



**11th OECD- ICGLR -UN GoE
Forum on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains**

**Opening address by Gabriela Ramos,
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European Commissioner for Trade Cecilia Malmström, Vice-Minister of Mines for Colombia, Executive Secretary of the ICGLR, Ambassadors, distinguished guests, members of the press, good morning and welcome to the 11th Forum on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains.

Before beginning, I would like to invite this Forum to observe a moment of silence in memory of our co-hosts, UN experts Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalan, who were murdered in the Democratic Republic of the Congo last month.

On behalf of the OECD, I wish to convey our condolences to their families and colleagues from the UN and beyond.

I also take the opportunity of this remembrance to extend our thoughts to all victims of the ongoing conflicts in Central Africa.

The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, OECD and UN Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo have convened this meeting on responsible mineral supply chains since May 2011.

Over time, this unique global multi-stakeholder forum has managed to attract an ever-increasing number of participants, with an unexpected growth both last year and this year.

Today we have registered 850 participants from all around the world.

This demonstrates the increasing awareness on the need for responsible business conduct in supply chains of minerals worldwide;

In a few minutes I will have the honour and the opportunity to moderate a high-level panel that will explain how, from their perspectives, the global agenda to promote responsible production and trade of minerals has progressed.

This progression has become possible notably through the implementation of the OECD Guidance on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains and other efforts over the last 5 years.

We will also hear and better understand the various challenges and gaps that lie ahead.

From our perspective, the developments in the last 12 months have helped solidify a structural shift that started many years ago.

There now seems to be a solid understanding that due diligence in mineral supply chains is expected by the market, and responsible sourcing is a way to help business grow and prosper.

Due diligence is the means for business to cut out the most harmful practices that undermine our collective security and development in a way that seeks to raise volumes of responsible exports, rather than embargoing entire producing regions from global markets.

We are proud to be hosting this year parallel sessions on the implementation of our instrument in a variety of mineral supply chains, including mica, cobalt, coal and precious stones.

The OECD Guidance as you all know is a framework applicable to all minerals.

In addition, this year we will begin conversations on responsible minerals trade in Myanmar, while also advancing our existing work in Africa's Great Lakes Region, China, India, West Africa and Colombia.

The relevance and applicability of the OECD standard across the globe is further underscored by the adoption of the European Union Regulation setting supply chain due diligence obligations for importers of tin, tantalum, tungsten.

We are proud to see that this regulation, which has a global scope, is based on the recommendations set out in the OECD Guidance.

I look forward to learning more in the key note address from Commissioner Malmström and the regulatory update session later in the day today.

This year, we will also be delving deeper into the ways that company risk management measures can have positive impacts on the ground.

We are pleased today to launch a set of practical actions to help companies address the worst forms of child labour in their mineral supply chain.

The International Labour Organisation has reported that almost 1 million children are working in mines worldwide.

This tool was developed and launched by the Secretariat, with input from many of you and builds off the OECD Guidance.

I hope it will be used as an urgent call to action to avoid mining that undermines children's rights.

This year we will also be hosting together with the World Bank on 5 May a half-day workshop on global support to responsible artisanal and small-scale mining.

As you may know, the implementation of the OECD Guidance pays specific attention to the inclusion of informal miners, to ensure that *responsible* mineral supply chains also translates into *inclusive* supply chains.

We are delighted to be able to move this agenda forward with the World Bank.

Before I conclude my introductory remarks I would like to take this opportunity to emphasise two important messages.

First, I would like to call on all countries that have committed to OECD Recommendation of Council on Due Diligence Guidance to continue do more.

In the end, responsible sourcing efforts by companies must be complemented by Governments living up to their own duties.

We have seen some very proactive efforts by a small handful of countries, many of you are here today, but there is still room for improvement.

I hope to return in 2018 to this Forum and hear how governments have strengthened their efforts to promote the OECD Guidance.

Second, I wish to emphasize how important it is that all stakeholders respect each other and engage in a constructive and open manner. I am proud that our work here is carried out in close cooperation with the private sector as well as civil society organizations. Civil society contributes in varied ways that often complement the roles and functions of governments and the private sector. Their efforts should be supported and their voices protected, in particular by governments. The OECD is committed to protecting and promoting an inclusive and enabling environment for civil society in policy and in practice.

Thank you all again and I wish you successful dialogues over the coming days.