Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region

21-22 March 2019

Statement by the OECD

In the run-up to the first comprehensive stocktaking exercise on the progress of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the OECD remains committed to support the international community in the UN-led process in SDG implementation and monitoring.

The OECD's work in support of the achievement of the SDGs, as laid out in its **Action Plan on the SDGs**, encompasses the following aims:

i) supporting countries as they identify where they currently stand in relation to the SDGs, where they need to be, and propose sustainable pathways based on evidence;

ii) reaffirming its role as a leading source of expertise, data, good practices, and standards in economic, social, and environmental areas of public policy that are relevant to SDGs; and

iii) encouraging a "race to the top" for better and more coherent policies that can help deliver the SDGs, through the use of hallmark OECD approaches.

With those objectives in mind, the OECD is focusing on four key areas of action:

1. Apply a SDG lens to the OECD's strategies and policy tools and integrating in a balanced way the economic, social and environmental objectives in policy analysis and recommendations;

2. Leverage OECD data to help analyse progress in the implementation of the SDGs;

3. Supporting national level implementation and policy coherence for example by supporting the development of a strategic vision, appropriate governance frameworks, measurement and monitoring frameworks, a financing and resourcing underpinning, as well as support in specific thematic areas. Provide a space for governments to share experiences in governing for the SDGs; and

4. Reflect on the implications of the SDGs for OECD external relations and strengthening our relationship with the UN.

Closer collaboration with the UN system is indispensable for our effort to support the implementation of the SDGs and is showing significant impact. For example, the joint OECD-UNDP capacity building *Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB)* initiative, covering the areas of tax and crime, has now resulted in tax revenue increases of over $414 million USD since 2012. TIWB has completed 10 projects, 34 are currently operational, and there are 22 in the pipeline across all regions. The Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), implemented jointly with the UNDP continues to implement an ambitious work programme to amplify the contribution of effectiveness to global development efforts and SDG implementation. This includes collecting evidence as the official source for measuring progress towards SDG targets 5.c, 17.15 and 17.16; adapting its monitoring framework to the 2030 Agenda; and developing guidelines and mechanisms for engagement with other stakeholders, including the private sector. The OECD also continues to leverage its LAC Regional Programme (jointly implemented with the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), whose objectives include support to countries in the region in SDG implementation.

The OECD would like to sincerely thank the UNECE for the opportunity to participate in the 2019 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and to share recent work particularly on the themes of

the two focus events – on digitalisation and data. We look forward to further deepening our collaboration in pursuing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Since mid-2016, the OECD has had a senior representative in post at UN headquarters with a view to strengthening relations with the UN family in the context of the OECD's role as permanent observer to both the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the General Assembly. The Office of the Special Representative to the United Nations engages in the day-to-day work of the UN, including but not limited to efforts in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Office also co-ordinates the participation of the OECD as a whole in the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and related initiatives.

Focus Event – Technology, Digitalisation, Artificial Intelligence – Curse or Blessing for Sustainable Development

Today's focus event touches on themes that have been a major focus of work at the OECD over the past two years. Through our ***Going Digital project***, the OECD has been examining how the digital transformation affects our economies and societies, and how policymaking must adapt to ensure countries can reap the benefits. The project cuts across practically all policy domains, draws on a spectrum of national experiences and policy experimentation, and offers insights for countries of all levels of development.

The project has shown that there are significant and clear benefits on offer for all, and that digital transformation has the potential for positive impact on all 17 of the UN SDGs, from innovation, to improved access to education, to better management of natural resources. .

However, the associated risks from digital technologies – including labour market polarisation and skill mismatches, breaches of privacy and security, growing market power for leading firms, and tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance – are real, and we must ensure that digitalisation does not reinforce the divides and discrimination that we see today. According to our estimates, 14% of jobs in OECD countries are at high risk of automation, and a further 32% at risk of significant change over the next 10 to 20 years. In the OECD, more than 4 in 10 rural households do not have access to high-speed broadband. About 9% of 15 year-olds say that they have been cyber-bullied.

On 11-12 March 2019, the OECD presented the outcomes of the first phase of work at a **high-level Summit**. The centrepiece of this was a unique new tool for governments – the **OECD's Going Digital Integrated Policy Framework**[1], which is describes action along seven key pillars for harnessing the digital transformation (Figure 1). The Framework explores how to enhance access, increase effective use, unleash innovation, ensure good jobs for all, promote social prosperity, strengthen trust and foster market openness in the digital era. By addressing these issues in a coherent way, countries can make digital transformation work for all.

