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**Opening Session  
OECD Forum 2004  
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It is a great pleasure to welcome you to OECD Forum 2004. It is an honour to once again hold the Forum in the Kléber International Conference Centre, and I am grateful to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs whose co-operation made this possible.

I would like to express my warmest gratitude to the Government of Mexico for chairing OECD's Ministerial meetings taking place over the next two days. We are indeed celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Mexico's membership in the OECD. I would particularly like to express my gratitude to:

- Luis Derbez, Mexico's Foreign Minister, who is joining me to open the Forum;
- Julio Frenk, Mexico's Health Minister, who will be participating in two Forum sessions today, as well as chairing the Health Ministers Round Table tomorrow morning; and
- Fernando Canales, Mexico's Economy Minister, who will be participating in tomorrow's Trade Ministers' panel.

Cette année, nous fêtons le 5<sup>ème</sup> Anniversaire de ce Forum de l'OCDE. Dans la vie de cette organisation le Forum devient de plus en plus important car il nous donne l'occasion de créer un dialogue entre des chefs d'entreprise, des chefs syndicaux, des représentants de la société civile, y compris des ONG, des Ministres, ainsi que ceux et celles qui dirigent les organisations internationales. Ensemble, ils peuvent ici s'adresser aux questions d'actualité les plus importantes à l'échelle de la planète. Ce Forum nous permet tous de comprendre mieux les inquiétudes et les espoirs des uns et des autres résultant de la globalisation.

Les trois ministres mexicains qui participeront à ce Forum, et qui présideront les sessions de la réunion ministérielle, porteront ces inquiétudes et ces espoirs à la connaissance de leurs collègues ministres lors des débats intergouvernementaux demain et vendredi.

Cette année, ce Forum s'annonce très spécial dans plusieurs perspectives. Nous aurons l'honneur aujourd'hui de recevoir :

- First, later today, we will have keynote addresses by KIM Dae-jung, former President of Korea and Nobel Peace Prize winner, and Michel Barnier, France's Minister of Foreign Affairs.
- Second, the Forum also provides an important multi-stakeholder consultation for our Ministerial Council Meeting and the OECD's first-ever meeting of Health Ministers. I am delighted that so many health and trade ministers have agreed to participate in

tomorrow's round-tables. But, I am equally pleased that so many captains of industry, labour leaders and civil society and media personalities will also be with us.

The "Health of Nations", the overarching theme of this year's Forum, is a very timely theme. Over these next three days, we will be seeking to achieve progress in tackling the most difficult issues on the national and international agendas in terms of the health of our citizens, health of the world economy and the health of multilateral co-operation. For example:

In our health systems, how to deal with the problems of financial sustainability and efficiency?

In the OECD area, health spending now averages almost 9% of total national expenditure, double its share in 1970. Tomorrow's health systems will be even more costly. Advances in technology mean that we will be able to do much more, but we will have to pay more, too. The increasing share of elderly in our populations will also raise the demand for health care in the years ahead. What matters to the governments is that some three-quarters of health spending is paid by the public purse.

Evidence from the OECD Health Project shows that, across countries, there are wide differences in the cost of care. This means that by sharing experience, there is scope to achieve the same or better health results at lower social and economic cost.

While financing health systems is a growing challenge, there are many opportunities to improve health systems in terms of the health results they achieve. One example is disease prevention – perhaps the best known case is the dramatic reduction in rates of smoking since the 1960s leading to a decline in the incidence of lung cancer.

Technological innovations, particularly in the fields of biotechnology, genetics, and information and communication technologies, are bringing substantial benefits in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease, as well as access to care. Tomorrow's Round Table of Health Ministers will explore the contribution of Research and Innovation Systems to Improving the Performance of health systems.

The Forum will also address the potential of "e-health". A wide range of knowledge, goods and services in health could be delivered across the web. We already see initiatives such as consumer-oriented health web sites, electronic exchanges between patients and providers, online health records, patient monitoring and home care, remote consultation, and so on.

Another set of questions that will be addressed by the Forum and our Ministerial meeting concern economic growth and the implications of population ageing. How to ensure that economic recovery is strong and sustainable? How to manage the negative effects of ageing populations on economic growth and public finance?

L'âge de la retraite dans les pays de l'OCDE s'est progressivement avancé alors que l'espérance de vie s'allongeait. Il en résulte qu'aujourd'hui nombreux sont ceux qui travaillent pendant une durée de vie beaucoup plus réduite. En même temps, dans beaucoup de pays la population est en déclin. Cela ne manquera pas d'entraîner une baisse de la croissance, et le montant de ressources transféré de la population active aux personnes à la retraite va augmenter. Il nous faudra en même temps augmenter les dépenses en faveur des populations vieillissantes dans des domaines tels que la santé et les soins de longue durée ; les impôts devront être augmentés pour faire face à ces dépenses. Donc un cercle vicieux !

La solution n'est pas simple. La technologie pourrait augmenter la productivité jusqu'à un certain point et l'immigration permettra peut être de retarder les pires difficultés.

Est-ce qu'une réponse réside dans le maintien des gens au travail pour une période de vie plus longue ? C'est une question qui vous donne à réfléchir.

Il serait important de corriger les déficiences de nos politiques actuelles. Ces questions, ou plutôt ces défis, seront évoqués demain au Forum et seront un thème central de la réunion des ministres de l'Economie et des Finances des pays de l'OCDE qui se réunissent demain après midi.

Finally, this Forum and the Ministerial will pose some pressing questions about the multilateral system of trade and investment and how to create new momentum in the Doha Development Round trade talks.

The multilateral trade negotiations have been stalled since the Cancún WTO Ministerial meeting in September. We are now beginning to see some stirring of movement. I hope that over the next two days we will see some signs of progress. As we all appreciate, the most important steps to take are to address developing country concerns, especially in agriculture, which is of great importance to the economic prospects of many developing countries.

Trade Ministers – from OECD and some emerging and developing countries – will discuss these issues at the OECD on Friday morning. Tomorrow afternoon, they will debate these issues at the Forum. The Forum will also treat other important related questions such as ways to equip and relocate workers whose jobs are lost to competition from imports, or ways to promote global corporate responsibility.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, I wish to emphasise that this is an interactive Forum. I – and the speakers and panellists that you will listen to and meet over the next two days – want to hear from you. We want to hear your questions and we want to hear your views. You will notice that there are and will be travelling microphones in each of the rooms. And, as I mentioned, the results of these proceedings will be conveyed to Ministers.

In order to get this process started, Minister Derbez and I hope you will ask us some questions – or give us your reactions at the end of his remarks.

As we focus on these challenges, it is all too easy to forget the immense progress that has been made in all these areas over the last half century. And it is all too easy to overlook the potential for continued progress on many fronts. As the great economist Keynes urged "Examine the present in light of the past for the purposes of the future."

That is what we will be doing together at this Forum.