



## Press Release

### **Computer Refurbishment Centre Opens for Business in Kampala** *Government of Uganda, UNIDO and Microsoft improve access to affordable technology for local small and medium-sized enterprises.*

**KAMPALA, Uganda — 12 June 2008** — Information and communications technology (ICT) has proven to be a powerful tool for business growth around the world, but in Uganda, where small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the cornerstones of the local economy, the shortage of high-quality, affordable hardware and software has been a barrier to expansion. A partnership signed in 2007 between the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and Microsoft Corp to support business opportunities and entrepreneurship among local SMEs has aimed to help address that problem by linking from end to end the country's access to affordable PCs and ICT training. At a ceremony today in Kampala, the president of Uganda, His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, represented by the country's prime minister, joined the director-general of UNIDO and the corporate vice president of the Microsoft Unlimited Potential Group to open the Uganda Green Computers Co, a computer refurbishment centre, making PC ownership more relevant, affordable and accessible for local SMEs and entrepreneurs today.

"The opening of the PC refurbishment centre in Kampala marks a major step forward for the economic opportunities available to SMEs, the majority of employers in Uganda," said Ham-Mukasa Mulira, minister of information and communications technology of Uganda. "Access to affordable PCs will help SMEs increase their productivity, share information, grow their business, create local jobs and ultimately help make Uganda a more competitive, knowledge-based economy."

“Fostering entrepreneurship is critical to economic growth in Africa. No economy can thrive and be competitive without dynamic SMEs,” said Kandeh K.Yumkella, director-general of UNIDO. “We are enthused by this project because PC refurbishment centres provide one of the missing links for many micro and informal businesses in the country.”

Funded primarily by local private and public sector investors, the Uganda Green Computers Co’s business model has been designed with commercial and environmental sustainability at the fore. Informed by a commissioned survey of the market for refurbished PCs in Uganda by Makerere University in Kampala, the centre will aim to refurbish 10,000 quality-brand PCs a year and resell them at a retail price estimated to start at \$175 (299,000 Ugandan shillings), one-third of the price of a new business PC. The PCs will include a one-year warranty and genuine Windows software.

“There is a significant market in Uganda for refurbished PCs, but until now no one has addressed the issues of affordability, training and recycling in a way that makes sense long-term,” said Patrick Bitature, chairman of Uganda Green Computers Co. “The centre in Kampala has created 22 new jobs already and is expected to grow to over 50 within a year. It will help develop a local and regional industry for responsible and profitable PC refurbishment and recycling for the future.”

The centre is scaled to prepare PCs for resale to local SMEs across Uganda through a network of distributors that is expected to grow from six to 20 within one year. The qualified local staff of the centre will offer training on after-sales support and marketing to the distributors. For its distributor network, the Uganda Green Computers Co also relies on District Business Information Centres, which UNIDO has established throughout the country to provide SMEs with access to the internet as well as business advisory and ICT services.

Providing a full life-cycle solution, the Uganda Green Computers Co offers a programme for the return of refurbished PCs at the end of their useful life and the responsible disassembly of the hardware. The centre will reuse working components such as memory (RAM), resell high-value material including copper and circuit boards, and locally recycle simple materials such as steel and plastic. The centre will work with regional or global recyclers for the proper disposal of toxic substances such as lead glass.

“We have been working with UNIDO over the last two years to help create business opportunities for SMEs in Africa,” said Will Poole, corporate vice president of the Unlimited Potential Group at Microsoft. “Our investments in sustainable PC refurbishment practices and programmes in

Uganda are all the more rewarding given the potential we see for ICT to foster innovation, create jobs and accelerate the competitiveness of local SMEs.”

As part of Microsoft’s Unlimited Potential initiative to enable sustained social and economic opportunity for underserved communities around the world, the company will continue to work with UNIDO to determine how to expand the PC refurbishment programme to other countries in Africa. Working with governments, intergovernmental organisations, nongovernmental organisations and industry partners, both UNIDO and Microsoft strive to accomplish a major milestone — to reach the next 1 billion people who are not yet realising the benefits of technology — by 2015.

#### **About UNIDO**

UNIDO is a specialized agency of the United Nations system that works towards improving the quality of life of the world’s poor by helping countries achieve sustainable industrial development. UNIDO views industrial development as a means of creating employment and income to overcome poverty. It helps developing countries and economies in transition to produce goods they can trade on the global market. It also helps provide the tools – training, technology, and investment – to make them competitive. At the same time, it encourages production processes that will neither harm the environment nor place too heavy a burden on a country’s limited energy resources. UNIDO has 172 Member States and has its headquarters in Vienna, Austria (please visit [www.unido.org](http://www.unido.org)).

#### **About Microsoft**

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq “MSFT”) is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realise their full potential.

#### **About Microsoft EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa)**

Microsoft has operated in EMEA since 1982. In the region Microsoft employs more than 16,000 people in over 64 subsidiaries, delivering products and services in more than 139 countries and territories.

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