

## Umicore Japan KK to invest JPY 4 billion to produce lithium ion battery materials in Kobe

After the meeting between Steven Vanackere, Belgian Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Masayuki Naoshima, Japanese Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, held in Tokyo on 7 April, Umicore Chairman Thomas Leysen announced a detailed plan about Umicore's lithium ion battery materials investment in Japan.

Umicore's JPY 4 billion investment in Kobe-city will provide a vital production presence in Japan and will employ 40 people once it reaches its designed capacity. The investment will also incorporate a new technical centre for the testing and validation of materials for customers. This centre will mostly employ university graduates and will expand according to customer requirements.

This investment has qualified for a subsidy from the Japanese authorities in the framework of the Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) initiative to promote the development of low-carbon industries. Umicore is the only foreign company among the ones selected for this subsidy, which in Umicore's case is expected to amount to some JPY 600 million (€5 million). It will be used to offset a portion of the investment expenditure. The new facility is expected to begin qualifying with customers and ramping up production in 2011.

Umicore selected the city of Kobe for its excellent transportation infrastructure, providing easy access to customers, research centres and universities. Kobe is a very international city which will provide fertile ground for interaction between local and overseas researchers. Belgium plays a central role in Umicore's lithium ion battery materials business and will support the new operations through its Group Research and Development Centre in Olen where high performance materials are developed.

Thomas Leysen commented:

*"We have had a very constructive interaction with METI and are glad that we have been chosen as a contributing partner in the further development of low-carbon industries in Japan. We expect to play a significant role in underpinning the development of the Japanese lithium ion battery industry".*

Umicore Japan president Denis Goffaux added:

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*“Umicore is delighted by the support provided by, the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) and the city of Kobe to the establishment of a greenfield operation in Japan. Demand for lithium ion batteries is set to surge in the coming years and the Japanese battery industry is particularly well positioned to supply the automotive industry. Umicore’s plant and technical centre in Kobe will be a strategic asset to support our Japanese customers.”*

Demand for lithium ion batteries is set to increase rapidly, driven particularly by the development and introduction of new models of hybrid and electric vehicles by the world’s automotive manufacturers. This, in turn will drive demand for lithium ion cathode materials and there are strong signals that nickel manganese and cobalt compounds will be a major cathode chemistry for new battery technologies used in these applications.

**Notes:**

**Umicore in Japan:**

Umicore’s activities in Japan stretch back to 1926 when the company started selling cobalt in the Japanese market. Umicore operates a facility in Tsukuba for the production of precious metals products used in a variety of applications including electroplating and catalysis. The company also has a country headquarters in Tokyo.

ICT (International Catalyst Technology) is a joint venture between Umicore and Nippon Shokubai. ICT operates a facility in Himeji for the development and production of automotive catalysts, which are used to reduce harmful emissions from vehicles. ICT’s headquarters are located in Osaka and it has a sales and marketing office in Tokyo.

Mr Shohei Naito is a member of Umicore’s Board of Directors. Mr Naito has served as Japan’s Ambassador to Cambodia, Denmark, Lithuania and, most recently, Belgium. He is now a Senior Fellow at the Japan Institute of International Affairs.

## For more information

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## Umicore profile

Umicore is a materials technology group. Its activities are centred on four business areas: Advanced Materials, Precious Metals Products and Catalysts, Precious Metals Services and Zinc Specialties. Each business area is divided into market-focused business units, be it in products that are essential to everyday life or those at the cutting edge of new technological developments.

Umicore focuses on application areas where it knows its expertise in materials science, chemistry and metallurgy can make a real difference. Umicore generates approximately 50 % of its revenues and spends approximately 80 % of its R&D budget in the area of clean technology, such as emission control catalysts, materials for rechargeable batteries and photovoltaics, fuel cells, and precious metals recycling. Umicore's overriding goal of sustainable value creation is based on this ambition to develop, produce and recycle materials in a way that fulfils its mission: materials for a better life.

The Umicore Group has industrial operations on all continents and serves a global customer base; it generated a turnover of € 6.9 billion (€ 1.7 billion excluding metal) in 2009 and currently employs some 13,700 people.