What is the Partnership for Action on Computing Equipment – PACE?

PACE is a multi-stakeholder partnership under the auspices of the Basel Convention between industry, government, academia and civil society to address the environmentally sound management of used and end-of-life computing equipment. The multi-stakeholder Working Group, comprised of representatives of personal computer manufacturers, recyclers, international organisations, academia, environmental groups and governments developed the proposed scope of work, terms of reference, financial arrangements, and structure of the Partnership for Action on Computing Equipment (PACE).

The PACE Working Group continues to seek a balanced and diverse partnership and welcomes new members with special expertise, especially original equipment manufacturers, refurbishers, recyclers, as well as academia, environmental groups, international organizations and governments.

Why is there a need for PACE?

Personal computing has improved the lives of people everywhere. As markets expand and communities gain the benefits of increased access to information technology, many countries, specially developing countries face new challenges in managing electronic products at their end-of-life.

All stakeholders, including original equipment manufacturers, consumers and recyclers, have a role in promoting environmentally sound management of used and end-of-life computing equipment. The technology and skills are available to promote environmentally sound management, including proper repair and refurbishment that can extend use, provide employment, and make valuable equipment available to the poor. Furthermore, those products which can not be reused can be directed to environmentally sound material recovery and recycling, which can reclaim base and precious metals, adequately treat problematic substances and conserve resources and energy.

Benefits of PACE

PACE provides a forum for governments, industry leaders, non-governmental organisations and academia to improve the current management of used and end-of-life computing equipment through the development of global refurbishment and material recovery/recycling guidelines on the environmentally sound management of computing equipment.

Furthermore, PACE offers opportunities for industry:

• to discuss and develop voluntary, flexible, and workable approaches that would be environmentally sound, without adversely affecting or restricting their businesses;
• to influence decision making in many countries on approaches to be taken to manage used and end-of-life computing equipment, as over 170 countries are Parties to the Basel Convention;
• to assist in building capacity in developing countries and countries with economies in transition;
• to forge new alliances and offer immense networking opportunities.

Aims of the Partnership

The Partnership on used and end-of-life computing equipment aims to provide new and innovative approaches for addressing emerging issues. It also aims to:

• Promote sustainable development for the continued use, repair and refurbishment of used personal computers in developing countries and countries with economies in transition;
• Find incentives and methods to divert end-of-life personal computers from land disposal and burning into commercial material recovery/recycling operations;
• Develop technical guidelines for proper repair, refurbishing and material
recovery/recycling, including criteria for testing, labeling of refurbished used equipment and certification of environmentally sound repair, refurbishing and recycling facilities;

- End shipment of personal computers, that can not be refurbished and reused, to developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

PACE actions also include pilot demonstration projects to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition in assessing the current situation of used and end of life computing equipment in their countries, and to achieve partnership and Basel Convention objectives.

Benefits

PACE intends to create sustainable commercial practices with economic and environmental benefits to all participants, and in particular to developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

The activities undertaken through PACE will offer expert advice, guidance and networking to support and build confidence in sustainable commercial practices with social, economic and environmental benefits to all participants.

Scope

The partnership will cover Personal Computers (PCs) and associated displays, printers and peripherals, that include: personal desk top computer, including the central processing unit and all other parts contained in the computer; Personal notebook and laptop computer, including the docking station, central processing unit and all other parts contained in the computer; Computer monitor, including the following types of computer monitor: (a) cathode ray tube, (b) liquid crystal display, (c) plasma; Computer keyboard, mouse, and cables; Computer printer: (a) including the following types of computer printer: (i) dot matrix; (ii) ink jet; (iii) laser; (iv) thermal; and (b) including any computer printer with scanning or facsimile capabilities, or both.

Achievements

The Interim Group on PACE proposed the governance structure, work programme of the Partnership and along with recommendations to establish the PACE Working Group presented them to the Conference of the Parties at its ninth meeting in June 2008. The Parties to the Basel Convention at this meeting:

- agreed to establish a Working Group that will operate under the guidance of the Basel Convention Open-ended Working Group;
- invited Parties, Signatories and all stakeholders, including manufacturers, recyclers, refurbishers, academia, non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations, to indicate interest in participating in the PACE Working Group to the Secretariat no later than 30 September 2008;
- requested the PACE to develop and implement a more detailed work plan with particular emphasis on the needs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition;
- requested the PACE Working Group to coordinate and collaborate, as appropriate, on activities with other organizations and initiatives to establish synergies and prevent duplication;
- requested the Secretariat to facilitate and provide expertise to the PACE and to collaborate with the Secretariat of the “Solving the E-Waste Problem” (StEP).

The PACE Working Group was established in January 2009 as an open forum for all interested Parties, Signatories to the Basel Convention, BCRCs, international organizations, industry, NGOs, and academia. It elaborated its work plan, terms of reference, financial arrangements and established four project groups to launch projects to implement four agreed activities which were foundation for the development of more detailed work plan:

- Develop tools (inter alia guidelines) and activities on environmentally sound refurbishment/repair, including criteria for testing, certification, and labelling.
- Develop tools (inter alia guidelines) and activities on environmentally sound recycling and material recovery, including facility certification.
- Develop and promote pilot schemes for environmentally sound management of used and end-of-life computing equipment towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goals.
- Develop awareness raising and training program activities.

The PACE Working Group agreed to meet at least twice per year by conference calls or by physical meetings.

What’s next?

The four Project Groups, established under PACE have started their work by developing their terms of reference and initiating literature review. One Project Group working ad interim, will identify relevant existing ESM guidance materials that may be used to support other Project Groups. Two Project Groups started development of guidelines, one on repair and refurbishment of used computing equipment and the second one on material recovery and recycling of end-of-life computing equipment. Another Project Group will find and pilot ways to refurbish, repair, recycle and recover materials from used and end-of-life computing equipment in an environmentally sound manner in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, which will divert end-of-life computing equipment from landfill and open-pit burning.

Stakeholders interested in joining the PACE Working Group or one or more of the Project Groups are invited to contact Mr. Matthias Kern, Senior Programme Officer, UNEP-Secretariat of the Basel Convention, Tel: +41 22 917 8767 Fax: +41 22 797 34 54, email: matthias.kern@unep.ch

Further information and documents on PACE can be found under: http://www.basel.int/industry/compasship/index.html

For further information, please contact:
Secretariat of the Basel Convention – International Environment House 1
15, chemin des Anémones – CH – 1219 Châtelaine, Geneva
Tel. +41 22 917 82 18 – Fax +41 22 917 34 54 – Email: sbc@unep.ch – www.basel.int