

I n t e r n a t i o n a l T e l e c o m m u n i c a t i o n U n i o n

ITU-T

TELECOMMUNICATION
STANDARDIZATION SECTOR
OF ITU

WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION STANDARDIZATION
ASSEMBLY
Geneva, 1-9 March 2022

**Resolution 79 – The role of
telecommunications/information and
communication technologies in handling and
controlling e-waste from telecommunication and
information technology equipment and methods
of treating it**

FOREWORD

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is the United Nations specialized agency in the field of telecommunications, information and communication technologies (ICTs). The ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T) is a permanent organ of ITU. ITU-T is responsible for studying technical, operating and tariff questions and issuing Recommendations on them with a view to standardizing telecommunications on a worldwide basis.

The World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA), which meets every four years, establishes the topics for study by the ITU-T study groups which, in turn, produce Recommendations on these topics.

The approval of ITU-T Recommendations is covered by the procedure laid down in WTSA Resolution 1.

In some areas of information technology which fall within ITU-T's purview, the necessary standards are prepared on a collaborative basis with ISO and IEC.

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RESOLUTION 79 (Rev. Geneva, 2022)

The role of telecommunications/information and communication technologies in handling and controlling e-waste from telecommunication and information technology equipment and methods of treating it

(Dubai, 2012, Geneva, 2022)

The World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (Geneva, 2022),

recalling

- a)* Resolution 182 (Rev. Busan, 2014) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on the role of telecommunications/information and communication technologies (ICTs) in regard to climate change and the protection of the environment;
- b)* Resolution 66 (Rev. Buenos Aires, 2017) of the World Telecommunication Development Conference, on ICT and climate change;
- c)* § 19 of the Hyderabad Declaration (2010), stating that the formulation and implementation of policies for proper disposal of e-waste are of great importance;
- d)* the Basel Convention (March, 1989) on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, which characterizes certain wastes resulting from electrical and electronic assemblies as hazardous;
- e)* § 20 of Action Line C7 (E-environment) of the Geneva Plan of Action of the World Summit on the Information Society (Geneva, 2003), calling for governments, civil society and the private sector to be encouraged to initiate actions and implement projects and programmes for sustainable production and consumption and the environmentally safe disposal and recycling of discarded hardware and components used in ICT;
- f)* the Nairobi Declaration on the Environmentally Sound Management of Electrical and Electronic Waste, and the adoption by the ninth Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention of the Work Plan for the Environmentally Sound Management of E-waste, focusing on the needs of developing countries¹,

considering

- a)* that, owing to the progress in telecommunications and information technology, consumption of and demand for electrical and electronic equipment has been continuously increasing and this in turn has led to a marked increase in the amount of e-waste, which has had a negative impact on the environment and health, particularly in the developing countries;
- b)* that ITU and relevant stakeholders (such as the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Development Programme for the Basel Convention) have a key role in strengthening coordination between interested parties to study the effects of e-waste;

¹ These include the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

c) Recommendation ITU-T L.1000 of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T), on the universal power adapter and charger solution for mobile terminals and other handheld ICT devices, and Recommendation ITU-T L.1100, on the procedure for recycling rare metals in ICT goods,

recognizing

a) that governments have an important role to play in limiting e-waste by formulating appropriate strategies, policies and legislation;

b) that most of the e-waste from the telecommunication/ICT sector, particularly obsolete user devices like mobile phones, end up in the informal sector without formal disposal procedures;

c) that telecommunications/ICT can make a major contribution to alleviating the impact of e-waste;

d) that ongoing work and studies in ITU-T Study Group 5 under Question 7/5, on e-waste, circular economy and sustainable supply-chain management, may include aspects of environmental protection and sustainable design/manufacture and recycling of ICT equipment/facilities;

e) the various and current efforts in developing countries and regions related to e-waste management, notwithstanding the challenges that still persist;

f) the inadequate awareness of how to effectively manage e-waste in developing countries;

g) the impact of counterfeit ICT devices on e-waste generation;

h) the role of the circular economy in reducing the global volume of e-waste and moving from the traditional linear production/consumption pattern to one that is sustainable;

i) that there is a lack of tools for measuring the environmental impacts of e-waste and for assessing the environmental impact of telecommunications/ICTs;

j) that the informal sector remains the predominant sector for handling e-waste in developing countries;

k) that sustainable management of e-waste is essential to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals;

l) ongoing work in Study Group 2 of the ITU Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D) under Question 6/2, on ICTs and the environment, studying strategies to develop a responsible approach to, and comprehensive treatment of, telecommunication/ICT waste,

recognizing further

a) that large quantities of used, old, obsolete and unserviceable telecommunication/ICT hardware and equipment are exported to developing countries for supposed reuse;

b) that many developing countries are suffering from severe environmental hazards, such as water pollution and health risks, due to e-waste, including from the influx of new telecommunications/ICTs;

c) that the availability of counterfeit telecommunication/ICT hardware and equipment in developing countries exacerbates the challenge of handling and controlling e-waste,

resolves to instruct the Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau, in collaboration with the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau

1 to pursue and strengthen the development of ITU activities in regard to handling and controlling e-waste from telecommunication and information technology equipment and methods of treating it;

2 to assist developing countries to undertake proper assessment of the magnitude/quantity of e-waste generated in a harmonized manner;

3 to address the handling and controlling of e-waste and to contribute to global efforts designed to deal with the increasing hazards which arise therefrom;

4 to work in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders, including academia and relevant organizations, and to coordinate activities relating to e-waste among the ITU study groups, focus groups and other relevant groups;

5 to organize seminars and workshops to enhance awareness of the hazards and sustainable management of e-waste, particularly in developing countries, and gauge the needs of the developing countries, which are the countries that suffer most from the hazards of e-waste;

6 to assist developing countries and facilitate their work in the implementation of circular-economy principles,

instructs Study Group 5 of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector, in collaboration with the relevant ITU study groups

1 to develop and document examples of best practice for handling and controlling e-waste resulting from telecommunications/ICT and methods of treating and recycling it, for dissemination among ITU Member States and Sector Members;

2 to develop Recommendations, methodologies and other publications relating to sustainable management of e-waste resulting from telecommunication/ICT equipment and products, and appropriate guidelines on implementation of these Recommendations;

3 to study the impact of used telecommunication/ICT equipment and products brought into developing countries and give appropriate guidance, taking into account *recognizing further* above, to assist developing countries,

invites Member States

1 to take all necessary measures to handle and control e-waste in order to mitigate the hazards which can arise from used telecommunication/ICT equipment;

2 to cooperate with each other in this area;

3 to incorporate e-waste management policies/processes, including their tracking, collection and disposal, in their national ICT strategies and take adequate measures in this regard;

4 to raise public awareness on the environmental hazards of e-waste,

encourages Member States, Sector Members and Academia

to participate actively in ITU-T studies on e-waste, through the submission of contributions and by other appropriate means.