

For Immediate Release

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RETAILERS AND MANUFACTURERS EXPLORE NEW GLOBAL RETAIL SUPPLY CHAIN INITIATIVE

Paris, France, May 7, 1999—More than 20 leading international manufacturers, retailers and organizations recently met and have joined forces to develop new global supply chain standards to better serve the world's consumers.

The Global Manufacturing and Retail Initiative's goal is to champion efficiencies and reduce global supply chain barriers through the harmonization of the best of existing regional standards and the fostering of new standards development as needed. The end result will provide benefits to all users, large and small, create savings for customers and improve consumer values.

“Our mission is simple – work together globally to fulfill consumer wishes better, faster and at less cost. We exist in a global marketplace, and it's only common sense for manufacturers and retailers from all regions of the world to adopt global standards that will increase efficiencies benefiting consumers,” said members of the group.

The initiative began with meetings in Paris and London, a direct result of previous meetings involving global retailers and manufacturers spanning five continents. Already, more than 50 companies have either joined the group or have shown an interest in joining the group.

In the past, regional industry standards have been supported by the Uniform Code Council Inc. (UCC) and the Voluntary Interindustry Commerce Standards (VICS) Association in North America. EAN represents all countries outside of the US and Canada which have adopted country or regional standards supported by EAN International. EAN's goal is to create global communication standards, using the EAN•UCC system. VICS, EAN and the UCC will now work together in support of this mission to improve global supply chain management.

“The group is excited about the prospect of sharing successful standards and learning from other retailers and manufacturers around the world,” said group members. “As a global working group we can improve supply chain efficiency and pass savings along to consumers.”

Currently, an interim working group aims to enlist interested companies committed to the development and use of global standards while, at the same time, prepare for the first official board meeting to be held this October in Paris.

The group's structure will consist of an executive board composed of senior representatives from international retailers and manufacturers with representatives from both ECR and VICS regional boards. International companies, operating in two or more continents or operating a global supply chain, will be encouraged to participate.

The group's first focus will be establishing global standards for Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) implementation, product ID, Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) and an industry extranet.

Organizations supporting the initiative include:

EAN International is a nonprofit association dedicated to the development and promotion of identification, codification and business communication solutions used in logistical and supply processes. The EAN•UCC system is used by over 800,000 organizations worldwide.

ECR is a global food industry initiative by manufacturers and retailers to fulfill consumer wishes better, faster and at less cost.

UCC, the global language of business, is a leader in the establishment and promotion of multi-industry standards for product identification and related electronic communication. The organization's goal is to enhance supply chain management thus contributing added value to the customer.

VICS is a global leader focused on the improvement of the flow of product and information throughout the entire supply chain in the retail industry.

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