

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON E-WASTE CONTROL
ABUJA, NIGERIA
20th -21st JULY, 2009

COMMUNIQUE
THE ABUJA PLATFORM ON E-WASTE

The International Conference on E- Waste Control organized by the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) of Nigeria held at the ECOWAS Secretariat, Abuja from 20th to 21st July 2009.

647 participants were registered at the Conference. Participation was open to all major stakeholders and sector players at both local and international levels, in the areas of environmental protection and sustainable development, as well as those in public and private sectors and business whose activities have direct bearing on manufacturing of computers, mobile phones and associated electronic products, and their local representatives. Other participants included representatives from Ghana, Uganda, Zambia, Republic of Benin, South Africa, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Germany, France, South Korea, Bulgaria and Switzerland; representatives from International Agencies (World Health Organisation, United Nations Environment Programme, United States Environmental Protections Agency, Basel Convention), Development Partners, Legislators, representatives of all relevant Federal and State Ministries and Agencies, State and Local Governments, Professional bodies, the Academia, the Media, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the Civil Society and the general public.

Having considered various topics such as E-Waste Control Along the Supply Chain: Challenges and Prospects; Opportunities in E-Waste; Environmental and Health Impacts of E-waste; Best Available Environmentally Sound Management Practices in E-Waste Control; Regulatory, Monitoring and Enforcement Issues in E-Waste Control: National and International Perspectives; and Citizens Participation, Opportunities and Partnerships in E-Waste Control.

- i. *Taking note* that e-waste, having been variously defined in different contexts, entails Waste Electrical Electronic Equipment (WEEE) including old, end-of-life (eol) or discarded electrical/electronic appliances;
- ii. *Noting also* that electronic waste, otherwise known as *e-waste*, is the fastest growing waste stream in the world today, and that the large volume of e-waste which is globally estimated at about 50 million tons annually, is more than three (3) times municipal waste generation;
- iii. *Concerned that* near-end-of-life electronic/electrical products that barely function and e-products with high level of obsolescence and low levels of upgradeability and recyclability, contribute to high e-wastes generation;
- iv. *Concerned also* that many of the WEEE are not tested before importation, and only about 25% are functional, when tested;
- v. *Concerned further* that there is high influx of sub-standard new electronics into African countries, with poor monitoring mechanisms;

- vi. **Recognizing** that the increasing volume of global e-waste in recent times, is the key driver for globalization of trade in near-end-of-life electronic /electrical equipment and e-wastes, between developed and developing countries;
- vii. **Realizing** that developing countries have been the destination and recipients of the alarming volume of e-wastes under the guise of “*bridging the digital divide*” between the developed and developing countries;
- viii. **Concerned** that the growing volume of e-waste which is being dumped in developing countries, especially African Region, contain hazardous constituents, such as brominated flame retardants, and heavy metals, such as lead, cadmium, beryllium, etc, which when burnt, release hazardous pollutants into the environment;
- ix. **Concerned also** that many developing countries lack the capacity to assess properly, the impact of e-wastes on human health and the environment;
- x. **Concerned further** that Stakeholders are not adequately mainstreamed into critical issues of human and environmental health arising from the menace of e-wastes;
- xi. **Noting** that the overall health impact of e-wastes on humans manifests in the form of various health problems such as cancers, nervous system damage, reproductive disorders, etc.;
- xii. **Acknowledging** that developing countries lack adequate infrastructure, regulatory framework and the capacity for environmentally sound management (ESM) of e-wastes including recycling;
- xiii. **Acknowledging also** that there are inadequate programmes or schemes at industry, public, private or civil society levels on volume reduction, reuse or recycling of e-wastes;
- xiv. **Acknowledging further** that there is a general lack of awareness among the citizens in developing countries on the hazards and negative impacts of improper management of e-wastes;
- xv. **Concerned** that the e-industry in the developing countries is not adequately displaying its corporate responsibility on product stewardship and extended producer responsibility which are important in the life cycle management of e-wastes;
- xvi. **Recognizing** that there is insufficient knowledge of the opportunities for public/private/ partnerships in e-wastes control;
- xvii. **Noting** that there are various investment options and opportunities in recycling used electronic products that have remained untapped or unexplored;
- xviii. **Concerned** that recovery of precious substances in e-wastes which is undertaken by local artisans is by the use of low – end technologies and crude processing methods without any safety precautions, thereby posing threat to human health and the environment;
- xix. **Convinced** that importation of near-end-of-life electrical /electronic products into Africa, creates a scenario, where such e-wastes can easily infiltrate markets bringing regional environmental and health challenges;

xx. **Acknowledging** that there are no adequate national, regional or international laws devoted to addressing the menace of near end-of-life products;

xxi. **Acknowledging also** the concern expressed by the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) on poor hazardous wastes (including e-waste) management as a threat to Africa at its 11th meeting held in Brazzaville, Congo in 2006;

xxii. **Acknowledging further** the adoption by the Second International Conference on Chemical Management (ICCM-2) held in Geneva, May 2009, of hazardous substances and the life cycle of electrical and electronic equipment, as one of the five emerging global environmental issues;

