

Green Economy, Green Growth and sustainable development: Post Covid 19 measures

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Abstract: The air is clean and fresh, fish have reappeared in urban waterways, birds are frequenting uncut gardens, wild mammals are meandering through cities and greenhouse gas emissions will likely drop by an unprecedented 8% this year. Nature has clearly benefited from several months of dramatically reduced economic activity. Nevertheless, the global COVID-19 pandemic is likely to set back the progress made in addressing the sustainable development. Hence, solutions for COVID-19 recovery must incorporate this prior momentum and work in parallel with the principles of a green economy if we are to avoid further sustainable development breakdown. The post-COVID-19 reconstruction phase should be centred around the green economy, the concept of which enables economic growth and investment while increasing environmental quality and social inclusiveness.

The purpose of this article is to present the issue of the current Post-Covid 19 situation and the measures that must be taken in the green economy to increase green growth and promote sustainable development.

Index-Terms: green economy, green growth, sustainable development, environment, the pandemic Covid 19.

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I. Introduction

Since December 2019, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has quickly spread all over the world. In March 2020, it was declared a global pandemic by the WHO, having affected virtually all countries and territories. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are under threat everywhere, as nations face unprecedented health and economic challenges.

Numerous countries—with extremely varied economic, socio-cultural, environmental, and health service attributes and capabilities—have adopted different and unprecedented measures to limit the spread of the virus. These measures have already had an enormous impact not only on the spread of COVID-19 but also on economies, employment, business, and community life, posing special risks for the poor, the elderly and the most vulnerable. Old work patterns, supply chains, social arrangements, and human relationships are changing, with long-term consequences for how we behave and organize our lives in the future.

II. Green economy

The Green Economy can be defined as a sustainable economy and society with zero carbon emissions and a one-planet footprint where all energy is derived from renewable resources which are naturally replenished. A green economy rigorously applies the triple bottom line of people, planet and profits across all corporations at the microeconomic level and throughout the entire economy at the macroeconomic level. In contrast to a green economy, a traditional —black energy economy is based on carbon-intensive fossil fuels such as coal and petroleum. By definition, a low-carbon economy is distinct from a green economy because it still generates carbon emissions.

Green-Economy is essentially an inclusive term comprising economic, social and the ecological pillars of growth.

☞ A win-win economic-ecological model; Programmes and projects are co-beneficial, bringing in revenues from both the economic and ecological investments.

☞ Well-being; measured not merely on the Happiness Index but in the context of achieving and pursuing the development goals.

☞ Equity; for diversified sustainable development.

A green economy exhibits the following characteristics:

- The preservation and protection of the world's ecosystems, biological diversity and forests in partnership with indigenous peoples and all relevant stakeholders through the creation of sustainable governance models, markets and business models for delivering, maintaining and paying for ecosystem services.
 - An energy infrastructure with zero carbon emission that is powered 100 percent by renewable energy — made possible through a combination of proven, renewable energy technologies; breakthrough cleantech solutions; as well as enabling regulation and carbon markets.
 - The water, waste and wastewater infrastructure is based on long-term sustainability.
 - sustained and successful adaptation to climate change at a local, regional and global level.
 - The green economy is comprised of the 25 industries listed below :
 1. Biofuels 2. Biomass 3. Carbon capture and storage
 4. Carbon markets and renewable energy credits 5. Climate change adaptation services
 6. Distributed generation
 7. Ecosystem services
 8. Energy efficiency, recycling, conservation, software and controls
 9. Energy storage, batteries and fuel cells
 10. Geothermal energy
 11. Green design
 12. Green IT
 13. Green buildings, materials and construction products
 14. Green transportation technologies and green vehicles
 15. Hydropower 16. Ocean power
 17. REDD 18. Smart grid 19. Solar energy
 20. Sustainable and organic agriculture, food and products
 21. Waste management
 22. Wastewater management 23. Waste-to-energy
 24. Water and water technologies 25. Wind energy
- “...the economy where the growth of the people's welfare and employment increase are provided owing to the state and social investments ensuring reduction of emissions and environmental pollution and stimulating effective use of energy and resources as well as preventing from any harm to biodiversity and ecosystem

