Three billion people in developing countries live in rural areas and include the majority of the world’s poor. They are constrained by a lack of productive employment opportunities, poor education and infrastructure, and limited access to markets and services. Although building on the experience of early developers is important, rural regions in less developed parts of the world face challenges and opportunities that developed countries did not face before. On the one hand, challenges include a more demanding competitive international environment, rapidly growing rural populations, increased pressure on limited environmental resources and climate change. On the other hand, opportunities include advances in agricultural, energy, health, and information and communications technologies that can help address some of these challenges. In this context, development strategies will not bear fruit unless they consider the potential of local assets and account for the multiple linkages between rural and urban areas.

Session 2 of the Global Forum on Development discusses the need to address rural development as a necessary condition for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This session also will launch “A New Rural Development Paradigm for the 21st Century: A toolkit for developing countries,” an OECD publication made possible with the support of the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This report takes stock of rural areas in developing countries and summarizes the theories and approaches to rural development. It analyses rural development strategies in both OECD and developing countries to identify lessons for policy makers interested in building resilient and sustainable rural livelihoods.

Panellists in this session will discuss the features of this new rural development paradigm for developing countries. The new paradigm argues that development strategies need to be multi-sectoral, focusing not just on agriculture but also on rural industries and services. They need to consider rural-urban linkages and not focus just on rural areas. And they also need to be multi-agent and multi-level, involving not just national but also local and regional governments as well as the private sector, international donors, non-governmental organizations and rural communities. Moreover, the paradigm argues that development strategies have to account for demographic challenges, give women greater rights and a greater role in economic decisions, and be both inclusive and sustainable.

Panellists will discuss concrete examples of rural development strategies as well as how the newly released toolkit for developing rural strategies can overcome specific implementation challenges.
Concept Note

Session 2—A new rural development paradigm: place matters for the SDGs

Questions for discussion:

- Does the SDG agenda place too much emphasis on urban challenges?
- Why is a rural focus necessary in designing national approaches to the SDGs?
- What instruments are available to manage rural development?
- How can rural-urban linkages be used to improve the effectiveness of development policies?
- Why is rural development still critical and how can rural strategies be strengthened in international and national agendas to support the SDGs?