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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS FOR THE 2025-26 BIENNIUM AND BEYOND

This document is issued under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD and does not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD Members.

- 1. This note sets out my Strategic Orientations on priorities for the Organisation over the 2025-26 biennium and beyond. These views have been shaped by the evolving global economic, political and social context, Council's discussions on the themes for the 2024 Ministerial Council Meeting (MCM), the outcomes of recent past Ministerial Council Meetings, and the 2023 Global Strategy Group Meeting. They also reflect my ongoing dialogue with Leaders, Ministers, Ambassadors and other stakeholders, as well as consultations with Council in the context of preparations for the 2025-26 OECD Programme of Work and Budget.
- 2. We are facing a complex geopolitical environment with risks tilted to the downside, due to the lingering repercussions of the pandemic, the impact of Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine and the evolving conflicts in the Middle East.
- 3. The global economy has shown real resilience and growth is set to continue at a modest pace. The *February 2024 OECD Economic Outlook Interim Report* projected global GDP growth of 2.9% in 2024 and 3.0% in 2025, while inflation is expected to decline further and real incomes strengthen. The fiscal outlook is challenging, with public debt in the OECD at 114% of GDP and high pressures for additional spending to address longer-term challenges.
- 4. Looking ahead, policymakers will need to navigate shifting geopolitics and concerns around supply chain fragmentation as disruptions to the important benefits of globally integrated markets. An increase in trade-restricting measures threatens to hold back productivity growth, income convergence and the green transition. Growing fragmentation and geopolitical tensions can increase the likelihood of supply chain disruptions and reduce opportunities to develop and reach agreement on global solutions to shared challenges.
- 5. Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution are also key challenges that require effective multilateral co-operation, alongside the uncertain impacts of digitalisation, declining trust in public institutions, shifting demographics, slow global growth, cost-of-living and fiscal pressures, and barriers to development progress. These will all continue to pose challenges to our drive for resilient societies, inclusive economies and fair distribution of opportunities.
- 6. Rapid technological evolution not least advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data Free Flow with Trust ((DFFT) have led to calls for reflection not just on effective technology development and diffusion, but also on how to guide the application of emerging technologies so that it ensures the greatest benefit to all while mitigating potential risks. In response, we must also foster appropriate skills formation and continue to address the taxation challenges of the digital economy and society.
- 7. In this policy environment, the OECD remains a unique community of likeminded nations with the ability and responsibility to contribute to shaping global economic and policy co-operation for the better. Our shared values, including democracy, the rule of law, the protection of human rights, multilateralism and open markets and a rules-based trading system, have stood the test of time.
- 8. At a time when the rules-based international order is under significant pressure, we need more multilateralism, not less. In the OECD's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Vision Statement, Members reaffirmed their shared commitment to an open and transparent rules-based international trading system underpinned by strong multilateral co-operation. In the 2023 Ministerial Council Statement, Members reaffirmed both the importance of multilateralism and the need for the OECD to reach out beyond its current membership to enhance and develop global partnerships.
- 9. We must continue to reinforce our shared values, support the benefits of multilateralism and strengthen the OECD's relevance and contribution to the global policy dialogue.

## 10. For the 2025-26 biennium and beyond, the OECD should aim to:

- promote strong, sustainable, inclusive and resilient economic development and growth;
- become a global leader in climate economic and policy analysis and facilitate multilateral co-operation on climate action;
- maintain our position as a global leader on digital policy and emerging technologies, including generative AI;
- promote well-functioning global markets and a global level playing field with a rules-based trading system in good working order;
- pursue strategic enlargement and global engagement to strengthen the OECD's relevance and ability to deliver on the global economic agenda, including on sustainable development, and
- continue progress on organisational reforms to ensure operational and management excellence.
- 11. In more detail, our work should be framed around the following priorities.

First, promoting strong, sustainable, inclusive and resilient economic development and growth.

