

## **IV. Issues in the APEC Region**

In view of the current status, the following series of issues have been identified which need to be addressed to improve RBE opportunities.

### **1. More Precise Definition of Recyclables**

This issue exists because there is no standard definition of recyclable materials. Currently, there is mis-labeling or poor labeling of materials (e.g. to distinguish between secondhand computers, as opposed to e-wastes). There are also waste products being exported as recyclables, mixed with non-recoverable waste. Potentially there should be specific designations to differentiate between secondhand goods and those generated from virgin goods. Currently, there are no stipulations on how the information is being reported.

To improve the quality of recyclables and facilitate trans-boundary trade, monitoring and evaluation systems are needed. There are designations of harmonized system codes which assign separate statistical codes to numerous categories of material, but there is no uniformity between economies as to the codes being used, and not all economies have adopted them. This warrants change.

### **2. Environmental Legislation Dealing with Trans-boundary Movement of Recyclables**

Most APEC economies and regions ratified the Basel Convention. However, waste management practices are not compliant with hazardous laws and regulations. The Basel Convention does not deal effectively with recyclable parts and materials crossing borders; there are no established trade rules to make the transaction of recyclables parts and materials smoother. Under existing rules, definitions and treatments differ from economy to economy. As a result, there is need for strengthening of enforcement of illegal shipment of hazardous wastes, which could be accomplished through international cooperation.

There is a need to establish 'baselines' to address the problem in developing economies and to strengthen legislation to monitor waste flows including trans-boundary movement of wastes and secondhand products.

There is no consensus on international trade of secondhand goods

### **3. Improved Environmental Legislation within Individual Economies**

There are important issues related to environmental legislation (and lack thereof) within individual economies. There is a need to have a general level of environmental legislation in order to support recycling and other waste reduction initiatives (e.g. "bottom line" standards for waste disposal, and supporting legislation which could vary

from economy to economy depending on individual circumstances).

The value and effectiveness of recycling efforts are strongly influenced by source separation. Hence, legislation on mandatory source separation by residents and businesses would go a long way to improving the sustainability of recycling systems. If consumer and waste generator do not segregate wastes, the costs of collection and transport, and the difficulties of recycling increase. It also decreases the value of the recycled materials.

Much of e-waste is currently disposed together with municipal solid wastes without pre-treatment. This needs to be controlled.

Tax and financial incentives, effectively implemented, could be designed to greatly assist the sustainability of recycling systems.

#### **4. Eco-Design**

There would be benefit if there were 'eco-design' approaches such as designing for easy disassembly of products, to facilitate recycling. The current situation is that for many constituents, there is no design for recycling and hence recycling of the more valuable components creates hazardous wastes.

Eco-design to enhance use of recycled plastics into new products would have significant benefit. This might include use of identifying marks for different resource articles at recycling points (e.g. to make the separation of plastics into specific types, more easily accomplished).

#### **5. Increasing Awareness and Understanding of Magnitude of Recyclables**

Currently, there is little understanding as to how much recycling is occurring in different economies. Basic statistics on recycling should be collected in official statistics systems but there needs to be consistent definition of different categories of recyclables.

There is limited awareness of the consumer, to buy 'green' or environmentally sound products. Education of the consumer would have significant influence on manufacturers to improve their product lines to enhance their images, and improve their sales.

There is a need to have clear audit specifications to make it desirable for firms to participate in recycling. For example, this could take the form of a 'green logo' that would allow a product generated in an effective recycling manner (e.g. requiring a minimum percentage of recycled materials to be used in the production), which would both heighten consumer awareness, and encourage the participation of firms.

There is a need to gather basic information and to share information on how to accomplish recycling in an environmentally sustainable manner and in an acceptable working environment for the recyclers.

There is a need for regional cooperation where the collected products, recyclable parts and accessories, materials, are smoothly traded. An infrastructure, such as a waste exchange is needed to ensure that knowledge of 'needs' and 'available' resources are linked, as part of an efficient system.

## **6. Assistance for Sustainability through Knowledge**

Frequently, there is poor financial support from government, to support waste management activities towards RBE. The government could assist in the sustainability of RBE through implementation of government green procurement/purchasing. Further, there could be encouragement of the development of RBEs from multiple directions (NGOs, consumer pressure, etc.). The availability of real time information via websites could assist the matching of sources of wastes to the needs of factories. Such a web-based centre, to serve as a neutral body in coordinating the needs of factories or companies, could ensure connection between the locations of potential recyclables or discarded materials for recycling, and those in need of materials as inputs.

## **7. Price Fluctuations**

There is an enormous need in RBEs for relatively stable prices for recyclables. Governments could assist in this respect by getting the correct combination of taxes, fees and other incentives.

## **8. Finding an Effective Reuse for Difficult Wastes**

The development of effective reuse opportunities for difficult wastes is very important. As an example, a major challenge for automobile tires is the creation and management of genuine solutions for collecting, storing and end use of tires. Similar problematic circumstances also exist for the other difficult wastes.

## **9. Health Protection of Recyclers**

The potential pollution effects of recycling are now generally acknowledged throughout APEC economies, but there needs to be continued attention to health controls for the workers within the recycling industry. Government action to encourage source separation would assist in this issue.

## **10. Sharing of “Best Practice” Information**

There is an issue of technology transfer, and need for data sharing, on collection and source separation for recycling activities. Sharing the industry's best practices on recycling systems would facilitate development of stronger RBE.

## **11. Extended Producer Responsibility**

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for products such as automobile tires, computers, and batteries, needs to be expanded as a possible strategy to improve the viability of RBE.

A standard approach to EPR or take-back system could be developed. Further, disclosure of product lifecycle information would be valuable to improve RBE.