Table 1. Selected Definitions of Green Economy

Source	“...the economy where the growth of the people's welfare and employment increase are provided owing to the state and social investments ensuring reduction of emissions and environmental pollution and stimulating effective use of energy and resources as well as preventing from any harm to biodiversity and ecosystem” Definition
Diyaret al., 2014	“...the economy where the growth of the people's welfare and employment increase are provided owing to the state and social investments ensuring reduction of emissions and environmental pollution and stimulating effective use of energy and resources as well as preventing from any harm to biodiversity and ecosystem”
International Chamber Of Commerce, 2012	“...an economy in which economic growth and environmental responsibility work together in a mutually reinforcing fashion, while supporting progress on social development...”
The UNEP-led Green Economy Initiative (UNEP, 2011)	“...economy “that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. It is low carbon, resource efficient, and socially inclusive.”
Green Economy Coalition, 2010	“...a resilient economy that provides a better quality of life for all Within the ecological limits of the planet...”
UNEP's working definition (UNEP, 2010b)	“...a system of economic activities related to the production, Distribution and consumption of goods and services that result in improved human well-being over the long term, while not exposing future generations to significant environmental risks or ecological scarcities...”

Source: Own elaboration

III. Green growth

Twenty years after the first Rio Summit, the world continually seeking to face a twin challenge expanding economic opportunities for all in the context of a growing population in its entirety; and addressing ecological pressures that if left unaddressed, could undermine the ability to seize these opportunities. Green growth is where these two challenges meet and it is about exploiting the opportunities to achieve the two together. It should be noted that, green growth does not represent a replacement for sustainable development. Rather, it provides a flexible and practical approach for achieving measurable, concrete progress across its environmental and economic pillars, while taking full consideration of the social consequences of greening the growth dynamic of economies. The green growth strategies focus on guaranteeing that natural resources are achieved and can deliver their full economic potential in a sustainable manner and environmental services on which our well-being relies. That potential including the provision of critical life support services – cleaning air and water, and the resilient biodiversity needed for supporting human health and food production. To do this it should catalyse innovation and investment which will underpin sustained growth and give rise to new economic opportunities. Green growth policies are an integral part of the structural reforms needed to foster sustainable, strong and inclusive growth. They can unlock new growth engines through :

- **Boosting investor confidence** through greater predictability in how governments deal with major environmental
- **Enhancing productivity** by creating incentives for greater efficiency in the use of natural resources, reducing waste and energy consumption, unlocking opportunities for innovation and value creation, and allocating resources to the highest value use.
- **Opening up new markets** by stimulating demand for green goods, services and technologies.
- **Reducing risks** of negative shocks to growth due to resource bottlenecks, as well as damaging and potentially irreversible environmental impacts.
- **Contributing to fiscal consolidation** by mobilising revenues through green taxes and through the elimination of environmentally harmful subsidies. These measures can also help to generate or free up resources for anti-poverty programmes in such areas as water supply and sanitation, or other poor investments.

Table 1. Selected Definitions of Green growth

Source	Definition
UNESCAP, 2012	"...environmentally sustainable economic progress to foster low-emission, socially inclusive development..."
World Bank, 2012	"...growth that is efficient in its use of natural resources, clean in that it minimizes pollution and environmental impacts and resilient in that it accounts for natural hazards..."
OECD, 2011	"...aims to foster economic growth and development, while ensuring that natural assets are used sustainably, and continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our well-being relies..."
Government of Rwanda, 2011 (Republic of Rwanda, 2011)	"...an emerging concept that recognizes that environmental protection is a driver of global and national economic development. It refocuses society on achieving qualitative growth rather than simply increasing GDP..."
Framework Act on Low Carbon, Green Growth, (Republic of Korea, 2010)	"...growth achieved by saving and using energy and resources efficiently to reduce climate change and damage to the environment, securing new growth engines through research and development of green technology, creating new job opportunities, and achieving harmony between the economy and environment..."
The Address by President Lee Myung-bak on the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Korea, August 15, 2008 (Republic of Korea, 2009)	"Green growth refers to sustainable growth that mitigates greenhouse gas emissions, and prevents environmental degradation. It is also a new national development paradigm that creates new growth engines and jobs through green technology and clean energy."

Source: own elaboration

IV. Sustainable development

Since its introduction, the concept of sustainable development has undergone many developmental steps. The historical development of the concept saw contribution of several organizations and institutions, which currently

work intensely and deeply on the implementation of its objectives and principles. The concept has experienced various interpretations and different critiques and over the time while being accepted in many areas and fields of human activity,

It must be said that the definition of sustainable development has become among the most cited in the scientific and academic literature. It should be noted that the concept has been adapting in its development, to the contemporary requirements of a complex global environment but the underlying goals and principles, as well as the problems of their implementation, remained almost unchanged.