- 12. Our essential mission of the past to promote strong, sustainable, inclusive and resilient economic growth and to raise employment, living standards and well-being remains our essential mission for the future.
- 13. We will continue to identify the policy tools needed to drive economic growth and development. Through our suite of flagship reports, country reviews and Economic Surveys, we will advise and engage with governments on structural reforms designed to boost productivity, promote innovation, support business dynamism, and ensure well-functioning and inclusive labour markets tailored towards longer term challenges like population growth, ageing and the transition to net zero. We will help address the global debt pressures and improve the quality and sustainability of inclusive growth and its financing, including the specific circumstances and needs of developing countries.
- 14. Our focus will be on promoting pro-growth policies (including industrial, innovation, education and skills, competition, tax, trade and investment, and digital), ensuring that appropriate social and environmental policies support a dynamic and inclusive economy, and providing the base for sustainable and inclusive growth including through human and social capital formation, sound fiscal policy, good corporate governance and responsible business conduct.
- 15. Core to our mission is the promotion of as many quality, productive and rewarding jobs as possible. Growing private-sector businesses that are operating in open, efficient and competitive markets will remain the main engines of job creation. Small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly new innovative firms, will be key actors in job creation and skills development and allocation at a regional and local level. The OECD has a critical role to support policies that allow SMEs and new firms to serve as engines for growth through the implementation of the new OECD Recommendations on SME Financing and on Regional Development Policy.
- 16. **Expanding and improving active labour market policies includes investing in effective education and skills policies.** Education, skills and human capital are central foundations for growth and productivity, and for ensuring merit-based social mobility and equality of opportunity. Our focus will be on upskilling and re-skilling, particularly important in the wake of

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evolving labour market needs, including as a result of shifting demographics, and the green and digital transformations. Drawing from our Jobs Strategy, we must promote a culture of lifelong learning, alongside eliminating barriers to labour force participation especially for social groups such as people with disabilities, parents (especially mothers) and the elderly, and better integrating migrants and their families. Our global Skills Surveys will enable countries to track progress on opportunities and outcomes.

- 17. **We will support health, well-being and inclusion** by developing new evidence and designing policy tools through the new Knowledge Exchange Platform on Well-being Metrics and Policy Practice (KEP) and the Observatory of Social Mobility and Equal Opportunity and by implementing the Youth Policy Toolkit delivered by the Horizontal Project on young people. We will also promote more resilient health systems, building on the meeting of the Health Committee at Ministerial Level in January 2024, and by harnessing new insights from the new Patient Reported Indicators Survey (PaRIS) initiative.
- 18. We will provide new insights on equality of opportunity and gender equality to support progress and ambition within the OECD and beyond, including through the implementation of the OECD's Contribution to Promoting Gender Equality. We will work on a new Gender Data Initiative and on the implementation of OECD instruments on gender equality, including the gender policy reviews as part of our Economic Surveys and the Social Institution and Gender Index (SIGI). The new Forum on Gender Equality for Economic and Democratic Resilience will bring together OECD committees to help close gender gaps across policy areas and promote gender mainstreaming. These efforts will be in addition to mainstreaming gender equality right across the Organisation's programme of work.
- 19. We will support countries to strengthen the quality and resilience of their infrastructure systems by further enhancing and better integrating our work on infrastructure with a new, whole-of-OECD approach. In doing so, we will draw insights from hosting the Secretariat of the Blue Dot Network, a global framework for quality infrastructure investment, which will leverage OECD instruments while ensuring compatibility with other infrastructure initiatives.
- 20. We will work to foster trust in government at all levels and promote an effective transformation of public governance practices. Mindful that economic and social prosperity is boosted by anti-corruption practices, we will continue addressing challenges to our democracies and economies by supporting transparent, accountable and citizen-centred public services, public integrity and civic participation, while addressing new threats such as mis- and disinformation and foreign interference through our Reinforcing Democracy Initiative, and through targeted development co-operation to partner countries facing similar challenges.
- 21. Well-functioning capital markets require a sound institutional architecture, good regulation, and robust supervision. We will strengthen our work on non-bank financial intermediation (investment and pension funds and insurance corporations), debt and equity securities markets, as well as national capital market development that is aligned with international standards. We will focus both on identifying risks in the non-bank financial intermediation sector and the role of these investors in supporting the real economy.
- 22. In the coming biennium, we will continue to lead the global fight against tax evasion and multinational tax avoidance, including by continuing our efforts to reinforce our work on transparency, inform opportunities for financing development and spurring domestic resource mobilisation through effective tax policies beyond the corporate income tax. We also will implement the landmark global agreement on the two-pillar solution to address the tax challenges arising from the digitalisation of the economy. We will step-up our efforts in capacity building and technical assistance to support implementation of the two-pillar solution, including by developing countries, and to ensure inclusive access to our standards. In the area of tax administration, we will

