**Media Release**

11 March 2014
Trivandrum

**"Urgent need for a Free & Open Mobile Platform for India"**

*Given the explosive projected growth of mobile phones, tablets and wearable devices in the country, a completely Free/Open Indian Mobile Platform is urgently required, said Dr. B Ramani, Executive Director, CDAC Thiruvananthapuram. He was inaugurating the Workshop on "Free Mobile Platforms" organized by the International Centre for Free and Open Source Software (ICFOSS), at Technopark, Trivandrum.*

Dr. Ramani pointed out that, "The number of mobile devices used globally is presently about 6.8 billion, for a population of about 7 billion. In India, about 904 million phones are in use, as against a population of 1220 million. Given the availability of new mobile devices such as tablets, cameras, and wearable devices (such as watches), further growth is expected."

"Although Android is currently the most popular mobile platform with about 82% market share, it is not completely Free. Some of the drivers are proprietary and need permission from Google. Some Android Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) are not documented. While work-arounds such as 'rooting' is available, this is feasible only for the technically proficient users. Given the fact that there are risks of malware and security breaches—particularly as more devices are used for banking & financial transactions as well as other sensitive applications—the need for completely transparent mobile platforms is very much needed."

"Another aspect of the growth of mobile devices is that of increasing dependence on imported components and systems. The Government of India has taken a proactive position on indigenization of hardware, and basic hardware, including microprocessors, would be also shortly available. For these hardware to take off also, there is an urgent need for Mobile Platforms that are transparent and free of licensing issues", Dr. Ramani added.

Dr. Ramani congratulated ICFOSS in the work done on bringing together all the leading Free mobile platforms such as FireFoxOS, Ubuntu Touch, Android Open Source Project (AOSP) and the Replicant Project.

Dr. Ramani also released Indic language keyboards for Android on the occasion. Mr. Anivar Aravind of Swathanthra Malayalam Computing (SMC), explained the features of the Indic keyboard layouts that were being released.

The keyboard layout for Android, developed jointly developed by ICFOSS and Jishnu Mohan of Swathanthra Malayalam Computing—a 13-year old community that is working to produce local language technology for Indic languages—under the R & D programme of Dept. of Information Technology, Govt. of India, that ICFOSS is implementing currently. The keyboard layout, which is freely downloadable from app repositories with the name "Indic Keyboard", provides support to input text any Android device in 15 languages and 35 keyboard layouts, consisting of most official Indian languages as well as Sinhalese and Nepali.

"ICFOSS considers localization and Free Mobile platforms as two significant aspects that will facilitate and enable individuals and communities to utilize the opportunities provided by mobile technologies with ease, and at the same time, enable device manufacturers quickly take their offerings to the market without licensing issues.", said Satish Babu, Director, ICFOSS.

"This workshop brings together information on several emerging Free Mobile Platforms—such as FireFox OS, Android Open Source Project, Ubuntu Touch and the Replicant Project—which will enable developers to adopt these technology. It is notable that many of these presentations are being made by young contributors in developer communities in India and abroad, many of them students. ICFOSS will be supporting further development in these technologies through supporting the respective communities. The workshop takes the us a step closer to our vision of a Free Web and Free Internet", he added.

"The most significant difference in the ICFOSS model of R & D, compared to the traditional R & D —which usually involved research technicians and the industry—is the presence of the Free Software Community as a key actor. The DIT Research Programme of ICFOSS has worked together with several communities, particularly the Swathanthra Malayalam Computing Community", said R. Srinivas, Manager of the DIT Research Programme on SmartPhone platforms.

The two-day workshop brought together about 100 developers, students and professionals in the domains of mobile computing and language localization. The first day of the Workshop exposed participants to several emerging technologies, while the second day focuses on in-depth coverage of FireFox OS, as well as a consultative Workshop on Frequently Used Entries for Localization (FUEL) for mobile platforms.