

## ROUND TABLE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Round Table is a catalyst in global environmental affairs. It brings together ministers, senior private sector executives, NGO leaders and academics to grapple with environmental and developmental issues at the global level. Established by the Secretary-General of the OECD in 1998, it is one of the most effective, high-level, informal policy dialogue forums in the world.

There is no shortage of opportunities for politicians and the agencies they empower to gather in formal meetings. However, the sheer complexity and duration of many negotiations, not to mention governments' requirements to defend national interests, means that the view of what is at stake is often fragmented. A true meeting of minds in such settings is a rarity.

The Round Table on Sustainable Development cuts through this problem by selecting subject matter that allows participants to focus on what is most important and begin to crystallise a practical way forward.

Specifically, the Round Table only places issues on its agenda which are:

- global in scope and require the collective engagement of high-level global players if they are to be moved forward;
- cross-cutting, in the sense that their resolution requires engagement by several policy communities and/or decision-making groups;
- difficult to advance through more formal and familiar channels or show little prospect of immediate progress.

All participants in the sustainable development debate need to keep the big picture in mind and think laterally about solutions that are difficult to initiate in formal negotiating processes. The Round Table's aim is to assist the development of a more coherent and prioritised agenda of international action on targeted issues.

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### Objectives

The Round Table on Sustainable Development's objectives are to:

- **T**est new ideas and thinking at the highest political and commercial levels;
- **A**ct as a catalyst for practical action;
- **B**ring together some of the best informed, best placed people in the world on key issues;
- **L**ook for ways to reach a better and shared understanding of the relevant facts and figures related to possible solutions for global challenges;
- **E**vents attended by Ministers, senior business leaders and decision-makers from intergovernmental organisations.



The Round Table deliberately avoids negotiated outcomes. Rather, it seeks to highlight issues and possible solutions that members can feed into their own work programmes. It provides an informal format through which ministers can engage one another and key international stakeholders without prejudice to negotiating positions on the cross-cutting issues comprising the sustainable development agenda.

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## What makes the Round Table unique?

Being hosted by the OECD gives the Round Table access to the Organisation's considerable analytical capabilities and an opportunity to collaborate with the most highly respected international organisations, companies, academics and NGOs.

Many forums offer elements that the Round Table offers. But no ministerial level forum brings together, on a Chatham House rules basis, such a diverse group to discuss very specific, difficult policy issues. Preparation of the subject matter – an independent paper is prepared for each meeting – is far more intensive than is normally the case in other settings. By keeping numbers to between 30 and 40, tailoring the invitation list to the subject matter and not allowing bureaucrats to substitute for politicians, attendees have the rare opportunity to engage directly with the key players on an in-depth but without-prejudice basis. As a result, attendees feel free to test out their thinking and spontaneously promote future action.

While hosted by the OECD, the Round Table does not form part of the programme of work mandated by the OECD Council. As such, it is well-informed but not constrained by the same protocols as official agencies.

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## Composition

The Right Honourable Simon Upton, former New Zealand Environment Minister and the Chairman of the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development (1997-8), is the Chair of the Round Table. He is also presently the Director of the OECD's Environment Directorate.

All **OECD ministers** are able to attend Round Table meetings. Given the cross-cutting nature of sustainable development issues, OECD Ministers with a range of portfolios have participated, including Ministers of Finance, Economy, Foreign Affairs, Trade, Labour, and Development Assistance and Environment, as well as EU Commissioners of Trade, Development and Environment.

In view of the importance of sustainability to developing countries, key **Ministers** from these countries are invited to participate in meetings. To date, Ministers from Algeria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, South Africa and Ukraine among others have attended Round Table meetings. The OECD itself also has very extensive links with non-member economies. As host for the Development Assistance Committee, the OECD provides the Round Table with access to some of the best expertise in the world on development-related issues.





**Inter-governmental organisations** represented at the Round Table vary according to the topic. Previous sessions have included heads or senior representatives from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Council for Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN International Maritime Organisation (IMO), United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development (UNCSD), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Bank.