- We will continue to deepen our work with the government of Ukraine, with our Members, the EU and all international partners providing support to Ukraine towards its recovery and reform agenda, especially through our Ukraine Country Programme, the OECD-Ukraine Liaison Office in Kyiv and the initial accession dialogue.
- 24. In line with our mandate, the Secretariat will work with our partners in the MENA region who share an interest in peace stability and development for the people in the Middle East and will support a public policy response to the economic and social impacts of the current conflict. Through our economic surveillance and other policy tools and programmes this could include work to support the public policy response on all relevant impacts on the economy and society across the MENA region.

Second, leadership on climate action to help secure global net-zero by 2050 in a way that is globally effective and fair.

- 25. Our aim is to become a global leader in climate economic and policy analysis, as well as to facilitate effective multilateral co-ordination on climate action for both mitigation and adaptation in our areas of comparative advantage. This is reflected in the five pillars of the proposed OECD's Contribution to Global Action on Climate Change.
- 26. We must do more to help individual jurisdictions lift their level of ambition and efforts on climate to reach carbon neutrality, while maintaining a global level playing field. We will also strengthen our multi-sectoral work on the economics of adaptation policy to complement longstanding OECD work on the economics of mitigation policies.
- 27. We will explore policies that seek to tackle the "triple crisis" of climate, biodiversity and pollution, including plastics pollution. We will support policy makers in considering their interlinkages and maximising policy coherence and synergies, while minimising unintended consequences such as distributional impacts and labour market implications, as well as competitiveness impacts.
- 28. We will support Members and non-Members on climate action, especially through the Inclusive Forum on Carbon Mitigation Approaches (IFCMA), by serving as a source of data, a means to share best practices and improve mutual understanding, and as a platform for multilateral dialogue to enable more globally effective solutions. We will work on developing methodologies for stocktaking policy instruments, mapping carbon emissions and assessing effectiveness, and we will further explore methodologies to compute the carbon intensity of goods and sectors.
- We will support the path to net zero at multinational, regional, national and sub-national levels. This includes: a focus on climate policy in all of our country and regional engagement programmes, as well as in the work of the Development Centre and the Development Assistance Committee; work on sub-national climate action through the OECD's Territorial Approach to Climate Action and Resilience and the Rural Agenda for Climate Action; policies for reducing emissions from agriculture and food systems and for enhancing agricultural resilience; strategies for industrial decarbonisation and for science, technologies and innovation to achieve net zero; work on a just transition; positioning education as a critical sector for sustainability and reconfiguring skills for the green transition; and further promoting green budgeting.
- 30. **We will continue developing effective climate partnerships**, building on the synergies between the IFCMA and the UNFCCC process, and through the Climate Change Expert

Group and hosting arrangements for complementary multilateral action, such as the Climate Club with its focus on industrial decarbonisation and hard-to-abate-sectors. This also includes strengthening partnerships and policies for climate action by the private sector.

