

Universal Mobile Phone Chargers To Reduce E-Waste

If you want to replace your old mobile phone with a new one, you need to purchase a new charger also. You discard the current one, even if it works perfectly. Thus one household may have several chargers that have become superfluous over time. Every year, such discarded chargers generate thousands of tons of e-waste — a major environmental problem.

Besides polluting environment, incompatibility of mobile phone chargers leads to inconvenience for users across the world. Users need to carry everywhere a specific charger for their handset. Cost of a new mobile phone includes the cost of its charger, thus an unnecessary burden to consumers.

The Solution

A Standard charger, compatible to all brands, types and models of mobile phones would reduce excessive e-waste. A harmonised and energy-efficient charger is the perfect solution.

The Benefit

Harmonising mobile phone chargers will bring significant economic and environmental benefits. Reducing the number of chargers unnecessarily sold will reduce electronic waste and create a positive



environmental impact. Users will be able to charge their mobile phone from a common charger. Purchasing mobile phones without having to purchase a new charger will reduce their cost. Consumers would purchase more cost-effective stand-alone chargers than it is currently the case.

The Universal Charger

The United Nations International Telecommunications Union (ITU), in October 2009, approved a Universal Phone-charger Standard. The new energy-efficient Universal Charging Solution (UCS) enables the same charger to be used for all future handsets, regardless of make and model. UCS chargers will have a 4-star or

higher efficiency rating - up to three times more energy-efficient than an unrated charger. It will reduce also the energy consumed in charging.

The new UCS is based on input from the Association of GSM Operators (GSMA), which predicts a 50 per cent reduction in standby energy consumption, elimination of 51,000 tonnes of redundant chargers, and a subsequent reduction of 13.6 million tonnes in greenhouse gas emissions each year. Many companies have agreed to comply with the standard for new products by 2012, including 3 Group, LG, Motorola, Nokia, Qualcomm, Samsung, Sony Ericsson, Telstra and Vodafone.

In Europe, major producers of mobile phones have agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the European Commission (EC) to harmonise chargers for data-enabled mobile phones sold in the EU. The companies that have signed the MoU are: Apple, LG, Motorola, NEC, Nokia, Qualcomm, Research in Motion (RIM), Samsung, Sony Ericsson and Texas Instruments. Industry commits to provide chargers compatibility on the basis of the Micro-USB connector. Once the commitment becomes effective, it will be possible to charge data-enabled mobile phones from any charger compatible with the common specifications. The MoU excludes mobile phones, which do not support USB data exchange, and also certain unusual formats of phone, for example phones worn as wrist watches. The EC expects that from 2010 onwards most future mobile phones will be data-enabled. The first generation of new interchangeable mobile phones is expected to reach the EU market from 2010 onwards.

As the companies which have agreed to the harmonisation of mobile phone chargers manufacture most mobile phones sold in India, we expect interchangeable mobile phones and UCS in the next few years. “Universal chargers are expected to hit Indian market after the first quarter of 2011”, said a Nokia official at Ahmedabad.

International Campaign

CHOICE, the largest consumer organisation of Australia, has started a campaign against Apple, Blackberry and HTC — brands that have not signed up to the ITU’s Standard for universal phone chargers. Though Apple is a signatory to the MoU with the European Commission, it has not signed up to the ITU’s Standard. CHOICE asked the three companies to sign on to the Standard and help lighten the e-waste load. It alerted Consumers International too, inviting 220 consumer bodies from 115 countries to apply the pressure worldwide.

Sources: choice.com.au, itu.int, europa.eu

