

Brazil Hosts UN Conference on Digital Inclusion

Contributed by Alana Gandra
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For the first time, Brazil is going to host the world conference "Wireless Internet Opportunities for Poor Communities in Latin America." The event is part of a series of eight conferences in various countries about various themes related to wireless broadband applications.

In Brazil it will take place in the Federation of Industries of Rio de Janeiro (Firjan), on February 22-23, in Rio.

According to the Firjan, the conference, sponsored by the Federation in conjunction with the Wireless Internet Institute and the United Nations ICT Task Force and the government of the state of Rio de Janeiro, wants to identify the extant obstacles impeding access to digital inclusion because of local policies and regulations.

Over 100 mayors from Brazilian and Latin American cities, as well as government officials, will participate in the event.

Brazil's General Budget of the Union foresees for this year US\$ 79 million for the creation of a thousand "Casas Brasil", telecenters that will have computers with access to the Internet, besides culture points and community radios. The idea is to allow the less privileged people known as Classes D and E in Brazil to have access to new technologies.

The secretary of Information Logistics and Technology from the Planning Ministry, Rogério Santanna, said in an interview that the Brazilian government is studying the creation of recycling centers for older computers that belonged to the public administration so that they can be refurbished and made available to the programs of digital inclusion.

Asked about the recent encounter of President Lula and the president of Microsoft, Bill Gates, Santanna, said that there was no conversation between Gates and the Brazilian government about open source software.

"The free software initiative is a strategic alternative for the Brazilian government to reduce costs, to reduce the dependence on suppliers. We are working, here in the Ministry to develop new and cheaper computer models that are more appropriate to the country."

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