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NVIDIA Licenses Integrated, Overvoltage-Tolerant I/O and ESD Technology from Sofics® and ICsense

GISTEL & LEUVEN, BELGIUM (April 24, 2012) – Sofics® bvba (www.sofics.com) of Gistel, a leading provider of ESD solutions for ICs, and ICsense (www.icsense.com) of Leuven, a prominent designer of analog, mixed-signal, and high-voltage ICs and turnkey ASICs, today announced that NVIDIA has licensed their integrated ESD and I/O technology to provide a stable 3.3V I/O with robust ESD protection on its Icera® modem processors that use 1.8V transistors .

The license includes customized ESD solutions from Sofics and ICsense’s overvoltage-tolerant I/Os. These solutions are based on a novel circuit technique proven in TSMC 0.18um, 40nm, and 28nm processes that allows I/Os to handle more than 2X the voltage of the transistors on the chip.

“Our baseband modem needs to interface with legacy components in smartphones and tablets, such as SIM cards and memory cards. Sofics and ICsense came up with a solution for us that works at high voltages and provides good ESD protection. This enables us to handle off-chip interfaces of up to 3.6 volts, even for non-standard multimedia interfaces like HDMI and USB 3.0,” said Pete Hughes, Vice President, Mobile, NVIDIA.

“We are very pleased that NVIDIA has chosen to extend Icera’s license for this truly novel technology,” said Bram De Muer, ICsense CEO. “It’s a testimony to how successfully this family of overvoltage-tolerant I/Os integrates our analog, high-voltage-in-low-voltage design discipline with ESD protection expertise from Sofics.”

Integration of overvoltage tolerance with ESD protection delivers both technical and cost benefits, according to Sofics CEO Koen Verhaege.

“On the technology side, our collaborative approach to the technology has produced overvoltage-tolerant I/Os with low leakage and low capacitance, while offering high-speed operation with transistors from 0.85V to 1.8V,” said Verhaege. “Our cost advantages are just as

compelling. There's no development cost. There's no shuttle cost. The technology is silicon-proven and product-proven, its IP is clean, and it uses standard processes."

"It's generally much less costly to license our technology than develop your own."

More information on overvoltage-tolerant, ESD-protected general purpose digital I/O design pads is available directly from Sofics or ICsense, or by visiting the companies' web sites.

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About Sofics

Sofics (www.sofics.com) focuses on product development, licensing, engineering tools and design services for on-chip device- and system-level protection and reliability. Sofics is an independent IP provider, formerly known as Sarnoff Europe.

About ICsense

ICsense (www.icsense.com) is an ISO 9001:2000 certified IC design house offering analog, mixed-signal, and high-voltage IC design services and ASIC turnkey solutions for the automotive, medical, industrial, and consumer markets. ICsense services extend from consultancy and building block design up to complete mixed-signal ASICs or SoCs.