**Private sector** The private sector is also keen to participate because of the opportunity to receive first hand information from policy-makers and the excellent opportunity to bring their ideas and interests to the table. Business has been represented at the highest level, including the CEOs of Shell, Suez, and Lafarge amongst numerous others.

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## Focus on Green Growth Strategies

Over the next two years we will focus on “**Green Growth**” strategies. This will encompass issues such as: removing barriers to greener growth (such as environmentally harmful subsidies); decoupling economic growth and environmental pressures; achieving deep technological transformation in the absence of strong demand-side pressures; and, selecting new measures of progress. We will also be able to explore the way in which a green growth agenda plays out in particular sectors or locations such as agriculture, mobility and urbanisation. In many respects this agenda will traverse issues that the Round Table has addressed before and this is a real strength to the extent that we can focus not just on policy solutions but also ask some difficult questions about why efforts to achieve sustainable growth and sound environmental policies have not always worked in the past. In asking these questions we hope to build support for a meaningful and action oriented outcome at the UN’s Rio+20 meeting in 2012.

We are planning to hold a meeting towards the end of 2010 that would begin this process by taking a critical look at the politics and economics of green growth and the broad policies that can deliver greener growth.

We have also already begun planning for a possible meeting on urban green growth strategies. That meeting would be held in the first half of 2011. The idea at the moment is to focus on funding for sustainable urban development. This would include looking at a range of channels such as through carbon finance schemes or public-private partnerships in infrastructure investment. This is an area of rapid policy development which will be crucial to green growth strategies in the future and for which national level government ministers need to be engaged to ensure that national and international policy settings are conducive to mobilising the large amounts of capital that are required for green growth in cities. For this meeting we are planning to partner with the OECD Urban Development Round Table and the World Bank to bring unparalleled expertise to bear on this issue.

Beyond this we can see several other topics of considerable importance and some of particular political sensitivity. One example might be to critically review the role of markets in delivering sustainable and effective environmental regulation. While economists favour market mechanisms, the public and politicians in some parts of the world are deeply sceptical about them. Can this divide be bridged? What is at stake if we choose to regulate through command and control rather than through markets? This is but one example of what the Round Table could tackle and the list of possible issues is long. We will need to consult carefully with OECD members, our funding partners and wider stakeholders and experts to ensure that we focus our efforts on important and timely topics.





## Annex

### Past Meetings, Outcomes and Participants, 2001 – 2010<sup>1</sup>

#### February 2010: Livestock agriculture and climate policy

- Background Paper: *Livestock and climate policy: less meat or less carbon?*
- Outcome: Recognition that agriculture, especially livestock agriculture, is a substantial contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions but that singling out climate change as the primary policy concern for agriculture could jeopardise the functions or objectives of food production and livestock systems. This implies the need to focus on improving food production technologies, minimising waste and other technical solutions to reduce emissions, increase the overall efficiency of food production and improve food security. These options should be pursued before demand-side measures are seriously considered.
- Ministerial Attendance: 5

#### September 2009: Comparability of climate change commitments

- Background Paper: *Comparing Climate Change Commitments: Technical versus Political Judgement.*
- Outcome: The first time that comparability of commitments and the need for technical judgement were discussed at political level. It was recognised that there is no golden rule for determining comparability of commitments across countries but that it is necessary to accommodate analytical judgement to ensure that global agreements are reasonable and, more importantly, effective.
- Ministerial Attendance: 13

#### July 2009: Border Tax Adjustment

- Background Paper: *Competitiveness, Leakage, and Border Tax Adjustment: Climate Policy Distractions?*
- Outcome: A unique opportunity for Trade Ministers to gauge the risks that border tax adjustments pose both to trade and climate negotiating processes. Broad agreement was reached that multilateral solutions are preferable for solving trade and climate problems. Strong interest shown in a moratorium on trade disputes over behind the border measures to address competitiveness and leakage concerns.
- Ministerial Attendance: 7

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<sup>1</sup> All meeting papers available via the Round Table website: [www.oecd.org/sd-roundtable](http://www.oecd.org/sd-roundtable).