- 31. Equally important will be our growing focus on support for climate finance, transition finance and finance for sustainable development, in collaboration with and for developing countries. We will continue to: foster enabling environments for mobilising public and private finance and investment, including in Partner countries; leverage the role of public finance and procurement; facilitate the greening of the financial sector; enhance environmental integrity in frameworks, methodologies and metrics; track progress towards the USD 100 billion goal and contribute to the implementation of the post-2025 New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance. Much of this will complement the OECD's hosting of the 4P Secretariat, established following the Summit for a New Global Financing Pact. It will also be supported by the Secretary-General's task force on mobilising private finance for the triple goals of sustainable development, climate action and biodiversity protection, which will aim to bring together and leverage the multiple strands of OECD policy work on private finance.
- 32. All this requires a continued strengthening of the Organisation's horizontal and integrated multi-disciplinary approach to its climate work which is the OECD's value-added. This approach is reflected in the OECD Horizontal Project on Building Climate and Economic Resilience, our work on indicators of climate action through the International Programme for Action on Climate (IPAC), and the systematic integration of climate and energy issues in OECD Economic Surveys, among others.
- 33. We will also expand work on scaling up economic instruments and finance for biodiversity, including tracking progress towards the USD 200 billion global biodiversity finance target of the Global Biodiversity Framework, our work to address all forms of environmentally harmful subsidies and support, and our work to track and combat plastics, chemical and other pollution.
- 34. We will deepen our work on science, technology, and innovation to accelerate the net zero transition. Enhancing the capacity of science, technology and innovation policies to rapidly develop and bring new technology-based solutions to the marketplace will be key not just for clean energy technologies such as energy storage and green hydrogen, but for a wide range of industrial, biobased and other net zero technologies. It is estimated that around 35% of the CO<sub>2</sub> emission reductions needed by 2050 are to come from technologies at either demonstration or prototype stage, i.e., not yet available on the market. This will include continued collaboration with the International Energy Agency, the Nuclear Energy Agency and the International Transport Forum.

Third, seizing the opportunities of digital transformation while better managing the associated risks, challenges and disruptions.

35. The OECD must remain a global reference point for digital policy and emerging technologies. Our whole-of-Organisation approach to the digital transformation - the OECD's Contribution to Policies to Optimise the Digital Transformation - outlines our priority focus on connectivity and infrastructure together with issues of digital divides, data as a key driver of economic and social value alongside privacy and property rights concerns, AI and emerging digital technologies including issues of governance and risk-management, safety and security and measurements to support evidence-based policies. Building on the multi-phase "Going Digital" Horizontal Project, the Going Digital Integrated Policy Framework and Toolkit, the OECD Recommendations on AI and on Neurotechnology, and through our AI Policy Observatory, Network of Experts on AI and Network of Experts on Data Free Flow with Trust, we can serve as

the authoritative global source of guidance and standards for the responsible development, deployment and governance of digital and other emerging technologies.

- 36. For this, we must anticipate and promote the responsible development of emerging and evolving new technologies, such as AI, quantum technologies, immersive technologies, neurotechnology, and synthetic biology. These offer new opportunities to address pressing issues, ranging from healthcare and education to effective delivery of public services and to climate change and degradation of the environment, as well as positive prospects in changing the nature and structure of organisations and markets, jobs and work-life balance. Mindful also of the challenges and following the OECD Framework for the Anticipatory Governance of Emerging Technologies, we will pay special attention to the design of technology governance systems and issues of public trust, the socio-economic implications and policy solutions for human-centric technologies, including AI, developing and revising consensus-based recommendations as needed. We will take a lead on governing with AI in the public sector. We will also strengthen our engagement with non-Member countries in this matter. Our new Global Forum on Technology will be an important platform in this context.
- 37. Through our multi-disciplinary competence, we will assess the effects of digital and other emerging technologies on employment and skills, economic growth and productivity, competition, financial markets, education and healthcare, including through our analytical work on firm-level adoption of new technologies and implications for competition and skills, as well as for workers and working conditions.
- 38. A key goal will be to develop future-ready digital learning ecosystems and policies, including through our projects exploring indicators for AI capabilities and implications of AI advancements for education.

Fourth, helping to ensure well-functioning global markets and a global level playing field with a rules-based trading system in good working order.

- 39. With heightened geopolitical tensions and trade-restricting measures on the rise, the OECD's Contribution to Promoting Open Markets and a Rules-Based International Trading System in Good Working Order puts a firm focus on trust and shared values in economic integration, as well as tools to boost supply chain resilience and sustainability while improving our understanding of the nature, scale and effective design of subsidies and responding to growing geopolitical tensions.
- 40. The OECD must help to ensure that the international trading system remains open, rules-based and resilient. We will support policymakers by providing the evidence base for monitoring global trade in real time and assessing changes and shedding light on trade fragmentation at granular level. We will also support governments in making trade policy for the digital era, developing improved estimates of digital trade and ensuring that the benefits of digital trade materialise and are broadly shared.
- 41. We will work on a whole-of-OECD approach in our advice to governments on how they can appropriately and effectively use strategic industrial policy while safeguarding the benefits of open competitive markets and rules-based trade. Industrial policies may be deployed to support economic growth and resilience, action on climate change or tackling inequality, but they can also carry risks of market and trade distortions, anti-competitive behaviour as a result of market dominance, overcapacity or poor use of fiscal resources. The OECD can contribute important data and insights to promote greater diversification of trade to reduce vulnerabilities, including to economic coercion, and maintain the contestability of global markets for production and supply, while accelerating industrial decarbonisation, diversification of value chains, and commercialisation of new technologies.

