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For Immediate Release

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The DVB Project - purposeful, global evolution

LAS VEGA, April 6 1997S. The DVB Project, a world-wide consortium of broadcasters, manufacturers and regulatory bodies in over 30 countries, has been a phenomenal success, having grown from a mere 30 in 1993 to over 200 organisations in 1997. The DVB project has made possible a smooth worldwide evolution of television in the years ahead.

Broadcasting is an unique combination of arts, technology and business. It is a high-tech industry, but the technology is firmly in the service of programme makers. Helping to lead broadcast technology forward is the Digital Video Broadcasting Project (DVB), one of the most important broadcast developments of the decade.

Broadcasting is in the midst of its greatest evolutionary step in thirty years - it is going digital. Arriving soon also, because of this sea change of technology from the analog world to a digital world will come convergence.

There are different visions of the shape convergence will take - but it will be a gradual merging of broadcasting and "on-line" delivery into the home providing interactive programmes of one kind or another. Digital broadcasting will be a major lane on the information superhighway and the DVB project has made possible the tools needed to build it.

Five years ago, the technology for the major enabling mechanism for the digital broadcasting revolution, digital compression, reached a watershed. Compression is one of the key ways digital technology adds value to broadcasting - by multiplying the number of channels available or making HDTV possible. It became possible to make digital compression systems sufficiently good, and cheaply enough to be used in home receivers.

History shows that it is possible to introduce new technology with your company's own proprietary standards. Possible, but risky. Commonly used and widely agreed standards are a 'win-win' scenario. Manufacturers win because they have a larger market. The public wins because they have more choice and more affordable services.

Recognising this, many organisations, from broadcasters to manufacturers to regulatory bodies, including the European Broadcasting Union, stood strongly behind the creation of the DVB project, when it began four years ago. DVB has a simple aim - to agree specifications for all aspects of digital television broadcasting, which can be used by everybody.

The DVB project has grown in four years from a voluntary grouping of some thirty organisations across Europe, to over two hundred organisations in thirty countries worldwide. Its achievements have been spectacular.

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Today, the DVB Project has a sophisticated committee structure of groups discussing and agreeing technical, commercial and legal issues. It has moved on from that first digital satellite standard to produce standards for all broadcast means, satellite, large area cable, local area cable and earth-bound transmitters. It has also prepared specifications, guidelines, and recommendations for the many ancillary parts of digital broadcasting.

Specifications developed by the DVB project in 1996 included Terrestrial digital television, and a series for 'return channels', which in the years ahead will give broadcasters the option of adding interactivity to their digital programmes.

Several years ago, the DVB Project prepared a set of guidelines for first generation digital television satellite and cable receivers. The DVB Project is now preparing for the next generation of receiver guidelines. In the near future, television will provide much improved vision and sound quality - this is 'high definition television', or HDTV. All DVB broadcast systems are capable of broadcasting HDTV, whenever broadcasters, set makers, and the public are ready. The new guidelines for digital television receivers, now being prepared, will reflect this.

What's more, this year, the discussion in the DVB project is turning to the computer-like programming language that receivers should use - the 'Application Programming Interface', or API. Agreement on an API will make receivers today more universal, and it will be one of the bridges to tomorrow's world of digital convergence. In this way the DVB project can continue to pave the way for the long march to full digital service convergence.

Background

The Digital Video Broadcasting Project (DVB) is a consortium of over 200 broadcasters, manufacturers, network operators and regulatory bodies in more than 30 countries worldwide, committed to designing a global standard for the delivery of digital television. Numerous broadcast services using DVB standards are now operational, in Europe, North and South America, Africa, Asia, and Australasia.