



November 2004

## OECD Work Proposal

### “Efficient and Effective Partnerships”

*BIAC appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the OECD work proposal on efficient and effective partnerships, which will be discussed at the November 2004 meeting of the OECD Environment Policy Committee (EPOC). We hope that our comments will be useful and be reflected in the further development of this project.*

- Business supports partnerships as a very practical means of delivering sustainable development. No part of society can address sustainable development challenges alone. Partnerships therefore have an important role to play in moving towards sustainable development.
- While companies participate in numerous new partnerships that were launched since the World Summit on Sustainable Development and are registered with the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), companies have been involved in a wide range of partnerships for a long time. There are many partnerships that were launched before WSSD, which have stood the test of time, fulfilling their objectives and continuing to deliver results on the ground. This project could benefit from the longer term experiences of these partnerships in addition to a focus on new partnerships recently launched during and after the Johannesburg process.
- We note that the proposed work would focus on “partnerships that are primarily environmental in character, while taking into account their economic and social linkages, and which would include at least one OECD Government as a partner”. These partnerships are only part of the picture. The value of many local partnerships should be duly recognised. Instead of focusing mainly on environmental aspects, partnerships should be viewed in the broader framework of sustainable development, the implementation of Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and the Millennium Development Goals.
- We believe that the objective of the work project should emphasize how to promote and support partnerships, and should not seek to develop guidelines. The Guidelines for partnerships that were developed in the course of the WSSD process are useful and reflect an international and multistakeholder consensus. An OECD effort to reinvent that wheel would be redundant.
- Business does not see partnerships as a substitute for government commitments or requirements. While they cannot be considered a general panacea, they are a powerful means for business and industry to contribute to sustainable development objectives where there is a sound business case and the potential to deliver benefits for all partners involved.

- When designing partnerships, it is important that participants' expectations are realistic. Partnerships should be designed in a transparent manner, be based on predictable resources and focus on the competencies that the different partners bring with them.
- Partnerships can be costly, complex and challenging to implement for a number of reasons. It is therefore important that enabling conditions are in place, excessive bureaucracy is avoided and that additional costs are worthwhile. The emphasis has to be on outcomes, on delivering solutions and shared reward, and on the concrete value added in achieving the partnership's stated objectives.
- Participation in partnerships should provide for positive solutions, including, but not limited to, improved access to water services, energy, food security, environment, health care and education. A wide range of local sectoral initiatives have proven to deliver very positive results.
- Businesses may contribute to meeting a partnership's objectives in diverse ways, bringing expertise, skills, knowledge, technology or financial resources as necessary. The success of a partnership should be measured based on the actual outcomes, and each party involved in the partnership should benefit from shared reward. The most crucial measure is assessment of the outcomes that a given partnership achieves.