42. We will actively support the World Trade Organization (WTO) reform agenda, including deliberations on enhanced subsidy rules. There is an opportunity for OECD countries to work together to foster greater global co-operation within the WTO and other global platforms, and to work at home and internationally to push back against the forces of protectionism while making sure that the benefits of trade are widely and fairly shared.

# 43. Our priorities will include:

- Further enhancing our evidence on and tools to monitor trade and supply chains resilience and sustainability through our work on Trade in Value-Added (TiVA), the Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI) with new green emphasis, the Trade Facilitation Indicators (TFIs), the Supply Chain Interdependencies Network (SPIN) and Critical Supply Chain Forum including the development of new trade interdependencies indicators, taking into account the principles developed under the OECD Keys to Resilient Supply Chains. We will also continue to deepen our focus on critical minerals and GVCs for the green transition and work in support of convergence or inter-operability of sustainability standards in supply chains.
- Promoting a **global level playing field and rules-based trade through our work on subsidies** in sectors from agriculture, fisheries, fossil fuels and industrial sectors, including semiconductors, shipbuilding and steel. We will bring a whole-of-OECD understanding to the effective design of subsidies to minimise environment and trade distorting impacts and thus reinforce the benefits of open markets.
- Continuing our **work on investment** through the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Regulatory Restrictiveness Index, the FDI Qualities Indicators, the work on monitoring capital flow measures and illicit financial flows as well as the Africa Virtual Investment Platform to help inform global discussions and actions.
- Supporting the **implementation of our standards on corporate governance and responsible business conduct**, using the updated G20/OECD Principles of Corporate Governance, the forthcoming updated Guidelines on Corporate Governance of State-Owned Enterprises, and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct and forthcoming DAC guidelines on responsible business conduct and development co-operation.

Fifth, global engagement: advancing OECD standards and policies, through membership and partnerships and a sound approach to development.

- 44. To maintain and reinforce the Organisation's positioning in the global governance architecture and its value to Members, we will continue to make progress on strategically enlarging our membership, deepening co-operation with Partners, and strengthening institutional relationships with other global fora, also through our cross-cutting work on development.
- 45. Accession, with its rigorous technical review process, remains the most powerful means of alignment with OECD standards and best practices. We will continue to support the accession discussions with the candidate countries currently in the technical phase (Brazil, Bulgaria, Croatia, Peru and Romania, launch the technical phase for Argentina and Indonesia (following the adoption of the Accession Roadmap for each in March 2024), and facilitate Council's consideration of the accession request from Thailand, the second request from a country in Southeast Asia following Indonesia.
- 46. To remain globally relevant, the OECD must enhance its engagement with different regions and voices, including the Indo-Pacific, as per our new OECD Strategic

