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**Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention
on the Control of Transboundary Movements of
Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal**

Eighth meeting

Nairobi, 27 November–1 December 2006

Item 6 (a) (iv) of the provisional agenda*

**Implementation of the decisions adopted by the Conference
of the Parties at its seventh meeting: Strategic Plan for the
Implementation of the Basel Convention to 2010:
Partnership Programme**

**Information on stakeholder consultations on the concept of a
public-private partnership on the environmentally sound
management of used and end-of-life computing equipment**

Note by the Secretariat

1. The purpose of this note is to inform Parties on recent activities concerning the concept for a partnership on the environmentally sound management of used and end-of-life computing equipment, including all attachments.

I. Introduction

2. With the rapid increase and need for information technology, there has been a significant growth in the number of computers and associated attachments, such as printers, being bought and sold daily. Technology and innovation have created a situation in which the life span for a computer, like a mobile phone, is short-lived. Information technology is driving a global change in the consumption of IT equipment, and with this change comes the used and end-of-life equipment that must be handled in an environmentally sound manner.

* UNEP/CHW.8/1.

II. Background

3. At its sixth meeting, the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention agreed in decision VI/32 to develop a work programme that will support the aims of the Basel Declaration on Environmentally Sound Management in order to strengthen cooperation with industry and business sectors and environmental non-governmental organizations. Partnerships are considered to be an important mechanism for implementing the Basel Convention Strategic Plan and one of the priority waste streams in the strategic plan, and in the Ministerial Statement on Partnerships, is electronic waste.

4. Partnerships continue to be an important means for building capacity, and in expanding the knowledge base. They can effectively serve as a catalyst for raising awareness and for promoting environmentally sound management across the life cycle of the product, thus reducing risks to human health and the environment.

III. Potential Partnership

5. One of the focus areas of the Strategic Plan for the Implementation of the Basel Convention and in the Ministerial Statement on Partnerships is electronic waste. The toxic components of this waste through, for example, the heavy metals or the brominated flame retardants in computing equipment, in conjunction with the volume of turnover, creates challenges when dealing with the environmentally sound management of used and end-of-life equipment. A partnership could be an efficient and effective way to address the life cycle of a product and create a mechanism for which to address the increasing volume of end of life products.

6. In 2004, a meeting was held in New York with all stakeholders to discuss the practicality of creating a partnership on the environmentally sound management of used and end of life computers. In August, 2006, an informal conference call was held with a small group of interested stakeholders to explore the practicality of following up to the original meeting, and associated activities, for establishing a partnership on the environmentally sound management of used and end of life computers equipment, including all attachments. A summary of this teleconference is found in Annex I to this information note.

7. During the teleconference, it was suggested, and subsequently agreed, that a physical meeting was needed to address more fully points discussed on the teleconference. A meeting was therefore organized in Geneva with a small cross-section of Parties and the private sector, from 14 to 15 September, 2006. At this meeting a document was completed on a potential scope for a public-private partnership and possible value-added activities that can be considered. The document produced at this meeting can be found in Annex II to the present document.

Annex I

Draft summary of the informal discussion on a GLOBAL COMPUTER AND ACCESSORIES PARTNERSHIP

9 August 2006

The teleconference call was an informal “brainstorm” discussion with stakeholders concerning what might be possible objectives of a global partnership on computers and accessories under the Basel Convention.

1. Possible goals:

- Support sustainable development by promoting environmentally friendly computers and best practices in industry;
- Encourage state of the art recovery methods that will avoid the loss of materials and secondary raw materials including such as rare metals;
- Encourage and promote state-of-the-art collection schemes for used equipment;
- Information sharing / awareness raising on existing regulations and guidelines (e.g. of the EU legislation such as WEEE and RoHS directive);
- Promote transparent and adequate transboundary movement of end-of-life computers and accessories;
- Create a level playing field for the collection and management of end of life and used computers and attachments.

2. Key points raised:

- Identify and reduce illegal transboundary movements of computers and/or accessories;
- Promote methods that will help to reduce the use of hazardous materials in computers such as certain metals (cadmium, lead, mercury) and hazardous components;
- Encourage product stewardship within industry;
- Encourage all potential stakeholders, including parties from developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to be actively involved;
- Create a forum for raising awareness, knowledge sharing and information dissemination between all stakeholders;
- Promote the development and marketing of environmentally friendly computers (“green computers”) and accessories (attachments) by collecting best industry practices;
- Investigate the value of developing global standard or a certification scheme for recycling and refurbishment facilities globally. Begin in one country such as under the Asia-Pacific programme (e.g. China);
- Develop principles or guidelines on trade of used computers, including donations, between countries and for the refurbishment and recycling of computers and accessories;
- Investigate and promote state of the art recycling technologies including the recovery of rare and precious metals/elements (e.g. indium, tantalum and palladium) from the computer or particular accessories and prevent the loss of secondary raw materials by promoting material recovery and closing the material loop cycles;
- Coordinate requirements from regional national and global programmes to help level the playing field;

