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*"To win the FIA World Rally Championship, the toughest competition for production-based cars, for a second consecutive season is an achievement of which we are rightly proud. Today we have added another memorable chapter to Ford's great Motorsport history."*

**John Fleming, President and CEO Ford of Europe**

### **FORD WINS WRC MANUFACTURERS' TITLES BACK TO BACK\***

**SLIGO, 18 NOVEMBER 2007** – Ford today won its second consecutive world title by securing the manufacturers' crown in the FIA World Rally Championship with the Focus RS World Rally Car 07\*. The BP-Ford World Rally Team finished Rally Ireland this afternoon with a 21-point lead to secure the prestigious title with one event remaining in the series.

Rally Ireland's championship debut proved every bit as challenging as was expected. The narrow, bumpy asphalt lanes were full of crests and dips and presented the kind of test not found on any other round of the series. Rain during the opening two legs of the three-day event provided treacherous conditions as cars dragged mud onto the already shiny asphalt, and drivers likened the special stages to driving on ice.

This cross-border event was based in Sligo, and featured tests in the Republic of Ireland during the first leg before crossing the border into Northern Ireland on the second day. The final leg covered both countries, ending with a spectacular test hugging the Donegal Bay coastline which was broadcast live on television. Drivers tackled 20 stages in total, covering 328,72 km of competition.

Hirvonen's target from the outset was to obtain the points necessary to ensure BP-Ford's second consecutive manufacturers' title. Sixth position or better would provide the three points required to do that and his role became even more important when team-mates Marcus Grönholm and Timo Rautiainen crashed out during Friday's opening leg. Hirvonen settled into fourth on the first morning and adopted a safety-first policy throughout the rest of the event, happy to keep an eye on the times of the cars behind rather than chase the drivers in front.



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"It was a difficult weekend," he said. "I had to keep reminding myself to drive cautiously but I did the required job and it's fantastic for the team to win the title. I'm so pleased for everyone, they deserve it. It's hard to drive at less than flat out pace and find a rhythm but I had to do that because I wanted these points so badly. For some reason it feels better than our first win last year. I expected this to be a tough rally because the roads here are so narrow and bumpy. The rain made it even harder and this is definitely the most difficult asphalt round of the season," added Hirvonen, who has assured himself of third in the drivers' championship.

Grönholm, who is now six points behind Sébastien Loeb in the drivers' series, returned home yesterday morning to rest after his accident. "While I am naturally still disappointed not to have finished the rally, I'm so pleased for Mikko and Jarmo who really did a fantastically cool job in securing the vital points," said the 39-year-old Finn.

## Final positions Rally of Ireland

1. S Loeb/D Elena	F	Citroen C4	3hr 01min 39.2sec
2. D Sordo/M Marti	E	Citroen C4	3hr 02min 32.6sec
<b>3. J-M Latvala/M Anttila</b>	<b>FIN</b>	<b>Ford Focus RS</b>	<b>3hr 03min27.4sec</b>
<b>4. M Hirvonen/J Lehtinen</b>	<b>FIN</b>	<b>Ford Focus RS</b>	<b>3hr 03min56.9sec</b>
5. P Solberg/P Mills	N	Subaru Impreza	3hr 04min 35.0sec
6. G Wilks/P Pugh	GB	Subaru Impreza	3hr 07min 37.1sec
7. M Wilson/M Orr	GB	Ford Focus RS	3hr 11min44.1sec
8. G MacHale/A Harryman	IRL	Ford Focus RS	3hr 12min47.5sec
9. A Mikkelsen/O Floene	N	Ford Focus RS	3hr 14min47.4sec
10 N McShea/M Clarke	GB	Subaru Impreza	3hr 18min 11.3sec

### Drivers

1. S Loeb	110pts
<b>2. M Grönholm</b>	<b>104pts</b>
<b>3. M Hirvonen</b>	<b>89pts</b>
4. D Sordo	61pts
5. P Solberg	42pts
6. H Solberg	34pts

### Manufacturers

<b>1. BP-Ford (champion*)</b>	<b>194pts</b>
2. Citroen Total	173pts
<b>3. Stobart VK M-Sport Ford</b>	<b>80pts</b>
4. Subaru	79pts
5. OMV Kronos Citroen	43pts
<b>6. Munchi's Ford</b>	<b>14pts</b>

\* Subject to the official publication of the results by the FIA



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### **On Top Again in 2007**

The team led the gruelling championship, which spans five continents on surfaces as diverse as snow, asphalt and gravel, since the third round in Norway in February. It has secured enough points to claim the title for 2007, even though one round in Britain remains.

Marcus Grönholm and Timo Rautiainen triumphed in Sweden, Italy and Greece during the first half of the season while team-mates Mikko Hirvonen and Jarmo Lehtinen won in Norway – all in the 2006-specification Focus RS World Rally Car. Grönholm secured a debut victory for the Focus RS World Rally Car 07 in Finland as the second part of the season got under way and added another victory in New Zealand in September after the closest finish in WRC history. Hirvonen added his second victory in Japan last month.

Both Focus RS World Rally Cars were developed by British-based company M-Sport and specialist engineers at Ford TeamRS, Ford's performance car and motorsport division under the lead of TeamRS Director Jost Capito for the last four years.

