

1st Global Conference on Partnership for Action on Green Economy

Dubai, 4 – 5 March, 2014

Chair's Summary and Conclusions

Preamble

1. Urgency and benefits of moving to an inclusive green economy

- 1.1. The inaugural global conference on the Partnership for Action on Green Economy - PAGE - held in Dubai on 4-5 March 2014, recognizes that moving towards an inclusive green economy is an imperative. Across the world, countries are taking action, seeking to create wealth, jobs and prosperity for their peoples within an increasingly resource constrained world.
- 1.2. The growing interest among countries to promote low-carbon, socially inclusive and resource-efficient development models that improves human wellbeing and values natural capital was evidenced by the more than 450 participants from 66 countries – including 27 ministers from environment, finance, industry, labour and trade – in this inaugural global PAGE conference, generously hosted by the H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice President of the United Arab Emirates, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai.
- 1.3. The UAE and many other countries have adopted their own green economy strategies spanning from investments in renewable energy, greener cities and eco-industrial parks to resource efficient and cleaner production, sustainable transport and waste management. Countries are also introducing fiscal policies, including tax reforms, to catalyze the use of cleaner technology.
- 1.4. Successful practices can serve as a basis for transferring knowledge and building capacities among PAGE countries. Among the success stories, the UAE showcased the Masdar Institute and City, a model for developing a carbon neutral zone and one of the most sustainable cities of the world. Taken together with its hosting of the PAGE conference, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the Abu Dhabi branch of the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), the UAE was recognized as playing a leading role in promoting the transition to a green economy and the transfer of green technology, including renewable energy, green buildings, sustainable transport, and electrical power generation, among others.

- 1.5. These country experiences indicate that positive, demonstrable results will attract attention and resources, and therefore generate momentum for start-up initiatives. Global networks such as PAGE can help promote successful policy experiences, and foster global cooperation and knowledge sharing.

2. Different pathways to sustainable development through multiplicity of approaches

- 2.1. The conference reconfirms that each country is forging its own green economy pathway, based on its individual national priorities and natural assets. The diversity and breadth of policies and initiatives presented during the conference are a testimony to the existence of different pathways to sustainable development. Sharing these pathways helps to distill lessons learned and good practices, and encourages other countries to embark on this journey.
- 2.2 Countries discussed how to develop and implement national green economy strategies, as well as how the United Nations could support countries in their transition. Many countries are already making bold steps towards a green economy transformation by promoting energy, industry and employment strategies, fiscal reforms and social protection in integrated policy packages.
- 2.3 The number of countries promoting green public and private investments in the development planning process is also growing. These efforts include setting clear targets and indicators, advancing ways to decouple growth from GHG emissions, and linking job creation with innovation and technological development.
- 2.4 Industrialized countries need to scale up their commitment to advance this global transition. Having a commitment from society, as well as an open and transparent dialogue between government, private sector, trade unions and civil society, is instrumental to provide the necessary enabling conditions for the transformation.

3. PAGE as a Response to Rio +20

- 3.1. The outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference, *The Future We Want*, called on the United Nations to support interested countries in their transition to greener and more inclusive economies. In response, UNEP, ILO, UNIDO and UNITAR created PAGE to meet the growing demands from countries seeking to develop and implement national green economy strategies.

- 3.2. Building on the existing initiatives and initial expertise of the four UN agencies, PAGE offers countries a range of integrated services and tools to facilitate their national green economy plans and actions. PAGE also provides a vehicle to pool expertise from other UN agencies and partners, such as the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), the Millennium Institute (MI) and the Green Growth Knowledge Platform (GGKP), creating a network of green economy and green growth practitioners.
- 3.3. PAGE supports continued collaboration and exchanges through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, harnessing the potential for collaboration and collective support.
- 3.4. Countries participating in PAGE demonstrated that efforts are nationally owned and grounded in political commitment, as well as multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder participation.

Insights and emerging good practices

The conference covered the following priority issues: green and decent jobs; fiscal policy and investments; green industrial policies; social inclusion and poverty eradication; trade policies and opportunities; and metrics and indicators for inclusive green economies, in dedicated parallel sessions. Participants actively shared experiences and formulated common insights, as summarized below.