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[1] The framework underpins three practical resources for policy makers, including a strategy document for policy making in the digital age [OECD (2019), *Going Digital: Shaping Policies, Improving Lives*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264312012-en], a volume presenting the state of the art in digital transformation measurement [OECD (2019), *Measuring the Digital Transformation: A Roadmap for the Future*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264311992-en], and the online *Going Digital Toolkit* [www.oecd.org/going-digital-toolkit] helping countries assess their state of digital development and formulate policy strategies in response.

Figure 1: Going Digital Integrated Policy Framework

As we look ahead, **international cooperation** on digital transformation will be vital, especially to tackle outstanding issues around competition dynamics, privacy, cross-border data flows, inequalities, and trust in government and democracy. At the OECD, we have the opportunity to leverage a wide range of knowledge and expertise across our members and stakeholders, and can use this to forge consensus around broad principles and ideas.

Of particular relevance to today's discussion, the OECD is **currently developing overarching principles for responsible stewardship of trustworthy Artificial Intelligence**. These principles have emerged from multistakeholder dialogue and are based on human-centred values, fairness and transparency, and also offer recommendations to guide national public policy making. The Principles are expected to be presented to Ministers at the OECD annual Ministerial Council Meeting in May 2019 on *Harnessing the Digital Transformation for Sustainable Development: Opportunities and Challenges*. Going forward, the OECD is developing practical guidance to implement the principles, and will continue to provide a forum for exchanging information on AI policy and activities.

The OECD has also recently launched the OECD **Blockchain Policy Centre** to support governments to address the challenges raised by blockchain and other distributed ledger technologies and their applications, as well as to seize the opportunities it offers for achieving policy objectives and delivering more effective government services. On 12-13 September 2019 the 2nd Blockchain Policy Forum will be held at the OECD in Paris.

In coming months, the OECD will be launching several other reports drawing on the Going Digital work: the OECD Employment Outlook, Skills Outlook, National work on tax and trade, and more.

Focus event – How to measure progress? Data and statistics for the SDGs

The OECD remains determined in its support to the UN-led process in implementing the SDGs.

To support OECD member countries in setting priorities for action, the OECD will issue a new version of the "Measuring Distances to SDG Targets" study in May 2019. To ensure international comparability, indicators used in the Study are based on the UN Global List of Indicators on SDGs and are sourced from the UN SDG Database and OECD databases. The Study is based on OECD countries' data for 132 of the 232 (unique) IAEG indicators (with 59 of them sourced from OECD databases, and 31 OECD "proxies" for IEAG indicators that are not yet included in the UN Global Database).

In addition to providing an up-to-date and expanded assessment of OECD countries' distances from (quantified) SDG targets, the new study will also include a first assessment of performance, for the OECD area as whole, on trends for a subset of indicators as well as an assessment on targets involving significant transboundary impacts.

The study methodology has also been used to support individual OECD members (Slovenia, Slovak Republic) in developing the monitoring framework for their national development strategies that are closely aligned to the 2030 Agenda.

The OECD works with the UN Statistics Division and participates as observers in the **Inter-agency and Expert Group (IAEG)**, providing OECD data to the UN Global Database and contributing to the development of Tier III indicators. The OECD-hosted PARIS21 programme supports statistical capacity building (in many cases, SDG related) in developing countries. In the UNECE region, we cooperated in the development of a regional "Roadmap on Statistics for SDGs", and in a pilot data exercise. We work with UNECLAC in a regional project on "measuring well-being in the Latin American region" in the context of a broader (EU supported) facility on "Development in Transition". This OECD project will develop a small set of well-being indicators for the region, and assess how these could be used to inform country policies and development plans.

The OECD also continues to actively engage in the development of indicators within SDG16, which have previously not been collected by countries on a harmonised basis. In collaboration with the UNDP, this relates in particular to targets 16.6.2 (Proportion of the population satisfied with their last experience of public services) and 16.7.2 (Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group).

The OECD set of Green Growth indicators and the Core Set of Environmental indicators include several indicators of relevance to the SDGs, and are being further developed and aligned with the SDG indicator list. Recent work has focused on the development of an internationally agreed methodology for measuring demand-based material flows (material footprints, SDG indicator 8.4.1 & 12.2.1) and on the use of earth observation and geospatial data to measure inequalities in exposure to air pollution (of relevance to SDG indicator 11.6.2) and land and soil degradation (of relevance to SDG indicator 15.3.1).

The 2019 edition of the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) was launched in December 2018, and includes relevant SDG analysis covering all gender-related SDGs beyond SDG 5.1.1 on legal frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex. Since April 2018, when the results were presented to the IAEG, the SDG 5.1.1 indicator has been upgraded as Tier II indicator, meaning that the methodology based on SIGI and developed by the OECD, UN Women and the World Bank has been recognised as international standard.