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Ecma International creates TC45 to standardize Office Open XML File Formats

The new open standard safeguards the continued use of billions of existing documents

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Geneva, 9 December 2005:

At the General Assembly meeting on 8 December 2005, Ecma International has created Technical Committee 45 (TC45) to produce a formal standard for office productivity applications that is fully compatible with the Office Open XML Formats, submitted by Microsoft. The aim is to have this standard implemented on a wide set of tools and platforms.

The creation of TC45 was proposed by Apple, Barclays Capital, BP, the British Library, Essilor, Intel, Microsoft, NextPage., Statoil ASA and Toshiba that are co-sponsoring this initiative.

Opening Up Billions of Documents – By standardizing and fully documenting the Office Open XML formats, billions of existing Office documents can be converted to the Ecma XML standard format with no loss of data, formatting, properties, or capabilities. This will facilitate document contents access, search, use, integration and development in new and innovative ways. Documents and public records can also be created, archived, and maintained with long-term, widespread industry support.

"Documents are a fundamental means of personal and business communication, and the foundation of information archival," said Jan van den Beld, Secretary General of Ecma International. "The benefit of backward compatibility that this effort will provide is evident from the broad spectrum of sponsors that will work together under the formal Ecma standardisation process. Following publication in Ecma, the standard is to be submitted for adoption under the ISO/IEC JTC 1 process."

The substantial initial effort to include specifications for existing document types will amount to several thousands of pages. Additionally, TC45 will be responsible and be the governing body for enhancing the standard with new and innovative formats and features while maintaining backward compatibility. The third main responsibility of TC45 will be the ongoing maintenance of the standard. Participants are hopeful that they will complete the first edition of the standard before the end of 2006.

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 not-for-profit industry association of technology developers, vendors and users. Industry and other experts work together at Ecma to complete standards. Ecma submits the approved work for approval as ISO, ISO/IEC and ETSI standards and is the inventor and main practitioner of "fast tracking" of specifications through the standardization process in Global Standards Bodies such as the ISO. Publications can be downloaded free of charge from http://www.ecma-international.org/

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