

JAPAN/GERMANY

# KYOCERA Strengthens Presence in Advanced Ceramics in Germany

With around 77 000 employees, KYOCERA (up to 1982 Kyoto Ceramic) is active in many areas worldwide, offering a wide array of products, including advanced materials, components, equipment, networks and services. The headquarters is located in Kyoto/JP, where the company was founded in 1959 with 28 employees and has since developed into one of the worldwide leading suppliers of technical ceramic components. In the Fiscal Year 2019, consolidated business report (1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019) for the 286 companies in the group, sales totalling around EUR 12,99 billion were disclosed. The company focuses on supplying system solutions – strategically important areas of business are information and communication technology, products for improving quality of life as well as environmentally friendly products. In many user segments, the technology group can deploy components of Technical Ceramics, which have been part of the company's core business since its founding.

In September 2019, the European headquarters of the KYOCERA Corporation based in Germany, KYOCERA Fineceramics GmbH, successfully completed the acquisition of Friatec's high-performance ceramics division. Since then, KYOCERA Fineceramics Solutions GmbH in Mannheim has been expanding the Group's presence in Germany (KYOCERA Fineceramics GmbH in Neuss and Esslingen, KYOCERA Fineceramics Precision GmbH in Selb – acquired in April 2019 from H.C. Starck GmbH, KYOCERA Automotive and Industrial Solutions GmbH in Dietzenbach and KYOCERA Document Solutions GmbH in Meerbusch) with one production site and around 300 employees. Shortly after the takeover, Armin Kayser (AK), Managing Director KYOCERA Fineceramics Solutions GmbH, agreed to update us about the new situation

**CA:** How is KYOCERA Fineceramics Solutions GmbH integrated in the Kyocera organisation in Technical Ceramics in Germany?

**AK:** As we produce components that are tailored solutions to meet individual customer requirements in the European



Fig. 1  
Armin Kayser (l.), MD KYOCERA Fineceramics Solutions, and  
Masaki Hayashi (r.), MD Corporate Fine Ceramics Group KYOCERA



Fig. 2  
KYOCERA Fineceramics Solutions GmbH in Mannheim/DE

market, close linking between production, development and technical sales is essential. That is underlined with our new name with "Solutions". Accordingly, the "Friatec range" remains our focus.

The same applies to our colleagues from KYOCERA Fineceramics Precision in Selb, however, with expansions and synergies resulting in the new constellation. KYOCERA Fineceramics in Esslingen as European Headquarters and sales office focuses on the marketing of products in Europe sourced from the KYOCERA production sites in Japan and USA.

**CA:** How has the presence of KYOCERA been strengthened by the investments in Selb and Mannheim in Technical Ceramics in Europe?

**AK:** KYOCERA is very well positioned as a global player. With the takeovers in Selb and Mannheim, however, a real gap has been closed as now two highly complementary production sites in the most important region of Europe for technical ceramics are now part of the group.

**CA:** What is changing for Friatec customers (Technical Ceramics, laboratory equipment, stoneware products) with regard to contact persons and product range?

**AK:** With regard to contact persons, everything will remain the same. I should like to say expressly that we are retaining the production range, especially the products often developed together with customers, where amongst other things we have especially high responsibility as the exclusive supplier.

**CA:** Do your customers now have access to the complete KYOCERA range in Technical Ceramics through the sales organisation in Mannheim?

**AK:** Naturally, our portfolio has so far been very fixed on oxide ceramics. Through the Group, now the entire spectrum of ceramic materials is actually available. Our colleagues from Selb can help us with silicon carbide and silicon nitride. On a case-by-case basis, we define how the customer en-

quiry is coordinated. A certain "cross-selling" will develop. As soon as customer-specific developments are required, we shall certainly pass them on to our colleagues.

**CA:** One strength of KYOCERA are system solutions with technical ceramic components. Will the Friatec range be further developed in this respect?

