Announcement:

Portugal to support ITU's Connect a School, Connect a Community Initiative through eSchool International

On the occasion of the quadrennial *ITU World Telecommunication Development Conference* held from 24 May – 4 June 2010 in Hyderabad, India, and in response to an open call for partners by Mr Sami Al-Basheer, Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Mr Paulo Campos, Vice-Minister of Public Works and Communications, announced today that, through eSchool International Portugal will provide comprehensive technological solutions for schools in a number of interested countries as part of the *Connect a School, Connect a Community* initiative, along the following lines:

(1) Laptops will be provided in one school per country
(2) Laptops will be equipped with software and educational content
(3) A smart board will be installed in each classroom, connected to the laptops to allow for interactive e-learning
(4) Wireless modems would be installed in the schools along with a school server
(5) The local partner will provide broadband internet connectivity
(6) A multi-partner, international group of experts will support project implementation, including the development of a national school connectivity plan

This announcement follows through on a commitment made by Portugal during the ITU World Telecommunications Policy Forum (WTPF), in Lisbon on 24th April 2009. Ten countries will benefit from this first phase, with the initiative supporting the launch of one connected school project per country. Each project will test innovative approaches using ICT in the classroom, measure the impact, showcase the benefits and share lessons learned.

Portugal's eSchool International is an initiative that acts as a major engine for promoting broadband internet access, as well as the e-inclusion of students, teachers and citizens in general. Through this action, Portugal aims to help participating countries experience the benefits of integrating ICTs in schools, making information and knowledge available for learning activities.

Connect *a School, Connect a Community* is a public-private partnership launched by ITU to promote broadband Internet connectivity for schools in developing countries around the world. Why focus on schools? Because connected schools can provide ICT access and education both to children and youth as well as their communities, serving as community ICT centres for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, including women and girls, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities. Together with partners, these centres will leverage ICTs to improve the economic and social development of their communities by providing ICT- based training on basic life skills (language literacy, numeracy and basic ICT literacy) along with training that develops business and ICT-specialized skills.

The Connect a School, Connect a Community online platform provides a range of resources and promotes understanding and awareness among government decision makers, donors and partners on the need for coordinated policies, regulations and practices that promote school connectivity and community benefits. This includes assisting interested governments in developing their own national school connectivity plans.

NB: ITU and Portugal will implement this partnership each using their own resources according to their respective rules and procedures. As per its internal policies, Portugal will donate laptops directly to participating schools/governments involved in implementing the project.

The Portuguese Government assigns to *Fundação para as Comunicações Móveis* (Foundation for Mobile Communications) the competencies for the overall management of the e-School International program, in the framework of the cooperation with ITU.