# United Nations System-wide Response to Tackling E-waste

UNITED NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP EMG

# Background

The *United Nations System-wide Response to Tackling E-waste*, signals the importance of collaboration and coordination among UN entities in sustainably solving the global e-waste problem.
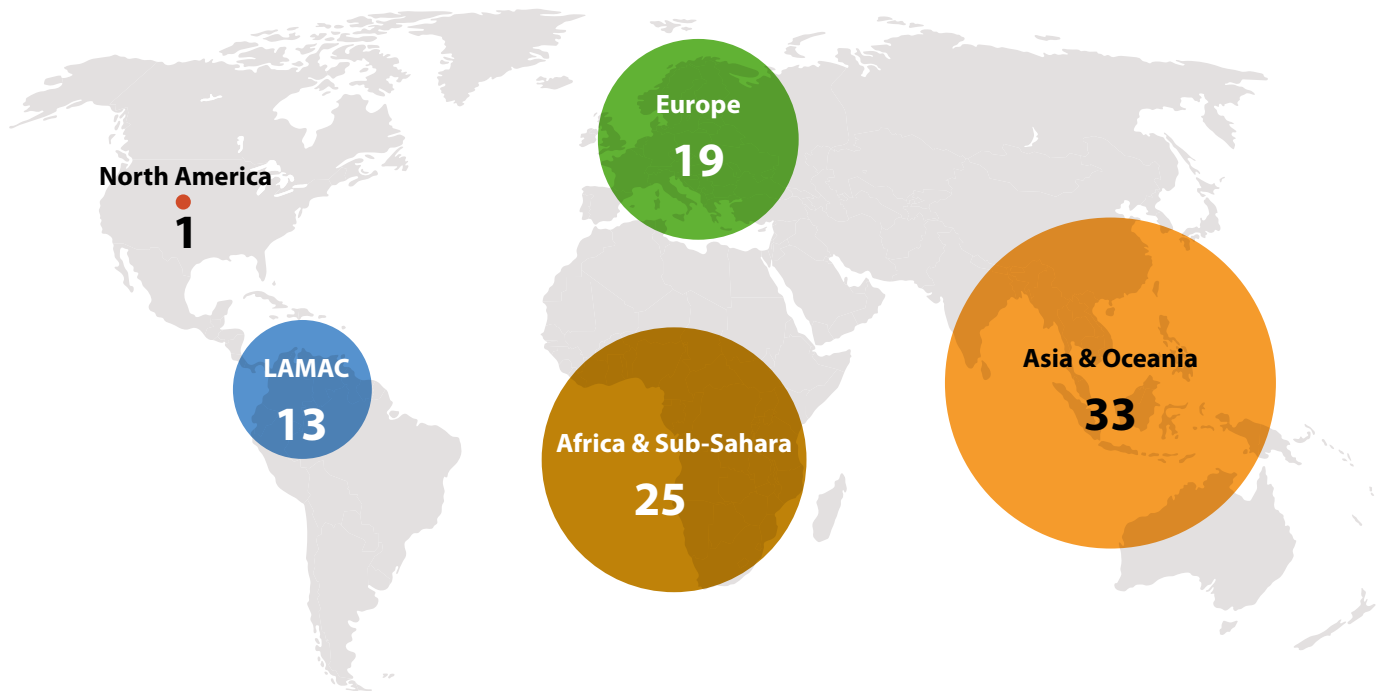
To download the full report, please visit : https://unemg.org/issue-management-groups/e-waste

The report showcases efforts by UN Environment Management Group (EMG) Members who have already undertaken various successful activities in the e-waste domain. It also highlights the areas which still require improvement, or where efforts are lacking. The report is a result of work by the EMG's Issue Management Group on Tackling E-waste, which has the following objectives:

- To strengthen the coordination and promotion of joint programmatic and policy initiatives in the UN system, in the area of e-waste prevention and its environmentally sound management.

