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Press Releases

July 22, 200

UNDP and Andersen Consulting, in cooperation with Markle Foundation, Launch Project at G-8 Summit to Bridge the Global Digital Divide

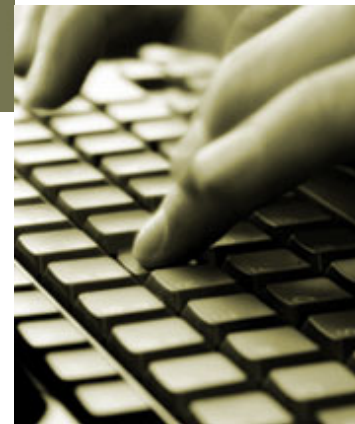
opportuNTy initiative Seeks to Extend the Benefits of the Network Economy and Society to All

OKINAWA, JAPAN - JULY 22, 2000) Responding to calls from leaders of the G-8 to bridge the global digital divide, a new initiative to be known as the *opportuNTy initiative* was launched today by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Andersen Consulting, in cooperation with the Markle Foundation and other potential partners. The initiative will design a strategic approach and help mobilize action on the ground from the international community to assist developing economies in pursuing the opportunities and benefits offered by the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) revolution. The aim is to use the power and efficiency of the ICT and the Internet to promote sustainable development in those countries and communities that are currently failing to benefit from the network revolution.

The *opportuNTy initiative* comes in accord with the G-8 "Okinawa Charter on the Global Information Society"; the "Comprehensive Co-operation Package to Address the International Digital Divide" of the Japanese government; and the "Global Call to Action" issued by President Clinton and endorsed today by a broad cross-section of the U.S. private sector. The *opportuNTy initiative* will involve three main components: setting an overall strategic approach for bridging the global digital divide before the decade is out; initiation and/or scaling up of a series of exemplar initiatives across the world over the next twelve months; and execution of a campaign to win the hearts and minds of all stakeholders in support of the real development benefits of ICT investment. The *opportuNTy initiative* will run for twelve months and report back in time for next year's G-8 Summit.

"We should not think in terms of a trade-off between Information and Communications Technologies and other developmental needs such as health and education. Technology is a powerful force to enhance the lives of people around the globe as well as a powerful engine of economic growth, said Vernon Ellis, International Chairman of Andersen Consulting. "We are proud to have played a leading role in creating this vitally important initiative which aims to ensure that everyone can benefit from the immense opportunities new technologies deliver. We look forward to working with partner organizations worldwide both in setting a strategy and in making a real difference on the ground and helping create a more sustainable future for all of us."

"The role that ICT can best play in supporting broader economic and social development is far from being fully understood," said Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of the UNDP, "but the price of delaying entry to the network revolution will rise sharply over time." He added, "If developing nations can be helped to put the right public policies in place, and attract private and public capital, then the applications from education to health services and micro-finance for the poor know no boundaries." He said the UNDP, which has a network of offices in 136 countries worldwide, will provide critical country support and leadership for the *opportuNTy initiative*.



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The *opportuNTy initiative* is intended to fully support the activities and strategic objectives of the G-8 Digital Opportunities Task Force (DOT) announced today. The implementation framework will suggest a concrete timetable and set targets for bridging the global digital divide before the decade is out. By the time of the 2001 G-8 meeting, this plan should contain a series of practical commitments from public, private, multilateral and charitable organizations and from governments of developed and developing nations, and for at least six immediate and concrete initiatives to act as exemplars for future work across the world. "The dedication of both G-8 and private sector resources so early in the global expansion of the information and communications technology should give us optimism that developing nations can match their most critical needs with the benefits the information revolution can provide," said Zoë Baird, President of the Markle Foundation. "It will take a concerted effort from the beginning to bring all stakeholders to the table to shape the needed strategies and policies in the public interest. The *opportuNTy initiative* can make an important contribution to these goals and the Markle Foundation is pleased to be a partner in it."

"Every day Andersen Consulting professionals work with our clients to change the way people live and work around the world. Through our work with the world's leading organizations, we have seen the value and learning that can be enabled by digital technologies," said Joe Forehand, global managing partner and CEO of Andersen Consulting. "This initiative will focus our energy and expertise on designing a strategy for bridging the widening digital divide. I know my partners and our employees share my enthusiasm for this task."

Andersen Consulting expects to contribute approximately \$3 million worth of personnel and other resources to the 12-month project, pro bono. The combined UNDP, Andersen Consulting, Markle Foundation, and other partner contributions are expected to total an initial commitment of at least \$5 million.

About the United Nations Development Programme

UNDP is part of the United Nations is committed to the principle that development is inseparable from the quest for peace and human security and that the United Nations must be a strong force for development as well as peace. With offices in 136 countries, UNDP's mission is to help countries in their efforts to achieve sustainable human development by assisting them to build their capacity to design and carry out development programs in poverty eradication, employment creation and sustainable livelihoods, the empowerment of women and the protection and regeneration of the environment, giving first priority to poverty eradication.

About Andersen Consulting

Andersen Consulting is an \$8.9 billion global management and technology consulting organization whose mission is to help its clients create their future. The firm works with clients from a wide range of industries to bring about far-reaching change by aligning their people, processes and technology with their strategy. Andersen Consulting has more than 65,000 people in 48 countries. Its home page address is <http://web.archive.org/web/20010820190617/http://www.ac.com/>.

About the Markle Foundation

The Markle Foundation works to realize the potential of emerging communications media and information technology to improve people's lives and promotes the development of communications industries that address public needs. Markle is the largest U.S. philanthropy devoted exclusively to working in the public interest as the information revolution unfolds and recently announced a \$100 million commitment to grants, investments and projects that seek to do so.

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