Thank you distinguished Mr. Co-chair. By BAN’s estimation, e-Waste is the most trafficked hazardous waste in the world today. Trafficking in e-Waste has unfortunately become a very profitable business for those that would externalize the true and proper costs of environmentally sound management and externalize toxic design to developing countries, where those externalities get dumped, and people pay with their health, and the country and its future generations pay dearly for a poisoned environment.

In the early days of waste trade, the excuse was “recycling” and traders hid behind this word, justifying their global dumping in this greenest of terms. Today we see a similar trade justified by “helping the poor”, “bridging the digital divide”, and “reuse”. All have been used as excuses for exports that result in a disproportionate burdening of developing countries with the global volumes of toxic waste.

The Basel Ban Amendment seeks to reverse this environmental justice, but even as that instrument comes very close to entering global force, we find new efforts to remove Basel controls from many types of electronic waste by calling them non-waste. We cannot allow the Basel Ban to be undermined in this way just as it finally enters into force.

The basic rule established prudent rule is that when used electronic equipment is untested, or tested and found to be non-functional then it is a waste and subject to Basel Controls. This must remain the fundamental rule in the Technical Guideline.

Any exceptions or exemptions to this rule posed by various stakeholders must be very carefully and critically scrutinized and allowed only if they do not pose loopholes that would allow hazardous waste residues or discarded parts from repair operations to be moved to and deposited in importing countries and do so by escaping all Basel controls and obligations.

Certain industries will at this meeting claim that they conduct only the most responsible acts of reuse and refurbishment and this may be true – for them. But what must be remembered is that behind every responsible exporter, thousands of irresponsible actors lie in wait to use legal openings and loopholes created to so they can continue to profit from cost externalization. The guideline has to be written with these unscrupulous actors in mind or we will live to regret our actions.

BAN has published an Action Alert available on our table outside outlining the principles that must held to, if any exceptions at all are to be considered. First and
foremost of these principles is that the Basel Ban must be honored – so that in any situation, no hazardous wastes can be transferred and left in the territory of developing countries. After all of the work we have done to move the Ban Amendment into force, this great achievement of the Basel Convention must not be undermined.

Distinguished delegates, the global e-Waste dumping crisis is upon us. It is extremely important that we have a finished guideline to establish strict global norms of control for use by all countries. At this juncture in history we would be very foolish to not take the most extreme caution in removing any Basel Controls from the pernicious threat of e-waste trade.

A clear, precise and precautionary guideline on e-waste trade is the duty of the Basel Convention. This week BAN looks forward to working together with delegates to finalize just such a guideline. We believe this important achievement is well within our reach.

Thank you.