



## Mobile Phone Lifecycles – Use, Take-back, Reuse and Recycle An Executive Summary

Today more than 2 billion people around the world have access to mobile telephony; the GSM Association estimates that by 2010 that figure will exceed 3 billion.

The fastest growing regions are Africa, the Middle East, Eastern Europe and the Americas. We estimate that about 896 million mobile phones will be sold in 2006, about 50% of these will be replacement phones, and about 1 in 10 new customers will use a 'used' phone. We also estimate that more than 20 million phones will be collected for reuse or recycling; those that cannot be repaired will compose less than 0.003% of the total annual weight of the waste electronic equipment. Typically, more than 70% of a mobile phone can be recycled and design innovations by manufacturers are eliminating the use of hazardous materials in new phones.

Mobile telecommunications operators – hereafter referred to as 'industry' – recognise the environmental responsibilities associated with new and used mobile phones. Indeed, industry led take-back schemes have existed in Asia-Pacific, Europe and the USA since the late 1990s and predate legislative requirements. There are now provisions for collection of used phones in at least 40 countries, including several in Africa and Latin America.

When it comes to mobile phone take-back, refurbishment and reuse is preferential to recycling, as it extends the life of the product. On average more than 70% of collected handsets from developed countries can be refurbished and most are sold in developing countries at prices that can vary significantly, an indicative range is US\$30-40.

We believe that existing legislation lacks clarity with regard to the international movement of used mobile phones, especially those destined for reuse – possibly after repair, refurbishment or upgrading – which the industry regards as products with inherent value, rather than waste. Much in the same way that used cars are still regarded as products when passed on to different owners. Furthermore, the increasing regulatory burden on used mobile phones has the potential to undermine the business case for refurbishment.

GSMA believes that more needs to be done by all stakeholders. Governments can ensure that regulatory approaches are proportionate; reward good practice, avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and tackle dumping of waste electronic equipment in countries without the necessary recycling infrastructure. Each of us can ensure we return old mobile phones through recognised take-back schemes rather than throwing them away.

Finally, by working together we can ensure that the environmental, social and economic benefits of new and used mobile phones can be delivered to everyone, sustainably.

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To read the full report, or for more information visit  
[www.gsmworld.com](http://www.gsmworld.com)*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jack Rowley'.

**Dr Jack Rowley**  
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October 2006