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BETTER POLICIES FOR 2030: AN OECD ACTION PLAN ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

**Better Policies for 2030:
An OECD Action Plan on the Sustainable
Development Goals**



Preamble

1. The world has seen significant advances in human development since the turn of the century. Extreme poverty has been halved, youth literacy has reached a record high, and child mortality continues to decline. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) supported an unparalleled mobilisation effort. Despite these achievements and many others, significant challenges remain. More needs to be done to eradicate poverty in all its forms, and to deliver on the unfinished business of the MDGs. The legacies of the worst economic and financial crises in recent history must be addressed. The implications of migration must be considered, and the current refugee crisis managed. We must continue to look beyond narrow economic measures of progress to consider all aspects of well-being and sustainable development. Deep reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions must be achieved in order to safeguard the planet for future generations.

2. Shared prosperity and the fulfilment of our intergenerational responsibilities can only be achieved through collaborative partnership involving all countries and all stakeholders. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognises this, and provides a useful universal framework to strengthen collective action towards common goals. Major agreements reached in 2015 in Addis Ababa (Financing for Development) and Paris (climate) further strengthen this framework.

3. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) mark a shift away from an outdated “North-South” lens for global progress, and instead embody an agenda that is relevant to countries at all levels of development. At the same time, a continued focus on the specific needs of developing countries will be important if extreme poverty is to be eradicated.

4. The OECD has a long history of engagement with major United Nations (UN) processes on human development and well-being, financing for development, environmental sustainability and climate change. It has contributed to shaping the 2030 Agenda, and is committed to leveraging its capacity and expertise to support the achievement of this vision.

5. Sound public policies grounded in evidence – and implemented effectively – will be crucial for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. In many of the areas covered by the SDGs, the OECD is already working with Member and Partner countries to generate evidence, identify good practices, develop standards, and help design and implement policies.

6. Last year, OECD Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to promoting the OECD’s contribution to the 2030 Agenda, and welcomed the preparation of a strategic response to guide the Organisation’s work in support of the SDGs [[C/MIN\(2015\)14](#)]. This Action Plan sets out how the Organisation will continue its transformation to best support Members and the international community in the achievement of the SDGs.

Vision for the OECD’s contribution to the SDGs

7. The OECD welcomes the strong global consensus in support of the 2030 Agenda. The 17 goals and 169 targets provide a vision for the world in which we aspire to live fifteen years from now. As it supports the achievement of this global vision, the OECD will:

- ***Support 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.*** In this way, the OECD will be an important contributor to the “GPS” (global positioning system) the international community will need to achieve the Goals.

- *Reaffirm 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 the SDGs.
- *Encourage a “race to the top” for better and more coherent policies that can help deliver the SDGs*, through the use of hallmark OECD approaches (e.g. peer reviews and learning; monitoring and statistical reporting; policy dialogue; soft law).

Identifying the OECD’s strengths and assets in relation to the 2030 Agenda

8. Deliberations on the SDGs at the OECD have already highlighted the very broad scope of the 17-goal framework and the relevance of policy tools, instruments, evidence, and dialogue platforms in a whole range of thematic areas. In fact, there are very few areas of OECD work that could *not* be linked in some way with the advancement of the agenda embodied by the Goals. Consultations to date have helped to identify those areas in which the OECD has particular expertise that might be put to use in supporting the 2030 Agenda.¹ These include:

- **Assessing economic, social and environmental progress** through measures going beyond GDP (e.g. multidimensional well-being), and facilitating comparison across and within countries. In several SDG areas, the OECD is the direct source of internationally accepted measures (e.g. data on official development assistance) or will provide data for OECD and partner countries as part of global reporting efforts (e.g. education data from PISA, PIAAC and TALIS; development effectiveness indicators).
- **Generating solid evidence and recommendations on global public goods and “bads”**, and relevant national efforts, with a focus on OECD countries and Key Partners. This includes recent analysis and publications on, for example, climate policies, development finance, foreign bribery, human trafficking, responsible business conduct and fiscal transparency.
- **Measuring and improving development finance** by helping governments mobilise the broad suite of financial resources (taxes, foreign and domestic investments, remittances, aid and philanthropy) that will be necessary to achieve the SDGs in many countries.
- **Enhancing policy and institutional coherence** by identifying policy interactions, trade-offs and synergies across economic, social and environmental areas; and considering trans-boundary and intergenerational effects. The OECD’s New Approaches to Economic Challenges (NAEC) initiative has deepened our understanding of the complementarities and trade-offs between different policy objectives and has, along with the Inclusive Growth and Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development initiatives, prepared the Organisation for a truly integrated and multidisciplinary approach to global progress.
- **Dismantling intellectual and policy silos to undertake integrated diagnostics and provide policy advice to both Member and partner countries.** The OECD’s Strategy on Development [C/MIN(2012)6] has helped to mainstream work on the issues facing developing countries across the Organisation. Its principles will continue to guide much of the work set out in this Action Plan.