- Enhance the dissemination of information across the supply chain;
- Identify and address obstacles and issues associated with the movement and illegal traffic of end of life computers and other accessories;
- Describe (inventory, collect data) the flow of computers from north-south and south-south as well as south-north;
- Identify/develop principles or a framework for economic incentives for promoting environmentally sound management of computers and accessories;
- Assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the management of used personal computers and accessories;
- Explore possibilities to initiate concrete field projects and training.

3. Special note should be taken on the following:

- Avoid duplication of work with previously existing legislation or activity of other fora.
- Activity and work could feed into a technical guideline under Basel, using the OECD Guideline, prepared by the US, as an input.
- The partnership should benefit from lessons learned in the public private Mobile Phone Partnership Initiative (MPPI) of the Basel Convention.
- The spectrum of industry involved with computers and accessories should be identified with their different interests and positions in the supply chain.
- Active Involvement, including clear respective roles and expectations, of all stakeholders is essential.

4. Next steps:

- SBC to further contact directly and informally industrial and all other interested stakeholders in order to further develop the concept of co-operation between the Basel Convention and industrial stakeholders on used and end-of-life personal computers and equipment attachments. NB Special efforts will be made to involve developing countries and countries with economies in transition and BCRCs.
- Organize physical meeting on 14-15 September with a dinner 13 September, 2006

Annex II

Basel Convention Partnership

Draft Scoping Paper

16 September 2006, 10:00 am

(As edited by participants of an informal consultation meeting)

1. Background

Environmentally sound management of e-waste has been identified as a priority work programme area under the Basel Convention Strategic Plan. The effective involvement and coordination by all stakeholders via public-private partnerships is seen as essential for achieving the aims of the Basel Declaration on Environmentally Sound Management. The partnership initiative on used and end-of-life computing equipment¹ is part of the Basel Convention Partnership Programme, as reflected in the Strategic Plan. Particular focuses for the Basel Convention for this initiative would be:

- Ensuring environmentally sound management (ESM) of used and end-of life computing equipment; and
- Opening a dialogue with among governments and stakeholders on initiatives that could be carried out in different UN regions and available information that would address issues associated with illegal traffic.

Through the United Nations Environment programme (UNEP), the Basel Convention is part of a wider network called the Global Compact. The Global Compact is an initiative of the Secretary General of the United Nations which gives businesses worldwide the opportunity to adhere to nine principles for a sustainable and inclusive global economy. Work undertaken through the partnership should take into account by the U.N. Millennium Development Goals

A partnership on used and end-of-life computing equipment should provide a roadmap and broad strategy for addressing ESM in a global context, recognizing that different actions, needs, and circumstances exist and that ESM technology needs are different in different UN regions and countries.

Scope:

The focus of the global partnership would be on the ESM of used and end-of-life computing equipment, taking into consideration the entire (product) life cycle. The partnership should address the management of used and end-of-life personal computers (in particular CPUs), CRTs and printers. The proper management of such equipment presents an environmental challenge that the partners to this initiative wish to address. In addition, growing markets exist for the proper recycling and treatment of these materials, such as with the example provided on CRT glass recycling in Brazil.

Used and end-of-life personal computers possess a number of characteristics that distinguish them from other end-of-life electrical and electronic equipment:

- Rapid advances in technology are expanding product performance and services to consumers. These advances often increase the pace at which they become obsolete and no longer meet the needs or preferences of the user who originally purchased the product;
- They may have high economic value. Used computers can often be reused directly or after they have been refurbished, provided they still meet acceptable performance standards. Component parts can often be reused or recycled. Materials contained in end-of-life computers, such as plastics, base and precious metals, can be safely recycled and reused in the manufacture of new products;

¹ In the first phase of this partnership computing equipment will consist of: PCs/CPU's, CRTs and printers.

- End-of-life personal computers (CPUs), CRTs, and printers are fragile and do contain certain toxic substances and heavy metals, which could present a risk to human health and the environment if not dismantled and managed in an environmentally sound manner;
- There has been an apparent increase in volume of transboundary movement of these types of used and end-of life computing equipment to developing countries for refurbishment and recycling. In some instances, health and environmental standards may be inadequate, or capacity to recycle or process such end-of-life equipment may not exist.