Table 2 : Selected Definitions of Sustainable Development

Stappen, R. K., 2008	“...development that meets the basic needs of all human beings and which conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth’s ecosystem, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and without going over the limits of long term capacity of the earth’s ecosystem
Pawłowski, 2006	“...programme integrating various aspects (moral, ecological, technical, economic, legal, social and political) of human activity based on a moral reflection referring to man’s responsibility for nature
Environment Protection Act (Journal of Laws 2001.62.627, Art. 3 par. 50) (Ustawa z dnia 27 kwietnia 2001 r. Prawo ochrony środowiska (... English...)) (Dz.U.2001.62.627)	“...social and economic development which includes integration of political, economic and social activities in retaining both the natural balance and the sustainability of basic natural processes – with the aim of balancing the chances to access the environment by particular communities or individuals – of both the contemporary and the future generations”
“...development that meets the basic needs of all human beings and which conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth’s ecosystem, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and without going over the limits of long term capacity of the earth’s ecosystem” (WCED (UN) (1987)	“...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”

Source: own elaboration

About the Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, all United Nations Member States adopted 17 Global Goals (officially known as the Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs) which are an urgent call for action by all countries in a global partnership. Still, some goals have been updated, and the new goals were set. These goals provide a shared blueprint for creating a better world now and into the future, prosperous, peaceful and more sustainable. They recognize that ending poverty and hunger, fighting inequality and addressing the urgency of climate change. Another deprivation must go hand-in-hand with strategies that reduce environmental degradation, inequality, and spur economic growth, improve education and health, – all while working to preserve forests and oceans and tackling climate change.

These 17 Goals (SDGs), are all interconnected, interrelated and address the great challenges that humanity faces and to protect all people of the world by ensuring to them the same opportunities to have a better life without compromising the planet. All of these goals are united in the framework of the Millennium Development Goals 2015 which outline the challenges that humanity has to fight not only to achieve sustainable development but to survive on Earth as well.

They can be summarised as follows :

Goal 1 : Ending poverty in all forms in the world

Goal 2 : Ending hunger ; promoting sustainable agriculture, achieving food security and improving nutrition

Goal 3 : promoting wellbeing and ensuring healthy lives for all at all ages

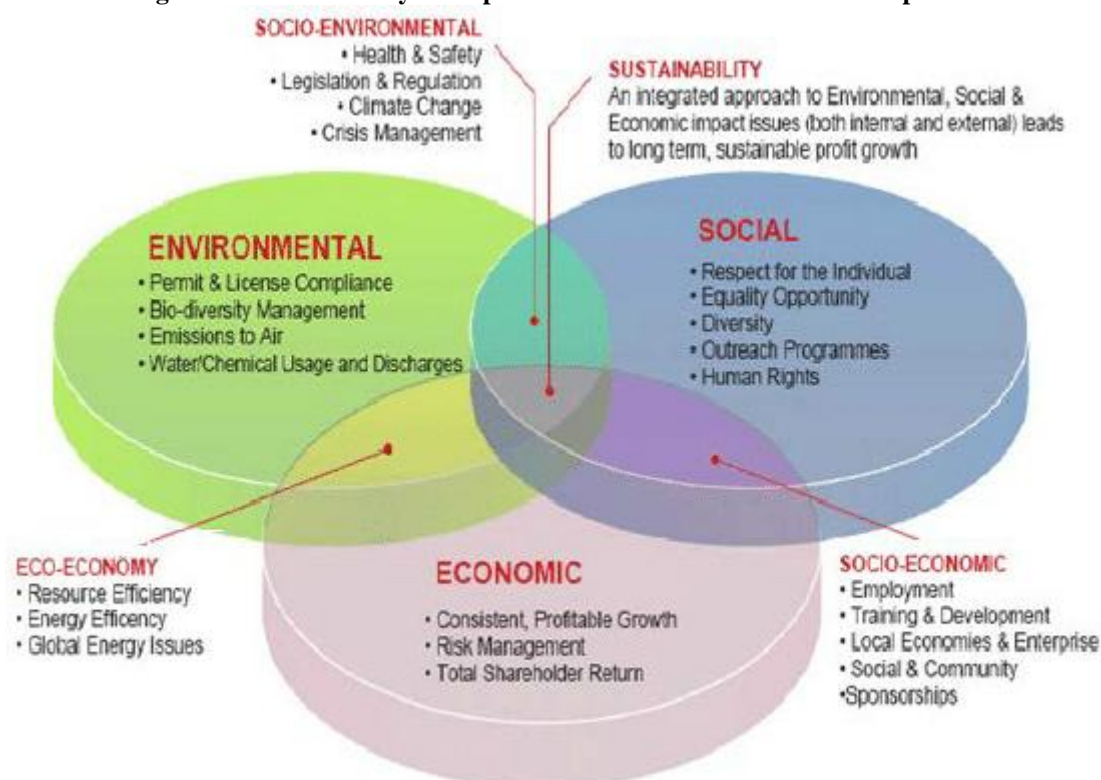
Goal 4 : promoting lifelong learning opportunities and ensuring equitable and inclusive quality education

