

PRESS RELEASE

Asian-African Partnerships for Business Development with Free and Open Source Software

Connecting InWEnt supported programmes across the continents

Bonn, Manila, Accra – This year Software Freedom Day will be celebrated globally on the 19th of September 2009. For this occasion, InWEnt has brought together its programme partners from Asia and Africa in an Internet Chat where they met and discussed opportunities for cooperation.

Software Freedom Day is a global happening – around the world different events are taking place to draw attention to the topic of free and open source software, its benefits and deployment possibilities. In Hamburg, Germany for instance a trade fair in the City-House Bambeck will give local companies the opportunity to present their open source products and business models. In Pretoria, South Africa, the Department for Science and Technology is hosting an event with lectures, live programming and live installations, and in the Philippino town Angeles Software Freedom Day is highlighted by conference including workshops and a programmer's competition.

What better occasion to bring together African and Asian InWEnt (Capacity Building International, Germany) partners to promote the use of free and open source software in developing countries? Petra Hagemann (InWEnt Project Manager) explains: „We are using this year's Software Freedom Day to strengthen the intercontinental dialogue and promote south-south cooperation. Our aim is to create synergies and encourage knowledge exchange between our development programme partners."

The InWEnt-partners Nnenna Nwakanma (Council Chair of the Free Software and Open Source Foundation for Africa, FOSSFA) in Accra, Ghana and Dr. Francisco Sarmiento III (IOSN – International Open Source Network, IOSN) from Manila, Philippines were connected via internet chat last week with InWEnt-representatives in Bonn and South Africa to discuss cooperation opportunities. One outcome of the three hour chat was the decision on the attendance of a FOSSFA representative at the ASIA SOURCE 3, a conference organised within the framework of the InWEnt supported Asian programme it@foss. ASIA SOURCE 3 is a six day, learning and networking event where experts come together to exchange their experiences with free and open source software. The ASIA SOURCE event was successfully held in Indonesia and India and will take place this November 2009 in the Philippines. This time Africa is on board.

At ASIA SOURCE 3 the FOSSFA representative will present the activities of the pan-African association, including the InWEnt supported programme ict@innovation. In addition, FOSSFA will exchange experiences on FOSS certification schemes with IOSN and will be made acquainted with the organisation of ASIA SOURCE3 so they can replicate the format at their bi-annual conference „Idlelo“. The next Idlelo is scheduled to take place 2010 in Ghana. Here, an IOSN representative will be invited to partake and present the Asian experiences with free and open source software. During the past three years IOSN have implemented the programme

it@foss with the support of InWEnt in South East Asia. Through this programme trainers have been equipped to pass their knowledge for example on open source application or business models to small, local IT enterprises. Further, European companies were matched with Asian companies. African organisations can learn from these experiences. Nnenna Nwakanma confirms at the end of the chat, „It was a very interesting exchange and we look forward to future collaboration”.

FOSSFA is currently implementing the programme ict@innovation in Eastern and Southern Africa with the support of InWEnt. The programme ict@innovation promotes the local development of open source software, the qualification of local IT experts and the promotion of local IT industries. This summer first trainings were conducted in South Africa and Uganda and at the moment the third training takes place in Tanzania. One of the participants of the Uganda training, Isaac Kigen, considers the building of local capacity for open source software a development opportunity for himself and his continent: „The training comes at a time when the world is embracing free and open source software and Africa should not be left behind.“ The next ict@innovation training will take place this autumn in Mozambique.

Contact persons for background information, interviews and contacts to partner organisations:

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InWEnt

InWEnt – Capacity Building International, Germany, is a non-profit organisation with worldwide operations dedicated to human resource development, advanced training, and dialogue. Our capacity building programmes are directed at experts and executives from politics, administration, the business community, and civil society. We are commissioned by the German federal government to assist with the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations. In addition, we provide the German business sector with support for public private partnership projects. Through exchange programmes, InWEnt also offers young people from Germany the opportunity to gain professional experience abroad.

Further information on InWEnt's IT-Programms: www.it-inwent.org/

Further information on ict@innovation <http://www.ict-innovation.fossfa.net/>

Further information on it@foss <http://www.it-foss.org/>

FOSSFA

FOSSFA is the premier African FOSS organization, and was founded under the auspices of the Bamako Bureau of the African Information Society Initiative within the mandate given by African Governments in 1995 to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). The Vision of FOSSFA is to promote the use of FOSS and the FOSS model in African development,

and the organization supports the integration of FOSS in national policies. FOSSFA also coordinates, promotes, and adds value to African FOSS initiatives, creativity, industry, expertise, efforts and activities at all levels. FOSSFA partners with development organizations who share these goals towards a participatory and gender-mainstreamed sustainable development and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals in Africa. <http://fossfa.net>

IOSN

The International Open Source Network (IOSN) is a Center of Excellence for FOSS in the Asia-Pacific Region. It shapes its activities around Free/Open Source Software (FOSS) technologies and applications. Via three centres of excellence – IOSN ASEAN+3, IOSN PIC (Pacific Island Countries), and IOSN South Asia, based in Manila, Suva and Chennai respectively, the IOSN is tasked specifically to facilitate and network FOSS advocates and human resources in the region. The vision is that developing countries in the Asia-Pacific Region can achieve rapid and sustained economic and social development by using affordable yet effective FOSS ICT solutions to bridge the digital divide. <http://www.iosn.net/>

Further information on the ASIA SOURCE 3 http://www.it-foss.org/e82/e237/NewsDetail741/index_eng.html