

E-WASTE Every year, millions of electronics are discarded worldwide. These electronic devices that are disposed of are called electronic waste, or e-waste for short. Obviously, because these devices contain chemicals that are dangerous for our environment, they are considered a serious issue. Because of how rapidly this e-waste is increasing, it can fairly be said that the issue is getting more and more serious every year. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 250 1050 tons of e-waste are produced worldwide every year. In the US only, the agency reported that the total amount of obsolete electronics was around 2 million tons. Of that amount 1.65 million tons are only discarded in landfills, and 380,000 tons were recycled. Over the next decade, it is believed that the amount of waste will grow by 500%, the United Nations Environment Programme warned. The rapid rise in e-waste over the years is partly due to how fast technology keeps changing which makes electronics become obsolete much faster. For instance, TVs and computer processors continuously updated, which makes older ones unwanted. Also, the shift to virtual space storage such as iCloud, GoogleDrive and OneDrive has led to discarding CDs, DVDs, and MP3s which were once widely used. Similarly, the change from cellular phones to smartphones has made the e-waste issue even worse in many parts of the world. The current common practice to deal with e-waste has been found to be extremely harmful for the environment. One of these ways that countries tend to use in order to discard e-waste is by throwing it into landfills. However, many scientists believe that when e-waste is disposed of in this way, its dangerous chemical content dissolves and leaks into the ground. This makes it a serious threat to the underground water supply. Another problematic way to handle e-waste is burning it. This too results in seriously harming the environment. When burned, the metal in these devices sends out poisonous chemicals in the air. Both human beings and the food chain run the risk of being negatively affected by the measures. The ideal solution for e-waste is recycling. However, in spite of the efforts to do that, only 20% of it is currently being recycled, according to the UN Environment Programme. In an attempt to recycle more few countries decided to export their e-waste to other countries. For example, the USA and Canada usually send their electronic waste to China. European countries send their e-waste to India and Pakistan. However, recycling on its own is not enough. Countries should consider implementing these measures in order to minimise the harm e-waste brings to the environment.