1. A mapping of OECD expertise relevant to each Goal has also informed the development of this Action Plan [C/MIN(2016)6/ADD1].

- **Facilitating the exchange of knowledge and data** across countries through global fora, expert groups, peer review mechanisms, inclusive partnerships, and open data platforms.
- **Supporting sector-specific initiatives and partnerships**, some of which are being tailored to support a broader range of countries in the achievement of specific Goals, and are helping to strengthen capacity in countries.

9. Country and regional coverage of OECD datasets and knowledge varies, and continues to expand. In some policy areas, the Organisation’s expertise remains focused on OECD countries and Key Partners. Nevertheless, evidence and expertise in many policy areas now covers a much larger number of countries.² Participation in the work of the Development Centre, and in Committees, Global Fora and regional programmes also continues to grow. Data on progress at the sub-national level also presents opportunities to support policies tailored to regional circumstances (*e.g.* 362 regions are covered by the OECD’s regional well-being statistics).

10. Part of the uniqueness of the OECD lies in its focus and core mandate on public policy. Unlike some other parts of the multilateral system, it is not involved in financing projects and programmes, and its support to countries is not conditionality-based. Few OECD tools are legally binding, and progress is instead promoted through mechanisms that encourage peer learning and accountability. This creates a fertile testing ground for ideas, and for supporting innovative policy approaches.

Four areas for action

11. The entire Organisation will be involved in achieving the vision set out above by employing the OECD’s strengths and installed capacity. Earlier discussions have identified examples of relevant initiatives that are already underway.

12. Four broad areas for future action have now been identified, and are detailed below. These actions are by no means exhaustive. The breadth of the SDGs means that almost all of the Organisation’s work contributes to the 2030 Agenda in some way. The actions identified are focused on fine-tuning existing OECD work. They highlight what the Organisation could do more of – or do differently – to support the achievement of the SDGs.

Action area 1: Apply an SDG lens to the OECD’s strategies and policy tools

13. The SDGs constitute an important part of the “backdrop” against which much of the OECD’s work takes place. This development in the international policy environment should be reflected in the evolution of the programmes of work of OECD Committees, all of which are encouraged to continue identifying opportunities to contribute to SDG implementation. Particular consideration should be given to ways in which OECD tools can be further adapted to meet the needs of a broader range of countries, particularly developing countries with low capacity.

2. This includes, for example, more than 70 countries in the case of PISA; around 70 countries covered by data on product market regulation; over 60 countries in the area of revenue statistics; some 44 countries in the area of climate change mitigation policies; 41 countries in the context of efforts to combat foreign bribery; and 46 countries in the area of responsible business conduct.

14. An effort to mainstream the SDGs across the OECD's work will also imply revisiting existing thematic strategies (e.g. innovation strategy, skills strategy, green growth strategy) to make them "SDG-aware", ensuring that they support the achievement of the SDGs where relevant.

15. Specific actions:

- Incorporate the SDGs into OECD Economic Surveys of countries, and explore approaches to addressing the SDGs in OECD Economic Outlooks. These efforts build on existing initiatives such as Going for Growth, which increasingly captures multi-dimensional well-being and, where relevant, environmental dimensions.
- Gradually integrate the SDG framework into other OECD reviews, including reviews of agricultural, market and competition policies, labour markets, social policy, open government reforms, gender equality, education, environmental performance, health, and development co-operation.
- Deepen efforts to support all countries in the implementation of the tax Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) initiative. Specific actions include the creation of an inclusive framework open to all countries and jurisdictions on an equal footing; the development of BEPS toolkits to support developing countries as they address high-priority BEPS challenges; and support for capacity development through the Tax Inspectors Without Borders initiative.
- Assist countries as they implement global standards for the exchange of information for tax purposes, building on the work of the 132-member Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes. This includes a specific initiative to support African countries.
- Further strengthen support to governments as they mobilise a broad range of financial resources – aid, taxes, both foreign and domestic investments, remittances and philanthropy – required to achieve the SDGs, in line with the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda. This includes continued efforts to incentivise additional and better quality resources for developing countries, especially those most in need.
- Support the development and implementation of policy actions to reverse the declining trend of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to countries most in need.
- Promote fuller use of blended finance operations and philanthropic flows through the dissemination of good practices and targeted guidance.
- Deepen our work on responsible business conduct, working with governments and other stakeholders to further promote national-level implementation of the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises as well as related guidance on responsible supply chains.
- Disseminate the updated OECD Policy Framework on Investment (PFI), which helps countries to improve their investment climates and, in so doing, encourages private sector-led sustainable development. Further consideration will be given to methodologies and indicators based on the PFI.
- Support market opening by bringing evidence to bear on the benefits of multilateral, plurilateral and regional efforts, as well as trade facilitation initiatives. Further promote Aid for Trade, enriching existing work with new insights on services and trade facilitation.

