

# [Electronic waste poses 'growing risk' to environment, human health, UN report warns](#)

13 December 2017 – The growing volume of electronic waste, including discarded products with a battery or plug, such as mobile phones, laptops, televisions, refrigerators and electrical toys, poses a major threat to the environment and human health, the United Nations warned on Wednesday.

“Environmental protection is one of the three pillars of sustainable development [...] E-waste management is an urgent issue in today’s [digitally dependent world](#), where use of electronic devices is ever increasing,” said Houlin Zhao, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union ([ITU](#)).

The [Global E-Waste Monitor 2017](#), released by ITU, the UN University (UNU) and the International Solid Waste Association (ISWA), highlights increasing levels of e-waste and its improper and unsafe treatment and disposal through burning or at dumpsites.

In 2016, 44.7 million metric tonnes of e-waste were generated, an increase of 3.3 million metric tonnes, or 8 per cent, from 2014. Experts foresee e-waste increasing a further 17 per cent to 52.2 million metric tonnes by 2021.

## ***E-waste contains \$55 billion worth of recoverable materials***

In 2016, only about 20 per cent, or 8.9 million metric tonnes, of all e-waste was recycled.

“The Global E-waste Monitor serves as a valuable resource for governments developing their necessary management strategies, standards and policies to reduce the adverse health and environmental effects of e-waste,” said Mr. Zhao.

With 53.6 per cent of global households now having Internet access, national e-waste policies and legislation play an important role governing the actions of stakeholders who are associated with e-waste.

Currently 66 per cent of the world population, living in 67 countries, is covered by national e-waste management laws, a significant increase from 44 per cent in 2014.

Low recycling rates can have a negative economic impact. In 2016, it was estimated that e-waste contained rich deposits of gold, silver, copper, platinum, palladium and other high value recoverable materials, whose total value is estimated at \$55 billion, a figure exceeding the gross domestic product of most countries in the world.