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MSF faces dramatic growth in scope and activity in 2008

Roger Ward, president, outlines strategy at NetEvents Barcelona

February 8th, 2008, Barcelona, Spain – The MultiService Forum (MSF) has dramatically strengthened its interoperability focus with the addition of two important new programmes to complement its much respected and well-established Global MSF Interoperability (GMI) programme. The MSF's new permanent NGN Interoperability Test Bed provides the industry with a test bed for focused testing of key emerging NGN interfaces. The MSF Certification Program provides vendor independent certification of critical NGN functionality. GMI continues to tie it all together by validating products in the latest standards based architectural framework using realistic global network deployment scenarios meaningful to major carriers.

Far from sidelining the importance of GMI 2008, each programme is a key element in a three-pronged strategy to meet the massive increase in NGN implementation around the globe and to advance the Forum's mission to help "make NGN's work" – according to Roger Ward, Office of the CTO, BT Group and President of the MSF. He was responding to a comment at NetEvents 2008 European Press Summit, Barcelona, Spain, suggesting that strong interest in the MSF Certification Programme and the MSF NGN Interoperability Test Bed might indicate a focus shift away from the massive biannual Global MSF Interoperability (GMI) events.

"On the contrary, GMI 2008 will be our highest profile interoperability event ever," replied Roger Ward. "In all our GMI events so far there has been a great deal of preliminary spadework necessary to lay the foundations for global IMS implementation. That work continues, of course, but this year GMI 2008 will also be addressing the exciting new services that can be build on an NGN – notably IPTV and other high value services that can ride on IMS – so we expect a lot more media 'buzz' this time. The permanent test bed, far from reducing the focus on GMI 2008, is already being acknowledged as a significant resource to enable our members to collaborate on testing in advance, and so be even better prepared for GMI 2008. Incidentally, the test bed is also generating a tremendous amount of aggregated, 'state of the industry' data for publication in future MSF whitepapers."

The MSF plans to test IMS based IPTV service integration and interoperability during GMI 2008 to help assess the maturity of IPTV solutions and identify gaps in the current industry standards. This is a significant task as IPTV must support both traditional broadcast and on-demand TV services in addition to enhanced services that include the presentation of native and foreign/third party programs based on presence, profile, device, convenience, and service/quality requirements. At the same time, the service providers must implement these new services without affecting end-to-end reliability, availability, scalability, and performance requirements. Other key areas announced for GMI 2008 include: testing of QoS control for multi-service IP networks serving both fixed and mobile clients; demonstration of important service enablers such as "location" information; and the interoperability of a Services Oriented Architecture (SOA) gateway with the core IMS capability.

The MSF permanent NGN Interoperability Test Bed at the UNH InterOperability Lab provides MSF members with a permanent environment to conduct focused interoperability testing of

MSF Implementation Agreements. The inaugural event, entitled the "Open Mc Interface Interoperability Event," will test the MSF "Mc Interface" Implementation Agreement based on 3GPP Release 7 specification of the MSC-Server / Media Gateway interface. Open implementation of this key interface is essential to the successful cost effective evolution of the mobile circuit switched domain to IP. As David Hutton, Standards Strategist, Vodafone put it: "GMI 2006 proved that IMS technologies and interfaces could work together in a live traffic environment, and that is key to Vodafone's NGN strategy. We see the MSF's test bed as an essential adjunct to the ongoing GMI programme, and very much in alignment with Vodafone's strategic goals. The MSF Permanent NGN Test Bed will help the industry deliver the open specification and multi-vendor interoperability that major carriers, such as Vodafone, demand."

The MSF Certification Programme was launched in the third quarter of 2007 and the first certifications will be announced shortly. The MSF's official certification laboratory, Iometrix, is testing and certifying compliance to the Forum's technical specifications. The initial program includes certifications of RTCP implementations of NGN networking components such as SIP end-points, SIP phones, residential gateways (CPE), access gateways, trunking gateways, media servers and session border gateways. RTCP is a protocol that allows the sender of a media stream to receive information, in the form of reports certified by both sender and receiver, about the packet loss, delay and jitter that were encountered by the RTP stream as seen by the recipient. This information is subsequently passed up to the management domain of the operator's network.

"RTCP will be an important tool for operators wishing to deploy NGNs, "according to Chris Gallon, Head of Systems, Fujitsu Telecommunications Europe Ltd. "However, because of the potential numbers of end points involved and the need for confidence in their measuring accuracy, the MSF believes that RTCP statistics will only be truly trusted when backed with a credible third party certification programme like this."

Vendors or service providers wishing to find out more about the MSF Certification Programme, MSF Permanent Test Bed Programme, Global MSF Interoperability Programme (GMI 2008) or MSF membership should contact the MultiService Forum at info@msforum.org.

About MSF

The MultiService Forum (MSF) is a global association of service providers, system suppliers and test equipment vendors committed to developing and promoting open-architecture, multiservice Next Generation Networks. Founded in 1998, the MSF is an open-membership organization comprised of the world's leading telecommunications companies. The MSF's activities include developing Implementation Agreements, promoting worldwide compatibility and interoperability of network elements, and encouraging input to appropriate national and international standards bodies.

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