- To add value to existing programmes, mechanisms and projects including developing eco-design and life-cycle approaches for electrical and electronic equipment.

The report brings together entities' responses to a desk-based mapping exercise of prior, existing and future e-waste initiatives, drawing information from websites and reports by a broad range of UN and related entities. In addition, a survey was distributed with the purpose of probing the thoughts of IMG Members on further opportunities for collaboration, and the challenges and opportunities faced by the global e-waste problem.

## E-waste Initiatives by region



North America
**1**

Europe
**19**

LAMAC
**13**

Africa & Sub-Sahara
**25**

Asia & Oceania
**33**

\* The number of e-waste initiatives with a global reach - 68

\* TOTAL - 154 Initiatives

## Key Findings & Overview

- At least 14 global processes and agreements are in place, which play a role in the control and regulation of e-waste, with at least a further 9 at the regional level.

- At least 154 prior, existing and proposed e-waste initiatives were identified with the expertise and involvement of at least 23 UN and related entities in tackling the global problem of e-waste.

- Views and opinions of UN and related entities regarding further consideration for strengthening UN support for Member States in their efforts to tackle e-waste.

- Characteristics of notable e-waste initiatives, including information on the number of initiatives over time, the total number by life-cycle stage, their type and focus and their geographical distribution.

- At least 10 notable UN prior and existing partnerships and cases of collaboration were identified which aim to tackle e-waste, providing possible avenues to further streamline e-waste initiatives.

ring the design and production stages of electrical and electronic equipment. In summary, more focus is applied to the end of the life-cycle compared to the earlier stages which include the acquisition of raw materials, design and production, and consumer use.

## Regional Distribution

The regional distribution of UN e-waste initiatives is centered substantially in the African and Asian regions, whilst there is less activity in Europe and significantly less in North America, Australia and New Zealand. The Latin American and Caribbean regions, in recent times, have attracted more attention.

More attention in Africa and Asia can be attributed to the curative nature of many current approaches to e-waste management in these regions such as open burning and acid baths etc. Moreover, these two regions have long been a hub for near-end-of-life and end-of-life legally and illegally imported equipment. In summary, there is more focus on the regions where e-waste ends up, rather than in the advanced economies where it is designed, produced and consumed in scale.

## The Life-cycle

A large number of UN and related entities are involved in various stages of e-waste management, including recycling and other environmentally sound management, its transboundary movement, and the design and standardisation of information and communication technologies. There is still, however, less attention paid to the reduction of e-waste and to poor practices du-
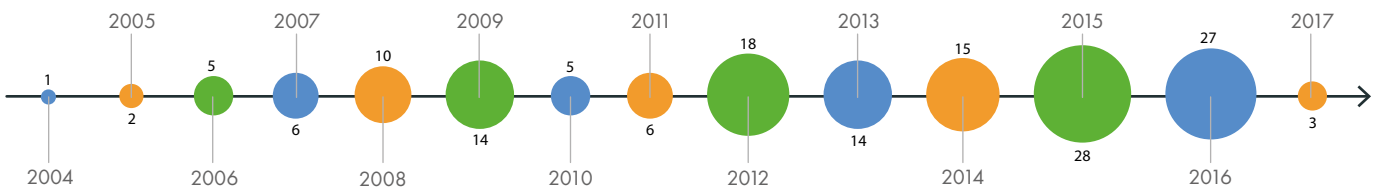
## Public & Private Sectors

