

Ministerio de Ambiente, Vivienda y Desarrollo Territorial
Oficina de Oficina Asuntos Internacionales
República de Colombia



20th anniversary of the adoption of the
Basel Convention

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Colombian project: computer programme for educational purposes

Electronic wastes (computers, mobile phones, printers, scanners and other equipment) are growing more rapidly than any other hazardous wastes in the world; mostly, due to the increase in the use of internet and the minimum technical characteristics necessary in equipment needed to provide access to this service. In Latin America, there was a 371% increase in the use of the internet between 2000 and 2005, which contributed to the fact that in 2006 approximately 14, 7 million computers were sold and the figure is estimated to increase to 17, 7 million for 2008.

These wastes are of great environmental interest, due to the fact that many of them contain pollutants and, when they are not managed in an environmentally safe and sound manner, they generate risk factors to human health and the environment,

Waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) constitute a priority waste stream, as it is identified in the Strategic Plan of the Basel Convention (2002 – 2010) adopted at the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention and in the “Ministerial Statement on Partnerships for meeting the Global Waste Challenge” also adopted at the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

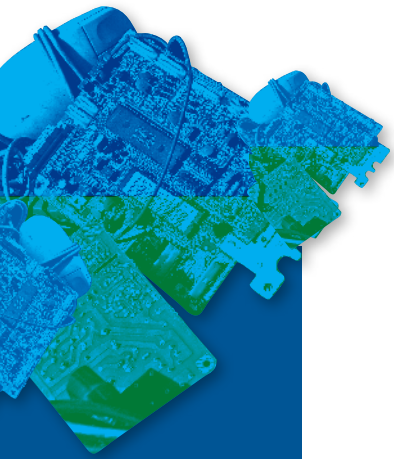
In order to comply with the dispositions mentioned, it is imperative to strengthen the institutional capacity at the regional level and integral work with the Basel Convention Regional Centre for South America (BCRC-Argentina), governmental entities, private sector, business sector, non-governmental organizations and societies in general, which would allow the environmentally sound management of electronic wastes and to contribute to the commitment of complying with the objectives of the Millennium.

In this context, strategies for integral waste management have been developed in Latin America, in particular used computer equipment, including mechanisms such as the refurbishing of used equipment associated to programmes aimed at reducing the digital gap, in the case of Argentina, Brazil and the Computer Programme for educational purposes in Colombia. Likewise, in several countries in the region, enterprises have been created which are dedicated to the remanufacturing, stocking, recycling and the final disposal of wastes generated by computers, at different levels of development, particularly from the technical point of view.

In Colombia the “Computer Programmed for Educational Purposes –CPE” is a governmental programme approved in the year 2000, aimed at public educational development in communities, through the minimization of the digital gap and the development of social enterprise responsibility. It gives access to information and communication technologies to institutions, by means of refurbishing used equipment donated by private enterprises and governmental institutions; at the same time, it promotes its use in educational processes.



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For the latter, a system of managing used equipment has been established which aims at involving the entire life cycle of the equipment, including waste management through recycling and the re-use of some parts in the robotic and automatic education programme.

The CPE Programme has established, as its main strategy for waste management, the launching of the National Centre of Use of Electronic Wastes – CENARE - which carries out stockage, remanufacture, recuperation and the re-use of parts activities, generating a stream of clean materials and incorporating them in into recycling chains or, finally disposing of them.

Through the Programme of Computers for Educational Purposes, the Colombian Government promotes the environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes thus protecting health and the environment, contributing to the eradication of poverty, the generation of employment and the development of education, basically at the local level and in the most vulnerable sectors in the country.

This experience has also contributed to the strengthening of the work with the Basel Convention Regional Centre for South America, located in Argentina. This allowed the carrying out of a joint pilot study done in Bogotá, in April 2008, on the recollection of out-of-order computers and printers, with the purpose of identifying the problem of this waste stream and defining guidelines for an environmentally sound management in each of its stages: recollection, classification, refurbishing, remanufacture, recycling and the management of materials.

This pilot study is considered to be one of the activities carried out by the said Centre within the framework of the regional project “Inventory of Electric and Electronic Wastes in South America”, developed within the framework of the Strategic Plan for the Implementation of the Basel Convention, and in compliance with the Ministerial Statement on Partnerships for meeting the global waste challenge, with the objective of identifying, developing and generating alternatives for managing critical issues associated to the rapid expansion of electric and electronic wastes all over the world and its environmentally sound management.

The study also allows identifying the potentiality to develop environmentally sound businesses, related to taking advantage and valuing computing equipment and printers, including the incorporation of the different wastes streams as supplies of new production processes, for both the local market and for exportation.

Likewise, the results obtained would facilitate the formulation of regulations by the national government “In view of which obligations for the recollection and environmental management of computer equipment wastes in urban areas? and by adopting other definitions”, at present available on the website of the Ministry (www.minambiente.gov.co). This could also assist other countries in the process of collecting information on the current situation of electric and electronic waste of equipment in the region. It will also allow defining policy guidelines and regulation, with the aim of promoting both a healthy environment and a better quality of life.



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