

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.

Thousands of children need assistance three months after Caribbean hurricanes – UNICEF

13 December 2017 – Three months after two category-5 hurricanes tore through the Caribbean, thousands of children across the region still need support, the United Nations Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) said on Wednesday.

"Even before the hurricanes hit, UNICEF was [on the ground](#), working with Governments and local partners to prepare communities and preposition humanitarian supplies for the areas at highest risk" said Maria Cristina Perceval, UNICEF Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean.

"These included life-saving supplies that were most needed during the immediate response when access to clean water, shelter and basic social services were scarce," she added.

Irma, the most powerful hurricane ever recorded in the Atlantic Ocean, caused extensive damage to the islands of the Eastern Caribbean, Haiti and Cuba.

Hurricane Maria then wrought additional damage across the region, with UNICEF estimating that together, they left 350,000 children in need of humanitarian assistance.

"Three months on, UNICEF is still on the ground in these countries and territories, working on programmes to support children and families in rebuilding their lives and returning to a sense of normalcy," she added.

However, challenges remain, with many of the most vulnerable families still feeling the effects of the storms.

Over 35 per cent of Dominica's children – particularly those in shelters – are still not enrolled in education activities, while in Antigua and Barbuda many families remain in shelters, unable to return home.

Working in collaboration with governments and non-governmental organizations, UNICEF has been providing immediate humanitarian relief and working to ensure longer term recovery and resilience.

"While life is returning to normal for many, children and families who have lived through these storms will need committed, sustained support to get their homes, communities and lives back on track," maintained Ms. Perceval.

UNICEF and its partners are supporting communities through programmes focused on recovery and resilience in Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, British Virgin Islands, Cuba, Dominica and Haiti.

UN peacekeeping chief visits injured Tanzanian 'blue helmets' in DR Congo

13 December 2017 – The head of United Nations peacekeeping operations today thanked individually peacekeepers who fought to hold off an attack on 7 December in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

“Thank you very much for your service. I wish you well,” Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, told each service member, speaking with them at their bedsides at the Nakasero Hospital in Kampala, Uganda.

At least 14 peacekeepers were killed when a UN Stabilization Mission ([MONUSCO](#)) Company Operating Base at Semuliki in Beni territory, in DRC’s restive eastern North Kivu province, was attacked by suspected Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) elements. It was the worst on UN ‘blue helmets’ in recent history.

Mr. Lacroix will meet with families of those killed during a visit to Tanzania later this week.

The bodies were repatriated with honours on Monday, and received by Tanzanian defence and military officials.

The ADF are suspected in the attack. [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has said that the attack constitutes a war crime.

With ‘so much at stake’ in crisis-torn South Sudan, UN and partners launch \$1.72 billion appeal

13 December 2017 – The United Nations relief wing and the humanitarian community in South Sudan launched on Wednesday a \$1.72 billion appeal to assist six million people affected by conflict, displacement and hunger.

“There is [growing need for humanitarian assistance](#) with displacement, food insecurity, malnutrition, violence and economic decline taking a toll on the health, safety and livelihoods of people in need,” stated Alain Noudéhou, the Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan in a news release issued by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)).

“Today, we are calling for [\\$1.72 billion](#) to continue providing life-saving assistance and protection for six million people most in need in South Sudan,” he said, emphasizing the plan’s focus on protecting vulnerable groups, especially women and children.

Since the conflict in began in December 2013, about four million people have been forced to flee their homes, including nearly 1.9 million internally displaced and about 2.1 million in neighbouring countries.

As the conflict continues in parts of the country, hunger and malnutrition rates have risen and, without early actions, thousands of people in multiple areas risk famine.

The UN relief wing has more on the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan [here](#)

According to the South Sudan Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, an earlier than normal start of the lean season will result in an estimated 5.1 million people, or 48 per cent of the population, being classified as severely food insecure between January-March 2018.

Moreover, nutrition surveys reveal that approximately half of all South Sudanese children under five experience acute malnutrition.

Despite these challenges, the South Sudan humanitarian operation continues to reach millions in need across the country. As of end-November, aid organizations had reached more than five million people since the year began.

Mr. Noudéhou thanked South Sudan’s donors, who contributed over 70 per cent of the plan for 2017 and called on all stakeholders to play their roles in alleviating the suffering. He highlighted the enormity of the challenge and the collective efforts for a rigorous prioritization to ensure the effectiveness of the response.

“With our collective and coordinated efforts, we will be able to effectively provide much needed assistance to the people in need. Children will remain in school. Many more will survive diseases. Livelihoods and hope will be restored. There is so much at stake,” stressed Mr. Noudéhou.

[Half the world lacks access to essential health services – UN-backed report](#)

13 December 2017 – At least half of the world’s population cannot obtain essential health services, and nearly 100 million people are being pushed into extreme poverty each year due to the out-of-pocket health expenses they

must pay, according to a United Nations-backed study.

It is [completely unacceptable](#) that half the world still lacks coverage for the most essential health services," said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)), in a press release.

A solution exists: universal health coverage allows everyone to obtain the health services they need, when and where they need them, without facing financial hardship," Mr. Tedros added.

The study, [Tracking Universal Health Coverage: 2017 Global Monitoring Report](#), co-authored by the World Bank and WHO, notes that 800 million people spend at least 10 per cent of their household budgets on health expenses for themselves, a sick child or other family member.

A solution exists: universal health coverage allows everyone to obtain the health services they need, when and where they need them, without facing financial hardshipWHO Director-General

For almost 100 million people, these expenses are high enough to push them into extreme poverty, forcing them to survive on just \$1.90 or less a day.

The report makes clear that if we are serious not just about better health outcomes, but also about ending poverty we must urgently scale up our efforts on universal health coverage," said World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim.

Wide gaps exist in the availability of services in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. In other regions, basic health care services such as family planning and infant immunization are becoming more available, but lack of financial protection makes it difficult for families to pay for these services.

Even in more affluent regions such as East Asia, Latin America and Europe, a growing number of people are spending at least 10 per cent of their household budgets on out-of-pocket health expenses.

Inequalities in health services are seen not just between, but also within countries: national averages can mask low levels of health service coverage in disadvantaged population groups.

In low- and lower-middle income countries, only 17 per cent of mothers and children in the poorest fifth of households received at least six of seven basic maternal and child health interventions, while 74 per cent for the wealthiest fifth of households did so.

The report is a key point of discussion at the global Universal Health Coverage Forum 2017, currently taking place in Tokyo, Japan. In addition to Mr. Kim and Mr. Tedros, attendees include heads of State and ministers from over 30 countries. UN [Secretary-General](#) Antonio Guterres will address the

Forum on Thursday.