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New ODF Interoperability Initiatives Launched At Dutch Government Workshop

The Hague, June 17, 2009. New ODF interoperability initiatives were unveiled this week at an international conference organized by the Dutch government, which has mandated ODF for reading, writing, exchange and publication of documents and also initiated a requirement to ask for ODF when issuing or renewing IT contracts. The Dutch government program [Netherlands in Open Connection](#) and the [OpenDoc Society](#) cosponsored the two-day ODF “plugfest” at the Royal Library in The Hague, where vendors and open source projects were able to test their ODF capabilities with each other in real-world, collaborative scenarios.

“Events like the Hague ODF workshop underscore the commitment on the part of ODF government adopters and implementers to build on what has already been achieved regarding ODF interoperability and to continue to make improvements,” said ODF Alliance Managing Director Marino Marcich. “ODF interoperability is already at a high level, and with continued leadership from national governments and vendors, it will continue to improve at a rapid pace.”

Last year the Dutch government adopted a national policy making support for ODF a mandatory requirement for all agencies and applications. The latest effort by the Dutch government was part of a broader policy encouraging the use of open standards within the public and semi-public sector in the Netherlands. The ODF “plugfest” this week in the Hague was the first in a series of planned events whose ultimate goal is to achieve full, seamless interoperability for the entire feature set of ODF across all suppliers, platforms and supported technologies. All ODF implementers and those considering implementing support were invited to participate.

In his [opening remarks](#) welcoming participants, Frank Heemskerk, Netherlands Minister for Foreign Trade, said: “In making ODF support compulsory, the Netherlands can rightly be called a forerunner. This workshop is an example of this, because it is the place to share knowledge with each other.” He challenged participants, noting “ODF applications must have the right degree of interoperability. During this workshop, we are going to test that interoperability. We also have to come up with a joint course of action for developing effective ODF support in each other's products and we must establish a testing framework.”

“The fact that this ODF Interoperability Workshop was organized is a clear sign that we are moving in the next phase in supporting ODF,” said Ineke Schop, Programm Manager at Nederland Open in Verbinding. “The use of open standards rely on available implementations and interoperability comes via these implementations. So I am extremely pleased with the support and commitment from vendors and open source projects at the workshop.”

With ODF now nearly universal, the event yielded several practical outcomes that will help implementers build on the level of ODF interoperability that has already been achieved.

- **Virtual “plugfests” announced.** Participants, who included representatives from over forty organizations worldwide and 12 vendors who have implemented support for ODF, agreed that the scenario-based testing of ODF support in each other's products was an effective means to advance interoperability. Several bugs impeding greater interoperability between and among ODF-supporting software were uncovered at the event and corrected in real time. Given the positive reception from participants, a web site will be developed where virtual “plugfests” can be conducted online.
- **Officeshots.org updated and offered to all vendors.** An ODF file may look nice on your screen while you are working on it in its native application, but how does it look to your collaborator who may be using a different brand of software? Enhancements to Officeshots.org, which lets you compare output quality of office applications, were unveiled at the event and made available to all vendors. After uploading a document to officeshots.org, the site will deliver the print, screen and code output as produced by a variety of different productivity applications - in different versions and across operating system platforms.
- **ODF implementations notes to be published.** Participants agreed on the merits of publishing implementation notes that would accompany the release of their ODF-supporting software. These notes would explain the design decisions that went into their ODF implementation and in the process help achieve maximum interoperability between and among ODF-supporting software.

“Thanks in no small measure to the rise of vendor-neutral file formats like ODF, dozens of new and innovative productivity tools are now arriving on the market, with vendors vying for the mantle of interoperability and openness,” said the ODF Alliance's Marcich. “We commend the Dutch government and the OpenDoc Society for highlighting, in a pragmatic and results-oriented manner, both what has been already achieved, and the opportunities and challenges lying ahead.”

About the ODF Alliance:

The OpenDocument Format Alliance is an organization of governments, academic institutions, non-government organizations and industry dedicated to informing policy makers, IT administrators and the public on the benefits and opportunities of ODF.