



distortions. The OECD Trade Committee has examined trade issues from a policy perspective rather than (as in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) in legal terms. On occasion, the OECD discussions on emerging issues have led to binding agreements in the area of multilateral trade negotiations (MTN). Government procurement practices in the Tokyo MTN Round is an example. In addition, after years of analysis and discussion, in 1987 OECD ministers collectively recognized for the first time the need for agricultural reform and pushed for action in the new Uruguay Round of MTN.

The oil crises of the 1970s produced shocks to the economies of the industrialized countries and placed energy security at the top of national policy agendas. The OECD responded to the first oil crisis by establishing the International Energy Agency (IEA) in 1974. The IEA embraces 21 of the 24 OECD countries (France, Ireland and Finland do not participate). The IEA governments have agreed to share available oil supplies in an emergency. In addition, the agency has been working with member countries to conserve energy, to reduce dependence on oil and achieve a more balanced energy mix by developing alternatives (such as coal, nuclear power and renewable energy sources), and to pursue relevant research and development in the production and use of energy. Other prominent issues for the IEA are the effects on energy policy of growing environmental concerns and the problems and opportunities offered by far-reaching structural changes in energy economies. The quest for both short- and long-term energy security remains at the heart of IEA work.

Nuclear energy, which now accounts for 18 per cent of OECD countries' electricity, is also an important part of the organization's energy planning. The Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA), created in 1957, is concerned with all aspects of nuclear energy use. In particular, it makes important contributions to increasing safety in power generation and in planning for nuclear waste disposal.

Fields such as biotechnology, information technologies, and advanced materials (e.g., super-conductors) signal the birth of a new industrial revolution. The impact of science and technology on economic growth, competitiveness and society as a whole has become a key

issue for all OECD governments. The Science and Technology Policy Committee, the Information, Computer and Communications Committee, and the Industry Committee are investigating the innovation process and seeking ways to promote and manage it. Other OECD committees are also looking at the effect of the new technologies on employment.

The relationship between economic growth and a healthy physical environment has been another major issue in the 1980s. The OECD Conference on Environment and Economics in 1984 and a subsequent OECD Environment Ministers' Conference concluded that environmental factors should be a central consideration in national decision-making. This work was a forerunner to the recent World Commission of Environment and Development which has stressed the importance of sustainable development. In addition, the OECD has passed specific recommendations and decisions on economic, legal and scientific aspects of environmental management. The well-known "polluter pays" principle originated in the OECD.

The themes discussed and negotiated at the OECD over the past two decades have reflected the preoccupations of policy-makers in Canada. OECD work on structural adjustment and economic performance has facilitated Canadian discussion on adapting the domestic economy to a changing global one. Lessons were drawn for regional development, and for industrial, labour and educational policies. Provincial ministers have come to the OECD to learn and to impart their experience on social policies and education.

On trade, Canadian ministers have used the OECD to strengthen the political commitment to combat protectionism. Canada supported the important 1985 study, "Costs and Benefits of Protection," and in recent years has been particularly active in promoting OECD work on the cost of agricultural support programs.

In the field of energy, where Canada is vitally concerned both as a large producer and consumer, Canadians have encouraged the IEA to take a longer-term perspective on energy security, one for instance that takes into account the potential of frontier resources. In the areas of environment, and science and technology, both of which have risen to the top of Canada's policy agenda, Canadian policy-makers have looked