



# COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT

## SOUTH AFRICA

24 November 2021 | Summary Report

### ABOUT THE COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT

PAGE Country Spotlights are focused deep dives presenting the green economy transformation from one PAGE partner country. The open discussions are delivered by government representatives and UN officials working directly in the country. The deep dive on 24 November 2021 was focused on sharing progress from South Africa, outlining national priorities for the country's green economy transition, challenges and how the PAGE engagement will support long-term sustainable development.

#### Speakers:



**Vic Van Vuuren**  
Director

Enterprises Department  
International Labour  
Organization (ILO)  
& Chair of the PAGE  
Management Board



**Dr. Jenitha Badul**  
Senior Policy Advisor

Sustainability Programmes and Projects  
Department of Forestry, Fisheries and  
the Environment (DFFE)



**Siyanda Siko**  
Project Coordinator  
UN Partnership for Action  
on Green Economy



**Asad Naqvi**  
Head of the Secretariat  
UN Partnership for Action  
on Green Economy

#### Moderator:





## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### I. Through a well-functioning PAGE governance structure, South African stakeholders were able to work as a collective.

According to Dr. Jenitha Badul, Senior Policy Advisor for the Sustainability Programmes and Projects at the National Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) and Chair of the PAGE National Steering Committee, one of the key elements that unlocked the potential of the programme in South Africa was the establishment of a well-functioning governance structure. The structure of the programme enabled closer collaboration and dialogue between national government partners, UN agencies, the public sector department as well as funding partners.

“The results [in South Africa] are progressively rising with impact through strong government leadership, effective policy coordination and solid inter-ministerial collaboration for a Green Economy transformation.”

**Vic Van Vuuren**

Director Enterprises Department, International Labour Organization (ILO)

### II. The PAGE programme succeeded in identifying country-specific gaps and needs.

In South Africa, PAGE helped identify national gaps related to inequality, poverty, and unemployment as well as industrialization that has historically exploited natural resources. Consequently, PAGE offered adaptive and tailored support to align to national priorities and advance the transition to an inclusive and low carbon economy. Its outputs have been deliberate and advanced strategic policy related interventions, industry related feasibilities as well as contributing towards addressing capacity needs through a selected number of green economy-related training interventions. Through the individual determination of sectors with Inclusive Green Economy (IGE) potential, South Africa is able to advance the transition to an inclusive and low-carbon economy more effectively.

“When governments develop their policies, the multi stakeholder dialogue is often missing. In that sense, the government develops policies without consulting the stakeholders who will be impacted. [...] Through the PAGE partnership of five UN agencies and the combination of their networks, it was possible to mobilize not only the counterpart ministries of the government but also other relevant partners and thus create a national ownership of the policy proposals.”

**Asad Naqvi**

Head of the PAGE Secretariat



### III. The alignment of PAGE activities with other programmes and initiatives enabled South Africa to find synergy in its sustainability efforts.

PAGE is collaborating with many other initiatives such as the [Green Economy Transformation programme](#) led by GIZ, the international development cooperation agency of Germany, which aims to strengthen the capacities of key public sector actors to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) more systematically. The alignment between PAGE and GIZ benefits South Africa to join hands on green economy interventions and creates synergies to pool expertise across different sectors and networks and avoid duplication of efforts. According to Dr. Jenitha Badul, this enables to better understand national challenges and limitations, to refine the programme and thus provide better business support, as well as, advance equality and youth development.

“When we think of jobs and employment, the cooperation with PAGE and ILO were definitely important aspects for us in terms of how the South African [Driving Force for Change II Challenge](#) can be addressed and creating the linkage not only to green economy and green recovery, but also to the environmental aspects to it, in encouraging dialogue with the youth.”

**Navina Sanchez Ibrahim**

German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)

### IV. The rehabilitation of the economy after the pandemic needs to be led by environmentally and socially responsible motives.

- As a response to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, PAGE delivered analytical support through a [modelling exercise](#), which compared scenarios for recovery packages and their associated immediate to long-term economic, social and environmental impacts. The analysis provided indications where policy priorities should be set. The economic modelling exercise and scenarios have certainly contributed toward understanding how South Africa can accelerate an inclusive economic recovery.
- South Africa was one of the first countries to receive green recovery support from PAGE. The recovery funds are an opportunity to provide ongoing business support in key economic sectors. Recovery activities include training of national partners on macroeconomic modeling, mobilizing stakeholders through dialogue and media promotion on the recovery plan as well as sectoral economic recovery plans and building the capacity of public and private institutions to promote green entrepreneurship and small business recovery.
- According to Dr. Badul, the COVID-19 pandemic presented South Africa an opportunity to revisit inclusivity and how social, economic and environmental imperatives are being addressed. This has outlined the deficit of access to basic social services in the health sector, as well as basic schooling systems, for example. In order to ‘build back better’, South Africa will aim to take the whole of its society along, through social outreach, education and awareness. Through PAGE recovery support, South Africa will allocate resources on training activities on climate change, the SDGs, Green Economy and thus address the knowledge gap and the extremely high, and through the pandemic still rising, level of youth unemployment.



