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OECD
Mr. Angel Gurría, Secretary-General
2, rue André Pascal
75775 Paris
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Dear Secretary-General

As you know, the Government of Iceland is strongly committed to advancing gender equality both within domestic and global spheres, within the spirit of the 2015 OECD *Recommendation on Gender Equality in Public Life*. In this regard, we are extremely pleased to engage with the OECD to reinforce and expand the scope of our efforts, building on our national achievements and contributing to international progress through taking active participation and leadership in OECD policy networks and dialogue opportunities.

The Government of Iceland has been honoured to host two ground-breaking OECD events: the OECD meeting of OECD Gender Equality Institutions and the OECD Experts Meeting on Gender Budgeting, marking new steps towards strengthening the gender equality agenda. The two events were held back to back, in Reykjavík, with the extensive involvement of the Government of Iceland, through the Ministries of Finance, Welfare, Foreign Affairs, the Centre for Gender Equality and the Prime Minister's Office. We highly appreciated the joint sessions on May 18, which brought together in a fruitful dialogue over twenty OECD countries and over seventy senior representatives from gender equality institutions, ministries of finance and the Centre of Government, as well as a number of international organisations.

The discussions have been successful in sharing promising practices, mechanisms and tools, as well as important lessons on strengthening the responsiveness of public policies and programmes to the different needs of men and women, while linking essential policy reforms with the adequate and fair allocation of resources. We see the benefit and need to continue this kind of exchange in the future and we respectfully encourage the OECD to continue to convene such policy-relevant meetings on a regular basis.

The meetings also served as a process of validation and refinement of an important new OECD instrument, the Policy Toolkit for Gender Equality in Governance, which Iceland's ministries and institutions welcomed as a timely and practical guide to enhancing the introduction of a gender perspective across all policy areas, budgets and programmes.

Iceland is proud of our innovative reform path to ensure pay equity; of our paternity leave policy which has greatly contributed to making gender roles more equitable; of the fair representation of men and women in parliament; of our efforts to create progressive

leadership engaging both men and women as champions for gender equality; and of our progress to date in gender budgeting.

However we realize that we still have a long way to go to close remaining gender gaps and to ensure long-lasting benefits for men and women and their full contribution to our society. Aware of this, we reiterate the crucial importance of sound governance to advance gender equality and the need to increase the evidence-base for government actions and reforms.

The role of the OECD in this regard is of strategic significance. In order to advance gender equality, the policy research and pathfinding role of the OECD is needed to robustly collect and analyse data, to help countries to coordinate government policy and budget processes, and to inform policy dialogue and implementation support, and to disseminate effective international practices.

In this perspective, we encourage the OECD to strengthen and promote across its community the collection of sex-disaggregated statistics to further support gender-responsive policies and budgets.

We also encourage the OECD to continue promoting a whole-of-government approach while engaging different institutions, levels of government and civil society bodies in advancing gender equality.

We welcome OECD efforts in providing concrete advice and frameworks for measuring the gender impact of policies and budgets, and we encourage further elaboration of the OECD's holistic approach to gender-responsive budgeting, which envisages a whole-of-government approach and a structured engagement of critical perspectives from civil society.

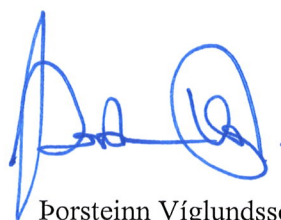
We also welcome further partnership with the OECD to intensify Iceland's gender mainstreaming commitments while linking them to effective gender budgeting processes, and to jointly lead critical discourses, such as those on pay equity and male leadership for gender equality.

The Government of Iceland stands ready to further enhance cooperation and partnership opportunities with the OECD, in order to realise more fully the potential benefits of the approaches outlined above. We trust also that these observations may serve as a useful contribution to the OECD's preparatory work for the forthcoming Ministerial Council Meeting where the promotion of gender equality will be an important element of the discussions.

Sincerely,



Benedikt Jóhannesson
Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs



Þorsteinn Víglundsson
Minister of Social Affairs and Equality