**AK:** In the Friatec range, with an around 50 % sales share, ceramic-metal composite components were already our most important segment. That is sub-systems that we steadily further develop and will certainly expand considerably within the KYOCERA Group. As part of the takeover, KYOCERA has acquired a production facility equipped with clean room technology (previously used by Dentsply for dental ceramics). In the near future, we shall be expanding our production of UHV (ultra-high vacuum) components to there.

**CA:** Is there closer cooperation with KYOCERA Fineceramics Precision in Selb? Are synergies resulting in production and R&D projects?

**AK:** An exchange started immediately on all relevant levels. For certain areas, we have prioritized the development of a manufacturing network high on the agenda. Selb can help us with materials, we are stronger with regard to joining systems or post-machining. We are also thinking about joint investments in machines and equipment, which can be used cost-efficiently faster if shared.

**CA:** Will there be joint stands at trade fairs? Are there still connections with the Friatec parent company Aliaxis in ceramic pump components?

**AK:** As Aliaxis has sold the pump business, in this area, too, there has been a complete parting of the ways. We shall coordinate all our trade fair exhibits through KYOCERA Fineceramics in Esslingen. We are happy that within the network we shall be able to show a greater presence on trade fairs as exhibitor. Individually, we shall be exhibiting laboratory equipment atACHEMA as this is a USP of our site.

**CA:** Do you see changes in the strategic orientation for the site under the new owner?

**AK:** Quite a significant one as Technical Ceramics at KYOCERA has a high priority as a core field of business. Under Aliaxis, we were more an "appendage" that had no relevance to their specialist fields of plastic pipes for gas and water supply, wastewater and sewer systems, drinking water supply and house and roof drainage.

As part of the takeover, KYOCERA, in line with growth strategy, also acquired an area of 100 000 m<sup>2</sup> – partly undeveloped land and a currently unused office building with 250 units.

**CA:** Are there investment plans for the Mannheim site?

**AK:** For the operative business alone, the planned investment volume for the next business year has been doubled for the Mannheim site.

We see growth for the established product portfolio, which we have sold essentially in Germany and Europe so far, but also thanks to the geographic market expansion to Asia and USA with the worldwide sales network of the KYOCERA Group. Other impulses will come with input from new technologies and materials that are new for us.

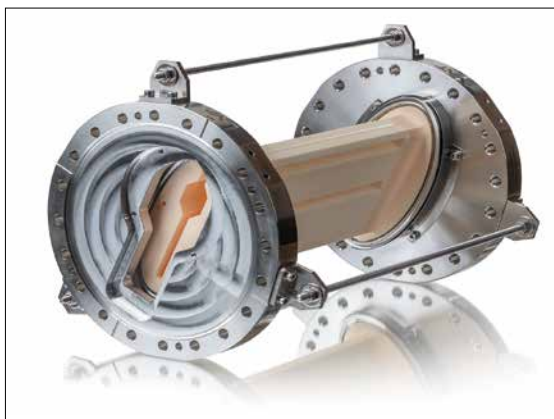


Fig. 3  
Ceramic-metal composite component for the accelerator technology



Fig. 4  
Containment shells for the pump industry

We are developing, however, completely new products for new applications and will bring innovations already developed in Japan to Europe.

Although supplies for the automotive sector have currently become difficult, so there are new tasks in new drive technologies, but also in many other areas (aerospace, semiconductor industry, etc.).

**CA:** So you are looking very optimistically into the business year 2020?

**AK:** We are looking very optimistically into the business year 2020 with further growth despite the current tense economic situation. Many new impulses are coming, and we are in the run-up to many exciting projects. I should like to note,

however, that it is important for the realisation that 99 % of the employees have remained on board and are highly motivated. Already in the due diligence phase, this was a key aspect for our new owner.

We know in the branch how important good teams are to be able to develop and produce reliable ceramic components for demanding applications. I think that after a short time the Japanese and German business cultures will get along fine with each other. Our customers, too, will soon be able to profit from the new, strong Japanese parent company with its priority on intensive customer orientation at the top of the agenda.

**CA:** Thank you for talking to us.

KS

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