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Global recycling program launches

06/03/2007

High tech manufacturers such as Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft, Dell and Philips, along with the United Nations, governments, academic institutions and recycling companies are joining together in a global public-private initiative called Solving the E-Waste Problem, or STEP. The program aims to standardise global recycling processes in order to harvest valuable components in electronic and electrical scrap. The partnership is also looking to extend product life and create markets for their reuse.

According to STEP, valuable resources in every scrapped product with a battery or plug are being trashed in rising volumes worldwide. Worse still, it adds, items sent to developing countries for reuse often remain unused for a host of reasons or are shipped by unscrupulous recyclers for illegal disposal. And, too often, e-scrap in developing countries is incinerated, not only wasting needed resources but adding toxic chemicals to the environment, both local and global. "There's more than gold in those mountains of high tech scrap," says Ruediger Kuehr of the United Nations University, which will host the STEP Secretariat in Bonn. "This partnership is committed to salvaging these increasingly precious resources and preventing them from fouling the environment."

Author
Graham Pitcher

Supporting Information

► <http://www.step-initiative.org>

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