

Message from the Director General

A new world – and a new deal for the chemical industry Strategy, vision and ambition.

“Give me a lever and a place to stand, and I will move the world.”

The world today is quite different from when Greek mathematician and physicist Archimedes first uttered those words. The last decade has seen new threats to our energy supply, environment and health. The sustainability of our economic models has been challenged.

As Director General of Cefic for the past 10 years, my expectation has been that Europe – and the rest of the world – would turn more and more to the chemical industry as one of the levers to ensure a sustainable, healthy and prosperous future. The overriding objective at Cefic has been to design such a new deal for the chemical industry together with policy makers and to get the industry ready for it.

Despite it once being fashionable, only shallow thinkers now doubt the role that chemistry can play in improving lives. As countries with emerging economies demand a standard of living comparable with Europe and the US, the world’s resources and environment are increasingly under stress. Every actor must contribute to solutions: if not, they are part of the problems.

While some continue to deliberate about issues such as climate change and energy conservation, European chemical manufacturers have confronted these issues head-on. European chemical facilities are among the world’s most energy efficient. Overall, the European chemical industry has cut its energy intensity by 3.6% annually and reduced greenhouse-gas emissions 30% since 1990, while production increased by 40%.

Back on the agenda

Rising to challenges has long been the role of Cefic – and of the people and organisations that comprise our federation. Through vision, proactivity and hard work, Cefic has accomplished much for our industry: contributing to the establishment of an EU high level group to map out a future for the chemical industry along with other stakeholders; helping to successfully steer the development of the single largest regulatory package ever to affect chemical manufacturing; and, after many years of absence, putting chemistry firmly back on the European research agenda.

The recently adopted conclusions from the High Level Group on the Competitiveness of the European Chemicals Industry (HLG) are far-reaching and remarkable.

The HLG recognises that innovation is Europe’s main competitive advantage and states that the European chemical industry must be considered as an important provider of solutions to address climate change.

The group’s recommendations have been endorsed by a wide array of stakeholders as the basis for future EU policy making affecting the chemicals sector. This is a major opportunity to be seized by the industry – and the result of many years of hard work by Cefic, its membership and my colleagues here in Brussels.