4. Green Jobs: seizing the opportunities for decent work

- 4.1. Jobs are central and crucial to the green economy. Evidence from countries reveals that green economy approaches have resulted in positive outcomes from creating jobs and improving working conditions and skills in the non-formal sector, to building capacities for the skilled and unemployed youth and building resilience to disasters.
- 4.2. The private sector provides the majority of green jobs. Greening the economy in ways that creates more and better jobs requires a proactive strategy based on convergence of efforts (political, social, environmental and economic), participatory governance structures, and policy and regulatory action by governments for mainstreaming in national and local development frameworks.
- 4.3. Building the business case for green jobs through the provision of incentives and subsidies, shifts in taxation and the easing of regulatory impediments is deemed necessary to create more hospitable conditions, particularly for the private sector to make the transition. The adoption of

the social enterprise model to maximize human and environmental well-being is considered particularly useful for countries with a large informal and SME base. 'Indigenous' approaches are also needed, for instance, as every country needs to carry out an assessment and develop customized green economy/green jobs strategies.

- 4.4. All jobs can be green. Greening the economy refers to the broad category of work to be done in a range of productive activities across sectors, whether formal or informal. It refers to creation of new jobs but also to the upgrading of existing jobs. Furthermore, green jobs need to include decent working conditions for them to be beneficial for the environment and contribute to social inclusion. This calls for more attention to be paid to informal work, which represents 60 to 80 per cent of the jobs in developing countries, in addition to low-income farming.

5. Fiscal policy and Finance: investing in a green transition

- 5.1. Major challenges associated with the transition to a green economy identified include sending the right signals to the market and ensuring political commitment and leadership.
- 5.2. The longer-term ecological cycle is not best served by the short-term political and business-planning cycle.
- 5.3. The biggest positive changes seen in markets are those that are policy-driven, but even then the aggregate change is often short of what is needed to support a green economy transition. While positive incentives are crucial, these alone will not move the market with sufficient speed and volume. Hence, there is a need for policy drivers to enable the market, so it can help drive the transition.
- 5.4. Critical success factors include the establishment of clear rules by government, which provide credible and reliable long-term programmes that reduce uncertainties and risks for green private sector investments; and, a long-term vision and political commitment, along with enhanced collaboration among different government ministries, to support a national shift towards a green economy.

6. Green Industrial Policies: shaping the future of manufacturing

- 6.1. Industrialization is a main driver for income and job creation, but business as usual is no longer an option. The goal now is to provide more value with fewer negative consequences, while

improving economic as well as ecological efficiency. This means that growth needs to be decoupled from increased resource usage; and, labour productivity should be shifted towards resource productivity.

- 6.2. This requires a two-pronged strategy. First, enterprises need to improve resource productivity and environmental performance, and second, new operations delivering environmental goods and services need to be established. A green industrial policy, which mobilises private investment in clean technologies while avoiding inefficiencies, is a vital part of an overall national strategy to promote a transition towards a green economy.
- 6.3. The greening of industry and the decoupling of economic growth from natural resource use requires building new partnerships. Many government institutions need to be involved to address such cross-cutting issues, such as access to and transfer of clean technologies, access to finance and capacity building at government level. Breaking up the current silos will require greater cooperation between national and local governments, as well as between government, the private sector and civil society.
- 6.4. The enormous global environmental challenges call for a new approach, one that prioritizes systemic change and includes working towards clear and shared objectives in which the different players are fully integrated. Resistance to change can be overcome by sharing successful strategies from industry champions. In addition, green industry champions can demonstrate good practice and drive change by designing new products and processes around materials to promote a circular economy.

7. Social inclusion and poverty reduction – making the green economy work for all

- 7.1. Addressing social inclusion through green economy requires a systemic change and redefinition of wealth and well-being. Stakeholders need to be engaged in a dialogue in order to ensure this new vision is transformed into strategies and actions, based on national priorities and possibilities.
- 7.2. Local initiatives can make the case for a socially inclusive green economy, and the lessons learned from these efforts can be shared with policymakers. Creating synergies between community-led initiatives and government, as well as private sector, civil societies and financial institutions, builds linkages for learning and scaling up good practices.

- 7.3. Experiences from countries show how the empowerment of women, notably through education, rights to land ownership and access to finance, are crucial for creating an inclusive green economies. Capacity building is required at the institutional and individual level. Thus, governments need to be supported with tools to overcome their implementation challenges. To help them address knowledge gaps, targeted training and awareness raising including with private sector representatives, should be offered. Individual citizens must also acquire skills to help them create sustainable livelihoods.
- 7.4. Green economy policies need to be linked to national poverty reduction priorities and strategies with adequate costing and budgeting and indicators that allow them to measure progress.