John Fleming, President and CEO of Ford of Europe, emphasised the team achievement and what the title meant to Ford. “We're delighted with this result. Winning the world championship in 2006 with a new car was a superb achievement, but to defend that title successfully this year and secure the championship with one event remaining is outstanding and raises our accomplishments to new heights. Ford takes great pride in the success of the car and the team and I would like to thank every member of the BP-Ford World Rally Team for their dedication this year. They can once again proudly state that they are the best in the world.”

“It's a great thrill to see Ford on top of the world again,” said Capito. “We have consistently produced high-quality performances and results through the season. We work together as a team and that bond goes far beyond the proven talents of Marcus, Timo, Mikko and Jarmo. It stretches to the core engineers who provided a super base vehicle in the Focus road car from which we developed the Focus RS WRC. I am personally proud of this result and I now feel comfortable to take on a new role within Ford from the beginning of 2008.”



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The 2007 title further enhances the hugely successful partnership between Ford of Europe and M-Sport, which has operated the Blue Oval's WRC programme under Malcolm Wilson since its inception in 1997.

Wilson said: “Once again Marcus Grönholm and Timo Rautiainen have expertly led Ford's challenge in their final season before retirement. They received magnificent support from Mikko Hirvonen and Jarmo Lehtinen, who showed increasing maturity as the season progressed to establish themselves as one of the best partnerships in the world and natural successors to their retiring colleagues.”

### **Ford and Rallying – A Heritage of Success**

Ford has been synonymous with motorsport for more than a century. It was on 10 October 1901 that Henry Ford beat the famous driver Alexander Winton to win the Grosse Pointe Race with a 26 PS that he personally developed. In the 1930s the Blue Oval twice won the famous Monte Carlo Rally and from that point on, the list of wonderful Ford cars developed to fight and win in the toughest championship is impressive. They include the innovative Zephyr, the Cortina that triumphed in the incredibly hard Safari Rally in 1964, the powerful Falcon and, by the end of the 1960s, the legendary Escort that claimed the first of its 21 WRC victories in the championship's inaugural season in 1973.

In 1979 Bjorn Waldegard drove an Escort RS1800 to Ford's first manufacturers' title and also claimed the drivers' crown. Two years later Ari Vatanen clinched a second drivers' title in a similar car.

The Focus World Rally Car made its debut in 1999 and since then has won 31 world rallies. It took its maiden title success last season when Ford secured its first manufacturers' championship for 27 years with the Focus RS World Rally Car 06 in its debut season.

\*Subject to the official publication of the results by the FIA

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### Other quotes for editorial use:

**John Fleming, President and CEO, Ford of Europe:** “Everyone at Ford is truly delighted at this wonderful achievement. I have attended several WRC events this year and seen for myself the blood, sweat and tears that go into being successful. Winning a title in the WRC demands so many attributes – skill, discipline, communication to name but a few. They all come together under one word – teamwork – and I'm proud of how effectively so many people have united to deliver a second world title. I'd like to thank our drivers and co-drivers and everyone in the team for a marvellous effort throughout the season.”

**Ian Slater, Vice President Public Affairs:** “Ford has a tremendous motorsport heritage, both at the top of international competition and at grass roots level. I have seen the genuine delight on the faces of our supporters around the world when we are successful in the WRC. These people are our customers and our employees and they, too, drive Ford cars on a daily basis or compete with a Blue Oval on their vehicle. This win will give great pleasure to them just as much as it does to everyone with the team.”

**Jost Capito, Director of Ford TeamRS:** “After last year's title success we knew we had to raise our game in 2007 if we wanted to defend it. The reigning champions become the target of all their rivals and it is an old adage in sport that is harder to defend a title than it is to win it in the first place. Well, we have done that and it is the result of many hours' hard work by many different people. It gives me great pride to reflect on this achievement and see the confidence throughout the team. It's not arrogance – it's a genuine belief in each other and that belief paid off in Ireland today.”

**Malcolm Wilson, Director of BP-Ford World Rally Team:** “I thought winning the title last year would be the crowning moment of my rally career, but to move forward from there to win it again and cement our place as the best in the world feels even better. It has been another huge effort by everyone, not only all the employees at M-Sport, but also Ford and all the partners and suppliers who have given just as much in contributing to this success. Marcus and Mikko set a professional example behind the wheel and that excellence spread throughout the team, to those members who travel to events and also to those who play such an important role behind the scenes at Dovenby Hall.”

**Marcus Grönholm, Driver:** “I'm delighted! I've been with BP-Ford for two seasons and we've now won a world title in both years. This is my final season of competition in the WRC and I couldn't have asked for a better car than the Focus RS WRC. I've enjoyed some magnificent moments this season en route to the title, none more so than in New Zealand when I won by just 0.3sec after three days of competition. That felt almost as good as winning the title and provided a surge of confidence at an important time of the season.”



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**Mikko Hirvonen, Driver:** “This has been a brilliant season for both BP-Ford and me personally. Marcus and I worked well together and that's important because to win the manufacturers' title it's vital to have both drivers scoring consistently and not just one. My task was to concentrate on securing podium finishes and getting manufacturers' points and I feel that I have achieved it. This is great!”

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For more information:

Jo Declercq  
Tel: +32 2 482 21 03  
[jdecler2@ford.com](mailto:jdecler2@ford.com)