Goal 5 : achieving gender equality and empowering all girls and women

Goal 6 : Ensuring sustainable and availability management of water and sanitation for all

- Goal 7 :** Ensuring access to sustainable, reliable, affordable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8 :** promoting sustainable, sustained and inclusive economic growth, full, decent work and productive employment
- Goal 9 :** building resilient infrastructure, promoting sustainable and inclusive industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10 :** reducing inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11 :** making human and cities settlements, safe, sustainable, inclusive and resilient
- Goal 12 :** ensuring sustainable production and consumption patterns
- Goal 13 :** taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 14 :** Conserving and sustainably using the marine resources, seas and oceans for sustainable development
- Goal 15 :** Protecting restore and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, managing forests, Combating desertification, halting and reversing land degradation and halting biodiversity loss.
- Goal 16 :** Promoting inclusive and peaceful societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all and built an effective inclusive and accountable institutions at all levels
- Goal 17 :** revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development and Strengthen the means of implementation

Figure 1 Green economy concept in the context of sustainable development



Source : Key elements of sustainable development

V. The Post-COVID-19 measures

On World Environment Day, 5th June 2020, global institutions working on development, labour and environment have united around key actions for spurring a green, just and transformative recovery.

The COVID-19 crisis is exacerbating existing global inequalities within and between countries and communities, while exposing how vulnerable our socio-economic systems are to external shocks.

Partners for inclusive Green Economy are calling for recovery efforts that recognise the interdependencies between human and environmental health, and aim to build resilience to even more profound risks on the horizon - biodiversity loss, widening inequality and climate change.

There are already some inspiring examples of countries and decision makers taking leadership to prioritise green and pro-poor stimulus packages. If these efforts can build towards deeper and more integrated policy approaches, developed in consultation with stakeholders and civil society, the response to COVID-19 could provide a powerful accelerator for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement.

Together, the partner organisations have identified the following ten policy options that will guide a fast, fair and green recovery:

- 1- The Green Economy Principles of Wellbeing, Justice, Sufficiency & Efficiency, Planetary Boundaries, and Good Governance should guide recovery plans and actions.
 - 2- Advance national green economy plans, 'Green Deals', green industrial strategies and COVID-19 recovery plans to build long-term resilience and prosperity. Countries should use this opportunity to redouble efforts to meet the ambitions of the SDGs and Paris Agreement
 - 3- Structure fiscal stimulus and financial aid packages to accelerate the transition to a fair and green economy - not to undermine it.
 - 4- Recognise and value the role of nature in reducing systemic risks, and mitigate the risk of future zoonotic disease outbreaks by addressing their root causes.
 - 5- Build resilience to external shocks by investing in sustainable infrastructure and stronger public health and environmental protection.
 - 6- strengthen and broaden inclusive social protection mechanisms and advance human rights.
 - 7- Accelerate the energy transition and tackle fossil fuel subsidies.
 - 8- Apply a gender-responsive approach to the recovery to effectively address underlying issues of gender inequality.
 - 9- Prioritise small and informal enterprises to accelerate the private sector transition to greener practices
- Improve global cooperation and coordination to more effectively respond to other global crises

VI. Conclusions

In the current situation of Covid19, the activities towards sustainable development have undergone a serious slowdown. The discussion has been much distanced from the original starting point, i.e. satisfying the needs within clearly specified limits determined by the environment. The growing understanding for biophysical limits which should not be exceeded in connection with the global economic and financial crisis reoriented the entire discussion concerning the above-mentioned problem back to economic growth within the existing limits (Volkery and Rouabhi, 2015).

