



## Declaration on Environmental Policy

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## Background Information

The Declaration on Environmental Policy was adopted on 14 November 1974 at the Ministerial meeting of the Environment Committee (now called Environment Policy Committee) by Governments of OECD Member Countries. Ministers declared that the protection and progressive improvement of the quality of the environment is a major objective of OECD Member countries. Hence they adopted this Declaration that focuses on basic principles of environmental policy.

**THE GOVERNMENTS OF OECD MEMBER COUNTRIES:**

**RECOGNISING** that increasing population, industrialisation and urbanisation place growing pressures on the limited assimilative capacity of the environment, and on the finite stock of natural resources;

**CONSCIOUS** of the responsibility they share to safeguard and improve the quality of the environment, both nationally and in a global context, and at the same time to promote economic development, and confident that the achievement of these goals is within the reach of their national economies;

**NOTING** the unique contribution the OECD can make in this field;

**RECALLING** the Declaration adopted at the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, to which they unanimously subscribed;

**DECLARE** that:

1. The protection and progressive improvement of the quality of the environment is a major objective of the OECD Member countries;
2. The improvement of the environment should reflect and promote a new approach to economic growth that will take into account all components of the quality of life and not only the quantity of goods produced. Therefore, economic and social development policies must be pursued in close connection with sound environment policies, in order to ensure a balanced contribution to the improvement of human well-being;
3. The enhancement of the human environment will require further action to evaluate and deal with the problems of cities;
4. The development, extraction, transportation, storage, use of energy and related waste disposal from existing and new sources, as well as of other scarce resources, should take place under conditions that safeguard environmental values;
5. Their governments will actively seek to protect the environment by encouraging: (i) the promotion of non-polluting technologies; (ii) conservation of energy and other scarce resources; (iii) intensified efforts to recycle materials; and (iv) the development of substitutes for scarce or environmentally harmful substances;
6. They will continue to observe and further refine the "Polluter-Pays Principle" and other agreed principles to encourage environmental protection and to avoid international economic distortions and where desirable, encourage the harmonization of environmental policies;
7. They will co-operate towards solving transfrontier pollution problems in a spirit of solidarity and with the intention of further developing international law in this field;
8. Comprehensive environmental planning, including that pertaining to land use should constitute an important element of government policy;
9. In order to prevent future environmental deterioration, prior assessment of the environmental consequences of significant public and private activities should be an essential element of policies applied at the national, regional and local levels;
10. Particular attention should be given to the ratification and implementation of international conventions for the protection and conservation of the environment and to the development of new conventions;
11. They will undertake, extend and strengthen the foregoing efforts and their co-operation with other international organisations and other countries, conscious of the special circumstances of developing countries, including those which are Members of OECD; in

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so doing they are prepared to make the benefits of OECD co-operation with respect to environmental improvement readily available to all countries.

## About the OECD

The OECD is a unique forum where governments work together to address the economic, social and environmental challenges of globalisation. The OECD is also at the forefront of efforts to understand and to help governments respond to new developments and concerns, such as corporate governance, the information economy and the challenges of an ageing population. The Organisation provides a setting where governments can compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practice and work to co-ordinate domestic and international policies.

The OECD Member countries are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and the United States. The European Union takes part in the work of the OECD.

## OECD Legal Instruments

Since the creation of the OECD in 1961, around 460 substantive legal instruments have been developed within its framework. These include OECD Acts (i.e. the Decisions and Recommendations adopted by the OECD Council in accordance with the OECD Convention) and other legal instruments developed within the OECD framework (e.g. Declarations, international agreements).

All substantive OECD legal instruments, whether in force or abrogated, are listed in the online Compendium of OECD Legal Instruments. They are presented in five categories:

- **Decisions** are adopted by Council and are legally binding on all Members except those which abstain at the time of adoption. They set out specific rights and obligations and may contain monitoring mechanisms.
- **Recommendations** are adopted by Council and are not legally binding. They represent a political commitment to the principles they contain and entail an expectation that Adherents will do their best to implement them.
- **Substantive Outcome Documents** are adopted by the individual listed Adherents rather than by an OECD body, as the outcome of a ministerial, high-level or other meeting within the framework of the Organisation. They usually set general principles or long-term goals and have a solemn character.
- **International Agreements** are negotiated and concluded within the framework of the Organisation. They are legally binding on the Parties.
- **Arrangement, Understanding and Others:** several other types of substantive legal instruments have been developed within the OECD framework over time, such as the Arrangement on Officially Supported Export Credits, the International Understanding on Maritime Transport Principles and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendations.