

Joint press release of Oeko-Institut, PAN-Ethiopia, Centre for Sustainable Cycles, Center for Justice Governance and Environmental Action and SRADev

Addis Abeba/Freiburg/Koforidua/Lagos/Mombasa

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Donating used Lithium-ion batteries to Africa? Clear rules urgently needed

The export of used lithium-ion batteries for second-life applications from Europe to Africa must follow clear rules and be better controlled. This is what Researchers and environmentalists from Oeko-Institut (Germany), PAN-Ethiopia (Ethiopia), the Centre for Sustainable Cycles (Ghana), the Center for Justice Governance and Environmental Action (Kenya), and SRADev (Nigeria) call for.

Second-life for Lithium-ion batteries: In Africa or Europe?

In view of the currently rapidly growing number of used batteries from electric vehicles, buses and e-scooters, the question of proper end-of-life management is becoming more and more urgent (see infographic). Although recycling capacities are being built up in the EU, the logistics and recycling processes are usually associated with considerable costs.

"There is currently a trend to 'donate' used batteries to other countries," says battery researcher Dr Johannes Betz of the Oeko-Institut. Many manufacturers argue that used batteries can still be used – for example in solar projects in Africa. More and more projects and press releases are praising this so-called repurposing approach as a solution. "Repurposing of used Li-ion batteries can certainly yield many environmental benefits", says Betz. "But it is hard to understand why the focus is on shipping old batteries to low- and middle-income countries, given the great need for electricity storage in Germany and the EU".

High-quality batteries needed for solar projects in Africa

"We have a very high demand for electricity storage here in Ethiopia – especially in the coming years", explains the founder and Executive Director of the Ethiopian NGO 'PAN-Ethiopia', Dr. Tadesse Amera, "Small and medium-sized solar solutions with battery storage play a crucial role for clean energy in many rural communities. However, we do not need low-quality batteries with limited remaining lifetime. We have signed the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes in the year 2000 and do not want to be misused as a dumping ground for the toxic waste of the North."

Press inquiries:

Phone: +49 30 405085-333

Email: presse@oeko.de

Public Relations & Communications Department

Mandy Schossig

Borkumstraße 2

D-13189 Berlin

Phone: +49 30 405085-334

E-Mail: m.schossig@oeko.de

Clear rules for battery exports needed

“We must set clear rules for shipping used batteries to low- and middle-income countries”, says Phyllis Omido from the Center for Justice Governance and Environmental Action in Kenya. “The mistakes as made with the export of old computers must not be repeated”, adds Dr. Sampson Atiemo from the Ghanaian NGO SCYCLES. Even 20 years ago, it was said that old equipment would contribute to development in Africa. But the environmental and social consequences of an uncontrolled e-waste trade were enormous. And like IT equipment, batteries contain numerous hazardous substances that can become a problem at the end of the product life cycle.

To this end, minimum batterie-standards based on four pillars are needed

At first, used batteries should in no way be inferior to commonly used batteries in the target countries. Generally, only high-quality batteries that still have at least 80 percent of their original energy storage capacity may be considered for export and donations – proven by tests under real conditions.

Secondly, if batteries are of equal quality to new batteries commonly used in the target countries, they should also have a price advantage for the receiving countries.

Thirdly should shipments comply with international procedures for trading in used goods. For example, before shipping used batteries, their full functionality must be proven.

In addition, forth, all actors bringing batteries – new or used – to market in low- and middle-income countries should be obliged to collect corresponding quantities in the same country and bring them to sound management. This corresponds to similar systems of extended producer responsibility in EU countries.

Set up recycling structure in Africa

“Instead of sending old batteries to Africa, we need our own environmentally sound recycling capacities for lithium-ion batteries,” says Dr. Leslie Adogame from SRADev Nigeria. “The demand for batteries will multiply, but the local take-back logistics, reuse and recycling are not yet sorted out.” More concerted efforts are needed to monitor the quality of imported batteries, set up domestic take-back systems and create dedicated reuse and environmentally sound recycling centres for batteries from domestic use. “But please stop even considering sending your waste batteries to Africa.”

[Infographic “More and more traction batteries for electromobility in the EU” by Oeko-Institut](#)

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E-Mail: m.schossig@oeko.de



Contact at the Oeko-Institut

Dr. Johannes Betz
 Researcher in Resources & Transport Division
 Oeko-Institut, Darmstadt office, Germany
 Phone: +49 6151 8191-174
 Email: j.betz@oeko.de

Contact at Pesticide Action Nexus Association (PAN-Ethiopia)

Dr. Tadesse Amera
 Executive Director of PAN-Ethiopia & Co-Chair of IPEN
 PAN-Ethiopia, Addis Abeba, Ethiopia
 Phone: +251 116186774
 Email: pan.ethiopia@gmail.com

Contact at the Centre for Sustainable Cycles (SCYCLES)

Dr. Sampson Atiemo
 Member of the Board, Centre for Sustainable Cycles (SCYCLES)
 Koforidua, Ghana
 Phone: + 233 303944200
 Email: scyclesghana@gmail.com

Contact at the Center for Justice Governance and Environmental Action (CJGEA)

Phyllis Omido
 Executive Director
 Center for Justice Governance and Environmental Action
 Mombasa, Kenya
 Phone: +254 772967888
 Email: media_communication@centerforjgea.com

Contact at SRADev

Dr. Leslie Adogame
 Executive Director
 Sustainable Research and Action for Environmental Development (SRADeV
 Nigeria)
 Lagos, Nigeria
 Phone: +234 8033301305
 Email: sradevnigeria@yahoo.com

About the Oeko-Institut

Oeko-Institut is a leading independent European research and consultancy institute working for a sustainable future. Founded in 1977, the institute develops principles and strategies for ways in which the vision of sustainable development can be realised globally, nationally and locally. It has offices in three cities in Germany: Freiburg, Darmstadt and Berlin.

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About PAN-Ethiopia

Pesticide Action Nexus Association of Ethiopia (PAN-Ethiopia) is a non-governmental organization established in 2005 to work on environment and development to contribute to the eradication of poverty in Ethiopia through raising awareness of the public in order to prevent the public health and environmental impacts of pesticides and other hazardous chemicals. Its main purpose is to enhance and promote a safe and sustainable environment protected from harms posed by hazardous chemicals by promoting the close collaboration of government, non-governmental organizations, civil society interest groups, urban and rural communities. PAN-Ethiopia has a Special Consultative Status with Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations since July 2012.

About the Centre for Sustainable Cycles (SCYCLES Ghana)

The Centre for Sustainable Cycles (SCYCLES Ghana) is a fully registered Ghana based environmental NGO dedicated to promoting the sustainability of resources. SCYCLES Ghana was incorporated and registered under the laws of Ghana in 2018 and started operation in the same year. SCYCLES Ghana works within the broad framework of the UN Sustainable Development Goals with special focus on the goal 12, responsible consumption and production. The organization believes and supports the concept of scarce and finite global resources (in particular natural resources). It believes that producers and consumers alike have equal responsibility to ensure these resources are produced and consumed in manner that promotes circular economy. The organization works with both local and international partners to bring issues of hazardous, toxic chemicals and waste into sharp focus and advocate same within the public policy space.

mountainresearchinstitute.com/Scycles

About the Centre for Justice Governance and Environmental Action (CJGEA)

Center for Justice Governance and Environmental Action is a UNEP accredited organization and the 2015-Africa Recipient of the Goldman Environmental prize dubbed "The Green Nobel" under Ms. Phyllis Omido. Our focus is to apply a human rights-based approach to environmental protection of the economically marginalized communities affected by the extractive industries and toxic sites in Kenya, drawing synergies of awareness on climate change mitigation and carbon emissions.

www.centerforjgea.com | [@CJGEA](https://twitter.com/CJGEA)

About SRADev Nigeria

Sustainable Research and Action for Environmental Development (SRADev Nigeria) is a professional, non-governmental, non-profit think tank in environmental health research and development, advocacy and action organization. It seeks to be the voice for environmental development in Africa particularly, Nigeria, while acting as a catalyst, advocate, educator and facilitator to promote the wise use and sustainable development of the environment. Its main mission is to promote sustainable development by

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PESTICIDE ACTION NEXUS
ASSOCIATION (PAN-Ethiopia)



SCYCLES GHANA



SRADev Nigeria

Öko-Institut e.V.

facilitating sound environmental practice, exchange of information, building bridges of understanding on environmental health and natural resource conservation in a sustainable way and to ensure that the local people are put on the drivers' seat in the sustainable management of the environment.

sradev.org | [@sradevnigeria](https://twitter.com/sradevnigeria)

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