### **March 2009: Post Kyoto Sectoral Agreements**

- Background Paper: Post Kyoto Sectoral Agreements: A Constructive or a Complicating Way Forward?
- Outcome: A general consensus that sectoral crediting represents a potentially constructive element of any post 2012 agreement. Recognition of difficult remaining issues, such as how to manage the need for scaling up financial flows with the need for ambitious emission reductions. Overall a general willingness to grapple with implementation difficulties even in the absence of an obvious fix.
- Ministerial Attendance: 7

### **April 2008: Mobilising Investment in Low Emission Energy Technologies**

- Background Paper: Mobilising Investments in Low-Emission Energy Technologies on the Scale Needed to Reduce the Risks of Climate Change
- Outcome: Highlighted the importance of a range of domestic and international approaches to scaling up finance to mobilise low-emission energy technologies. Provided ministers with an early look at the IEA's significant work on energy technology pathways for combating climate change. Discussion revealed widely varying understandings of sectoral approaches and whether they are useful, thus prompting the Round Table to take the matter further in 2009.
- Ministerial Attendance: 15

### **September 2007: Biofuels: Is the Cure Worse than the Disease?**

- Background Paper: Biofuels: Is the Cure Worse than the Disease?
- Outcome: The meeting raised high-level awareness of the pros and cons of biofuels. Related discussion paper received considerable media attention and helped to spark a much-needed public discussion on the merits of policies encouraging widespread use of biofuels to meet sustainability objectives.
- Ministerial Attendance: 12

### **January 2007: The Economics of Illegal Logging and Associated Trade**

- Background Paper: The Economics of Illegal Logging and Associated Trade
- Outcome: The meeting provided direct input to the European Commissions Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade action plan. It helped to engage ministers of finance in several developing countries, highlighted the importance of inter-agency cooperation and the need to bring deforestation under the climate change regime.
- Ministerial Attendance: 13



## **June 2006: Do We Have the Right R&D Priorities and Programmes to Support the Energy Technologies of the Future?**

- Background Paper: Do We Have the Right R&D Priorities and Programmes to Support the Energy Technologies of the Future?
- Outcome: The meeting confirmed that in the absence of a carbon charge or similar price signal, near zero CO<sub>2</sub> emissions technologies will simply not come to the market on a scale or in time to have any impact on emissions reductions. While useful research and technology development issues remain to be worked on, technology is not the main problem – price is. The findings and observations of both the paper and the meeting were used for the OECD's input to the UNFCCC 15 in 2007.
- Ministerial Attendance: 10

## **June 2005: Can Transnational Sectoral Agreements Help Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions?**

- Background Paper: Can Transnational Sectoral Agreements Help Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions?
- Outcome: Discussions ongoing with governments and industry leaders in the cement and aluminium sectors regarding taking next steps towards negotiation of an agreement.
- Ministerial Attendance: 8

## **November 2004: Global Public Goods**

- Background Paper: International Cooperation in the National Interest: A Cross-Cutting Approach to Enhancing the Provision of Global Public Goods with Specific Focus on Global Commons
- Outcome: Direct feedback by ministers and other stakeholders provided to the secretariat of the International Task Force on Global Public Goods on their draft operational proposals on institutional reform and financing mechanisms for the Global Commons. This input fed into the drafting of their final report published in 2005.
- Ministerial Attendance: 8

## **September 2004: Sustainable Mobility**

- Background Paper: Mobility 2030; Meeting the Challenges to Sustainability
- Outcome: Following the conclusions of the World Business Council on Sustainable Development's Mobility 2030 report was the definition of which private and public sector policies could achieve the goals identified in the report. Discussion of how to achieve this fed into the work programme of the Dutch Presidency of the EU and was subsequently discussed at December EU Transport Council.
- Ministerial Attendance: 10



### **September 2004: Renewable Energy**

- Background Paper: Large Scale Deployment of Renewables for Electricity Generation
- Outcome: The importance of the renewables agenda across the range of government portfolios was confirmed, with agreement that the OECD/IEA Ministerial in May 2005, attended by a range of different ministers, would be an ideal forum to take the renewables agenda forward.
- Ministerial Attendance: 10

