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# **High-Level Event on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond**

**Remarks by Angel Gurría  
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**Paris, France  
Thursday, 28 May 2020**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

Excellencies,

Dear friends,

Allow me to begin by thanking Prime Ministers Trudeau and Holness, and Secretary-General Guterres, for convening today's meeting.

I will try not to repeat the points made by others, but I want to stress that the international system works at its best when it works *together*. Even prior to Covid-19, we were beginning to see cracks in the multilateral order that we have built. We had warned of the impact of heightened political and trade tensions on our economies. If anything, the Covid crisis gives us an opportunity to "reset". To come together at a time at which 350 000 lives have already been lost. To show that – in this 75<sup>th</sup> year of the United Nations – we can come together, and rebuild better.

The last crisis brought with it soaring levels of inequality, and trust in governments and institutions plummeted. Without bold action now, I fear the same will happen again.

Aid is a crucial lifeline for many right now, and action on debt is paramount. But no-one aspires to depend on aid forever. We need to expand fiscal space, and ensure that as countries recover, they are better placed than ever before to harness domestic resources, and of course tackle illicit flows.

**That is why here, today, I am proposing that we join forces in a concerted push to revitalise the tax agenda. And I believe we must do this *now*.** This is about laying the foundations for a global recovery that is strong, fair, inclusive, and green.

Concretely, I am proposing that we work in a matter of weeks to deliver an ambitious plan of action. The OECD will put itself at the disposal of all countries that want to shape this. It is clear that such a plan will need to be designed *by* developing countries and *for* developing countries.

Let me share some initial thoughts on what such a plan might contain.

- **First, we need to accelerate implementation of automatic exchange of information, making tax evasion a thing of the past.** If ever there was a time to get the job done, it is now. And we have made a good start. 160 countries are already implementing the international tax transparency standards. Over a hundred are already automating this, with information on around 50 million accounts being shared, worth some 5 trillion Euros. Now, more must be done to ensure that developing countries benefit fully from these developments.
- **Second, we need to put an end to opaque fiduciary and corporate structures.** The issue of beneficial ownership needs to be tackled head-on, and we need to strengthen the standard.
- **Third, we need to roll out a ‘whole of government’ approach to tackling tax evasion and other financial crimes.** We need to break down silos, and this will bring with it significant gains.
- **Fourth, we need a new action plan on BEPS (Base Erosion and Profit Shifting)** to boost the ability of developing countries to tax multinationals. We know that aggressive tax avoidance by multinationals hits developing countries particularly hard as they rely heavily on corporate income tax. Countries are losing anywhere between 100 and 240 billion Dollars every year. Again, we are not starting from scratch. I believe that in a matter of weeks, we could together come up with blueprint for such a plan.

- **Fifth, I propose a rapid scaling up of the *Tax Inspectors Without Borders* programme** to address illicit financial flows, particularly tax and crime investigation and the use of data exchanged automatically between countries. It's one thing to have international rules. It's another thing to have the know-how to implement them. To date, the programme has delivered 1.7 billion dollars in assessed revenues for the treasuries of developing countries. It's a no-brainer. We need to bring this to scale fast.

Again, these are only initial ideas. But I hope that with the collective wisdom of the leaders gathered here today, and the energy and dedication of your finance ministers, we can together deliver.

Please count on the OECD to work *with* you and *for* you in this endeavour. Let's get it done. Let's recover better. Let us keep the SDGs well within our sights.

Thank you.