Activities for green economy and green growth open doors for a more extensive debate, thus creating a chance to reactivate the universal objective, that is, sustainable development. By reorienting the economy to ensure a mutual synergy of economic growth and environmental protection, green growth strategies aim to support the conventional paths of economic development in a better adaptation to implementing the objectives of sustainable development. Such strategies can help build green economy characterised by a significant increase in investment in the areas of economic activity based on and increasing the Earth's natural capital, at the same time reducing ecological and environmental deficiencies.

The key advantage of the emergence of the concepts of green growth and green economy is the fact that they stimulated international attention and renewed global efforts for transforming our present non-sustainable economic model in the direction consistent with the imperative objectives of sustainable development. Importantly, the efforts of international organisations, main groups of interest, teams of experts and representatives of science (both adherents and critics) have led to developing the operating principles both for green growth and green economy, and made it possible to develop a set of tools and measures for national policies. "Green" concepts have revived the global debate on a new definition of our economic model to achieve the agreed imperative objective, that is, sustainable development.

Thus, taking into account the goal we should be aiming at, the following definition of green growth can be proposed: economic growth which contributes to rational utilisation of natural capital, prevents and reduces pollution, and creates chances to improve the overall social welfare by building green economy, and finally makes it possible to enter on the path towards sustainable development. Such a treatment makes it possible to emphasize the integrity of the trio: green growth – green economy – sustainable development.

APPENDIX

Quotes from the partner

"The policy and investment decisions taken today will mitigate or amplify future risks to humanity and our economies. An inclusive and green economic recovery requires collective, coherent and decisive action through broader networks of partnerships such as the Partners for Inclusive Green Economy." – Asad Naqvi, Head, UN PAGE Secretariat

"The COVID-19 pandemic and associated policy responses have highlighted the interconnectedness and fragility of our socio-economic systems. Pursuing economic recovery, social protection as well as human and

ecosystem health need to be an overarching goal for countries. We need to build a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable economic model that prioritises green and low-carbon policies.” - **Kumi Kitamori, Head, Green Growth, OECD**

“The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the frailties and inequalities of economies and societies around the world. Governments, workers and employers have a unique opportunity to build a better normal, a green recovery, that protects people and planet and promotes sustainable growth.” - **Moustapha Kamal Gueye, Coordinator, ILO Green Jobs Programme**

“Lurching from one crisis to another, with even larger crises looming, is neither acceptable, nor inevitable. The COVID-19 response represents a profound fork in the road, a choice on which path to choose. It is time to get serious about change and to put improving the health of nature and reducing inequality at the heart of our recovery.” - **Oliver Greenfield, Convenor of the Green Economy Coalition.**

“As much of the world starts to slowly recover from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, our economies, our societies and our communities now have an opportunity to push the hard reset button on their relationships with the environment,” says **UNDP Administrator, Achim Steiner.** “In particular, we must insert the DNA of a green economy into all recovery efforts – this is crucial not only to protect ecosystems and biodiversity and restore nature but it will also bring other concrete benefits including the creation of new green jobs and reductions in inequalities while fostering more resilient communities.”

“The 2030 Agenda commits that we will leave no one behind in our quest for sustainable development. With the COVID-19 crisis amplifying the deep and dangerous inequalities that already exist across the globe and in our communities, there is a real and pressing risk of pushing the most vulnerable people yet further behind. Building green and fair economies – that guarantee human rights and ensure gender equality – will be critical in putting the world on a path of sustainability, resilience, and social justice.” - **Paul Ladd, Director, UNRISD**

“COVID-19 reminds us of the importance of rethinking how our economies interact with nature, we need to keep in mind that in reality we need economic revitalization that supports sustainability. Without this, we will simply end up trading one crisis for another. It is crucial for the international community to work together as the world is profoundly connected, where risk and consequences are shared among all of us.” - **Ben Simmons, Head, Green Growth Knowledge Partnership**

“We remain steadfast in greening the future together and facing what is to come with a strengthened commitment to sustainable, inclusive development, knowing that embracing a green economic transformation together will lead to the Future We Want.” - **PAGE Management Board**

“The 2030 Agenda commits that we will leave no one behind in our quest for sustainable development. With the COVID-19 crisis amplifying the deep and dangerous inequalities that already exist across the globe and in our communities, there is a real and pressing risk of pushing the most vulnerable people yet further behind. Building green and fair economies – that guarantee human rights and ensure gender equality – will be critical in putting the world on a path of sustainability, resilience, and social justice.” - **Paul Ladd, Director, UNRISD.**

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