Ecma International approves Office Open XML standard

The new open standard safeguards the continued use of billions of existing documents and promotes document processing interoperability

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Geneva, 7 December 2006 :

At the General Assembly meeting on 7 December 2006, Ecma International approved Office Open XML as an Ecma standard (Ecma 376). The General Assembly also approved submitting the standard for adoption under the ISO/IEC JTC 1 process.

The work to standardize OpenXML has been carried out by Ecma International as part of an open, cross-industry collaboration via Technical Committee 45 (Ecma TC45), which includes representatives from Apple, Barclays Capital, BP, The British Library, Essilor, Intel, Microsoft, NextPage, Novell, Statoil, Toshiba, and the United States Library of Congress.

With more and more organizations around the world interested in achieving document processing interoperability, and creating digital archives using open formats, the Office Open XML (Open XML) formats provide an international open standard for word-processing documents, presentations, and spreadsheets that can be freely implemented across multiple applications and platforms, both today and in the future. Multiple vendors such as Corel, Microsoft and Novell already announced implementations of the Open XML standard in very popular applications such as WordPerfect, Open Office and Microsoft Office 2007.

Opening Up Billions of Documents - After more than a year of work, the technical committee (Ecma TC45) produced the Open XML formats to be interoperable by design, and produced over 6.000 pages of documentation on the formats, to provide developers all the technical details needed to ensure predictable results and high fidelity interoperability when working with the standard. Thanks to the depth of the technical resources the TC45 created, the Open XML standard covers the full set of features used in the existing corpus of billions of documents. The Open XML standard addresses as well the international language needs of organizations by supporting all the major worldwide languages, and also includes information for assistive technology products to properly process documents. Developers have the flexibility to decide whether they want to take advantage of subsets or the full feature set of the Office Open XML formats. In addition the format enables organizations to integrate productivity applications with information systems that manage business processes by enabling the use of custom schemas within Open XML documents.

 "The broad spectrum of sponsors from the industry and public institutions ensure the creation of an open standard that can create a wide range of possibilities for document processing, archival and interoperability" said Jan van den Beld, Secretary General of Ecma International. "The Open XML standard recognizes the benefit of backward compatibility preservation of the billions of documents that have already been created while enabling new future applications of document technology."

The Ecma TC45 will continue to be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the standard, and for enhancing the standard with new and innovative features while simultaneously preserving backwards compatibility. In January, Ecma International will also begin the fast track process for adoption of the Office Open XML formats as an ISO international standard under the ISO/IEC JTC 1 process.

About Ecma International

Since its inception in 1961, Ecma International (Ecma) has developed standards for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Consumer Electronics (CE). Ecma is a non-profit industry association of technology developers, vendors and users. Experts from industry and other organizations work together at Ecma to develop standards. Ecma submits its work for approval as ISO, IEC, ISO/IEC and ETSI standards and is the inventor and main practitioner of "fast tracking" of specifications through the standardisation process in International Standards Organisations (ISOs) such as the ISO and the IEC. Publications can be downloaded free of charge from http://www.ecma-international.org/.

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