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Press Release

For immediate publication

**ORBICOM Network of UNESCO Chairs in Communications
A Mission and Philosophy Supported by Innovative Strategies**

ORBICOM, the Network of UNESCO Chairs in Communications, an exciting initiative dedicated to international development and communications was officially inaugurated on 24 November 1995 at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. A unique collaboration of national and international academics, policy-makers and managers, journalists and media specialists, representatives of industry and technology, public relations and advertising consultants, ORBICOM is dedicated to favoring practices in the various fields of communication, in particular in the service of sustainable development and in the context of globalization.

With the support of UNESCO and the University of Quebec at Montreal, ORBICOM was established in May 1994, under the direction of Madame Thérèse Paquet-Sévigny, formerly Vice President of Communication at Société Radio-Canada/Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (1983-1987) and Assistant Secretary General of Information for the United Nations (1987-1992) and currently Chair of UNESCO at the University of Quebec at Montreal. ORBICOM forms the global link for 25 Chairs in Communications which, through telecommunications, will unite over 300 representatives of all communication disciplines and an unlimited number of international experts in these fields.

ORBICOM seeks to broaden the scope of exchange and cooperation, both on national and international levels, among those working in the field of communications. ORBICOM's objective is to facilitate the international liaison between the scientific and professional communications communities and specialized industries in order to strengthen the exchange of information and to establish new models for the transfer of expertise.

Preliminary research undertaken by ORBICOM: UNESCO Chairs in Communications, headquartered at the University of Quebec at Montreal, demonstrates that international cooperation among these groups is not only possible, it is critical.

Nine ORBICOM chairs have already been established: Barcelona and Madrid (Spain), Bogota (Columbia), Montevideo (Uruguay), Sofia (Bulgaria), Vilnius (Lithuania), Budapest (Hungary), Moscow (Russia) and Montreal. Further, throughout the world, over 60 individuals, respected for their contributions both to international development and to communications, have become associate members of ORBICOM. (For a complete list of ORBICOM Board Members, consult final pages of this document.)

The philosophy which guides the action plans of the ORBICOM Network is founded on five basic principles:

- within the perspective of the development of individuals, organizations and societies, promote the development of communications, with the understanding that development, participation and communications are inextricably linked;
- support the process of democratization and good governance which, in the context of increasingly complex development, challenges the roles of governments and public administrations and which makes necessary the improved circulation of information and a greater participation by citizens in public affairs;

- present policy-makers with a new understanding of the role of communications in both the orientation and the application of strategic policies and programmes of international development;
- focus on policy-makers who, regardless of their geographical location or their areas of expertise, influence the development of communications and its structures. Both strategists and strategic players, these policy-makers have a concrete impact on the social dynamic;
- respecting global plurality, favor activities which are multinational, multisectorial, multidisciplinary and multilingual involving those from a diversity of cultures, philosophies and experiences.

Based on this strategic position, ORBICOM will focus on seven identified areas of research, expertise and action: communications and international development (diplomatic relations, bilateral and multilateral aide policies and decision-making processes); national information policies and communications law; development of new models for transferring knowledge and expertise to countries in transition and developing nations; institutional and organizational communications; media development and management; public relations, public affairs and advertising; education and professional ethics.

To accomplish this mission, the ORBICOM Network has devised a nine point action plan:

- stimulate the exchange of knowledge and expertise in communications in the areas of teaching and research via presentations and secondments;
- establish an exchange program of academics and professionals who will offer their expertise to countries in transition or in development;
- develop an electronic newsletter which will allow for the interaction of the scientific and academic communities, communications practitioners, specialized industries, ministries and governments working in the fields of communications and international development;
- organize conferences, symposia and meetings on various communications-related themes;
- develop a program of specialized publications dealing with international communications;
- create a pool of specialists working in different sectors of communications;
- provide expert advice to UNESCO;
- establish an international board of directors whose members will represent both scientific and professional concerns.

Notwithstanding the special association which exists between the United Nations and UNESCO, ORBICOM will develop independent relationships with partners, governments and their representatives, private and public organizations and decision-makers in order to establish policies, programmes and/or projects which enhance international development and communications.

The originality of ORBICOM: the Network of UNESCO Chairs in Communications is based on its intention to stimulate exceptional international cooperation among the scientific community, communications professionals and industries specialized in communications. The enthusiasm with which this initiative has been met is proof of the urgent need for this world-wide liaison among those working in the fields of communications and international development. This enthusiasm augers well for the success of this innovative, international collaboration.

ORBICOM NETWORK BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors is comprised of 15 members of whom six are chosen from the full members (Chairs), six from associate members and three ex-officio members (the Rector of the University of Quebec at Montreal or his/her representative, the Director-General of UNESCO or his/her representative and the Secretary General of ORBICOM).

Ex-officio Members

Claude Corbo, Rector, University of Quebec at Montreal
Alain Modoux, Director, Division of Communication, UNESCO
Thérèse Paquet-Sévigny, Secretary General of ORBICOM

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