About this sheet

SOMO is an independent, non-profit research and network organisation that works on social, ecological and economic issues related to sustainable development. SOMO coordinates makeITfair — a public awareness campaign run by a coalition of European and Southern NGOs, with the goal of enhancing sustainability throughout the electronics supply chain. Through an extensive international network of NGOs, SOMO is in a good position to highlight the problems and issues in different industrial sectors, as well as coordinating the expectations and demands that NGOs have of companies to address these problems.

In this information sheet for responsible investors, we will outline NGO’s priorities related to three high-risk phases in the electronics supply chain: metal mining, production in low wage countries and the disposal of electronics products. Responsible investors can use this information when leveraging their investment power to influence the behaviour of electronics companies.

This sheet is based on the priorities as published by the makeITfair campaign, and the demands and input of members of the worldwide GoodElectronics Network.

NGO priorities related to mining

The current priorities of NGO’s and communities in mining areas are the following:

- Since the electronics industry as a whole consumes significant quantities of metals, the industry should recognise that responsibility for their supply chain extends to the sourcing and mining of metals and primary metal processing.
- Electronics companies should map their supply chain down to the extractives phase. They should set up a system to update the supply chain periodically for each of the metals used.
- Electronics companies should apply due diligence when sourcing minerals from conflict areas, and they should adhere to relevant guidelines. A due diligence process for conflict areas should include tracing of minerals down to the mine level and setting up systems to detect whether any purchasing takes place from mines controlled by armed groups (including being taxed by armed groups along the trading routes). Ultimately, involvement of either rebel groups or state army actors in the mining industry is not acceptable.

Responsible company behaviour in this respect involves adopting and implementing makeITfair’s ‘List of principles on the extractives phase of the electronics supply chain’. All actions taken should include engaging proactively with local actors and striving for continuous improvements, rather than applying boycotts and black lists as a first step.
NGO priorities related to e-waste
Electronics companies should take the following responsibilities to reduce the negative impact of their electronics products at their end-of-life stage:

- Develop electronics that are more ecologically and socially sustainable by proactively phasing out hazardous substances, maximising the use of recycled materials, minimising the use of scarce materials in electronics, designing products for a longer life span, and increasing the recyclability of their products.
- Take responsibility for the collection and recycling of the waste created by their products, both in regulated and unregulated areas.

Responsible company behaviour in this respect means that electronics companies assess the ecological and social sustainability of their product portfolio and set ambitious targets for continuously improving sustainability. In doing so, they should collaborate with actors along the electronics supply chain, from mining companies to recyclers.

Furthermore, it means that they take action to increase the recycling rate of e-waste by:

- Setting targets for e-waste collection.
- Providing incentives for end users to hand in their old electronics items.
- Paying for the collection and recycling of their products, also in unregulated areas.
- Last but not least, taking action to contribute to solving the e-waste problem in developing countries by refraining from exporting e-waste outside countries from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and by investing in recycling capacity in the developing countries where they operate.

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