

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM - *OECD*

Cologne Summit on global challenges, including biotechnology and the importance of investing in people. Major differences in the OECD on the biotechnology issue were deftly finessed by deciding simply to quote a factual paragraph adopted at the preceding Ministerial Council meeting. Reaching a decision on the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF), however, proved unexpectedly difficult, with France alone in opposition. A last minute compromise resulted in Ministerial endorsement of efforts by interested countries and encouragement of initiatives aimed at establishing an international coordinating body that would implement a GBIF. The Ministerial demonstrated that most OECD members are increasingly focussing on the new currency of the knowledge economy, namely innovation and investment in R&D. S&T are being further integrated (although not fast enough for many) into key portfolios of government, including industry, transport, communications, education and commerce. Ministers agreed on the importance of a favourable macroeconomic environment, attention to the regulatory framework and a focus on sustainable development. It was also recognized that policy development must include non-governmental stakeholders.

### *OECD remit to the G8 on Biotechnology and Other Aspects of Food Safety*

The OECD has approved a program of work on the implications of biotechnology and other aspects of food safety in response to a request by the G8 leaders in Cologne in 1999 that the OECD report on the subject in time for the 2000 Summit in Okinawa. After lengthy and difficult debate, the OECD decided to forward the following documents to the G8 sherpas: reports on the relevant work of the two OECD bodies mentioned by the G8 (Working Group on Harmonisation of Regulatory Oversight and the Task Force for the Safety of Novel Foods and Feeds); the results of an OECD Conference on the Scientific and Health Aspects of GM Foods, to be held in Edinburgh, February 29-March 2, 2000, and a compendium on national and international food safety systems to be prepared by the OECD's new Ad Hoc Group on Food Safety.

### **3. Future S&T Directions and Value to Canada**

The OECD is seeking to pattern its program of work on S&T for the year 2000 and beyond on the priorities identified at the recent Ministerial meeting. These harmonize well with Canada's own S&T interests. The new mandate of the CSTP reflects the increasing emphasis in member countries on the global knowledge society and the importance of coordinated and integrated approaches to S&T, in cooperation with other agencies of government, civil society, the scientific community and other international bodies. Canada is also insisting that the CSTP and other OECD committees work more collaboratively.

Another challenge, recently discussed in the CSTP and of particular interest to Canada, relates to the Committee's relationship with its subsidiary bodies. Since most all of the Committee's work is developed within its working parties, there has been a tendency for the Committee to become something of a rubber stamp, with the result that it was becoming increasingly difficult to attract senior science policy officials to CSTP meetings. The Canadian delegation has been working with the Secretariat and others to develop closer policy links between the Committee and its subsidiary bodies. One innovation in support of this objective has been to give individual members of the CSTP Bureau direct responsibility for specific working parties. The aim is to assure that the CSTP, with its broader policy vantage point, engage in more substantive policy