



Electronic waste

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Proponents
African region
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Magnitude of the problem

- E-waste has been identified as the fastest growing waste stream in the world, forecast to soon reach 50 million tonnes a year, while its generation is estimated at three times the rate of municipal solid waste.
- The flood of e-waste and second-hand electronics from developed countries into developing and economy in transition countries which lack the capacity for ESM of e-waste, is taking place faster than the development of policies, safeguards, legislation, and enforcement, leading to serious human and environmental problems in importing countries.

Relevance of the problem

- E-waste issue is a global problem arising from globalisation with transboundary movement among all countries and all regions and therefore requires global solutions. There is a lack of neither labelling nor communication mechanism on the myriad of hazardous substances content of electrical and electronic equipment and waste electrical and electronic equipment along the supply chain to guide stakeholders especially retailers and end users; and reduce risk to human health and the environment.
- Recycling of e-waste occurs in the informal sector in developing countries with vulnerable groups, women, children and unemployed youths actively involved in crude processing methods without personal protective equipment and thereby exposing themselves to inorganic and organic toxins with potential adverse health impacts

The extent to which e-waste is cross-cutting

- E-waste issue has a synergistic relationship with the Marrakech process on sustainable consumption and production (SCP).
- The high turnover in the production of information and communications technology-equipment has caused rapid computer and mobile phone products obsolescence which in turn has generated rapid and uncontrollable high volume of e-waste driving a global e-waste trade. This provides national and regional governance challenges in e-waste management in all regions and countries.
- End-of-life electric and electronic equipment have a social impact since the recovery and the reuse of its parts and materials is a valuable source of income to poor communities.

Level of knowledge about the issue

- The BAN/Silicon Valley Coalition, BAN/SVC (2002) film and report entitled: "Exporting harm: the high tech trashing of Asia" and the, BAN (2005) film and report on "The digital dump: exporting re-use and abuse to Africa" drew international attention to the global e-waste trade between developed and developing countries. These films have stimulated and catalysed international, regional and national awareness and reactions on the need for sustainable control of the e-waste trade. For example the EU has adopted common regulations on e-waste for all member states.
- Some Governments and non-governmental organizations in South America ; Asia –Pacific and Africa have carried out projects on e-waste including inventory, collection and recycling of e-waste.

The extent addressed by other bodies

- The Basel Convention has developed two initiatives in order to foster the participation of the private sector in the efforts towards the ESM of e-waste namely the Mobile Phone Partnership Initiative (MPPI) in 2002 and the Partnership for Action on Computing Equipment (PACE) in 2008
- Other international initiatives on the ESM of E-waste include, Solving the E waste Problem (StEP) of the United Nations University UNU ; the Global e-Sustainability Initiative (GeSI) – E-waste Working Group established by UNEP DTIE.
- However links between these initiatives are weak.

Rationale for the proposed actions

- Electronic waste is a significant global issue of a cross-cutting nature requiring the effective cross-sectoral implementation of Strategic Approach objectives concerning risk reduction, knowledge and information, and illegal international traffic, and successful integration of such implementation efforts with a number of international and national instruments and programmes for waste management, product design including those of the private sector.

Rationale for the proposed actions

- Electronic waste is a growing global problem and of critical concern due to its illegal dumping in developing and economy in transition countries resulting in transboundary movement of its hazardous constituents such as heavy metals and brominated flame retardants
- The hazardous substances are released into the environment and harm humans during crude processing of e-waste for material recovery

Rationale for the proposed actions

- The lack of capacity for recycling of electronic waste in developing and economy in transition countries is further leading to the release of hazardous substances causing harm to human health and the environment.
- Need for the development of effective global strategies including incentives for the reduction of toxic substances in electrical and electronic equipment and measures to minimize human exposure.

Rationale for the proposed actions

- Need for the development of substitute/alternative chemicals and eventual phase-out of in electrical and electronic products and electronic waste; through green product design, green procurement and consumption , while also tackling the issue of minimising rapid product obsolescence,
- Data gap on the scientific study of the fate of hazardous substances especially brominated flame retardants in electronic waste during processing especially in developing countries and those with economies in transition

Rationale for the proposed actions

- Need to Develop a global information database to exchange and disseminate information on the hazardous substances found in electrical and electronic products and waste, and including available guidance on the sound management of such hazardous substances;
- Establishment of a global framework or mechanism to address solutions and guidance to prevent harmful near-end of life exports of used electronic goods that may not technically be waste but for which the environmental liabilities of their import far outweigh the benefits to the receiving country.



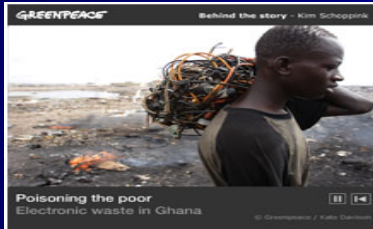
Arrival of E-waste import from Overseas in Lagos Port, Nigeria



Used Computer Market in Computer Village, Lagos, Nigeria



Open Burning for disposal of Used Computers in dump site in Lagos, Nigeria



Cables collected for open burning and material recovery in Ghana



Open burning of cables for material recovery in Ghana



Extraction of metals from waste cables in China



Disposal and management practices in China.
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Copper extraction using acid in India
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