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"Making Next Generation Networks Work"

MSF announces plans to broaden scope and initiate certification programs

Evian, France, Feb 22nd 2007 – Following a highly successful GMI 2006, the MSF is extending its sphere of activity to address the needs of Next Generation Networks (NGNs) and to launch a pilot certification program. Key elements in this decision – announced today at the NetEvents Press/Analyst Summit in Evian, France – will be the extension of MSF architecture to embrace web services and an industry leading certification programme.

"Last November's GMI report was the proof point the industry needed," explained Camille Mendler, Vice President of research at Yankee Group. "It demonstrated how far and how stringently IMS interoperability testing has progressed with the MSF's solid guidance. Now the agenda must turn to certification in a broader NGN context, particularly in the area of applications definition, management and integration."

Under the heading "We make NGNs work", Roger Ward, Office of the CTO, BT Group and President of the MSF, outlined the five key elements of the MSF's 2007/8 work programme. 1) extension of the MSF architecture from its communications network focus to include integration of web services, 2) a unified approach to QoS to minimise and contain differences in practical implementations, 3) evaluation of NGN interconnect scenarios and development of fully specified NNI interconnect points, 4) specification of a coherent approach to achieving resilience to overload in highly distributed and dynamic NGN implementations and 5) implementation of an MSF NGN certification programme with a Pilot Programme focused on delivering certifiable specifications based on MSF Implementation Agreements .

"As the technology matures we need to focus more on developing 'industrial strength' Implementation Agreements" that can be used by carriers in their NGN procurement programmes, explained Roger Ward. "A pilot NGN certification testing program will be a key aspect of our work this year with an initial focus on service interoperability. With April 2007 set as the target launch date, initial discussions with major test labs have been positive and the first round of certification testing could begin by the third quarter and be completed early in 2008. We are also exploring the need for a permanent interoperability test bed and discussions are well advanced with a leading interoperability lab to see what would be possible."

Andy Huckridge, Director of IMS Solutions, Spirent, endorsed this need: "GMI provides the industry with a serious opportunity for large scale co-operative testing at 2-year intervals. But, as the pace of development is speeding up, we also need an easily reproducible set of test cases as well as a less formal on-going test facility to keep pace."

"And MSF Release 4 really needs to provide for enhanced integration of web services into the applications frameworks" added Jim McEachern, Carrier VoIP Standards Strategist, Nortel. "Release 3 rightly focused on IMS, and included communications via Parlay and Parlay-X, but networks based on Service Oriented Architectural principles are in increasing demand, and therefore enhanced web services and other components, including broader interworking with non-trusted applications, needs to be addressed in Release 4 to really meet the needs of next generation networking."

More detail of the proposed certification programme will be released after the MSF's Montreal meeting on April 26th, when the date of the pilot program launch will also be finalised.

About MSF

The MultiService Forum (MSF) is a global association of service providers and system suppliers committed to developing and promoting open-architecture, multiservice switching systems. 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, and encouraging input to appropriate national and international standards bodies. For more information about the MSF and its members, visit the MSF web site at <http://www.msforum.org/>.