### **March 2004: Water and Sanitation**

- Background Papers:
- Closing the Sanitation Gap – the Case for Better Public Funding of Sanitation and Hygiene
- Integrated Water Resource Management and Water Efficiency Plans by 2005
- Outcome: New evidence of the development ‘dividend’ from improved sanitation in line with the related Millennium Development Goal was presented to ministers and other stakeholders. Priorities in the areas of sanitation provision and water resource management were identified in preparation for UNCSD 12.
- Ministerial Attendance: 11

### **November 2003: Sustaining Whose Development? International Effects of National Actions**

- Background Paper: Sustaining Whose Development? International Effects of National Actions
- Outcome: Further work on transboundary measurement was endorsed, including the possibility of integrating the work into any wider OECD work programme on sustainable development.
- Ministerial Attendance: 10

### **June 2003: Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing on the High Seas**

- Background Paper: Stopping the High Seas Robbers: Coming to Grips with Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fisheries on the High Seas
- Outcome: Time-bound, issue-oriented ministerial-level task force on IUU fishing launched, led by the United Kingdom. Concept fostered by Round Table discussion in March 2003. Task Force secretariat co-located with the Round Table at the OECD in 2004.
- Ministerial Attendance: 15



### **March 2003: International Governance for Sustainable Development**

- Background Paper: Responding to the Johannesburg Plan of Action
- Outcome: In advance of the first meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) post-WSSD, the Round Table provided a forum for ministers to prepare for that session. Momentum to support the concept of time-bound, issue-focussed minister-led task forces was marshalled by the Round Table, working with a core group of ministerial-level participants. A number of ministers suggested that using such task forces at the formal CSD session could facilitate swift progress on the Plan of Implementation.
- Ministerial Attendance: 16

### **December 2002: Eco-labelling for Sustainable Development**

- Background Papers:
  - Private Voluntary Eco-labels: Trade Distorting, Discriminatory and Environmentally Disappointing
  - Voluntary Sustainability Standards: The Case for Fostering Them
- Outcome: Franchising of developed world eco-labels was launched. Work on franchising eco-labels in developing countries scoped by the European Commission. This concept emerged from one of the Round Table background papers and meeting discussion.
- Ministerial Attendance: 12

### **July 2002: Preparing for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg**

- Background Papers:
  - Preparing for the World Summit: Some Information about Sustainable Development
  - Preparing for the World Summit: Some Personal Reflections
- Outcome: Provided the last (and only off-line) opportunity for ministers, inter-governmental organisations and civil society to discuss the direction of preparations for WSSD. Concept of time-bound, issue-focussed minister-led task forces discussed.
- Ministerial Attendance: 23



## February 2002: Improving the Synergies between ODA and FDI Flows

- Background Paper: Official Development Assistance and Foreign Direct Investment: Improving the Synergies
- Outcome 1: Facilitated formalisation of private sector/development agency information exchanges. Regular information sharing and co-operation sessions between business groups and certain ODA agencies at the regional and national level were formalised. Initiative emerged from the Round Table's background paper and meeting discussions and was pursued by the World Business Council on Sustainable Development (WBCSD) working with the Round Table to a successful outcome.
- Outcome 2: Assisted private sector preparations for WSSD: The Round Table worked with the WBCSD, private sector representatives and government officials from ODA Agencies to follow-up the ideas emerging from the February meeting. This led to a detailed report on how to improve the linkages between FDI flows and ODA delivery. WBCSD tabled this report in Johannesburg as one of its primary inputs into the WSSD process and in the post-WSSD period sought to implement its key conclusions.
- Ministerial Attendance: 13

## December 2001: Indicators of Sustainable Development: Measuring What?

- Background Papers:
- Measuring What?
- Accounting for Sustainability: Complementary Monetary and Biophysical Approaches
- Outcome: Science gaps research placed on Global Science Forum (GSF) agenda: The Round Table discussion helped to secure a commitment by Ministers to encourage the GSF to further research on the 'science gaps' in indicators of sustainable development. Placed formally on GSF's work programme in January 2002.
- Ministerial Attendance: 10