- PAGE and South Africa's Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) are hosting and driving forward the 2021 Driving Force for Change II Challenge, which is directly linked to the Presidential Employment Stimulus or the Presidential Youth Employment Interventions. President Ramaphosa challenged the youth of South Africa to craft and design programmes that will make the country reach its developmental goals. The Challenge is an opportunity for young entrepreneurs to further develop early-stage entrepreneurship skills and competencies aiming to create decent jobs for youth. Financed by the PAGE recovery funds, the initiative mobilizes the youth to come forward, demonstrate their potential and exposes them to training opportunities. Additionally, this initiative encourages social engagement and dialogue on community level, and thus adds value to the overall outcome of Chapter 5 of the National Development Plan, which is the transition to a low carbon economy.

“When talking about inclusive economy, it’s important that we are taking everyone along and also addressing the issue of inclusivity, of gender, of youth and of persons with disabilities. So activities through PAGE, such as the Driving Force for Change II Challenge, has definitely touched on this.”

**Dr. Jenitha Badul**

Senior Policy Advisor, Sustainability Programmes and Projects,  
National Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE)

**V. The work of the UN RCO Economists is acknowledged on multiple levels.**

According to Vic van Vuuren, the importance of the economists in UN Resident Coordinator Offices (UN RCOs) is being recognized globally and the UN continuously engages in upscaling the impact and support of the UN RCO's work. Siyanda Siko additionally referred to the close collaboration with the UN RCO at country level to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of operational activities, which help deliver transformative results for the whole economy and the economic recovery from COVID-19. In South Africa, the UN RCO economist is represented in the PAGE National Steering Committee, and supported the PAGE Green Recovery proposal which is now being implemented. The UN RCO also supported the Green Economy Transformation Programme, led by GIZ.

**UN Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE)**

PAGE is a joint collaboration between five United Nations agencies, seeking to place sustainability at the heart of economic policies and practices to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. PAGE supports nations and regions in reframing economic policies and practices around sustainability to foster economic growth, create income and jobs, reduce poverty and inequality, and strengthen the ecological foundations of their economies.



## LOOKING AHEAD

As South Africa is phasing out of the PAGE programme, ensuring sustainability of the outcomes becomes essential.

- An effective national coordination mechanism was put in place in form of a National Steering Committee. This presents an opportunity to ensure dialogue between stakeholders such as the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, which is the leading government focal point, the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition and the Department of Science and Innovation. The composition of the National Steering Committee has enabled a coordination across multiple levels – from government representatives to the private sector and at local level.
- South Africa wants to maintain the governance structure to ensure strong future dialogue and exchange across all levels. This should also continue to bring on board other businesses, align initiatives to use synergies and ensure that emerging opportunities will be met accordingly.
- South Africa will continue to advance the Green Economy Transformation programme led by GIZ to strengthen the capacities of key public sector actors to implement SDGs and NDCs and advance towards an Inclusive Green Economy.
- The pandemic revealed the urgency to address key issues such as youth unemployment and extreme levels of poverty coupled with inequality and lack of adequate knowledge on climate change, green economy and sustainable development goals amongst youth. Recovery resources will be allocated to address those issues, e.g. with further training activities, intending to pursue low carbon green business education. Additionally, other partners should be identified to continue the PAGE programme efforts. One recently identified key partner from the public sector side was the Department of Employment and Labour.

“Right from the beginning, we attempt to place it with the relevant sector. So that when it comes to sustainability of an initiative, [...] no delivery will come out of the PAGE programme without having an owner for it.”

**Dr. Jenitha Badul**

Senior Policy Advisor, Sustainability Programmes and Projects,  
National Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE)

The Country Spotlight sessions will continue to enable dialogue and exchange between governmental representatives, UN officials, national focal points and donor partners. The next deep dive will be held in **December 2021** and focus on **PAGE Uruguay**. Further sessions are planned to continue in 2022.

For more information or questions, please contact:

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