

E-WASTE AWARENES WORKSHOP CONCEPT

The growth of telecommunications/ICTs, especially in developing countries, has been exponential in recent years. The growth of electrical and electronic equipment and their peripherals, as well as the continuous updating of technology, has generated a significant growth in telecommunication/ICT waste.

In 2018, as a response to the global e-waste challenge, Member States of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) agreed on two targets at the Union's Plenipotentiary Conference:

- 1.) Increase the global e-waste recycling rate to 30%
- 2.) Raise the percentage of countries with an e-waste legislation to 50%

Considering the advances in technology, exponential growth of Telecommunications/ ICT terminals and associated high turnover, action is required to prevent an environmental catastrophe in developing countries. This will involve the design of an adequate regulatory framework and policies to address this problem.

The World Telecommunication Development Conference (Buenos Aires, 2017), which took place from 9 to 20 October 2017 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, under the theme of "ICT for Sustainable Development Goals" (ICT④SDGs),

recognizing

a) that telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs) are a key tool for implementing the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Vision beyond 2015, approved by Resolution 70/125 of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), and a key enabler for social, environmental, cultural and economic development; and consequently for accelerating the timely attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets set out in UNGA Resolution 70/1: "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development";

b) that technological change and the new and innovative opportunities provided by telecommunications/ICTs should be accompanied by ambitious decision-making and measures aimed at reducing poverty and inequalities and fostering the protection of our planet, all of which are spheres that are critical to the progress of humankind;

It is now clear that the world is increasingly transforming into a digital world as the ICT industry evolves with continuous technological innovations. As a consequence of this technological innovation and the consumers' desire of acquiring the latest ICT equipment on the market, electrical and electronic equipment life cycles are becoming shorter causing high generation of electronic waste (e-waste). Many used devices end up in least developed countries and eventually become e-waste. Most LDCs, many of which are in Africa, have insufficient legislation related to generated electronic, electrical and ICT waste and most have weak enforcement systems.

Inadequate management of ICT/waste can have adverse consequences considering that e-waste contains hazardous components and substances that can be potentially harmful to both human health and the environment. In many European countries, regulations have been introduced to prevent electronic waste being dumped in landfills due to its implications. However, there is very little practice, if any, to prevent and manage electronic waste in many African countries. The lack of regulations,

technologies and infrastructure accompanied with very limited awareness of the e-waste management are some of the current challenges countries are facing.

In recognition of this concern, African Countries need to review; the current e-waste situation in the region, the awareness levels regarding e-waste and the estimated amounts of e-waste generated. This would support effective management of e-waste as the world moves towards Digital Transformation.