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ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP



UN Environment Management Group High-Level Panel Discussion on Sustainable Consumption and Production of Electrics and Electronics

Elevating electrics and electronics to the forefront of the circular economy, in an integral and multi-disciplinary approach

13 March 2019

Conference Room 13 (16.30-17.30)

United Nations Environment Assembly IV, Nairobi, Kenya

Concept Note

This high-level dialogue, organized by the Environment Management Group, will focus on the need for a new vision for Electrical and Electronic Equipment (EEE), according to the principles of circular economy. It will refer to the multitude of actors across the life-cycle of this equipment, and the mountain of e-waste generated from our throw-away society. This event, organized by the Environment Management Group, will build on recent efforts by the seven UN entities that are building a UN E-Waste Coalition as well as on the report [A New Circular Vision for Electronics – Time for a Global Reboot](#), which was launched at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos in January 2019, as a collaboration between the World Economic Forum, the seven UN entities and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.

The generation of waste of electrical and electronic equipment (e-waste) is growing rapidly in parallel with a greater number of people joining the global information society and digital economy every day. According to the Global E-waste Monitor 2017¹, all the countries in the world combined generated a staggering 44.7 million metric tonnes of e-waste in 2016. Every-day consumer products which are thrown away like phones, fridges, laptops, televisions and sensors contain materials that are considered toxic, such as mercury, cadmium and lead. More often than not, these hazardous substances are subsequently released into air, soil and water due to inappropriate recycling methods posing considerable environmental and human health risks.

Inadequate consumer awareness, shorter product lifespans, low domestic collection rates and lack of waste management policies, poor recycling practices, and in some cases illegal international movement of used and end-of-life Electrical and Electronic Equipment, all contribute to a challenging international need to address a rapidly growing mountain of e-waste. What is not managed through appropriate systems domestically, often ends up left in cupboard drawers, incinerated or landfilled, or in some cases escapes the official system to end up in highly polluting waste dumps, most commonly established informally in parts of Africa and Asia.

¹ Baldé, C. P., Forti, V., Gray, V., Kuehr, R., Stegmann, P. Global E-waste Monitor (2017)



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Despite the negative associations with e-waste, there is huge potential to shift the current model of a throw-away society towards a circular economy. Such a waste stream managed properly, could offer an opportunity for green jobs in the recycling sector and for recovery of secondary materials through urban mining. Up to 60 elements of the periodic table can be found in electronics, with many being technically recoverable. Overall, the United Nations University estimates that the resource perspective for secondary raw materials of e-waste is worth 55 Billion € per year. These materials can include: gold, silver, copper, platinum, and palladium.

In this light, the UN Environment Management Group is organizing a discussion at the high-level during the 4th session of the United Nations Environmental Assembly in Nairobi, to bring more attention to this multidisciplinary and multi-actor topic. The Dialogue aims to explore the wide-range of actors and multidisciplinary nature of the topic, and to promote efficiency and coherence at different stages of the life cycle. The Dialogue will highlight the importance of promoting sustainable patterns of production, consumption and disposal of Electrical and Electronic Equipment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and the need for different sectors and actors to collaborate efficiently in this regard.

The session outputs will feed into the ongoing design and development of a new vision for Electrical and Electronic Equipment, a programme area of the E-waste Coalition, a group of seven UN entities facilitated by the Environment Management Group, that have come together to increase cooperation and more efficiently provide support to Member States and Parties to address the e-waste challenge. This vision will be captured in the future work plan of the E-waste coalition to generate awareness about the growing impact of e-waste, among governments, businesses and consumers.

This dialogue builds on the e-waste sessions that took place at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, in January 2019, where the report [A New Circular Vision for Electronics – Time for a Global Reboot](#), was launched as a collaboration among the E-waste coalition, the World Economic Forum and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.

Time

13 March, 2019, 16h30 – 17h30

Venue

Conference Room 13

UN Environment Assembly, UN Compound, Nairobi, Kenya





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Session composition

Moderator:

Mr. Satya Tripathi, UN Assistant Secretary-General; Head of New York Office, UN Environment and Secretary, UN EMG.

16h30	Opening remarks by session moderator
16h35	<p>Panel discussion <i>The panel will focus on the need for a new vision for Electrical and Electronic Equipment (EEE) according to the principles of circular economy. It will refer to the multitude of actors across the life-cycle of EEE, and the need to address the mountain of e-waste generated from our throw-away society.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ H.E. Mr Kwabena Frimpong-Boateng, Minister for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation of <i>Ghana</i> ○ H.E. Mr Tserenbat Namsrai, Minister of Environment and Tourism of <i>Mongolia</i> ○ H.E. Mr Foday Moriba Jaward, Executive Chairman, Environment Protection Agency <i>Sierra Leone</i> ○ Ms. Naoko Ishii, CEO and Chairperson for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) ○ Mr. Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions ○ Mr. Nikhil Seth, Executive Director, United Nations Institute for Training and Research ○ Mr. Lawrence Thuo, Executive Director, E-waste Initiative Kenya (Ewik) ○ Ms. Sanda Ojiambo, Head of corporate responsibility, Safaricom ○ Mr. Tadesse Amera, Director of Pesticide Action Nexus (PAN)-Ethiopia, IPEN, Co-Chair
17h25	Closing remarks by session moderator
17h30	End of session