

30 September, 2015

Island Sustainability Alliance Intervention on CRP10- Hazardous Waste in Electronics

Thank you Mr. President,

We support CRP 10 on hazardous substances within the lifecycle of electrical and electronic products. Aspects of this CRP, such as awareness-raising about the dangers of improper disposal, green design, green procurement and compulsory take-back, are very relevant. But Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are importing countries that have special requirements with regard to the downstream or waste part of the full lifecycle. If our governments, which are significant users of electrical and electronic products, adopt policies where they only purchase products from sellers who are prepared to take back their products, that would help greatly.

E-waste was identified as a priority for chemical and waste management in the Pacific Island Countries at the SAICM regional meeting at Apia, Samoa in November 2007. Responses to a scoping study by CSOs in 2009 indicated that either the groups visited are unaware of the consequences of poor disposal of e-waste; or they were aware of the impacts of poor disposal of e-waste and the rapid growth of this waste-stream but had not accorded it priority and funding.

Pacific Small Island Developing States do not have the capacity to establish national facilities for environmentally-sound disposal of e-waste. Because of the high cost of fuels (which are imported), it is unlikely that an affordable disposal facility in our sub-region would be feasible. More appropriate would be transboundary transport of e-waste under the Basel Convention for the purpose of environmentally-sound disposal, modelled on the successful 2005 UNEP project entitled "POPs in Pacific Island Countries". It is for this reason we make this intervention, to get some consideration of our needs with regard to environmentally sound waste disposal. Under this project, stockpiles of obsolete pesticides were inventoried, proper packaging and shipping was carried out by contractors (while training local counterparts), and these hazardous wastes were sent to a facility in Australia for proper disposal.

Costs of transport to SIDS are high, and the relatively low volumes make take-back schemes difficult. Periodic shipments of electrical and electronic waste would be needed, given the relatively small volumes of this type of hazardous waste generated annually by Pacific SIDS. But even these small volumes would have deep impacts on our fragile ecosystems if not handled in an environmentally-sound manner.

We would need to put in place institutional measures including a financial incentive to return the products and thus prevent stockpiles through better life-cycle management of electronic products. Further, an advance disposal fee to cover the cost of shipping for the re-export and proper recycling and/or disposal of discarded e-waste. But our main plea is to insert into CRP10 the special needs of Pacific SIDS.

Thank you Mr. President.