

Experts discuss a 'European vision' at steel industry week

Bloomberg photo



STEEL: This file photo shows steel bars used for reinforcing concrete stacked and ready for shipping at OneSteel Ltd.'s Steel Mill in Laverton, Australia.

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Leaders in the steel industry are meeting in Istanbul this week to discuss steel structuring and finding a new European vision for a sustainable future.

As the annual meeting of the European Convention for Constructional Steelwork, or ECCS, began Monday nearly 120 participants, including architects, engineers, designers, builders, urban psychologists and social planners from 20 countries were in attendance. Meeting sessions will continue until tomorrow.

The aim of the meetings is, "to discuss new horizons on steel structuring in relation to contemporary culture, giving way to a new European vision for a better and sustainable future."

Yener Güreş, secretary-general of the Constructional Steelwork Association, or **TUCSA**, said Turkey is proud to be hosting one of the biggest international steel events.

Steel Structures Week will be the scene of Nesrin Yardımcı's takeover ceremony. Yardımcı, the **TUCSA** president, was the first woman to be elected as the chairperson of ECCS.

Talking to the Hürriyet Daily News & Economic Review on Tuesday, Güreş said the meeting has significant importance for Turkey because it brings "the recent developments in the steel sector, as well as the experiences of developed countries to Istanbul."

Speaking about Turkey's "seismic fragility" and the importance of the use of steel in construction, Güreş

said: "Unfortunately, the threat of an earthquake has always been exploited by many who offer no concrete solution. Many people claim replacing weak buildings with new and stronger ones is too expensive for Turkey. This is not true at all." Turkey keeps ignoring the threat of an earthquake because they are afraid of facing the facts, according to Güreş.

Overcoming the crisis

The Turkish steel sector has felt the impact of the global crisis since 2008, contracting by 20 percent, he said. On the other hand, Turkey has become a manufacturing center for North Africa, the Middle East and Eurasia. "This paved the road for steel manufacturers to overcome the effects of the crisis with relatively minor damages," he said.

According to the World Steel Association, global steel use will increase by 10.7 percent, or 1.24 billion metric tons, by the end of this year, after contracting by 6.7 percent last year. According to these projections, world steel demand in 2010 will exceed the pre-crisis levels of 2007. Turkey is a key player in steel.

Last year, Turkey's finished and semi-finished steel product exports amounted to around 17.5 million tons, making it the world's seventh-largest exporter. Turkey is also the world's 10th biggest producer of steel, with a total production of 25 million tons, which will amount to 2.2 percent of global production by the end of 2009.