

## Brazil Closer to Get Its US\$ 100 Linux Laptop

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The US\$ 100 laptop prototype (about 240 reais) was presented this Wednesday, November 16, in the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) as the great solution for the digital inclusion of needy children in developing countries like Brazil.

The goal of the MIT's (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) Media Laboratory is to offer the equipment, in the coming years, to the six largest developing countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia (Brazil, Nigeria, Egypt, India, China and Thailand).

In the speech he made Wednesday representing Brazil in the World Summit on Information Society, Brazilian Culture Minister, Gilberto Gil, said that Brazil is negotiating the acquisition of the laptop with the MIT. He did not mention any specific deadline, however.

According to the president and founder of the MIT's Media Lab, Nicholas Negroponte, "this is an educational project that is going to help to solve the problem of the digital division in the world". According to him, if the project becomes viable, it will also be offered to other poor countries.

The US\$ 100 laptop, which can work on dynamo, battery or electricity, has the size of a book and a brilliant green color - to please the children and convey an environmental message.

The MIT has decided not to take orders for less than one million units and the machines have to be paid in advance. Negroponte believes that the first shipments of the new computers will start by the end of 2006 or beginning of 2007.

Negroponte highlighted that the product will not be sold in stores. The idea is to sell the Linux-based laptop only to those Education Ministries of countries committed to the policy of "One Computer for Child."

The president of the MIT's Media Lab visited Brazil in July to present his project to President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, but said he is not sure yet whether Brazil will buy the equipment.

According to him, Lula seemed very enthusiastic, but the ministers involved in the project negotiation left the government soon after the meeting in Brasília.

"Doing business with governments is very difficult," commented Negroponte. "The high echelon shows lots of excitement, but the levels below are very bureaucratic".

Negroponte said that he was already contacted by the Brazilian industry to launch the laptop commercially, but that his goal is to work with the governments.

"Education is a public good. Turning the back on the governments would be a kind of penalty, a bad way of doing things", explained the president of the MIT's Media Lab, adding that he will dedicate the rest of his life to the cause of digital inclusion.

"I won't do anything else but that, starting now," he guaranteed.

The MIT Laptop can do almost all the operations of a regular computer, but store a great volume of data. It uses free Linux software as its operating system and a wireless connection to access the Internet.

For those who have no electricity and cannot buy batteries there's the crank (dynamo) option. One minute of cranking offers at least 10 minutes of connection for data reception, and it might offer as much as 40 minutes of operation. The MIT admits, however, that the crank is not satisfactory for sending data.

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