The partnership would seek innovative solutions to issues raised, showing concrete and practical results in order to meet the objectives set out under the partnership. Building upon current information and principles on environmentally sound recycling and refurbishment, it should provide new and innovative information, guidance, and standards for evaluating and/or testing and labeling of collected used products, including those that are destined to be refurbished and those destined for recycling at environmentally sound facilities.

The workplan activities would consist of a forum for the exchange of information between all members, regions, and the public. Furthermore, it would consist of a phased-in approach of projects with global, regional and local level needs and interests in mind. It is proposed that the partnership address first the immediate needs that can be completed in a relatively short timeframe, while planning and organizing projects that may provide longer-term benefits. In doing so, the partnership would enhance and ensure the transparency, predictability, and traceability of transboundary movement.

2. Potential activities/projects

- Apply a focused approach on the management of computer hardware (i.e. PCs (CPUs), CRTs and printers).
- Develop ESM guidelines for material recovery/recycling of end-of-life computing equipment, taking into account the OECD Technical Guidance.
- Investigate barriers to the development and investment in ESM facilities at the regional level and the role of transboundary movement, building upon findings in the MPPI Guideline on Material Recovery/Recycling.
- Create a level playing field for ESM, and identify what Parties can do to promote sound and efficient management by working with the partnership.
- Develop ESM guidelines for refurbishment of used computing equipment.
- Develop a checklist for reuse in the importing country of computing equipment, with or without refurbishment, including donated equipment.
- Promote ESM of used and end-of-life equipment, explore a preauthorization/certification scheme for ESM refurbishment and material recovery/recycling facilities, and then ensure that this information is shared with the competent authorities.
- Working with the BCRCs, develop local and regional pilot projects derived from interests and needs in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.
- Develop awareness-raising, informational and training material, tailored to regional needs, including consumers and municipalities, and disseminate via workshops involving the BCRCs.
- Examine the economic viability of recovery of different materials, such as plastics, glass and metals from end-of-life computing equipment.
- Consider preparing a document on eco-design/environmentally friendly design focused on what is being done by industry and to widely disseminate this information as part of the awareness-raising component.
- Provide input to Parties on the classification, recovery and disposal operations (Annex IVA and IVB) under the Basel Convention for used and end-of-life computing equipment.

- Promote ESM by collecting information from BC regional centers and focal points for the development of a global data base on existing recycling and refurbishment facilities in their regions or countries, including identification of technologies involved, and the type of materials that are being recycled and/or refurbished by these companies, and make this information available to all Basel Convention regional centers.
- Encourage regional awareness raising approaches such as: high level dialogues and workshops on ESM of used and end-of-life computing equipment.

3. Participation and Funding

Balanced participation of Parties and Signatories from developed and developing countries, private sector (e.g. equipment manufacturers and refurbishers/recyclers) and NGO's will be necessary. All stakeholders should be consulted and invited to contribute, as appropriate, from the beginning of the partnership.

Funding under the partnership is an important consideration and some membership fee and voluntary contributions by parties and members will be needed, supplemented by project specific voluntary contributions. Sufficient resources should be made available as part of this funding to ensure developing country representation and participation.

Expectations and Benefits:

Expectations from members would be to have a partnership designed with the aim of providing tangible and clear benefits to government, industry and to the non-governmental organizations or academics, such as, a new forum for the exchange of information, better access to a enlarged and organized global network of contacts, marketing opportunities through the exposure by being involved in environmentally sound management activities, access to information about new initiatives, innovations by government, regional or other organizations. Other benefits include improved public health in areas where equipment is being dumped, shift in jobs from the informal to the formal sectors, improved/more effective management of rare earth minerals and other actions in line and complementary to the MDGs.

Process and procedures:

Membership should be clearly articulated with the roles and responsibilities clearly defined. Diverse participation should be sought. Consideration should be given to set up a membership scheme similar to that under GeSI and UNU STeP with a multi-level approach with full members, associate members and observers.

The working group is to be co-chaired by members representing governments of developed and developing countries. Chairs of sub-groups could come from other partners, as decided by members. Co-chairs of the working group are to be selected by members of the working group, once it has been established.

It is suggested that SBC prepares a decision for consideration by parties at COP 8 on this partnership, following discussions at the expended Bureau meeting on October 5-6 of this year. This decision would welcome the on-going discussions and encourage these to be finalized following the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and to report back to the Open Ended Working Group. It is anticipated that the Conference of the Parties could then empower the OEWG to approve a work plan and terms of reference of the working group on a partnership on computing equipment.