There is a need to engage more with business, to address business responsibility in the design, production and sale of electrical and electronic equipment. For example, 49% of e-waste initiatives are carried out through UN-public sector collaboration, whilst e-waste initiatives undertaken through UN-private sector collaboration account for only 36% of the total.
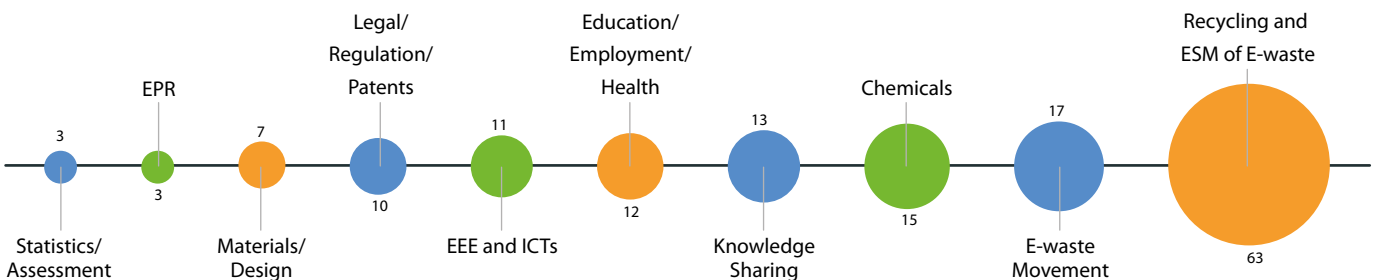
# Other Opportunities

Wider suggestions made by survey respondents, on possible support areas for Member States, focusseed on supporting new business models for repair and refurbishment activities, and reducing or eliminating taxes on reuse and repair operations. A need for the UN to play a role in informing Member States about relevant e-waste issues by means of expanding national data and information sharing, was highlighted; some of these areas included on national e-waste flows and characteristics.

**E-waste Initiatives Overtime**

| 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 10 | 14 | 5 | 6 | 18 | 14 | 15 | 28 | 27 | 3 |

**Number and Focus of E-waste Initiatives**

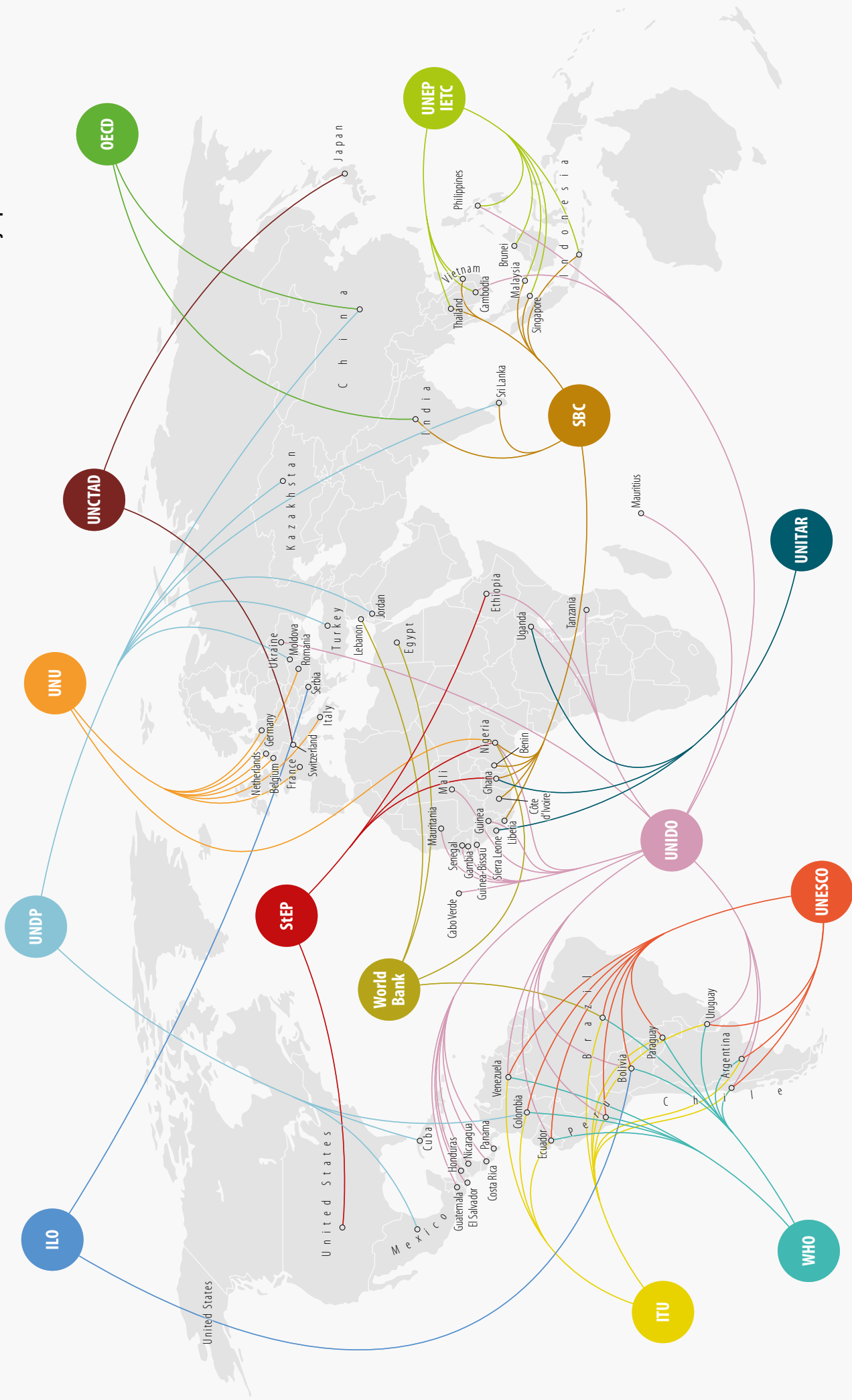| Statistics/ Assessment | EPR | Materials/ Design | Legal/ Regulation/ Patents | EEE and ICTs | Education/ Employment/ Health | Knowledge Sharing | Chemicals | E-waste Movement | Recycling and ESM of E-waste |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | 3 | 7 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 15 | 17 | 63 |

