



United Nations Environment Programme

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ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ

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PRESS RELEASE

Asian governments launch action to tackle “e-wastes”

Tianjin, China, 21 November 2002 – Officials from eight Asian governments are meeting here under the auspices of the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal to seek solutions to the growing deluge of electrical and electronic wastes – popularly known as e-wastes.

“A few decades ago, very few families in wealthier countries and communities owned a personal computer or other electronic devices,” said Executive Director Klaus Töpfer of the United Nations Environment Programme, under whose auspices the Basel Convention was adopted in 1989.

“Today PCs are becoming widespread in homes and are ubiquitous throughout the business world and in organizations of every kind. The emerging issue of e-wastes needs to be tackled urgently as the production and use of PCs continues to rise dramatically,” he said.

A number of Asian countries are generally considered to be the main importers of e-wastes generated around the world. Importing countries can earn significant income from refurbishing used PCs and disassembling obsolete PCs, monitors, and circuit boards and then recovering the gold, copper and other precious metals.

End-of-life PCs as well as printers and other related equipment are made of highly sophisticated blends of metals, plastics and other materials. They also often contain hazardous substances such as lead, cadmium and mercury. Workers in e-waste operations may face dangerous working conditions where health, safety and environmental standards may be compromised.

A variety of potential solutions are being discussed at the Tianjin meeting. For example, dismantling can be made easier and safer by incorporating these concerns at the design stage. Manufacturers can be given responsibility for managing the wastes resulting from the equipment they sell. National capacities and legislative frameworks for monitoring and controlling transboundary movements of this priority hazardous waste stream can be strengthened.

The meeting will also consider how to start producing authoritative data on e-waste streams, and it will start evaluating current technical practices.

The environmentally sound management of electronic wastes is an important element of the Strategic Plan now being developed by the member governments of the Basel Convention. This Plan will be finalized at the sixth meeting of the Parties to the Convention, which will be held in Geneva, Switzerland from 9 - 13 December.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Scoping Workshop on the Environmentally Sound Management of Electronic Wastes is the first intergovernmental meeting to be held on the e-wastes problem in Asia. Organized at the initiative of the Basel Convention Regional Centre in Beijing and the Secretariat of Basel Convention, the meeting runs from 19 - 22 November.

Participants include government representatives from China, India, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. Resource persons come from Canada, China, Japan, the US and the Secretariat of the Basel Convention. The meeting is hosted by China and has received financial support from Australia, Canada and Japan.

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