

Delegation from the United States of America

Position Paper for the General Assembly Second Committee

The following issues will be discussed at the 76th meeting of the General Assembly's (GA) Second Committee of the United Nations: I. Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development and II. Disaster Risk Reduction. The United States of America (USA) is looking forward to working together with all the other Member States (MS) on these important topics and is confident that effective and efficient international agreements can be achieved.

I. ICTs for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development

In today's globalized world, ICTs are key stimulators for social, economic and environmental development and therefore also key to achieving the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Unfortunately, the components of these devices often only have a short lifespan, leading to mounting volumes of electronic and electrical waste (e-waste) around the globe. The nature of production and disposal of waste in a globalized world makes this a global problem. The USA is concerned that chemical substances in e-waste treated the wrong way could be potentially dangerous to the human health or the environment and that valuable elements and rare resources contained in e-waste could be lost instead of recycled. This problem is especially distinct in lesser developed MS since they receive very high amounts of used electronic and electrical equipment while often lacking regulations, policies, legal instruments, technology, infrastructure and capacities needed for an environmentally friendly handling of e-waste and the recycling process. In many cases, missing awareness of the consequences of disproportionate e-waste management turned out to be problematic as well. In 2016, only around 20% of the global e-waste was recycled. This leaves lots of room for improvements and with combined efforts of the international community the USA is confident that this situation will improve in the near future.

In the USA, President Obama has established the Interagency Task Force on Electronics Stewardship in November 2010 to develop a *National Strategy for Electronics Stewardship (NSES)*. This Task Force released the *National Strategy for Electronics Stewardship Report* in July 2011 which does not only address the national level but also supports developing MS. NSES has the potential to increase domestic recycling efforts in the USA and to reduce the amount of unsafely managed e-waste domestically and abroad. It can further strengthen both domestic and international markets for used electronic products and prevent health and environmental threats all over the world. In addition, since 2011, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) and the Taiwan Environmental Protection Administration (Taiwan EPA) are collaborating with the International Environmental Partnership to build global capacity for the environmentally sound management of e-waste. The International E-Waste Management Network is coordinated by U.S. EPA and Taiwan EPA to support this goal. Moreover, U.S. EPA is collaborating with the Solving the E-waste Problem Initiative to face the e-waste problem together in developing MS. Moreover, the *Sustainable Development Goal 12* "ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns" reflects the needed action on e-waste management as well.

To tackle this problem, the USA strongly urges every MS to establish a legal framework, securing the environmentally sound management of e-waste. The recycling of e-waste and the reuse of ICTs have many advantages such as digital inclusion, the reduction of financial barriers to access by providing affordable devices and it benefits the environment and the climate as well. Additionally, it helps to close the digital and knowledge divide and accelerates economic growth. This newly established framework should cover the organization and design of an e-waste management system on a nationwide level and should ensure its enforcement on the basis of a set of reasonable minimum standards, especially in regard to environmental, health and safety policy and to processing stages of used ICTs and e-waste. On top of that the legal framework should include administrative, technical, social, economic, control and monitoring aspects. A review process should be included at the end to enable MS to further implement continuous improvements. Legal frameworks have to define realistic targets for collection, reuse, recycling and recovery of used ICTs and e-waste and also the regulation

of import and export of ICTs and e-waste. The framework should likewise encourage the creation of jobs related to the collecting, reusing, recycling and recovering of e-waste and ICTs to foster a sustainable economy. Furthermore, awareness of the consequences of disproportionate e-waste management should be promoted just like responsible technology consumption. Additionally, sufficient capacities to manage used ICTs and e-waste should be created and the application of a circular economy should be promoted. The delegation from the USA notes that these legal frameworks will differ a lot from MS to MS due to their different levels of development and stresses out that it's delegation is prepared to support every single MS in the creation of a reasonable and state specific legal framework, if requested.

II. Disaster Risk Reduction

In the last decade, more than 1.5 billion people have been negatively affected by disasters globally and the costs of these disasters have risen to more than \$1.3 trillion. Because of climate change and a growing world population, future disasters are likely to occur even more frequently and their impact is estimated to be even more devastating. The delegation from the USA is deeply concerned that, despite the poor prospects for the future, action to prevent the creation of new and to reduce existing disaster risk is lacking. Previously gained achievements in development may be lost as poverty increases, infrastructure is destroyed and livelihoods and economic opportunities are negatively affected. New approaches are required to help MS in dealing with the growing risks posed by disasters. The USA realizes that local and national entities can play a key role in responding to emergencies, so the main goal should not only be to strengthen the ability of local communities to respond to emergencies, but also to help communities to better handle the impact of disasters and to make communities themselves more resilient to disasters. Furthermore, the delegation from the USA is strongly convinced that effective and efficient disaster risk reduction strategies are key to achieving the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) founded in 1961 supports a wide range of disaster risk reduction activities, including the creation of early warning systems, the analysis of hazards, the establishment and enforcement of building codes, the training of first responders and the promotion of a family with more than one means of support. Over the last 3 decades, USAID has supported disaster risk reduction efforts in more than 130 countries, trained over 70.000 people only in Latin America and the Caribbean in disaster response and emergency management and helped to establish 17 national, regional and global early warning systems. Moreover, USAID brought the Incident Command System to 18 partners around the globe. Together with 186 MS, the USA adopted the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR)* at the Third UN World Conference in 2015. Additionally, USAID has created a strategic approach to disaster risk reduction to better guide its actions in the future and to reduce disaster risk in general. One of the main points in this document is the support of diversified, resilient livelihood strategies. This is a very important aspect, because a family with only one means of support is at risk to have its livelihood completely destroyed by a disaster and to have nothing left to fall back on. USAID's disaster risk reduction programs are already focusing on the reduction of vulnerability to specific disasters. Due to different preconditions in different MS the strategies needed to be efficient in different MS can vary a lot. The USA strongly believes that this topic needs more attention from the international community and a lot more can be done to create diversified and resilient livelihood conditions.

The delegation from the USA calls upon the international community to create a new forum, named the United Nations Forum on Livelihood Strategies (UNFLS). UNFLS should meet annually and discuss strategies for diversified and resilient livelihoods and the most efficient way of their implementation in different MS. Each year a report should be submitted to the GA to accumulate knowledge on this matter. Experts from all MS should be invited to the UNFLS same as the following UN entities: UN Development Programme, UN Environmental Assembly, the World Food Programme, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group and UN-Women. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies should be invited as a nongovernmental organization. The UNFLS could be financed by the UN Development Programme. The USA proposes to facilitate the UNFLS for the time of the pandemic digitally. After the pandemic the USA will be available to host the UNFLS annually and to work together with the international community on different strategies to secure alternate means of livelihood in post disaster situations.