On behalf of Mr Jacek Piechota, the Minister for the Economy, I would sincerely like to welcome you to today’s conference. The Ministry of Economy, which I represent, has a significant interest in the development of new technologies and in their implementation in the economy. I am delighted to be here today, both as the Undersecretary of State and also as the National Co-ordinator for Poland - OECD Co-operation.

The fourth conference in the “Global Research Village” series, organized by the OECD in Poland, in cooperation with the Committee of Scientific Research is proof of the positive assessment by the Organization of the ongoing changes in our country as well as the appreciation of Poland’s efforts on the OECD forum. It also underlines the importance to the Polish government as well as to the economic and scientific circles, of the development of information and communication technologies that are to be applied in the economy.

Poland belongs to the group of countries undergoing rapid economic transformation, and making progress towards membership in the European Union. Our OECD membership enabled us to successfully solve a number of problems in our transformation from a planned to a market economy. The recommendations of the OECD in its reports on the Polish economy have, for a number of years, played an important role in the formation of economic policy. Let me say that the presence in Warsaw today of Mr Hervig Schlögl, the Deputy Secretary General of the OECD, is another confirmation of Poland’s important role on the working forum of the OECD. It is not the first visit of Mr Schlögl to Poland - as we remember he has visited our country on the occasion of the unprecedented event, which was the OECD Council Session held in Warsaw in September 2000. He was also our guest at the Seminar “Poland’s Membership in OECD and accession process to the European Union”, organized on 29th November last year, during the celebrations of the 5th anniversary of our OECD membership.

The OECD is a global economic forum used by member countries as a vehicle for the exchange of experiences and results of the individual socio-economic policies of its member countries. Joining OECD in 1996, on the international forum - Poland demonstrated its economic maturity and credibility. Being a member of the OECD enabled us to take part and jointly decide on matters regarding to the world liberalization process as well as to formulate a new image of the OECD among other international organizations. Poland participates in all of the OECD programs, which encompass inter alia countries’ economic surveys, regulatory reform, sustainable development, e-commerce; we have also joined the convention on fighting corruption in international commercial transactions. Last year, in our legal system we introduced the Regulatory Impact Analyses (RIA), obligating government administration to prepare a comprehensive report on all possible consequences, especially economic ones, of new legal acts.
At this point it is worth to briefly mention two important documents prepared during the last 6 months: “The VII Economic Report on Poland“ and “Poland. From Transition to New Regulatory Challenges“.

The promotion of the both publications took place in the presence of Deputy Secretary General, Mr Richard Hecklinger, and other OECD representatives at the press conference in July this year.

Today’s conference and the subject of our discussion forum will serve to confirm that OECD is an organization able to undertake most contemporary challenges in the globalisation process. Let me say that in the face of economic synchronization of the world, especially after the events of 11th September 2001, there is even more important to undertake dialog on the wider use of new information and communication technologies. In countries like Poland the implementation of new technologies has already visibly accelerated its economic transformation, upgrading its position in the world economy.

Our experience with new technologies – so far - confirms the belief that they can constitute the basis of non-inflationary growth. The potentially growing use of advanced technologies can be a strong base for the acceleration of our economy in the coming years.

In the government’s strategy for economic development of Poland called “Entrepreneurship - Development - Work”, proposed changes to the structure of our economy were put forward. They should result in modernisation, improvement of competitiveness, ownership changes and privatisation of state companies.

We hope that the implementation of this strategy will contribute to the development of an information society based on more and more advanced information technologies.

One of the important tasks within the framework of the strategy for economic development is the implementation of the programme based on the development of an advanced information infrastructure for education, central and local administration, as well as individual users. In addition, we endeavour to introduce universal and inexpensive access to the Internet, create a broadband network for government and local administration and to help develop the Polish high-technology industry in the field of software and (paid) services for the use of the information society. We also plan to simplify e-commerce encouraging a rise in economic turnover using this medium.

These incentives are the result of the government document “E-Poland. The Plan of Activities for the Development of an Information Society in Poland in 2001 - 2006“, which is being carried out within the framework of a European Union initiative, “E - Europe“.

It is also worth to underline that activities resulting in the development of innovation work towards strengthening the links between science and the economy. The creation of beneficial conditions for the development of innovation was also introduced into strategic governmental documents. These documents set out the steps that should be taken before Poland’s accession to the European Union and the
implementation of which should be continued until 2006 - in other words also in the
first years of our membership in the European Union.

The development of innovation and competitiveness in the Polish economy should be
accomplished by improving the mechanism which turn scientific research into
economic practice. This will occur by supporting the creators of technical projects,
who have a chance of developing technologically advanced products that meet
market needs.

Bearing in mind the importance and opportunities which can be derived from the
development of information and communication technology, Poland recognizes the
development of knowledge as the principle factor in achieving economic growth. We
hence pledge to actively participate in the introduction and implementation of
information technology solutions in every sector of our economy.

The realization of programmes connected with the implementation of information and
communication technology is a substantial burden for the budget. Having access to
EU funds will enable us to increase, even threefold, the level of spending that is
presently designated by the Polish government for the task of creating an information
society and to the implementing modern information and communication technologies
in the economy.

At this point, I would like to refer to Mr Schlögl's presentation, in which he stressed
the necessity and importance of changes in the policy priorities of governments with
regard to supporting the increase in spending on science, training and education.
These priorities are clearly long-term targets and therefore they often “loose” with
short-term goals, which are a more useful tool in the battle for election votes.

Consequently, cooperation within the OECD, an organization, which through its
actions is constantly reminding us of the need for such formulation of economic policy
targets, is of prime importance, in order for the world to be able to cope with the
challenges of the XXI century.