

Paris, 9 November 2000

OECD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES (SMES)

"REALISING THE BENEFITS OF GLOBALISATION AND THE KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY", PARIS, 29-30 NOVEMBER 2000

In a number of countries, women are responsible for significantly more business start-ups than men, but frequently they face obstacles that stand in the way of business development. For example, women business owners are continuing to experience difficulties in obtaining finance for business start-ups, development and expansion, garnering merely a small fraction of growing institutional venture capital market. They are only just beginning to become involved in international trade and develop their trade networks.

These and other issues relating to the role of women as entrepreneurs form the basis of an international conference organised by the OECD and the French Ministry of the Economy, Finance and Industry on 29-30 November 2000 in Paris.

The Conference, to be held at the Conference Centre Pierre Mendès France of the French Ministry, follows on from an April 1997 OECD conference on the role of women entrepreneurs in innovation and job creation and the first OECD conference at ministerial level on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in June 2000 in Bologna, Italy, on enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs in the global economy. This time, the theme will be "how can women-owned businesses become better integrated in the global economy?"

Some 60 countries will be represented at the conference, which will bring together government ministers and officials, entrepreneurs, corporate executives, experts and academics, as well as representatives of international and civil society organisations and of women's business associations.

The conference will address key issues and policies related to women's entrepreneurship and the participation of women-owned businesses in the global economy, including the use of new technologies; international trade; fostering an entrepreneurial culture for women; statistics on female entrepreneurship and its role in the economy; financing for women-owned businesses; domestic and international networking. These themes will also be examined in relation to transition economies and developing countries. The conference will result in policy recommendations for public and private sector decision-makers and concrete initiatives for women-owned businesses.

The meeting is open to journalists and there will be two briefings in the course of the conference: at approximately 10.30 a.m. on 29 November with OECD Deputy Secretary-General Herwig Schlögl, France's Secretary of State responsible for small and medium-sized enterprises François Patriat, who will chair the conference and Aida Alvarez of the US Small Business Administration; and at approximately 4.15 p.m. on 30 November with OECD Deputy Secretary-General Sally Shelton-Colby, OECD Director for Science, Technology and Industry Risaburo Nezu and the President of PlaNet Finance Jacques Attali.

The conference will be followed by a private sector business partnering event "Networking 2000 - Women Entrepreneurs' Forum", organised by the association "Dirigeantes" (<http://www.dirigeantes.com>) at the Centre de Congrès Chaillot Galliéra on 1-2 December 2000. This event will bring together more than 600 business owners from France and other countries.

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