Mission to Kiel, Germany
On 11 February, the OECD Chief of Staff and Sherpa, Ms Gabriela Ramos, was in Kiel, Germany, to deliver remarks at the Farewell Conference for Dennis Snower on “Why we need an Empowering State”. In her speech, she discussed the importance of breaking down the silos and narratives that confine economic thinking within exclusively quantitative approaches, especially in the current context of rising populism. Ms Ramos underscored the need to change the frameworks, models and narratives in favour of a more inclusive growth. She also highlighted that the OECD is leading this effort with its New Approaches to Economic Challenges (NAEC) and the Inclusive Growth initiatives. In addition, she emphasised the role of other key OECD contributions in these areas such as the “Going Digital” project and the work on gender, skills, early childhood education and tax evasion and avoidance.

Ms Ramos also met with Professor Dennis Snower, President of the Kiel Institute for the World Economy and Founder of the Global Solutions Initiative. During their meeting, they explored convergences between the Professor’s latest research papers, the OECD’s Well-Being Framework and the recent work by the NAEC and Inclusive Growth initiatives. Their discussions also focused on how the OECD and the Global Solutions Initiative could deepen their collaboration in the context of the next Global Solutions Summit.

OECD Forum on Due Diligence in the Garment and Footwear Sector, Paris
On 12 February, Ms Gabriela Ramos delivered remarks for the Roundtable for Policymakers at the OECD Forum on Due Diligence in the Garment and Footwear Sector: “The Urgency of Responsible Supply Chains in the Apparel Sector”. In her remarks, she focused on how globalisation – in the context of the apparel sector – could work for everyone: workers, consumers and investors. She underlined the important role of governments to enable and monitor responsible supply chains, stressing the need to tackle challenges such as insufficient resources directed towards clean production processes and decent work, including forced labour and child labour. She also acknowledged that responsible supply chains have risen high on the global agenda, as they have become a lever to achieve more inclusive growth. As such, she noted that there is an increased scrutiny of supply chains driven by investors and consumers.

Ms Ramos underlined that the main recommendations provided by the 2017 Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains include: promoting a collaborative approach between industry at different stages of the supply chain; promoting meaningful stakeholder engagement; and incentivising responsible purchasing practices. She also highlighted the need to integrate a gender-lens into due diligence, given that 75% of employees in the industry are women.

Meeting for the Global Parliamentary Network, Paris
On 14 February, Ms Gabriela Ramos delivered remarks at the Meeting for the Global Parliamentary Network on “Towards Better Housing Opportunities”. In her speech, she highlighted the importance of affordable, accessible and good quality housing as a key pillar of the inclusive growth agenda. However, she underlined that housing needs are frequently unmet. She noted that the middle class have been confronting stagnant incomes for a long time, while prices of essential consumption items, such as education, health and housing, have increased above inflation. She also emphasised that housing costs represent the largest single expenditure for many individuals and families in the OECD, a burden which is particularly high for low-income households and for young people, who struggle to get onto the property ladder. Ms Ramos also noted that many households are overcrowded, with poor children at higher risk. She concluded by noting that the distribution and accessibility of housing remains highly skewed; as such, policy agendas should consider this in order to respond to the needs of those at the bottom of the income distribution.