Austrian Federal Chancellor Franz Vranitzky will address on 24th January the opening session of a two-day international conference on "Regional Integration and Globalisation: Implications for Human Resources", that has been organised by the OECD and the Austrian Federal Government.

Part of a major study by the OECD on Employment and Unemployment, the conference will examine what has been happening to workers and their jobs over the last several years as a result of measures taken by governments to reduce barriers to trade and investment, and as a result of enterprises choosing increasingly to organise themselves and carry out their business across national borders.

Three main questions will be addressed. First, what forms do enterprise "globalisation" strategies take? Second, what impacts do these strategies have on workers and their jobs? Third, what public policy response is needed in order to facilitate adjustment to, or minimise the transition costs incurred by regional integration policies put in place by governments, and globalisation strategies pursued by enterprises?

Following opening statements by the Federal Chancellor and Pierre Vinde, Deputy-Secretary General of the OECD, the conference will hear a keynote speech on how the behaviour of enterprises has changed in a climate of increased regional integration, particularly in response to liberalisation of trade and investment flows. Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning will examine the impact of these developments and regional integration policies in three regional contexts:

   -- the relationship between Central and Eastern Europe, and Western Europe, with a focus on the experience of Austria;

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-- that of the European Union; and,

-- North America.

Ferdinand Lacina, Austrian Minister of Finance will chair the concluding Policy Roundtable. Roundtable participants, including J.E. Andriessen, Dutch Minister of Economic Affairs and Allan Larsson, former Swedish Minister of Finance, will debate the role that public authorities might play in reducing temporary job losses and other hardships, and maximising the long-term benefits that potentially result from regional integration and globalisation. T.J. Alexander, OECD Director for Education, Employment, Labour and Social Affairs will close the conference.