- Support countries as they scale up and enhance the impact of climate change adaptation finance by promoting peer learning and evidence-based analysis of projects and programmes delivering results, including in the development co-operation arena.
- Promote the effective design and management of marine protected areas by undertaking cost-benefit analysis, supporting monitoring and enforcement efforts, and efforts to scale up finance.
- Promote effective policies and management of ecosystems, including forests, to achieve targets on terrestrial ecosystems, forests and biodiversity, and climate change, and to ensure that ecosystem service values are reflected in national and sectoral development strategies and policies.

Action area 2: Leverage OECD data to help track progress in the implementation of the SDGs

16. The OECD already holds vast amounts of information – both quantitative and qualitative – that can contribute to global and regional SDG follow-up efforts. These include efforts to assess OECD countries’ preparedness towards the SDGs, to examine how countries’ domestic policies help or hinder the achievement of the SDGs globally, and to contribute to OECD countries’ strategies to progress on SDG outcomes. The OECD’s work in this area builds on existing co-operation with national statistical offices and other international organisations.

17. Specific actions:

- Provide existing OECD data for use in the UN-led Global Indicator Framework for the SDGs, and help close data gaps by developing methodologies and capacities in support of the international SDG monitoring system.
- Develop an OECD publication that analyses Members’ progress in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals. This will build on a preliminary assessment of countries’ starting positions and will help governments as they work to define national action plans, as well as contribute to SDG-relevant analysis across OECD workstreams. The extent to which countries’ policies help or hinder the achievement of the SDGs globally will also be explored. Existing OECD data will be harnessed in this effort, which builds on the Organisation’s work on multi-dimensional well-being, climate policies, trade and agriculture, development finance, investment, foreign bribery, fiscal transparency, responsible business conduct, human trafficking, and other issues. The OECD will work with other interested organisations in this effort.
- Address the gap in data for developing countries, particularly leveraging opportunities arising from “the data revolution” including big data and public-private partnerships in the data ecosystem through the development of inventories, tools, guidelines, standards and protocols through active collaboration with the OECD-hosted Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21).
- Broaden the reach and relevance of the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), building on the eight-country PISA for Development pilot, which strengthens the evidence base available to countries on education and learning outcomes.
- Modernise development finance statistics through an inclusive process so as to promote uniform reporting that is credible and relevant, capturing new and more complex financing instruments and arrangements, and creating appropriate incentives for resource mobilisation. The new

measure of Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD) will increase the transparency of public efforts to support sustainable development.

- Contribute data and analysis, as a Member of the Inter-Agency Task Force, to global reports on progress in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.
- Develop and expand the OECD's Revenue Statistics work, which provides comparable data on fiscal revenues for 66 countries.
- Put OECD expertise at the disposal of countries as they develop policies to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people. These efforts will build on long-standing OECD work analysing migration flows and policies, including through the International Migration Outlook and ongoing work on the integration of migrants. These efforts will also build on the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD), and will involve close collaboration with other organisations.
- Increase the coverage of the indicators in the OECD Gender Portal across both OECD and partner countries.
- Further develop the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), working with national gender entities and statistical agencies to support global monitoring of the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.
- Improve the tracking and measurement of green growth using OECD's green growth indicators.
- Support interested countries as they implement the OECD Principles on Water Governance, including through the adaptation of indicators to include a focus on the SDGs, the development of a database of good practices, and improved data on local participation in water governance.
- Include additional metrics and indicators in OECD Regional and Metropolitan statistics that can help analyse progress and preparedness towards the SDGs. Develop assessments at territorial level of how selected policies help or hinder the SDG implementation.
- Monitor the effectiveness of development co-operation, working with the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation to help strengthen its impact.

Action area 3: Upgrade the OECD's support for integrated planning and policy-making at the country level, and provide a space for governments to share experiences on governing for the SDGs

18. Significant efforts have already been made to address the challenges presented by policy silos. The OECD's New Approaches to Economic Challenges (NAEC), Inclusive Growth, and Green Growth initiatives have played important roles in this transformation. Governments are already beginning to draw on OECD expertise as they start planning for the implementation of the SDGs. A further upgrading of the OECD's support for integrated policy-making should respond to demand from a range of countries.

