OECD countries launch accession talks with five prospective new members

OECD countries have given a green light for the start of accession talks with five prospective new members -- Chile, Estonia, Israel, Russia and Slovenia, signaling a new stage in the Organisation's drive to broaden and deepen its involvement with emerging new players in the global economy.

The approval of so-called "road maps" setting a negotiating framework for each of the five countries marks the formal launch of a process agreed at an OECD ministerial meeting in Paris last May. In parallel, OECD has announced plans to engage more closely with other significant economies, notably Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa.

The twin-track process is designed to reinforce OECD's role as a hub for dialogue on global issues involving both OECD and non-OECD countries, OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría said. OECD's working methods are based on the principle of peer review and evidence-based discussion of policy options, drawing on the experiences of member countries. "Our goal is to help countries respond successfully to the challenges and opportunities of a global economy."

"By extending our membership and deepening our relations with other big players in the world economy, we are broadening our perspectives and consolidating our role as a source of policy solutions," Mr. Gurría added. "Governments must work together to tackle issues like innovation and intellectual property rights, poverty and inequality, climate change and international migration. OECD provides a forum for doing that."

Created in 1961 as the successor to the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation which was set up in 1948 to administer the Marshall Plan, OECD defines its mission as being to help make the world economy work effectively and efficiently. It currently has 30 members, the most recent entrant being the Slovak Republic in 2000. Its founding Convention requires it to help member countries to achieve sustainable economic growth and employment and rising standards of living while maintaining financial stability, thereby contributing to improved prosperity worldwide.

Accession negotiations will take place individually between the candidate countries and the OECD committees that handle the substantive aspects of the Organisation's work. These bring together senior officials from national capitals to discuss policy in areas ranging from farming to financial affairs and from taxation to trade.

OECD Deputy Secretary-General Thelma Askey will visit each of the five countries over the next few weeks to set the accession talks in motion. Once OECD committees are satisfied that a candidate country fulfils their requirements for membership, a final decision on whether to issue an invitation for membership will be taken by the Organisation's governing Council of ambassadors. Like all major decisions affecting the Organisation, decisions on membership will have to be taken on a basis of consensus.
The OECD's current members are: Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

For further information, journalists are invited to visit www.oecd.org/membershiptalks or contact OECD's Media Division (tel. +33 1 4524 9700).