OECD to Hold Conference on Telecommunications Policies for the Digital Economy in Dubai
21-22 January 2002

OECD countries have learned by experience that a competitive telecommunications market is one of the best guarantees for businesses and consumers to access good quality infrastructure and services at reasonable prices in order to participate in a "digital economy". The lessons that can be drawn from telecommunications liberalisation will be the subject of an OECD conference on "Telecommunications Policy for the Digital Economy" in Dubai on 21-22 January 2002.

The objective of the conference, which will take place at the Conference Centre of the Jumeirah Beach Hotel, Dubai, will be to provide guidance for policy makers in non-OECD countries on strategies for change in their telecommunication markets and the adoption of best practice policies. As well an objective is to highlight the benefits that changes in telecommunication market structures can bring to the economy at large. Participants will examine how telecommunications competition can help to promote economic growth and diversification. They will review the impact of competition on both telecommunication operators and other business players. They will examine ways of structuring a regulatory framework for the telecommunications sector, including necessary safeguards relating to pricing policies and the availability of services.

Approximately 300 participants are expected, including government officials, industry representatives, academia and civil organisations from 30 OECD countries and around 30 other countries, including many in North Africa, the Middle East and Central and South Asia. The conference will be closed to the media, but journalists are invited to participate in the opening and closing sessions. There will be media seminars involving some of the participants in the conference at 12.30 p.m. on 21 and 22 January on "the benefits of a competitive telecommunication sector" and "how to manage the changeover from a monopoly to a competitive sector".

Most OECD countries have themselves only recently made the transition from a monopolistic telecommunications sector to a competitive sector so as to better able to respond to growing demand for telecommunication services in an environment of fast-moving technological change. Drawing on case studies in OECD and other countries, the Dubai conference will review the rapid technological and policy changes taking place in the telecommunications sector and their implications for economies.

Dubai is playing a leading role in the region in promoting information technologies and developing a digital economy. This is the second conference that the OECD will be holding in the United Arab Emirates. It follows the OECD’s Emerging Market Economy Forum on Electronic Commerce that took place in Dubai in January 2001.

For further information, journalists may contact Dimitri Ypsilanti, Information, Computer and Communications Policy Division (tel. 33 1 45 24 94 42 or dimitri.ypsilanti@oecd.org) or Sonia Primot, Media Relations Division (tel. 33 1 45 24 80 89 or sonia.primot@oecd.org).

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