

**Speech from Jon Hall (OECD) during the United Nation General Assembly's
Informal Thematic Debate on Development
27 November 2006**

**"Partnerships towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals:
Taking Stock, Moving Forward"**

Thank you for this opportunity.

The OECD has long recognised the importance that evidence, and indicators, can and should play in designing better policies. Typically our work has focussed on the OECD member countries. But much of our experience can be useful to any nation.

The OECD recognises the MDG process and indicators as a tremendous - an extraordinary - achievement, which the OECD is proud to have helped to initiate. We help compile the indicators. And we assist with the work led by the United Nations Statistics Division, to improve the quality of the whole indicator set.

But despite the efforts of the international community, we all have to recognise that work is still needed to make the MDG indicators fully reliable. Data in official reports is sometimes estimated by international organisations, not supplied by national statistical authorities. And this is a limitation. It is a limitation that should lead the international community, and national governments, to invest today more resources to improve the statistical capacity of developing countries. This is especially urgent if we want to have more solid information in time for the UN's 2010 report on progress towards the 2015 targets. The OECD share offices with PARIS21 – the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century – that has a mission to improve statistical capacity.

Strengthening the monitoring of the MDGs remains a top international priority. But we have seen a growing demand by civil society, as well as governments, to develop their own measures of societal wellbeing. Measures beyond the purely economic (i.e. Gross Domestic Product): . indicators of economic, social and environmental trends at the national level and the sub-national level. Indicators to judge the effectiveness of public policy. Work such as AfriMAP which Mr Soros mentioned.

And that is why the OECD, in collaboration with the United Nations, the World Bank and the European Commission, has launched a project to achieve two aims:

- Our first aim – to help countries, at all levels of development, to better measure their societal progress. And to do that by looking at economic, social and environmental dimensions;
- Our second aim - to promote the use of different sets of key economic, social and environmental indicators to inform and promote evidence-based decision-making, within and across the public, private and citizen sectors.

The project is about the importance of statistical evidence. Evidence as a foundation for better decision making. Evidence as a tool to promote healthier political systems. Systems where decision makers focus on the things that really matter. In short, it is about the “Statistics, Knowledge and Policy” value chain.

And “Statistics, Knowledge and Policy” is the key concept underpinning a World Forum which will be held in Istanbul from June 27 – 30 next year. This second World Forum follows on from the first, held in Italy in 2004. It is called “Measuring and Fostering the Progress of Societies”. It will discuss what we know, and what more we need to know, if we are to measure and foster progress in many of the key concerns facing the world in the 21st century.

The Forum is a key opportunity for debate among many of the world’s most influential leaders. The OECD will invite 800 delegates from the public, private and citizen sectors from every continent. And the Forum will be webcast to a global audience who will follow the debate.

The OECD want this to be a truly “global initiative”. One where the international community can listen to all countries. So before the Istanbul Forum we are organising “regional meetings” in each continent. A first meeting was held in Colombia in October for Latin America. Others will follow in the first half of next year for Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

This work is generating great interest. Just last week the Andean Community of Latin American nations wrote to the OECD. They were inspired by the Colombian Conference. They want the OECD to assist them to measure and monitor their progress.

One of our long-term aims is to stimulate a global debate on what progress means and how it can be measured. Progress means different things to different countries. It depends on our level of economic development, our history and culture of course. But when we look across the work already underway to measure progress, there is much common ground between countries. This project could catalyse a global conversation. It could provide a fundamental intellectual foundation to the work to monitor local, national and global progress.

How does this work relate to the Millennium Development Goals? The MDG goals and indicators will continue to play a major role, especially for developing countries, until 2015. But in the next few years, discussions will take place about setting goals beyond 2015. This project could help ensure that whatever subsequent system the world's leaders put in place to monitor the planet's progress, it is a system that is built co-operatively on the deepest, and on the broadest, on the strongest, analytical foundations possible.

Much is to be decided about the direction, scope and role of this project. And the OECD hope those decisions will come out of the discussions at the Istanbul conference. Flyers about the World Forum and the project are available in this room. We hope that you will agree this initiative is a significant opportunity to improve the national and international debate about how to foster the progress of all our societies.

Thank you

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