

Statement of Manisha Singh
Nominee, Permanent Representative to the OECD
U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
August 6, 2020

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member and Distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am very appreciative of the time from you and your dedicated staffs.

I am deeply humbled to be considered to be the next Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

I want to express my gratitude to President Trump and Secretary Pompeo for the trust and confidence they have placed in me. It has been the honor of my life to serve in my present role as the Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs.

I am incredibly blessed to have a loving family and great friends. It is due to their support that I have been able to contribute as a public servant. My parents are watching from home in the sunshine state of Florida, where I grew up. My sister, her husband and their two daughters are cheering me on from northern Georgia. It is for American families that I am making sure our workers and companies can compete and succeed in the global economy.

I am especially pleased to be considered for a role in an institution which can serve as a valuable platform to propel a global economic recovery. If confirmed, I will ensure that we fully engage with the like-minded members of the OECD to return growth and employment to pre-pandemic levels.

The OECD is an institution created out of American dedication to sustainable economic recovery and prosperity in a time of crisis. In a 1947 address at Harvard University, Secretary of State George Marshall outlined a vision for cooperation among European nations to regain economic footing after World War II. During that time, Congress was considering funding and logistics for the economic aid we were providing to Europe. This committee, under then Chairman Arthur Vandenburg, issued a comprehensive report titled, "Administration of United States Aid for a European Recovery Program." This program would become known as the Marshall Plan.

The predecessor to the OECD, known as the Organization for European Economic Cooperation, was established in 1948 to administer the Marshall Plan. By 1961, recognizing the interdependence of economies, the organization became the present-day OECD with the United States joining as a member. Our vision for the mission of the organization as well as the growth of the Trans-Atlantic economy both became more significant.

We will see an important milestone this December-- the sixtieth anniversary of the signing of the OECD convention. It serves as an ideal moment to review how we work within the OECD to create a level playing field for American workers, to solve issues preventing our companies from accessing markets and most importantly, how to return to a sustainable, working economy in light of the pandemic.

There are important tools at the OECD which we use to accomplish all of these goals. One is the Anti-Bribery Convention which enables our private sector to compete under fair circumstances. Signatories commit to stop bribery abroad by their companies and citizens. It provides us with an important foundation to combat corruption, money-laundering and other illicit practices which result in a tainted business environment.

As a leading voice at the OECD, we consistently share our best practices and policies with both members and non-members. This is another method through which we promote a global marketplace in which our companies can succeed. In order to create new jobs here at home, we need to have equal opportunities to export to foreign markets.

The OECD has expanded to include member nations from Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Its membership constitutes about 60% of global GDP. Yet it is still compact enough a forum that we can use it effectively to address issues impacting our workforce. Outcomes in the OECD also affect our economic relationships with non-members. The OECD does not strive for universal membership; it is relevant due to its global impact.

Our new global digital economy is borderless and poses increasing challenges for regulators. As the nation which produces the greatest innovations, we can have discussions in the OECD to ensure that regulations are applied on equal footing.

If I am confirmed, I commit to advocating for market-based principles which create free, stable societies and for policies which include everyone in the benefits of economic growth. I commit not only to U.S. engagement, but to a constructive, cooperative approach to our membership. Our leadership is needed, now more than ever, to ensure that international organizations focus on their original missions and are accountable to their members. A return to economic health requires us to seize every available platform which can drive us forward.

Another important event is the upcoming selection of a new OECD Secretary General. The process commences formally on September 1. As the original visionary for the organization, it is incumbent upon us to play a strong and central role in the selection of new leadership.

Our focus on the effective functioning of the OECD is critical. If confirmed, I would work with representatives from other nations to establish a member-driven agenda. I would also advocate for budget discipline, increased transparency, and external evaluations, as is USG policy with respect to all of our international organization memberships.

The 1948 SFRC report I referenced earlier discusses the need to develop continuing organizations to disseminate plans for a sustained economic recovery. The report further states, “Provision should therefore be made for representation of the United States in such organizations as may be established.” If confirmed, I will ensure that my representation on behalf of our country in this organization reflects the historic magnitude of the public trust which is being placed in me.

My initial engagement with the OECD began when I was a staff member at this committee more than 15 years ago. It was here, under the mentorship of the great statesman Senator Richard Lugar, that I learned how important it is for diplomacy to succeed.

I have used that sentiment for the last three years to work with a very talented team of civil service and foreign service officers in the Economic Bureau at the Department as well as thousands of officers serving in posts overseas. I feel incredibly lucky to work with them, and if confirmed, I will be as fortunate to work with the dedicated team based at the U.S. Mission to the OECD. And I look forward to continuing to collaborate with you and your staffs to promote American interests in this organization.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.