## Ministerial Participants, 2001-2010.

As mentioned above, the Round Table welcomes a wide range of people to its meetings. The following list illustrates the range of countries and areas of responsibility covered by the more than 150 Ministers attending the Round Table since 2001; from finance ministers to ministers of fisheries, from ministers from Luxembourg to Ministers from Mozambique:

*Cherif Rahmani, Minister of Environment, Algeria;*  
*Simon Crean, Minister for Trade, Australia;*  
*Martin Bartenstein, Minister of Economy, Labour and Trade, Austria*  
*Hafizuddin Ahmed, Minister of Water Resources, Bangladesh*  
*Paul Magnette, Minister of Climate and Energy, Belgium*  
*Celso Lafer, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Brazil*  
*David Anderson, Minister of Environment, Canada*  
*Felipe Sandoval Precht, Minister for Fisheries, Chile*  
*Chen Deming, Minister of Commerce, People's Republic of China*  
*Petr Mares, Deputy Prime Minister, Czech Republic*  
*Connie Hedegaard, Minister of Environment, Minister Climate and Energy, Denmark*  
*Poul Nielson, EU Commissioner, For Development & Humanitarian Aid, European Commission*  
*Mme Anne-Marie Idrac, Minister of State for Foreign Trade, France*  
*Juha Korkeaoja, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Finland*  
*Jürgen Trittin, Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany*  
*Kwesi Nduom, Minister of Economic Planning and Regional Cooperation, Ghana*  
*Panagiotis Kolyris, Secretary of State for Agriculture and Fisheries, Greece*  
*Arnie Mathiesen, Minister of Fisheries, Iceland*  
*Jairam Ramesh, Minister of Environment and Forests, India*  
*Malam Sambat Kaban, Minister of Forest, Indonesia*  
*Pat the Cope Gallagher, Minister of State, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Ireland*  
*Gideon Ezra, Minister for Environmental Protection, Israel*  
*Roberto Tòrtoli, Deputy Minister for Environment and Land Protection, Italy*  
*Toshikatsu Matsuoka, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan*  
*Martha Wangari Karua, Minister for Water Resources, Kenya*  
*Sung-kwan Huh, Minister of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Korea*  
*Raimonds Vējonis, Minister for Environment, Latvia*  
*Arunas Kundrotas, Minister of Environment, Lithuania*  
*Charles Goerens, Minister of Environment, Luxembourg*  
*Ahmedou Ould Ahmedou, Minister of Fisheries, Mauritania*  
*Juan Rafael Elvira-Quesada, Minister for Environment and Natural Resources, Mexico*  
*Mohammed El Yazghi, Minister of Spatial Planning, Water and the Environment, Morocco*  
*Cadmiel Muthamba, Minister of Fisheries, Mozambique*  
*Abraham Iyambo, Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources and Chair of the Ministers of Fisheries of the Southern African Development Community, Namibia*  
*Jacqueline Cramer, Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Netherlands*  
*David Parker, Minister for Energy, New Zealand*  
*Mukhtar Shagari, Minister for Water Resources, Nigeria*  
*Per-Kristian Foss, Finance Minister, Norway*  
*Maciej Nowicki, Minister of Environment, Poland*  
*Mr. Humberto Rosa, Secretary of State for the Environment, Portugal*  
*Hng Kiang Lim, Minister for Trade and Industry, Singapore*  
*Vladimir Palsa, State Secretary of the Ministry for Agriculture, Slovak Republic*  
*Janez Podobnik, Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Slovenia*  
*Marthinus Van Schalkwyk, Minister of the Environment, South Africa*



*Teresa Ribera, Secrétaire d'Etat du Changement Climatique de l'Espagne, Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Medio Rural y Marino, Spain*

*Andreas Carlgren, Minister for the Environment, Sweden*

*Prommin Lertsuridej, Minister of Energy, Thailand*

*Mr Mehmet Eker, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Turkey*

*Maria Mutagamba, Minister of Water, Lands and Environment, Uganda*

*Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Minister of Finance, Ukraine*

*Elliot Morley, Minister for Fisheries, United Kingdom*

*Emil Frankel, Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy, United States*