fundamental to CIBJO’s vision of global consistency and transparency.

**Disodium Tetraborate and Boric Acid**

The Precious Metals Commission is keeping a watching brief on a EU proposal to classify Disodium Tetraborate and Boric Acid as Substances of Very High Concern. (SVHC) These chemicals are extensively used in the jewellery and refining/recovery industry, and also in enamel manufacturing as flux, a substance added to assist in the melting of metal or alloy.

Their inclusion was opposed by seven EU member states (Poland, the United Kingdom, Italy, Ireland, Belgium, Slovenia, Latvia), but the objections were over-ruled.

The case for an exemption for their use in the jewellery and precious metal industry will be on the agenda for the Congress as it would be detrimental to our industry.