# Beyond the report

As a result of the recommendations of the report, the Issue Management Group on Tackling E-waste, will focus on the following areas of work going forward:

- A focus on further analysis at the programmatic level of UN entities' mandates and decisions relating to electrical and electronic equipment, beyond the report's mapping of e-waste initiatives and projects.

- A focus on strengthening existing websites and online knowledge sharing platforms, to deepen and keep up-to-date the collective data, information and training resources available across the UN relating to e-waste.

- A focus on internal corporate e-waste management within the UN system, with a particular focus on the procurement of information communication technologies whilst considering the revision of existing procurement guidelines.

**Country-specific E-waste Initiatives**



OECD

UNEP
IETC

SBC

UNITAR

UNCTAD

UNU

UNESCO

UNDP

StEP

UNIDO

ILO

WHO

ITU

World
Bank

Japan

Philippines

Brunei
Vietnam
Malaysia
Thailand
Cambodia
Singapore
Indonesia

Sri Lanka

India

Mauritius

China

Kazakhstan

Ethiopia
Tanzania
Uganda

Jordan
Lebanon
Egypt

Turkey
Ukraine
Moldova
Romania
Serbia
Italy

Netherlands
Germany
Belgium
France
Switzerland

Nigeria
Benin
Ghana
Côte
d'Ivoire
Mali
Liberia
Mauritania
Guinea
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Gambia
Guinea-Bissau
Cabo Verde

Venezuela
Colombia
Ecuador
Brazil
Bolivia
Paraguay
Uruguay
Argentina
Chile
Peru

Cuba
Honduras
Nicaragua
Panama
Guatemala
Costa Rica
El Salvador

Mexico

United States

United States

The Environment Management Group (EMG) is a United Nations System-wide coordination body. It furthers interagency cooperation in support of the implementation of the international environmental and human settlement agenda. Its membership consists of specialized agencies, programmes and organs of the United Nations, including the secretariat of the Multilateral Environment Agreements.

EMG is chaired by the Executive Director of UN Environment (UNEP) and supported by a secretariat provided by UN Environment.

For more information on the EMG and the Issue Management Group on Tackling E-waste, please visit www.unemg.org

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