

Foreword

It is our pleasure to present to you the 2017 Global E-waste Monitor, a joint effort of the United Nations University (UNU), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA) to increase awareness and draw attention to the growing issue of electronic-waste.

More and more people are joining the global information society and digital economy, and are benefiting from the opportunities they offer. More and faster networks, and new applications and services delivered at increasingly high speeds, have brought new opportunities to many people, particularly in the areas of health, education, government, entertainment, and commerce. In parallel, higher levels of disposable incomes, urbanization, and industrialization in many developing countries are leading to growing amounts of electrical and electronic equipment and, consequently, to greater amounts of e-waste.

Discarded equipment, such as phones, laptops, fridges, sensors, and TVs contain substances that pose considerable environmental and health risks, especially if treated inadequately. Most e-waste is not properly documented and not treated through appropriate recycling chains and methods. At the same time, e-waste streams challenge the efforts towards a circular economy as valuable and scarce resources are wasted. This report represents an important step to identify current challenges and solutions.

Indeed, this report shows that the amounts of e-waste continue to grow, while too little is recycled. By 2016, the world generated 44.7 million metric tonnes (Mt) of e-waste and only 20% was recycled through appropriate channels. Although 66% of the world's population is covered by e-waste legislation, more efforts must be made to enforce, implement, and encourage more countries to develop e-waste policies.

The report also highlights the lack of reliable e-waste data at the country level. Often, merely anecdotal evidence is available on the production, management, and recycling of e-waste, and only 41 countries in the world collect international statistics on e-waste.

To address these challenges, UNU, ITU, and ISWA joined forces, and in January 2017 launched the Global Partnership for E-waste Statistics. Its objective is to help countries produce e-waste statistics and to build a global e-waste database to track developments over time. Better data is an important step towards addressing the e-waste challenge. Statistics help to evaluate developments over time, set and assess targets, and identify best practices of policies. Better e-waste data will eventually contribute to minimizing e-waste generation, prevent illegal dumping and improper treatment of e-waste, promote recycling, and create jobs in the refurbishment and recycling sector.

This 2017 edition of the Global E-waste Monitor is an important achievement of the Partnership and will inform policy makers, industries, and businesses to enhance the understanding and interpretation of global e-waste data, thus communicating the data to the general public and relevant stakeholders. The Partnership further aims to map recycling opportunities from e-waste, pollutants, and e-waste related health effects, along with building national and regional capacities to help countries produce reliable

and comparable e-waste statistics that can identify best practices of global e-waste management. Ultimately, its work will contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 11.6 and 12.5 by monitoring relevant waste streams and tracking the ITU Connect 2020 target 3.2 on e-waste.

We would like to thank all authors and contributors to this report, and would like to invite you to support the Global Partnership for E-waste Statistics and its continuous efforts to improve global e-waste management.



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