

Letter from the Secretary-General

In 2018, the OECD faced many challenges that pushed us to strive even harder to deliver better policies for better lives. It was a year in which geopolitical tensions were increasingly acute, nationalism and populism were on the rise, and citizens' discontent was blatant. This erosion of trust is putting at risk everything we have built in the past 70 years, at a time when the international community is confronted with global challenges that, albeit not new, manifest themselves with unprecedented urgency: weak economic growth, rising inequalities, unemployment and low-quality jobs, climate change and responding to the digital revolution.

Against this background, our Organisation's commitment and dedication to openness, solidarity and co-operation was even stronger. At the **2018 Ministerial Council Meeting (MCM)**, chaired by France, we put the need to reshape multilateralism at the centre of our agenda, making it more responsible, effective and inclusive. As President Macron said in his MCM opening speech: "Multilateralism is not

just a collection of bilateralisms. It's a dialogue with several voices, a chorus for action and thought, and we need to work together to build this chorus, to reinvent it and make it fair and efficient for the world we are in." It is our duty to draw attention to the many benefits that countries can derive from multilateralism and to the dangers of retreating within national borders. We need more, not less,



From left: Emmanuel Macron, President of France; Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of Lithuania; Juan Manuel Santos, President of Colombia; and Angel Gurría, OECD Secretary-General, during the Signing Ceremony of Accession of Lithuania and Colombia, Paris, 30 May 2018.

Photo: OECD/Julien Daniel

multilateralism. At the same time, we need to make it better. At the OECD, we are fully engaged to make multilateralism fit for purpose in the 21st century.

Despite the challenging context, we held landmark Ministerial Meetings in 2018 that made a difference in key areas for the global economy: in February, the Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) Ministerial in Mexico, where we adopted the ambitious **OECD Declaration on SMEs**, and the Ministerial on Social Policy in Montreal in May. Both meetings called for embracing shared prosperity through better public policies, based on citizens' perception of social and economic risks, like that provided by the new *Risks that Matter* survey. We also took positive steps to strengthen international co-operation at the Ministerial Meeting, last September here in Paris, of the Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity (GFSEC). At the **OECD World Forum on the Future of Well-being**, held in November in Korea, we reaffirmed our commitment to a paradigm shift in the way we measure progress by putting

inclusive growth and people's lives at the core of our policies and collective action. Several other high-level meetings, ranging from education and skills, to the environment, development, or integrity and anti-corruption, showed the ability of our Organisation to continue leading in all of these policy areas.

Besides our own ministerial meetings, global fora and key summits, we continue to contribute evidence to other international efforts. In the context of the **G20** and **G7**, we worked very closely with the Argentinian and Canadian Presidencies, respectively, to help them deliver on their key priorities. Once again, we were a valued partner in advancing their agenda on issues such as promoting stronger, inclusive and more sustainable growth; the future of work; tax challenges; the digital revolution; ensuring due diligence and responsible business conduct; and the transition to low-carbon and circular economies to tackle the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. The Framework for Policy Action on Inclusive Growth is promoting a people-centred growth model, with



From left: Gabriela Ramos, OECD Chief of Staff and Sherpa; Angel Gurría, OECD Secretary-General; Ingrid Brocková, Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to the OECD, and Peter Pellegrini, Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic at the OECD, Going Digital Summit, Paris, 11 March 2019.

Photo: OECD/Victor Tonelli

better measurement of what really matters to citizens, and policies that will address the plight of the people, regions and firms left behind. This is a message that we also took to other international summits in which we participated during the past year, such as the **Paris Peace Forum**, the **United Nations (UN) Intergovernmental Conference on the Global Compact for Migration** in Marrakech, and the **COP24** (24th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) in Katowice.

Every output of the OECD demonstrates not only the high quality of its work, but also what international co-operation can achieve, the well-being it can unlock and the opportunities it can create. Beyond international co-operation, we continue to support our members and partners with targeted policy advice. Our analysis, comparable data and policy expertise help countries as they embark on the reforms needed to meet new demands, contributing to a better

understanding of different policy options and the spillover effects across multiple dimensions. The OECD's increasing collaboration with the European Commission's Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS) in this area illustrates the OECD's added value.

The significance of the OECD continues to grow. Few things symbolise this better than the six countries that have formally expressed their interest to join our Organisation, to which we owe an answer soon. Over the past 12 months, we welcomed Lithuania as a new Member. Colombia has been invited to become a Member and accession discussions with Costa Rica are ongoing. We also increased our Organisation's global relevance through our regional and country programmes, as well as working very closely with our key partners to continue their gradual adherence to OECD instruments and tools, as well as their growing participation in our committees and bodies.



➦ Angel Gurría, OECD Secretary-General, welcomes Katrín Jakobsdóttir, Prime Minister of Iceland, at the OECD Global Anti-Corruption and Integrity Forum, Paris, 27 March 2018.

Photo: OECD/Andrew Wheeler

➦ Emmanuel Macron, President of France, and Angel Gurría, OECD Secretary-General, during the OECD Ministerial Council Meeting, Paris, 31 May 2018.

Photo: OECD/Victor Tonelli



2018 was also a year in which we emphasised the need to focus more on the transformative effect of digitalisation and new technologies, leading to our forthcoming Ministerial Council Meeting focused precisely on this theme. The **interim report of the Going Digital** project and the Going Digital Summit laid the groundwork for the fundamental contribution that the OECD can make in this field, shaping the future of our economies, societies and lives. The OECD Blockchain Policy Forum, held last September, is a good example of our Organisation's potential for unique contributions in this field. It was the first major international conference to take stock of this emerging technology's impacts across the full range of government activities and public priorities. In addition, the **New Approaches to Economic Challenges' (NAEC) Innovation LAB** is allowing us to increasingly engage with digital innovation and experiment with new analytical tools and techniques to open up new sources of evidence.

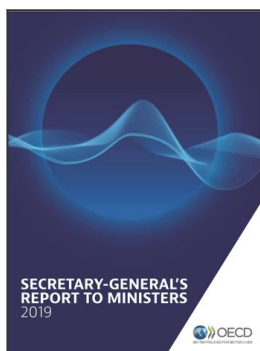
Although the past year confronted us with a more complex environment to advance multilateral solutions, we delivered. And we will continue to deliver. As we look ahead, we will uphold the common values that define the OECD: global openness, international co-operation, economic integration, mutual respect and cultural tolerance. These values will enhance access to digital technologies, increase its effective use, unleash innovation, ensure jobs, promote social prosperity, address tax challenges and foster trust and fair competition. In a nutshell: we will continue to advance a more inclusive and sustainable growth model that responds to people's needs. We will be guided by our determination to help our members and partners design, develop and deliver better policies for better lives. ■



Angel Gurría

➔ Angel Gurría, OECD Secretary-General, and António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, at the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly, New York, 24 September 2018.
Photo: OECD





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