8. Sustainable trade opportunities: driving an inclusive green economy

- 8.1. Sustainable trade can be a key driver for an inclusive green economy. Empirical evidence demonstrates that greener trade can create decent jobs and more resource efficient production methods, increase competitiveness, build new market access opportunities and enhance sustainability.
- 8.2. The private sector has a key role to play. Green innovation and greener global value chains as well as social and environmental practices, such as certification and adhering to sustainability standards, drive international markets and present a clear business case for industry and are, for many, indispensable for long-term survival of business. Best practice examples demonstrate the importance of setting clear and accountable environmental and social targets and monitoring implementation.
- 8.3. Policy makers need to set the right enabling conditions and incentive measures to enhance sustainable trade. These policies need to be carefully designed at the national, regional, multilateral levels to enhance innovation and transfer of environmental technologies. Inter-ministerial coordination as well as international donor assistance is crucial.
- 8.4. Scaling up support, financing and intensive capacity building for sustainable trade, and trade in environmental goods and services, will help green global value chains and drive the shift to an inclusive green economy. Strategic partnerships, like PAGE, which strive to engage government, the private sector and civil society stakeholders, have an important role to play in helping countries identify and harness sustainable trade opportunities.

9. Metrics and indicators for Green Economy: Measuring the future we want

- 9.1. The conference recognized that green economy objectives to address the challenges of sustainability are different from the current economic objectives, which are causing these issues. In order to successfully transition to a green economy, indicators must be consistent with the overall goals and objectives to provide an accurate measure.
- 9.2. The green economy's ultimate goal is to improve well-being. Economic metrics, including 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 well-being are needed, and should be integrated into decision-making.
- 9.3. The movement towards green economy indicators already has strong foundations. Indicators that move beyond GDP and look at better measures of well-being have been around for some time, and new ones are emerging.
- 9.4. The change to measurement systems consistent with the green economy requires strong and persistent political commitment. It also requires the developing greater capacity to continue the work on new and better measurements, and an ability to make use of the improved metrics in decision-making.

Cross-cutting opportunities

During the conference, a number of topics and opportunities emerged which cut across specialized topics and actors, creating opportunities for strategic action at various levels.

10. Strengthening institutions for a green transition

- 10.1 An effective national institutional framework, political stability and good coordination are important factors for advancing a green transition. Participation and leadership of concerned ministries, including from ministries of finance and planning, is important.
- 10.2 Equally, national, sectoral and local action to advance a green economy can benefit from early and consistent engagement of social partners, such as the private sector, labour force and other concerned stakeholders.



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- 10.3 Further knowledge exchange and learning on diverse institutional approaches taken by countries to advance a green economy should also be explored.

11. Learning, capacity development and knowledge exchange

- 11.1. A transition to a green economy creates unprecedented challenges and opportunities for learning and skills development. Opportunities exist to scale up awareness raising, knowledge transfer and mutual learning so that actors at all levels are ready to participate in the transformation. This includes senior decision-makers, the private sector and civil society.
- 11.2. PAGE is responding to countries' needs, and as well as engaging knowledge and learning institutions in a global effort to bring green economy learning to the national level.
- 11.3. Opportunities for scaling up this learning and knowledge sharing may include the organization of regional PAGE conferences and the provision of learning support and services at the national level so that countries better understand the opportunities of green economy and growth policies.
- 11.4. More analysis is needed to gain insights into such issues as technology transfer, the distribution effects of greening economies, and ways to better value natural capital, among others.

The way forward – Getting on to the same PAGE

12. Countries participating in the First Global PAGE Conference at Dubai have taken inspiration and guidance from each other. They have shared their experiences, their national perspectives and priorities, which will enable them to bring the green economy concept home and translate this collective wisdom into practical action. Many of these national initiatives are now featured on the PAGExchange, which will continue to grow and expand over the months and years to come as a visible manifestation of the pioneering work undertaken around the globe.
13. The international community, including regional organizations, the Friends of PAGE and the many interested countries represented at the conference, have renewed their commitment and expressed support for the fundamental changes needed to green our economies and societies. One of the key messages is integration. Stakeholders from across ministries and society must participate in the



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decision making process, and all of the participants vowed to play their role to promote this approach.

14. Moreover, the global PAGE initiative was welcomed and reconfirmed as a major vehicle to facilitate this change by keeping countries connected through continued knowledge and experience sharing and support. This conference also marked the beginning of new green economy partnerships between countries and the international community.
15. Finally, through the many enriching contributions and findings resulting from the plenary discussions and technical sessions, PAGE is now better informed to assist countries interested in developing, adopting and sharing experiences from their national green economy strategies and policies.
16. The Chair expressed his gratitude to all participants for coming to Dubai and making the conference a success, and indicated his desire to host future PAGE gatherings, including notably in 2020 on the occasion of the next World Expo to be held in Dubai.