



## **NEW REPORT FROM GSMA AND UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY REVEALS IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC WASTE IN LATIN AMERICA**

**1 December 2015, London:** In 2014, Latin America produced 9 per cent of the world's electronic waste<sup>1</sup> (e-waste), the equivalent of 3,900 kilo tonnes<sup>2</sup> (kt), according to a new report from the GSMA and United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS). The study, "E-waste in Latin America: Statistical Analysis and Policy Recommendations", finds that over the next four years, e-waste generated by the region's population will grow between 5 and 7 per cent annually, with almost 4,800 kt of e-waste predicted by 2018.

The report was commissioned to identify the main challenges related to e-waste management in Latin America, focusing in particular on the opportunities associated with mobile phone collection and recycling. The total average e-waste generated in 2014 in Latin America was calculated to be 6.6 kg per person, of which 29 g represents mobile phone e-waste per person in the region, or approximately 0.3 mobile phones discarded per person per year.

Further findings from the report include:

- The amount of e-waste is growing worldwide, reaching more than 40,000 kt of discarded electronic products in 2014;
- For mobile phones in particular, nearly 189 kt have been discarded worldwide, nearly 17 kt of which was from Latin America;
- Worldwide, e-waste generated from mobile phones represents less than 0.5 per cent of the total weight of the world's e-waste, which is the same proportion within Latin America; and
- Only a small number of countries in Latin America have specific bills on e-waste; the majority are currently developing legislation but adequate recycling infrastructures should also be developed in parallel.

Within Latin America, most e-waste is generated in Brazil and Mexico, which respectively produced 1,400 kt and 1,000 kt of e-waste during 2014 due to their large populations, followed by Argentina (292 kt), Colombia (252 kt), Venezuela (233 kt), Chile (176 kt) and Peru (147 kt).

"More and more people are relying on electronic devices, particularly mobile phones, in their daily lives," said Sebastian Cabello, Head of Latin America, GSMA. "This is not only happening in developed countries, but also in emerging markets and growing economies. While mobile devices may only contribute to a minor percentage of total e-waste in Latin America, we encourage operators in the region to continue their voluntary efforts around e-waste management<sup>3</sup>, and also to work closely with regulators to develop a legislative framework that takes into account the responsibility of various industry players."

"In the past, e-waste estimates were mainly based on a simple correlation with a country's gross domestic product. For this report, up-to-date data was derived using the sales lifespan approach, which is consistent with internationally accepted definitions of e-waste statistics that we have been working on in previous years with many other UN and international agencies," said Prof. Jakob Rhyner Vice Rector in Europe of UNU. "We hope that the insights from this report will prompt further debate on policy development, taking into account the perspective of industry and other key stakeholders."

The report recommends a set of principles to guide e-waste policy development in Latin America:

- **Build targeted awareness campaigns** through public authorities, with support from manufacturers, service providers, retailers and local councils, in order to educate consumers about their fundamental role in the recycling chain;
- **Ensure reliable access to raw materials** to enable future access to key metals and effectiveness through the recycling chain;
- **Organise separate collection of mobile phones** as the first, fundamental step in the recycling chain. However, the societal benefits of e-waste (especially mobile phone) recycling can only be achieved if all e-waste collected is channelled to the best treatment options;
- **Enable efficiency in the recovery process** and across all steps of the recycling chain, which is particularly key for those metals that are extensively used in modern electronics;
- **Foster the creation of e-waste management and recycling infrastructure** and processing facilities that can enable new entrepreneurial opportunities in the waste management sector and generate new job opportunities, especially in growing economies; and
- **Recognise the principle of extended producer responsibility (EPR)** through a coordinated process with manufacturers, importers, distributors, traders and e-waste management companies, based on environmental and economically sustainable models.

The report calls upon policy makers to introduce legislation that supports recycling efforts by all stakeholders in the e-waste chain, including consumers and civil society. It also encourages coordinated discussion with all stakeholders across the recycling chain, involving manufacturers, importers, distributors, and e-waste collection and recycling companies.

To access the report, please visit: <http://www.gsma.com/latinamerica/ewaste2015>

-END-

### Notes to Editors

<sup>1</sup> In this document, “e-waste” is used as a general term to include all appliances discarded: both waste and discarded electronic equipment with potential for reuse. The distinction between equipment destined for disposal or recycling and equipment intended for reuse is important, especially in regard to export, and this is a matter of ongoing discussion among parties to the Basel Convention.

<sup>2</sup> 1 kilo tonne = 1,000 tonnes

<sup>3</sup> To find out more about volunteer initiatives by Latin American mobile operators to promote e-waste management, please visit: <http://www.gsma.com/latinamerica/gsma-report-highlights-latin-american-operators-contributions-in-reducing-electronic-waste>

### About the GSMA

The GSMA represents the interests of mobile operators worldwide, uniting nearly 800 operators with more than 250 companies in the broader mobile ecosystem, including handset and device makers, software companies, equipment providers and internet companies, as well as

organisations in adjacent industry sectors. The GSMA also produces industry-leading events such as Mobile World Congress, Mobile World Congress Shanghai and the Mobile 360 Series conferences.

For more information, please visit the GSMA corporate website at [www.gsma.com](http://www.gsma.com). Follow the GSMA on Twitter: [@GSMA](https://twitter.com/GSMA)

### **About United Nations University**

The mission of the United Nations University is to contribute, through collaborative research and education, dissemination and advisory services, to efforts to resolve the pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare that are the concern of the United Nations, its Peoples and Member States. In pursuing this mission, UNU conducts research on problems of relevance to the United Nations and its Member States, offers postgraduate programs that prepare people for science-based work in the United Nations or Governments of Member States and functions as a think tank for the United Nations and its Member States. UNU also acts as a bridge between the United Nations and the international academic community, and it serves as a platform for global and local dialogue and creative new ideas. Through postgraduate teaching and research, UNU contributes to capacity building, particularly in developing countries.

### **Media Contacts**

For the GSMA

Tatiana Cantoni (Brazil)  
+55 11 95210-2225  
[taticantoni@pimenta.com](mailto:taticantoni@pimenta.com)

GSMA Press Office  
[pressoffice@gsma.com](mailto:pressoffice@gsma.com)