Forum of the Southeast Asia Programme, Paris

On 11 March, the OECD Chief of Staff and Sherpa, Ms Gabriela Ramos, delivered welcoming remarks at the 2019 Forum of the Southeast Asia Programme: Connecting Southeast Asia. In her speech, she stated that connectivity is a critical pillar for inclusiveness in the region. She acknowledged that Southeast Asia has made remarkable progress in raising income levels, lowering barriers to greater trade and investment, and supporting its domestic enterprises to ‘go global’. However, she stressed that one of the challenges to greater connectivity is financing infrastructure, as perceived risks could prevent private investors from engaging in this sector. In addition, she emphasised the importance of overcoming challenges such as border crossing procedures, administrative barriers and conformity of standards in order to improve regional connectivity.

Coffees with the Secretary-General, Paris

On 11 March, Ms Gabriela Ramos delivered remarks at a seminar with Nobel Peace Laureate, Mr Kailash Satyarthi, organised in the context of the 29th session of The Coffees with the Secretary-General. In her remarks, she presented Mr Satyarthi as one of the world’s top defenders and promoters of children’s rights, stressing that he had been leading the global fight against child slavery for over three decades. She also acknowledged that the OECD is striving to raise the importance of children in numerous areas of the Organisation’s work.

Going Digital Summit, Paris

On 11-12 March, Ms Gabriela Ramos participated in the Going Digital Summit, in Paris. On 11 March, Ms Ramos took part in the panel Digital Divides. In her remarks, she highlighted that there is a large global gender gap in the access to the Internet. She stressed the need to encourage women’s full participation and inclusion in the digital economy, while addressing ingrained stereotypes and social norms that lead to discrimination, violence against women and cyberbullying. She also underlined the need for targeted educational programmes to encourage girls and women to become involved in STEM subjects, as they are still largely absent from the digital sector and, particularly, from the fast-growing platform economy. She added that education systems must equip women and men with future-proof skills such as management, communication and advanced numerical skills so that they can compete in the labour market of the future.

Ms Ramos also moderated the Going Digital special session with stakeholders. In her intervention, she underlined that broad stakeholder consultation enriches the debate, sheds new light on complex issues, and ultimately enables better policies. She noted that an inclusive multi-stakeholder model has not only helped improve the quality of OECD analysis and recommendations, but also helped shape an approach to digital policy development.

On 12 March, Ms Ramos moderated the session on the Global Agenda on Digital Transformation. In her opening remarks, she highlighted that the digital transformation generates common opportunities and links countries more closely together. She underlined that cross-border data flows enable the co-ordination of global value chains, help small firms reach global markets and offer a means for delivering services. However, she also stressed the importance of reaping the benefits from digital trade while dealing with the protection of privacy, security and intellectual property rights. As such, she highlighted the importance of multilateral discussions in revealing opportunities and setting ambitious agendas.

5th Southeast Asia Regional Programme Steering Group Meeting, Paris

On 12 March, Ms Gabriela Ramos delivered welcoming remarks at the 5th Southeast Asia Regional Programme Steering Group Meeting, in Paris. In her speech, she stressed that better connecting Southeast Asia will be essential to sustain the region’s growth momentum in a challenging global context. Ms Ramos acknowledged the important progress that Southeast Asia has achieved in the transport, energy and ICT sectors. However, she underlined that access to the digital economy is uneven across and within the regions, and that certain challenges to investing in the digital economy persist, including financing gaps, trade restrictions and administrative barriers. She also stressed the importance of improving border crossing procedures and the flows of knowledge, innovation and skills between ASEAN nations.