19. At the institutional level, some OECD governments are already putting in place national mechanisms to plan and co-ordinate government-wide efforts while engaging in a multi-stakeholder process to support the implementation of the SDGs. Others are reflecting on how best to adapt and adopt global goals in national frameworks. The OECD will build on existing tools and fora, including its Committees, to support governments as they approach the SDGs as an integrated agenda.

20. Specific actions:

- Further adapt, pilot, and refine existing approaches such as the OECD Multi-Dimensional Country Reviews so that they can be used by countries as a starting point for the analysis of policies and development of national strategies in support of the SDGs.
- Develop a proposal for OECD support to members in the preparation of SDG-aligned National Development Strategies, based on country demand, and drawing on lessons from an ongoing country pilot. This would involve an integrated, whole-of-government approach combining strategic foresight, wellbeing framework, long-term modelling, and support to implementation.
- Update Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development tools and instruments to inform policy-making and monitoring efforts.
- Review and assess the capacity of OECD governments to steer and co-ordinate the implementation of the SDGs, including the vital link to planning and budgetary processes; identify challenges and opportunities; and use the existing network of Centres of Government to promote a co-ordinated, coherent and clear approach across government to the implementation of the SDGs.
- Review the role of municipalities and sub-national governments in the implementation of the SDGs; build on Regional Development Policy Committee networks and partnerships with cities and local governments to foster cross-sectoral perspective on SDGs at subnational level; and enhance thematic projects on public service delivery, which can help foster inter-linkages across several SDGs at local and regional levels.

Action area 4: Reflect on the implications of the SDGs for OECD external relations

21. Further consideration will be given to the implications of the SDG agenda for both the content and structure of the OECD's work with non-Members, with other international organisations, and with non-state actors. OECD regional programmes may provide an appropriate vehicle for supporting countries as they develop and implement strategies to achieve the SDGs. OECD Global Fora provide established spaces for dialogue among OECD and partner countries on an equal footing.

22. The OECD's relationship with the United Nations system continues to go from strength to strength. The Organisation will continue to engage with UN entities, fora and processes as it contributes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In all areas, it aims to maximise synergies and avoid duplication of effort across organisations.

23. Specific actions:

- Ensure the use of existing resources allocated to collaboration with the United Nations maximises the effectiveness of the OECD's engagement as a permanent observer of both ECOSOC and of the UN General Assembly, and contributes effectively to key UN processes and analytic work (e.g. ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum, High Level Political Forum). The scope for a light OECD presence at the United Nations will be explored further.
- Leverage OECD regional programmes to share lessons on policy successes and failures, and to promote dialogue among policy-makers at the regional level in partnership with the UN regional economic commissions. Relevant policy areas include trade and investment, education, social policies, climate, tax, and infrastructure.

- Develop the OECD Global Forum on Development as a regular opportunity for sharing experiences on SDG implementation, and consider the roles that other OECD Global Fora may play in relation to the 2030 Agenda.
- Develop a new Platform for Collaboration on Tax, involving the OECD, UN, IMF and World Bank. The Platform will provide a way for the main international organisations working on tax to work effectively together on domestic resource mobilisation in support of the SDGs.
- Partner with the United Nations to put the multi-stakeholder Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation at the service of all actors as they work to strengthen the means of implementation of the SDGs.
- Promote the use of the OECD World Forum on Statistics, Policy and Knowledge as a space for dialogue where statistics and policies speak to each other on pursuing the 2030 Agenda.
- Harness existing networks of experts, policymakers and practitioners – including the multi-stakeholder OECD Water Governance Initiative and national policy dialogues on water – to support the achievement of water-related SDG outcomes.
- Further develop sector / theme-specific fora so that policy dialogue among OECD and partner countries supports efforts towards relevant goals (*e.g.* fora on natural resource-based development, Global Value Chains (GVCs) etc.)

Putting the OECD Action Plan into action

24. The activities outlined above will be mainstreamed in the OECD's Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) 2017-18, building on ongoing and planned work. The suggested actions may be adjusted and elaborated further, based on additional consultations within Committees and with interested countries.

25. As the 2017-18 PWB is developed, further consideration will be given to the configuration of resources so as to strengthen the OECD's core capabilities and skills in certain areas. This could include, for example, the capacity to engage in a sustained manner with interested countries on national strategies.

26. Sustained leadership will be crucial to the successful implementation of this Action Plan, and to ensure that OECD efforts make a tangible contribution to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The Council will review progress in the implementation of this Action Plan at regular intervals. An annual meeting of the Council on the Sustainable Development Goals may provide an appropriate setting for such reviews, which could benefit from reporting on relevant activities, as well as broader evidence of progress and challenges in the achievement of the SDGs.

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