



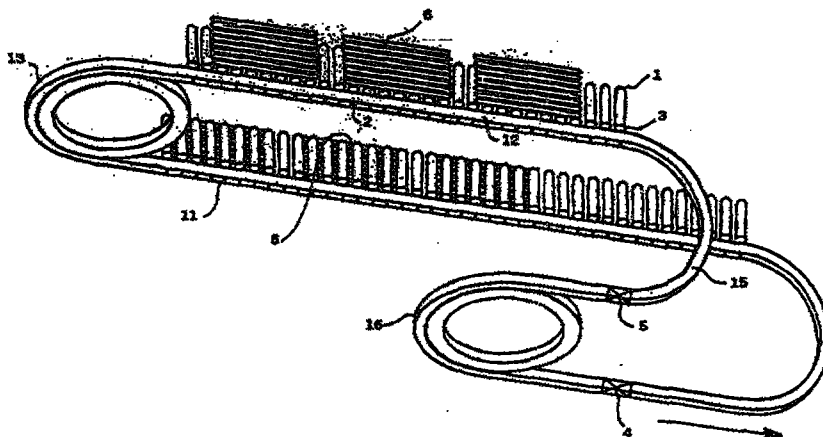
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(54) Title: APPARATUS FOR CONTINUOUSLY TRANSFERRING ORDERLY SEQUENCES OF PREFORMS OF THERMOPLASTIC MATERIAL



(57) Abstract

Apparatus for continuously transferring orderly sequences of preforms, comprising a closed-loop conveyor belt that constitutes guiding means for a closed-loop moving conveyor chain, which is adapted to be driven into a continuous motion and comprises a plurality of support and forward carrying elements (3, 3a) capable of carrying respective preforms by means of appropriate pick-up plugs, a loading station and an unloading station. The loading and unloading stations are arranged so as to enable the preforms to be loaded onto the pick-up plugs, and released therefrom, in a vertical position with their neck portion turned upwards. The support and forward carrying elements are in turn rotated so that, when they move into the conditioning station, the respective preforms are positioned vertically with their neck portion turned downwards. The apparatus further comprises two horizontal stretches that follow a conditioning station and precede the preform loading station, respectively. Said two horizontal stretches are capable of being lengthened and/or shortened so as to be given a predetermined length in accordance to the time specifically assigned to the particular types of preforms for covering the stretch from the conditioning station to the unloading station, wherein the overall length of said conveyor belt and the related chain must however remain constant.