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## MICROSOFT TO OPEN PAKISTAN OPERATION

*WORLD'S LEADING SOFTWARE COMPANY COMMITS TO INVESTMENT IN PAKISTANI IT SECTOR IN MEETING WITH PREMIER SHERIF, WILL ASSIST GROWTH OF 'DIGITAL ECONOMY'*

26 January 1999

Islamabad, Pakistan

In a meeting with Pakistani Premier Nawaz Sherif, executives from Microsoft Middle East today announced that Microsoft will open an office in Pakistan. The news marks the beginning of a series of initiatives from the world's leading software company, designed to foster a dynamic and thriving information technology industry in the country. "Pakistan is a market with huge technology potential, and Microsoft is ready to help in realising that potential by investing in, and working with, government, businesses and computer users," said Bahram Mohazzebi, general manager of Microsoft GEM (Gulf and Eastern Mediterranean).

Announcing the move, Mohazzebi was joined by Microsoft Middle East regional director Emre Berkin and Microsoft GEM product marketing manager Murad Lakhdar. The effects of the move will be felt immediately in Pakistan with new pricing, software licensing and educational initiatives aimed at helping the country's growing base of information technology users.

"Pakistan has met so many challenges as a nation since it was founded. Today it faces a new challenge: the challenge of the information age. That challenge goes up to, and way beyond, the Year 2000: it means bringing a whole new way of working as a competitive player in the global economy, the digital economy. Our goal is to be here when we're needed, helping to bring the full potential of that future to fruition," said Mohazzebi.

The first obstacle in the path to that vision is the endemic rate of software piracy in Pakistan, where the use of illegally copied software is widely devaluing the IT investments being made in the public and private sectors. A professional local software and hardware market cannot thrive while illegal copies flood the market: resellers are unable to invest in staff training and customer support services and local software developers cannot anticipate returns on their work that allow them to invest in providing high quality locally developed solutions.

In addition to these factors, international IT companies are generally unwilling to invest in markets where illegal software dominates. Microsoft has established a track record across the Middle East of working with governments and private interests alike to address the issue, and has followed this work in every case by establishing a local presence in the markets concerned.

"We will be working ever more actively with government officials, aiming to share with them a view of the economical advantages that can be achieved by addressing the illegal software problem. It is our hope and desire to help them in evaluating the benefits of copyright protection legislation, and to show them how other markets in this region have moved to establish strong and dynamic information technology capabilities," commented Mohazzebi. "As we progress towards the global information economy, these moves will play a vital role in maintaining and building upon the hard work and competitiveness of Pakistani entrepreneurs and make a real contribution to the national economy."

"Microsoft Middle East has offices in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and in the UAE. We are opening up new offices in Lebanon and Kuwait. Today we are announcing that we are also embarking on a long term commitment to Pakistan by establishing a presence here,"

Mohazzebi stated. "A commitment to work with the government to reduce piracy, to bring technology education to schools and the workplace, and a commitment to drive the growth of an advanced technology industry and market in Pakistan."

Microsoft has established a unique track record of investment in Middle East markets, including the availability of flexible and attractive licensing packages and discounts for educational establishments, a key long term investment target for the company. "Where we have committed to investment, we have seen reductions of up to 90% on the cost of software for education, free training packages for resellers and users alike, large scale technology transfer exercises and the establishment of highly professional reseller resources which benefit information technology users. It is our intention to bring these resources to Pakistan," stated Mohazzebi.

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