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PRESS RELEASE

New Investment Will Reduce Communication Costs and Create Business Opportunities

World Teleconnect International (WTI) and USAID announced today that WTI will make a multi-million dollar investment to establish Macedonia as their operational and technology hub for the Balkan region. WTI will introduce state-of-the-art technology for handling and routing calls between Macedonia, the wider region and the rest of the world. This technology could help significantly reduce telecommunication costs in Macedonia, saving money for consumers, lowering the cost of business, and opening opportunities in industries — such as call centers and business process outsourcing — where telecommunication costs are an important success factor.

The USAID Macedonia Competitiveness Project (MCP) Innovation Center was instrumental in bringing about this new investment. “We felt that there was an opportunity to reduce Macedonia’s telecom costs by adopting technology that allows international calls to connect directly to global telecom networks instead of routing through Germany, as is done now,” said Zarko Pop Ililev, Director of the Innovation Center. “We saw that WTI offered such technology and we presented a business case study and local partnership opportunities to them, which helped result in this positive outcome.

“I want to thank the staff of the Innovation Center for their work in bringing WTI to Macedonia,” said Johan Helmond, Chief Executive Officer of WTI Macedonia. “They presented a clear case of why we needed to locate here and establish Skopje as a regional hub for the delivery of our services. Not only did they help with the investment decision, but their team and local networks have allowed for a rapid roll-out of this project.”

NOTE TO EDITORS:

Based in Holland, **World Teleconnect International B.V.** (WTI) is a global communications service provider offering wholesale and retail telephony services using both conventional circuit-switched and Internet protocol (VoIP) telephony. The company has already registered an office in Skopje, is in the process of applying for appropriate licenses and is establishing a series of local partnerships with help from the USAID Competitiveness Project Innovation Center. WTI expects to launch the technology platform within the coming period.

The USAID Competitiveness Project established **The Innovation Center** in April 2010 to assist innovators and innovative companies in adopting innovations, creating new products or services, and commercializing existing innovations. The Center is developing a pool of advisors, service providers and resources within and outside of Macedonia that can assist entrepreneurial business ventures to be successful. The Center will coach and guide entrepreneurs through

every step necessary to realize business success from an innovation, linking innovators to specific knowledge, technology and financial resources needed.

The American people, through **USAID**, have invested nearly **\$500 million** in Macedonia since 1993. USAID is implementing projects that increase investment, create jobs, reduce corruption and improve the quality of education in Macedonia. These initiatives support Macedonia's transition to a stable democracy and its successful integration into the European Union. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.