

Tax and Crime Conference, Oslo 21 – 23 March 2011

Opening remarks by Mr Richard Boucher, Deputy General Secretary OECD

Let me first, on behalf of the OECD, **welcome** all of you and **thank** State Secretary Scherva for his opening speech and the government of Norway for hosting and financially supporting this important event. Norway has for a long time played a widely recognised role in bringing a responsible dimension to globalisation, particularly by supporting development and anti-corruption initiatives. It is therefore quite appropriate that this first Tax and Crime conference is being held in Oslo.

We are here to focus on cooperation, and rightly so. Unfortunately, criminals operate across borders and sectors quite easily. They make harmful use of telecommunications innovations and liberalisation of trade to carry out illicit activities with greater speed and on a wider stage than ever before. They can also more readily hide their traces by using multiple jurisdictions and by recycling the proceeds of their crimes at dizzying speeds.

So, we need to operate across borders and between agencies as well. The hard question is how to do so effectively?

At the international level, for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, cooperation is our middle name. We've brought jurisdictions together to exchange tax information, to compare cases against foreign bribery, to compare the learning of 15-year olds and to set international standards in many areas.

On corruption, we have recently launched an initiative called "clean.gov.biz" to bring together the full range of our tools to fight corruption: from public integrity and public procurement, to business practices and countering corruption in export credits as well as our well-known work against foreign bribery. We also aim to unite all the players, including the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Bank, the Financial Action Task Force, and NGOs like Transparency International, the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative, and the World Economic Forum.

In the end, when these systems fail, illegal proceeds result. Cooperation between tax authorities, prosecutors and other agencies across borders is thus an essential tool to find and follow the money.

Sharing and using tax information goes beyond corruption to almost any type of crime. This is why I am pleased to see so many participants from both developed and developing countries, and from such a wide range of policy areas: tax, anti-corruption, anti-fraud, anti-money laundering, development. I am also pleased to see representatives of civil society and business.

Cooperation is difficult at the international level. It is also equally challenging, and sometimes even harder, at the domestic level. There are serious obstacles to overcome. Efforts are often carried out in parallel by different agencies and organisations focus on their particular piece of the puzzle. Laws and rules sometimes prevent sharing. At other times, people and organizations lack incentives to share and they cooperate only from personal interest.

We are here to look into these issues. How can greater collaboration among tax administrations, different ministries and law enforcement agencies strengthen governments' overall effectiveness in tackling financial crime? During these three days, we will explore the benefits, share experiences and insights, and discuss concerns for the future.

We will hopefully come up with ideas on how to encourage and implement greater cooperation.

Let me also reassure you. **This conference was born in tax experts' minds, but this is not just another tax conference.** The objective is to explore, using tax as an example, how governments can combat financial crimes more effectively through an integrated inter-agency approach and a strengthened international cooperation.

Let me welcome you again. You are all here because of your expertise and your experience, but also because of your dedication to cleaning up the practice of business and government. We work for the citizens. They deserve to be protected wherever they are.

I am confident that the experts in this first panel will provide us with a great introduction to our discussions. They are all experts in “serious” issues, be it serious fraud, serious non-compliance, economic regulation or financial intelligence. They come from different countries and entities or Ministries, with a tax, justice, foreign affairs or central bank's perspective. All these views are necessary to make a difference. So, please, tell us how to ensure a whole of government approach to sharing information in the fight against crime.

First off, we'll hear from.....