- 47. Guided by the OECD Global Relations Strategy, we will continue working towards high impact in all our regional and country programmes, including in Eurasia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, Southeast Asia and Southeast Europe. We will leverage our global relations through OECD Committees and bodies with members from these regions, such as the Development Centre and the Sahel and West Africa Club.
- 48. We will continue to reach out to the Key Partners Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa and encourage them to participate actively in the work of OECD bodies, request adherence to our legal instruments, and identify mutually beneficial work priorities.
- We will seek to continue playing an important role in global governance fora, such as the G7, G20, APEC and ASEAN, where the OECD is a critical provider of evidence-based analysis and policy advice. We will enhance work with other international and regional organisations, especially the United Nations, to position the OECD as a bridge between its Members and developing and emerging economies. We will advance engagement with key agendas of the United Nations, including the 2030 Agenda, and support OECD contributions to upcoming UN milestones, including the Summit of the Future and the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development. We will also build on our excellent cooperation with Business at OECD (BIAC), the Trade Union Advisory Council (TUAC) and legislators through the Global Parliamentary Network.
- 50. We will deliver on our commitment from the OECD's Vision for the Next Decade to renew our approach on development by delivering a new Organisation-wide strategy on development, in coherence with the 2030 Agenda, modernising our ambitions and instruments to adapt to a rapidly changing global context. The new strategy will aim to optimise the OECD's core strengths in cross-sectoral work to promote a whole-of-OECD offer on sustainable development, built on inclusive dialogue and partnership with non-Members underlining the OECD's value proposition for partners at all stages of development.
- 51. Through the **Development Centre**, we will further strengthen regional economic outlooks and policy dialogue with developing countries and continue to work on issues for a just transition, gender equality and financing for sustainable development. Through the **Development Assistance Committee**, we will elaborate an updated narrative on an improved level, quality, and coherence of public and private finance for sustainable development and development cooperation.

## **Ensuring operational and management excellence**

- 52. Alongside our outward-facing priorities, we must also continue to modernise and improve the way our Organisation operates. The OECD should continue to be a model of good governance, management excellence, diversity, gender equality, integrity, resource efficiency and sustainability.
- 53. We will implement the suite of initiatives set out in our response to the first Independent External Evaluation of the OECD. This includes a comprehensive set of proposals to strengthen the financial sustainability and budget planning of the Organisation, tools to enhance our horizontal policy work, and strengthened OECD frameworks for the service delivery and accountability of our corporate services, both centrally and across the Organisation.
- We will focus on how we communicate our work and measure its impact. Central to this will be upgrading the OECD's digital communication platforms and online presence,

while at the same time improving digital security and data protection. It will also involve the OECD's landmark move to an Open-by-Default model (OBD) for dissemination of OECD publications and analysis.

- 55. We are modernising our human resources framework to attract, retain and support talent while also managing and containing staff-related costs. Key projects include implementation of the Human Resources Strategy, continued promotion of diversity and inclusion in the OECD Secretariat, updating the OECD staff ethics framework, and finalising updates to the OECD contractual framework and pension schemes.
- 56. By continuing implementation of the Smart Data Strategy, we will accelerate the Organisation's efforts to modernise its statistical and data capabilities for more timely and granular analysis, streamlining access to new data sources, implementing quality frameworks, better managing and disseminating data with new data platforms, and developing staff data skills, all in a rapidly evolving digital environment.
- 57. In the context of proliferating sources of data and "knowledge" as well as misand dis-information, a key priority will be to ensure the continued quality of and trust in OECD data. For this, we will continue to address the risks and opportunities presented by the growing number of alternative sources of data, which come with their own quality challenges (such as bias or noise) and with new risk dimensions (such as cyber security, confidentiality, sustainability, consistency and legal liability). We will also proactively confront the issue of the role of AI in data sourcing and the OECD's own analysis, just as we are advising our Members and Partner countries to do.
- 58. With these and other initiatives coming together into one overall organisational reform plan, this will deliver on my commitment to ensure our Organisation is efficient, transparent, accountable and ultimately responsive to and effective for its Members.
- 59. To deliver on these reforms, and on the Organisation's near, medium and long-term policy objectives, we must together ensure that the OECD secures appropriate and stable financing both through its regular (biennial) operational budget planning exercise and through appropriate arrangements for long-term financing for infrastructure and capital expenditure needs. At a time when the OECD's role in and contribution to the multilateral system has never been more essential than since its founding, we are committed to working with Members to ensure a sensible and appropriate reform of the OECD's budget planning and long-term financing model.

#### In conclusion

- 60. In the years ahead, the OECD must maintain its position as a trusted and inclusive multilateral actor with an important role in the global governance architecture.
- 61. We must continue to reinforce the Organisation's strong foundations of Member-led expert committees, world-class data collection, evidence-based analysis and robust peer reviews. And we must enable the OECD to continue serving as a global leader in benchmarking policies and in developing and disseminating standards and best practices for its Members and beyond.