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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**

United Nations Environment Assembly IV, Nairobi, Kenya

#### Outcome Document

This high-level dialogue, organized by the Environment Management Group, focused on the need for a new vision for Electrical and Electronic Equipment (EEE), according to the principles of circular economy. Nine high level representatives of governments, civil society, multilateral finance institutions, and the international community discussed the need for a new global vision for EEE, identifying priorities and opportunities for working together towards sustainable electronics consumption and production.

This Dialogue followed the recent efforts by the [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.

Here are the key messages noted during this one-hour session on the margins of the Fourth United Nation's Environment Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya:

- Electric and electronic equipment (EEE) bring great benefits and are critical for development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, the negative impacts on the environment and society that result from the current system of production, consumption, and disposal of EEE need to be addressed. Addressing these issues are not possible without key partnerships and the adaptation of a circular economy approach.
- The growing rate of e-waste generation globally is concerning, with unsafe and unregulated e-waste disposal posing considerable environmental and health risks to communities, especially to more vulnerable populations. Hazardous substances such as



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mercury, cadmium, and lead are released into the air, soil, and water due to inappropriate recycling methods of products such as mobile phones, fridges, laptops, and TVs.

- **A multidisciplinary and a multi-stakeholder approach** is integral to covering the entire lifecycle of EEE and associated actors such as designers, manufacturers, investors, traders, miners, raw material producers, consumers, policy-makers, etc.
- **It is vital to have a lifecycle approach to EEE.** This includes targeting the very early stages of product development, including conceptualization and design stages. In some cases, there might be the need to deconstruct and re-think the whole life-cycle of the product.
- **Youth empowerment and education** is key to achieving the circular economy approach. The young generation are the biggest consumers of EEE and must be included in decision-making and policy development. It is important to include sustainable electronics consumption and production in school's curriculum to ensure an understanding of circular approaches from a young age.
- **Establishment of relevant policies and a regulatory framework** is needed to strengthen national legislation on e-waste. The law on e-waste passed in 2016 in Ghana, called "sustainable control of e-waste and electronics", was praised as a success story in this regard.
- **Safe collection and handling of e-waste** is a growing challenge that could not be addressed unless there are increased public and private partnerships, global regulations, and incentives for manufacturers to phase out unrecyclable parts in production.
- **Knowledge sharing** between countries, especially best practices, can be helpful in improving the lifecycle of EEE.
- **The need for public-private partnerships and strengthened collaboration** in the implementation of the vision, including through better design, new and inclusive business models, and state of the art technology for resource recovery was highlighted.
- Two main fora were presented which are bringing EEE to the forefront of the circular economy, in an integral and multi-disciplinary approach:
  - **The E-waste Coalition**, a group of seven UN entities that have come together to increase cooperation and more efficiently provide support to Member States and Parties to address the e-waste challenge. The coalition brings together: the International Labour Organization (ILO); the International Telecommunication Union (ITU); the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); the United



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Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR); the United Nations University (UNU), and the Secretariat of the Basel and Stockholm Conventions. It is supported by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Economic Forum and coordinated by the Secretariat of the **Environment Management Group (EMG)**.

- **The Platform for Accelerating the Circular Economy (PACE)**, is a public-private collaboration mechanism and project accelerator dedicated to bringing about the circular economy at speed and scale. It brings together a coalition of more than 50 leaders and is co-chaired by the heads of Royal Philips, the Global Environment Facility, and UN Environment. It is hosted by the World Economic Forum.

We would like to thank the following High-Level panellists for making the time to be with us and for their kind contributions to the Dialogue.

- *H.E. Mr Kwabena Frimpong-Boateng, Minister for Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation of Ghana*
- *H.E. Mr Tserenbat Namsrai, Minister of Environment and Tourism of Mongolia*
- *H.E. Mr Foday Moriba Jaward, Executive Chairman, Environment Protection Agency Sierra Leone*
- *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*