Romain Girbal: the Marco Polo of industry

Paris, France Jul 26, 2023 (Issuewire.com) - In the 13th century, the Venetian merchant Marco Polo set up a new form of trade between Europe and Asia. Eight hundred years later, in another field, the Frenchman Romain Girbal brings a solution that will go down in the history of the aluminum industry in China. The businessman leading IB2 is about to succeed in the incredible challenge of reconciling ecology and alumina production in China.
A revolutionary method that considerably reduces the carbon footprint of operations.

Today, quality deposits of bauxite are becoming increasingly scarce and half of the world's alumina production is supplied by refineries that use low-grade bauxite. The latter is most often extracted from local deposits (that can be found in China, Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan, and Turkey). While these bauxites with high silica content and relatively low alumina concentration are not expensive to purchase, their yield while being transformed into alumina is unfortunately very poor and costly. As a result, refiners are seeing their production costs and the associated red mud pollution increase. They are buying more imported high-quality bauxite and products needed for the Bayer extraction process, such as caustic soda which is very expensive. They are also running their high-température kilns longer. Environmentally, CO2 emissions are high and waste volumes such as Red Muds are massive.
Romain Girbal knows the bauxite and alumina market well. When he met Yves Occello - the brain behind the technology with 40 years of experience in alumina production and founder of iB2 - he understood that he had found the bauxite enrichment solution that would revolutionize the alumina and aluminum sector in the coming years. He says, « It's a technology that allows alumina refineries to reduce red mud production by 70% and that will reduce massively their CO2 emissions. It has a real positive impact on the environment. »
By radically transforming the use and profitability of low-grade bauxite, this solution also becomes a virtuous alternative to importing quality bauxite over thousands of kilometers. Indeed, the bauxite transported by ship crosses the oceans. The trucks that load it at the quay to deliver it to the refineries travel hundreds or even thousands of kilometers, producing tons of CO2. At the end of the chain, the volume of red mud remains high and the environmental impact of the import is heavy.
With iB2 and the exploitation of local bauxite, great opportunities are emerging for refiners: quality alumina production at substantially lower costs, an attractive business model, and a minimized environmental footprint.

Bauxite becomes doubly profitable: "iB2 does twice the job" explains Romain Girbal. While alumina extraction is optimized, Tobermorite (a green cement) is generated as a co-product by this unique process, at zero cost that will be sold to cement companies that need to reduce their carbon footprint in the production of cement. The principle of circular economy is therefore at the heart of this IB2 process. This co-product could thus replace certain ingredients in the manufacture of this construction material (such as a replacement of Klinker which pollutes a lot in the production of cement), in a circular economy model, but most importantly “we can carbonate this product with the CO2 emissions of the alumina refinery and therefore bring it to a carbon neutral positioning.”

About iB2:

IB2 is a green industrial tech company that has developed a breakthrough environment-friendly technology for alumina refineries. The technology was developed by a team of 10 professionals cumulating 300 years of experience in the bauxite and alumina industry, especially in the Bayer process and all types of bauxites. IB2 is currently in the industrialization phase and in advanced discussions with multiple clients to start the first plants within the next 12 months.

About Romain Girbal:

Romain Girbal is a co-founder of iB2.

After studying French and Spanish business law at the University of Paris X (Nanterre) and international trade at the University of Carlos III (Madrid), he obtained a master's degree in business law and international management at HEC Paris in 2007.

Romain Girbal is a graduate of Harvard Business School where he studied the OPM program for entrepreneurs.

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