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Contacts: WCIT 2004 Press Office: Marie-Claire Androulaki, +30 (210) 688-9258, mcandroulaki@cip.gr
WITSA: Anders Halvorsen, +1 703 284 5333, ahalvorsen@itaa.org

WITSA Presents Global IT Excellence Awards to Seven User Organizations

Athens, Greece – The World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA) May 20 honored seven organizations from around the world whose use of information technology has exhibited exceptional achievement. During the World Congress on Information Technology in Athens, WITSA presented its signature Global IT Excellence Awards to two organizations each within three broad categories: Public Sector Excellence, Private Sector Excellence, and Digital Opportunity. In addition, a Chairman's Award was presented.

Nominations for the WITSA IT Excellence Awards are made by WITSA member associations. The associations have autonomy in nominating and selecting the most qualified candidates in their respective country or region. In order to nominate a candidate, the WITSA member association must demonstrate the effectiveness of the program; approximate the number of people benefiting from the program; describe the degree of intensiveness of the program; and evaluate the level of innovation used in achieving the program's goals.

This year the Center for Digital Government worked with WITSA to oversee the awards selection process. CDG is a national research and advisory institute providing government, industry, and education leaders with decision support, research, and educational resources to help them effectively incorporate new technologies in the 21st century. Ms. Cathilea Robinett, Executive Director of the Center, presided over the awards ceremony.

"Candidates for the Global IT Excellence awards were chosen by IT experts from around the world who are part of our now-60-country WITSA industry network," said Harris N. Miller, President of WITSA and the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA). "Each of the winners has demonstrated leadership and innovation in their use of IT, and WITSA was proud to honor the winners here at the World Congress on Information Technology - the preeminent global IT executive conference," Miller said.

"WITSA selected some of the very best applications of IT from around the globe, based on a large pool of highly qualified candidates," said WITSA Chairman George Newstrom. "It was an honor for me to select the United States Agency for International Development as the winner of our special Chairman's Award. USAID has skillfully harnessed the technological strength of the United States in its effective use of information technology for development," Newstrom added.

About this Year's Award Winners

The **Public Sector Excellence Award** recognizes government authorities that use information technology to improve a national or local government's effectiveness in meeting the needs of its citizens; save time and money in government operations by eliminating inefficient practices and processes; and/or improve access to or the quality of services, communication and information within government.   This award also recognizes non-profit organizations that use information technology to improve the common good through programs with significant social benefits.

The winners of the Public Sector Excellence Award were:

Ministry of Communications and Information Technology Of Romania: eGovernment Initiatives

The Ministry of Public Finances of Romania has taken an unparalleled approach of transparency by disseminating economic and financial information through the Internet by its portal www.mfinante.ro. The valuable digital content of the Ministry's databases is now available to companies, NGOs, and citizens to help them evaluate different commercial and non-commercial organizations. Main data on more than 800,000 organizations, including balance sheets for the last four years are now available through the Internet to many millions of Romanians. In a transition economy, the initiative of the Ministry of Public Finances of Romania is of great help to various companies and citizens to reduce risk by providing information on the real status of a company, its observance of fiscal duties, and payment of excises. The information is offered free of charge.

Yokosuka City Electronic Bidding - Japan
As the number of parties seeking to do business with Yokosuka City increases, the city introduced e-Bids to improve administrative efficiency. Most tasks handled by bidding processors have been automated, while the results are automatically displayed online, real-time, and available to the public, ensuring transparency of data transactions. The cost for participation in bidding is low, while the system can be easily used, error-free with user-friendly design. The process has allowed bidding companies more competitive opportunities, resulting in less costly contracts, so that Yokosuka City achieved savings of $30 million (¥3 billion) per year in ordering construction works. Encouraged by e-Bids' popularity, Yokosuka City extended its use for purchasing and subcontracting. Yokosuka City is now regarded as the e-frontier of Japan and a model for other local governments.

The **Private Sector Excellence Award** recognizes for-profit information technology users whose innovative uses of information technology directly increase a business' ability to meet its objectives, improve its competitiveness or better serve its customer needs. A for-profit user of IT who creates an advantage in the design, development, manufacturing, marketing and/or distribution of products and services would be competitive for this award.

The winners of the Private Sector Excellence Award were:

Terra Payments - Canada
This automated risk management system for international payment transactions approves or declines every payment transaction in real time, and tracks each transaction throughout its lifecycle to improve the quality of the real-time decisions by exploiting patterns associated with legitimate versus fraudulent transactions. By implementing a highly automated system for real-time transaction-level risk management, Terra Payments has made it possible for merchants with limited skills and resources to safely and profitably engage in high-risk transactions.

