

Dubai PAGE Conference Session Report on

Using Indicators to Guide the Transition to a Green Economy

1. Background

At the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), countries recognized that indicators are a necessary means to assess progress towards the achievement of the sustainable development goals. In the conference's outcome document "The Future We Want", parties invited governments to "improve knowledge and statistical capacity on job trends, developments and constraints and integrate relevant data into national statistics, with the support of relevant UN agencies within their mandates".

The Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) aims at providing a comprehensive suite of green economy services that will enable countries to transform their national economic structures to meet the growing demands and challenges of the 21st century. Among these, PAGE will develop a set of global and sectoral indicators for national green economy assessments.

Measuring progress on such a complex and multi-dimensional change as the transition to green economy, and identifying the relevant indicators, is a challenging task. Recently, there has also been some effort to unify the experiences of four international agencies (UNEP, World Bank, OECD and GGGI), cooperating under the framework of the Green Growth Knowledge Platform. They published a joint paper, "Moving towards a common approach on green growth indicators" (2013), to agree on an analytical framework and a set of indicators to monitor green growth and green economy.

2. Content of the Session

The overall theme addressed by the session was "using indicators to guide the transition to a Green Economy". This session outlined several different frameworks and initiatives to measure the transition to a green economy. Different actors – international organisations and countries – shared their experiences, lessons learned and good practices in terms of indicators. The multiplicity of the potential approaches to metrics for green economy was emphasized, from the Global Green Knowledge Platform's indicator work to national concepts and initiatives, such as Thailand's "Sufficiency economy", and China's "Ecological Civilization".

The session was co-chaired by Stephen Wainaina, Economic Secretary, Ministry of Devolution and Planning of Kenya and Laszlo Pinter, Professor at the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary.

Pablo Montes Goitia, Coordinator of the National Portfolio of Environmental Projects from the Ministry of Housing, Land Planning and Environment of Uruguay and Niramon Sutummakid, Associate Professor, Economics, Thammasat University of Thailand presented national examples of indicator frameworks. The panelists were Hoseok Kim of Global Green Growth Institute, Matteo Pedercini of the Millennium Institute and Pushpam Kumar of UNEP.

Stephen Wainaina opened the session, explained the objectives, and described the format of the session. Laszlo Pinter made a short introduction, explaining that green economy metrics and indicators are a relatively new topic but the essence of it is not really new. However, the interest in metrics and the work on indicators systems has grown in the past years, due to the recognition that we should measure what we manage.

A lively panelist discussion then followed, where further country best practices were discussed.

3. Good Practices, Insights and Lessons Learned

State-of-the-art knowledge and good-practice examples

- Mr Montes Goitia introduced the Uruguayan example. He explained how Uruguay are looking to go beyond GDP, and develop indicators that integrate social and environmental considerations. Progress has been made in Uruguay, and they are working closely with UNEP on this topic - but finding the right indicators that are adjusted to Uruguay's national context is a difficult task.
- Professor Sutummakid presented the Thailand case, and how indicators are used to improve measurement of non-economic factors. She described how Thailand has established a 'well-being index', which is a composite indicator composed of 6 areas - health, family, community empowerment, economic strength and equity, surrounding/ecological system, democratic society.
- The panelists also described several global level initiatives, including the Global Green Growth Institute's indicators approach, as well as UNEP's inclusive wealth index.

Identify key action, actors and institutions to harness new opportunities

- The change to measurement systems consistent with the green economy requires strong and persistent political commitment. It also requires the development of capacity to continue the

work on new and better measurements and an ability to make use of the improved metrics in decision-making.

- Efforts to establish economic, social and environmental indicators need to take a multi-stakeholder approach. Buy-in from a wide range of government departments, civil society groups and the wider public can result in increased impact of these indicator initiatives.

Opportunities for Knowledge Sharing and Learning

- Mr Montes stated that a development of platforms to share experiences and best practices would be useful a tool to learn about green economy indicators elsewhere.

4. Key Take Home Points/Recommendation

- 1) The objectives of the green economy that is addressing some of the root causes of sustainability problems are different than the objectives of the economy that is causing them. In order to successfully manage the transition, we need indicators that are consistent with its objectives. We need indicators and underlying goals and targets to tell us where we want to be and whether we are getting there.
- 2) The green economy's ultimate goal is to improve well-being. Economic metrics, including the GDP are important for economic decision-making, but they should not be used as the highest-level measure of progress. Metrics related to environmental sustainability and the ultimate goal of well-being are needed and integrated into decision-making.
- 3) The movement towards green economy indicators already has strong foundations. Indicators that move beyond GDP, and look at better measure of well-being have been around for some time and new ones are emerging. Thailand's well-being index, Uruguay's focus on happiness, UNEP's inclusive wealth index, GGGI's green growth indicators are some of the good examples.

5. Key Resources for the Session

- [“Measuring Progress towards an Inclusive Green Economy”](#), UNEP
- [“Using Indicators for Green Economy Policy Making”](#), UNEP
- “A practitioner’s guide to green economy modelling tools” (forthcoming, UNEP)
- [“Moving towards a Common Approach on Green Growth Indicators”](#), GGKP