Consumers in search of greater choice, lower prices and more personal convenience are increasingly turning to the global marketplace to purchase goods and services, according to the organisers of an OECD Conference on "A Global Marketplace for Consumers", to be held at the OECD on 1st-2nd June.

Deregulation and new technologies are removing geographical limits on the marketplace and the growing use of toll-free telephone lines, fast parcel delivery services and credit cards, are contributing to a significant rise in direct, long distance selling. Today, these transactions remain largely confined within national boundaries, but the number of purchases across such frontiers is on the increase.

The OECD Committee on Consumer Policy has organised the Conference to explore both the opportunities and risks for the consumer in the global marketplace. The Conference will be opened by OECD Secretary General Jean-Claude Paye, and by GATT Deputy Director-General Jesus Seade. Discussions will bring together Member country delegates, business leaders and experts in direct marketing and long distance sales, as well as representatives of consumer organisations, telecommunications companies, parcel delivery operators, financial institutions and advertisers.

Issues affecting the global marketplace go beyond simply fulfilling consumer needs and touch upon important economic and trade questions such as competition and market access. Conference participants will debate how to help hasten global sales development while enhancing consumer protection in the transactions. This fundamental question is one where the interests of both the consumer and the supplier are clearly compatible.

Participants will debate the risks associated with any long distance purchase such as fraud, non-delivery, non-conformity and product defects. They will also discuss whether realistic, consumer-friendly remedies can be created for buyers in the global marketplace.
Obstacles to the growth of the global marketplace include transaction costs, particularly for telephone and delivery services. Conference participants will discuss the potential for technological progress and deregulation of international telecommunications, parcel delivery and other services to increase competition and lower prices. The creation of a global marketplace involves not only overcoming prohibitive transaction costs but also removing barriers to effective advertising services. Media developments which foster improved consumer information and expand markets for long distance merchants will be reviewed.

The discussions will be organised in five consecutive panels:

-- Trends in consumer purchases across national boundaries
-- Telecommunication services in international consumer transactions
-- International delivery of consumer purchases
-- Credit cards in international transactions
-- Advertising consumer goods and services internationally

A closing press conference will be held at 5 p.m.
on Thursday 2nd June 1994

Journalists seeking further information or wishing to attend the conference should contact:

Mr. Timothy H. Baker
or
Mr. Francis Ventura
Competition and Consumer Policy Division
Directorate for Financial, Fiscal and Enterprise Affairs
OECD, 2 rue Andre-Pascal, 75775 Paris cedex 16, France

Tel. (33-1) 45.24.18.91. or 45.24.78.70
Fax. (33-1) 45.24.78.52