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Environment Ministers to Meet at OECD, 19–21 April 2004

Environment Ministers will meet at OECD headquarters in Paris on 19-21 April to check how well they are doing in meeting objectives set in the OECD Environmental Strategy they adopted three years ago.

Participants will include ministers from OECD and several non-OECD countries – invitations have been issued to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, India, Israel, Kazakhstan, Russia, Slovenia and South Africa – as well as representatives of intergovernmental organisations, business, trade unions and environmental groups.

On Monday 19 April, ministers will hold a consultation session with stakeholder representatives to discuss environmental challenges in relation to climate change, globalisation, the efficient use of resources and technological innovation. This session is **open to the media**.

The ministerial meeting on the following two days is closed to the media, but there will be a **news briefing on Tuesday 20 April at 3.00 p.m.** with ministers and stakeholder representatives and a **closing news conference on Wednesday 21 April at 3.00 p.m.** by the Chair of the meeting, Ireland's Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government Martin Cullen, and the Vice-Chair, Sweden's Minister of Environment Lena Sommestad.

Participants will discuss how to address environmental challenges in an equitable, efficient and cost-effective manner, including by integrating environmental concerns into sectoral and economic policies. In some areas, performance has improved over the past couple of years, but in others action is still lagging.

OECD countries have reduced emissions of some air pollutants, are using energy more efficiently, are managing water resources better, and have expanded natural parks. Governments are taking more care in reviewing the environmental and health implications of genetically modified organisms and the risks posed by hazardous chemicals. Several international environmental agreements, including one for the sustainable management of fish stocks and another to phase-out persistent organic pollutants, have recently entered into force or will soon do so.

But greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise at a global level. Only one in three OECD countries has reduced or stabilised greenhouse gas emissions since 1990, despite increased use of taxes on energy use or carbon content, tradable permits and other policies. Expanding road and air transport bring increased congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. Environmentally damaging subsidy arrangements, meanwhile, are proving slow to change: agricultural support in OECD countries, estimated at around USD 318 billion annually, is largely provided through mechanisms that have negative side-effects for the environment.

Further information will be published on the OECD's website at www.oecd.org/envmin2004. Media interviews with ministers can be arranged on request during the meeting. To register for the Stakeholder Consultation and media briefings, journalists are invited to contact the Media Relations Division (news.contact@oecd.org or tel. 33 1 45 24 97 00). For further information, please contact Helen Fisher, OECD's Media Relations Division (helen.fisher@oecd.org or tel. 33 1 45 24 80 97).

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