xxiii. **Concerned** that there appears to be a lack of willingness on the part of regulatory authorities of some exporting countries to stop the shipment of e-wastes to developing countries;

xxiv. **Noting** that there is poor information exchange from exporting to receiving countries on the movement of e-waste;

xxv. **Convinced** that the non-domestication and non-implementation of the Basel Convention and other related Conventions, constitute pertinent obstacles to stemming dumping of hazardous and e-waste products in developing countries;

xxvi. **Convinced also** that the Bamako Convention which has remained moribund, has affected proper control of the influx of e-waste into Africa;

xxvii. **Convinced further** that development and popularization of best environmentally sound practices in e-waste management and control in developing countries has become imperative;

decided, to RECOMMEND that:

1. Governments should set up and/or strengthen Regulatory Agencies at both the national and local levels, for effective e-waste control;
2. The relevant National Regulatory Authorities/Agencies should as a matter of urgency, come up with appropriate Regulations, Guidelines, Standards and modalities to monitor the importation and disposal of used electrical /electronic equipment;
3. Enforcement of Regulations on open burning should be implemented with stiff penalties for defaulters;
4. Governments should evolve appropriate registration and permitting systems to regulate EEE imports;
5. Conscious efforts should be made at building capacity at all levels of Stakeholders including the Civil Society and Law Enforcement Agencies;
6. Governments should encourage the adoption of appropriate application of the 4R concept (reduce, reuse, recycle and recover) in the area of e-waste control;

7. Regional, Sub-regional and National Action Plans on the management of e-waste should be developed/finalized by relevant Regulatory Agencies, with Stakeholder inputs from manufacturers, assemblers, importers, exporters and vendors, for prompt implementation;
8. There is need to involve all Stakeholders in critical issues of human and environmental health arising from the menace of e-waste;
9. There is need to mount a robust public awareness and education campaigns, including the development and integration of e-waste management into school curricula, involving Governments at all levels, private sector, NGOs, Civil Society, women, children and vulnerable groups, and local communities;
10. Governments should encourage research to facilitate development of pilot/demonstration projects, standards, environmental monitoring and regulations on e-waste control;
11. Industry should pursue and accord high priority to green design from the point of generation through material control, waste minimization techniques, and sustainable design;
12. There is the need for all countries to adopt and implement the Extended Producer Responsibility programme to control e-wastes at country level;
13. Extended Producer Responsibility with respect to e-wastes should apply along the supply chain based on the life cycle approach with responsibility of the original equipment manufacturers for their products in user countries;
14. There is need for countries to pass legislation that will require manufacturers to “*take back*” or “*buy back*” their electronic products. The legislation should also mandate a timetable for phasing out most toxic substances in electronic products;
15. Governments should encourage the establishment of recycling plants with full participation of the private sector through Public-Private-Partnerships (PPP);
16. Governments should explore opportunities to partner with manufacturers and retailers to provide best available technologies for effective disposal and recycling of e-wastes, towards the phasing out of open-pit and indiscriminate dumping as a method of disposal of e-wastes;
17. There is the need for Governments to reduce tariffs on importation of new electrical /electronic equipment, to encourage the use of new products, with emphasis on standards for quality products;
18. Governments of developing countries should work towards removing the issues hampering the effective industrialization of their countries, to reduce the tendency to import near-end-of-life and end-of-life electrical/electronic equipments, as against procuring new ones;
19. Industrialized countries should enforce stricter legislation in their own nations for the prevention of the horrifying trans-boundary export of used e-products that are known to be near-end-of-life, or outright scrap;

20. Greater cooperation and information sharing among inter-governmental and Regulatory Agencies in developing countries, countries with economies in transition and developed countries on e-waste matters should be encouraged;
21. Toxic Waste Dump Watch Programme should be established/reactivated at the Regional/Sub-regional levels, to monitor importation and dumping of near-end-of-life electrical /electronic equipment and e-wastes;
22. There is need for domestication of the Basel Convention by those countries who have not done so, for effective implementation at national, sub-regional and regional levels;
23. Efforts should be intensified by the African Union (AU) and the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) to review and operationalise the Bamako Convention, with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme;
24. AU and AMCEN should take necessary actions to address e-waste as one of the strongest emerging environmental issues in Africa.
25. The outcome of this Conference shall be considered as an input into the intersessional preparatory meetings and consultations towards the 3rd Session of the International Conference on Chemical Management (ICCM-3);
26. This Communiqué shall be referred to as the “Abuja Platform on e-Waste”.

Acknowledgement and Appreciation:

The Conference:

- a) ***Acknowledged and commended*** the Federal Government of Nigeria for her efforts and commitment in setting out a new path towards sustainable e-waste control;
- b) ***Also commended*** the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA), an Agency of the Federal Ministry of Environment, for the noble and timely initiative of organizing this conference;
- c) ***Further commended*** the presenters, facilitators/resource persons, and indeed all national and international participants for ensuring that the Conference was a huge success.

Dated this 21st day of July, 2009, in Abuja, Nigeria.