

Unclassified

DAFFE/IME(98)10



Organisation de Coopération et de Développement Economiques
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OLIS : 29-Jul-1998
Dist. : 30-Jul-1998

PARIS

Or. Eng.

DIRECTORATE FOR FINANCIAL, FISCAL AND ENTERPRISE AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENT AND MULTINATIONAL ENTERPRISES

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**CONFERENCE ON THE OECD GUIDELINES FOR MULTINATIONAL
ENTERPRISES - DRAFT AGENDA**

Budapest, 16-18 November 1998

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**CONFERENCE ON THE
“OECD GUIDELINES FOR MULTINATIONAL ENTERPRISES”**

Budapest 16-18 November 1998

Draft Agenda

Summary

1. This paper contains a draft agenda for the Conference on the “OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises” which is scheduled to be held in Budapest, Hungary on 16-18 November 1998.

Objective

2. The OECD Guidelines are a key component of the OECD policy aimed at strengthening international co-operation and mutual understanding in the field of international direct investment and at improving the climate for such investment. They are supported by business and labour. Since their adoption, 22 years ago, there has been flexibility in interpreting and amending them to meet new developments and concerns. At the same time, a certain stability has been maintained.

3. The issue of corporate conduct, including codes of conduct, has enjoyed increasing attention over the past few years, notably in the fields of labour relations, the environment, illicit payments and accountability. Many MNEs have developed in-house codes. However, there have been few internationally accepted standards of reference. The OECD Guidelines were developed to fulfil this function, but they will need a stronger profile to do so more effectively. The text of the Guidelines is showing its age in certain areas and needs attention.

4. Against this background, the objectives of the Conference on the “OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises” will be to increase the influence of the Guidelines as an internationally accepted yardstick for corporate conduct and to discuss ways of making their implementation more effective. In addition, the Conference would also contribute to the review of the Guidelines which was launched by the CIME at its last meeting on 26 June 1998.

5. To these ends, the Conference will assess the role of the Guidelines and their *modus operandi* from the point of view of governments, business, labour unions and non-governmental organisations. Ways will be sought to involve all interested parties in the process of improving the Guidelines as a widely accepted yardstick for corporate conduct and furthering their application in practice.

Programme

6. The Conference will start on Monday 16 November 1998 in the afternoon and will continue on Tuesday 17 November and Wednesday 18 November in the morning. It will be organised around four plenary sessions. The opening session (16 November in the afternoon) will provide an opportunity for the OECD to introduce the Guidelines and for governments, business, trade unions, governmental and non-governmental organisations to make a first evaluation of their effectiveness in the current circumstances in particular with the emergence of new actors (emerging home and host countries for FDI, increasing

number of MNEs, increasing involvement of NGOs). This will also be an opportunity to present other international guidelines (*e.g.* of the ILO) and codes of conduct of individual MNEs.

7. In the second day in the morning, experience with the Guidelines will be addressed taking into account relevant international developments in the areas of environment, employment and industrial relations, competition, bribery and corruption etc.

8. The third session in the afternoon will deal with ways to improve the effectiveness of the Guidelines and their implementation procedures. In the concluding session, the third day in the morning, a panel discussion with participants from business and labour, NGOs and National Contact Points will formulate conclusions based on the previous sessions and recommendations for follow-up addressing governments, governmental and non-governmental international organisations, business and labour.

9. The outline of the agenda is as follows.

Monday 16 November 1998 (afternoon, 3 p.m.)

Welcoming remarks

Opening Session: The role of the OECD Guidelines in a globalising economy

Lead Speaker: OECD Secretariat

- An assessment of the OECD Guidelines and other codes of conduct in current circumstances and of experiences in their implementation from the point of view of:
 - Governments: the role of National Contact Points
 - Business: integrating the Guidelines into corporate practices; the role of corporate codes of conduct;
 - Trade unions: evolution of labour-management relations and the role of the Guidelines;
 - Non-governmental organisations.

Tuesday 17 November 1998

Morning Session: The relevance of the Guidelines in a changing world

Lead Speaker:

Discussants:

- The environment
- Labour relations
- Competition
- Bribery and corruption

- Human rights
- Economic development

Afternoon Session: Improving the effectiveness of the Guidelines

Lead Speaker:

Discussants:

- Implementation procedures and follow-up
 - Strengthening the role of the National Contact Points
 - Associating non-OECD Members with the Guidelines
 - Promoting awareness and acceptance of the Guidelines among the business community, trade unions and civil society

Wednesday 18 November 1998 (morning)

Concluding Session: Conclusions and future steps

- Conclusions from previous sessions
- Closing of the Conference

Documentation

10. Documentation for the Conference will include a general issues paper, notes from experts and submissions from participants.

11. General reference material will include relevant OECD documents, and:

- the Declarations of the Rio Earth Summit and Kyoto Conference;
- The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development (UN Commission on Sustainable Development);
- the ILO's Tripartite Declaration on MNEs and social policy;
- the ILO Declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work;
- the European Works Council Directive on the rights of workers to information and consultation;
- the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions;

- the ICC Rules of Conduct to Combat Extortion and Bribery in Business Transactions;
- the UN Principles and Rules on Restrictive Business Practices;
- Analysis of codes of conduct of some large MNEs.

Organisation

12. The technical organisation will be the joint responsibility of the OECD Secretariat and the Government of Hungary.

Participants

13. Participants will be invited from:

1. OECD Member countries;
2. Non-members:
 - Those who have adhered to the 1976 Declaration: Argentina, Brazil and Chile;
 - Other observers to the MAI negotiations: Estonia; Hong Kong, China; Latvia; Lithuania and the Slovak Republic;
3. BIAC and TUAC; other private sector and trade union representatives;
4. International Organisations: ILO, UNCTAD and the World Bank;
5. Non-Governmental Organisations.