East Japan Railway Company Suica System - Japan
East Japan Railway Company (JR East), the largest railway company in Japan, whose service includes the Tokyo Metropolitan Area, boasts the highest passenger volume in the world (measured in passenger-kilometers). A future-oriented company developing both hardware and software elements to provide better services, JR East introduced a contactless card called Suica (Super Urban Intelligent Card), replacing the magnetic cards that were previously used. The large-scale IC Card Automatic Fare Collection System (Suica system) is used at 547 stations. With its convenience, Suica has proven to be very popular with the passengers. The number of Suica users has increased dramatically and is still increasing (7.81 million Suica holders; 3.77 million Suica Pass holders; 4.04 million Suica IC Card holders at the date of Feb. 2, 2004). Suica system has been acknowledged worldwide with many countries expressing their interest in its convenience and integrity.

The **Digital Opportunity Award** recognizes individuals, academic institutions, corporations, NGOs or government authorities that have made a remarkable and successful effort at providing digital opportunities to those in need are eligible for this award. Nominees must help facilitate the deployment of information technology and use of the internet among inner city populations segments, or in towns, rural areas or cities in developing and least-developed countries in order to be considered for this award.

Winners of the Digital Opportunity were:

PEOPLink/CatGen – United States
PEOPLink is a non-profit organization guiding small and medium enterprises to participate in global e-commerce since 1996. Starting in 1999, PEOPLink has offered the CatGen (for "catalog generator") e-commerce platform, enabling any enterprise anywhere to create and maintain a database of product images, inventory counts, and other related business and item data which can then be used to support their own web catalog. More than 2,000 enterprises directly benefiting more than 200,000 individuals from 42 countries (including many of the poorest in the world) are currently posting more than 20,000 items and services on CatGen. None of these enterprises had previously considered offering their items on-line, especially via a web catalog that they themselves were able to manage. This initiative enables even the smallest enterprise in the poorest countries to benefit from international trade and the Internet via the same world class, on-line business systems usually available only to large enterprises in industrialized nations.

Korea Agency for Digital Opportunity and Promotion – Republic of Korea
Korea Agency for Digital Opportunity & Promotion (KADO), under authority of the Ministry of Information and Communication, was established in 1984 with the aim of bridging the digital divide at home and abroad. The agency was created to upgrade digital-life quality and enhance the national economy by ensuring the "informatization" of the deprived, typically the disabled, elderly, of low-income, aquaculture and agri/animal husbandry professionals, free access to information and communication services. KADO already has established Internet Access Centers in the countries like Cambodia, Romania, and Vietnam since 2002. The Centers consists of a computer training room, an Internet plaza, a seminar room and a management office. KADO also has invited three persons from the these countries to Korea and provided a training course for the operation and maintenance of the IAC.

The prestigious **Chairman's Award**, often chosen from the pool of candidates from all three categories, recognizes organizations whose initiatives demonstrate extraordinary insight, innovation, and collaboration to improve the use of ICT in business, government, or digital opportunity around the world.

The winner of the Chairman's Award was:

The United States Agency for International Development – United States

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is the largest country-to-country donor organization in the world. USAID operates in more than 100 of the poorest countries in the world, focusing on improving livelihoods, health, environment, education, and democracy.

Since the Agency was founded in 1961, it has focused on improving access to information and communication technology for its development programs, drawing on its experience in building capacity and on the technological strength of the United States to introduce a number of successes in applying information technology to development.

Today, USAID is a leader in helping developing nations close the digital divide and apply ICT to all sectors of development. Numerous USAID activities have an IT component, ranging from Teacher Training Resource Centers in Namibia to courtroom automation software in Mongolia, to a successful alliance with WITSA in ten countries, and from rural IT access in Peru to telecommunications training at the U.S. Telecommunications Training Institute (USTTI).

For USAID, IT is important both as a means to important development objectives as well as being a vibrant, growing economic sector. USAID's approach to IT development focuses on: (a) Creating a pro-competitive policy environment, (b) Stimulating private sector entrepreneurship, (c) Increasing access for under-served populations, and (d) Using IT as a development tool to harness the power of information and communications for sectors such as agriculture, democracy, education, environment, health, for women, humanitarian assistance, etc.

In 2002 and 2003, USAID spent an estimated $200M and leveraged $240M in outside contributions - all using IT for development purposes. Ninety-five percent of all USAID Missions have an IT activity, consisting of several hundred IT projects, and most recently, USAID launched the Last Mile Initiative, to reach the world's under-served populations.

The World Information Technology and Services Alliance **([WITSA](#))** is a consortium of information technology (IT) industry associations from 60 economies around the world, representing over 90 percent of the world's IT market. As the global voice of the IT industry, WITSA is dedicated to advocating policies that advance industry growth and development; facilitating international trade and investment in IT products and services; strengthening WITSA's national industry associations; providing members with a broad network of contacts; and overseeing the World Congress on Information Technology, the premier industry sponsored global IT policy event.