

Note that these minutes only mean to capture the main discussion topics and action items from the meeting and do not represent a full view of the discussion. However, the meeting was recorded and if you would like the recording contact Diana Ngina.

I. Introduction

The expert consultation was held virtually on Tuesday 21st April 2020 2:00 PM- 5:00 PM and on Wednesday 22nd April 2020 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM (East Africa Time). The purpose of the meeting was to obtain feedback on the methodology and drafting approach for the second version of the Measuring Progress publication will aim to align with the next UN Environment Assembly in February 2021. The publication will focus on the relationship between the SDGs and nature-based actions.

The following people attended the meeting (alphabetical by first name): Adrien Comte, CIRED; Aidan O’Sullivan, University College London; Alessandra Alfieri, UNSD; Alison Fairbrass, University College London; Ana Neves, European Commission Joint Research Centre; Arman Bidarbakht, United Nations ESCAP; Bianca Wernecke, South African Medical Research Council; Bob Chen, Colombia University; Brennan VanDyke, UNEP; Caradee Wright, South African Medical Research Council; Carolina Soto-Navarro, UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre; Dany Ghafari, UNEP; Diana Ngina, UNEP; Fraisl Dilek, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA); Hilary Allison, UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre; Huadong Guo, Chinese Academy of Science (CAS); Huang Lei, Aerospace Information Research Institute, CAS; Ivonne Lobos Alva, Stockholm Environment Institute; Jessica Espey, SDSN Thematic Research Network on Data and Statistics (TReNDS); Jian Liu, UNEP; Jillian Campbell, UNEP; Jock Martin, European Environment Agency; Julian Blanc, UNEP; Julien Calas, Agence Française de Développement; Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); Kevin Urama, African Development Bank; Liping Li, Chinese Academy of Science; Liu Jie, Aerospace Information Research Institute, CAS; Lorren Haywood, The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR); Ludgarde Coppens, UNEP; Mans Nilsson, Stockholm Environment Institute; Mito Tsukamoto, Chinese Academy of Science; Moustapha Kamal Gueye, ILO; Myriam Linster, OECD Environment Directorate; Nathalie Seddon, University of Oxford; Neil Burgess, UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre; Noelle Kumpel, Birdlife International; Oskar Lecuyer, Agence Française de Développement; Paul Ekins, University College London; Regis Farret, CGDD/SDDES/SDIE; Robert Smith, MidSummer Analytics, Canada; See Linda, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA); Shanlong Lu, Chinese Academy of Science; Steven Ramage, Group on Earth Observations; Thierry De Oliveira, UNEP; Wondwosen Asnake Kibret, UNEP; Xiaosong Li, Chinese Academy of Science; Zhognchang Sun, Chinese Academy of Science

II. Minutes

The Measuring Progress report aims to provide a relevant analysis which is useful for the UN Environment Assembly 5 in February 2021 and Convention on Biological Diversity CoP in 2021. Additionally, a 3rd Measuring Progress report which will have a focus on strong sustainability and will be prepared for the Stockholm [+50 conference in 2022](#) – the 3rd version will focus on an analysis of global sustainability gaps using a Sustainability Gap Index approach.

During the first day, the importance of a clear definition of what actions/interventions was highlighted. This session included a review of the concept of ‘Nature-based Solutions’ and the appropriateness of the concept for the macro-scale of the analysis – including how nature based solutions includes action that

nature takes without an intervention. The group supported an alternative concept of nature-based action that was proposed. The approach taken so far to identify SDG indicators for the analysis of the report and the proposed statistical methodology for investigating relationships between Pro-nature Actions and environmental and socio-economic outcomes was presented. The methodology will include options for combining related indicators for the statistical analysis, comparing groups and stratifying data, identifying outlier countries and the need to include additional variables in the analysis to account for factors that may influence the relationships.

The discussion on definitions and scope of the report concluded that:

- The report should aim to use the DPSIR framework and link with the post-2020 biodiversity framework work (noting that the DPSIR was also used in the GEO-6).
- There is a need to develop a method for mapping out indirect causal chains using a theory of change, such as impacts of gender equality actions – which may have an intrinsic benefit even if there is not a clear link with nature-based action.
- The lack of environmental state SDG indicators was noted and it was suggested to supplement this with other sources of data, such as from the recent IPBES Global Assessment and from the CBD, while at the same time ensuring that any additional indicators are linked back to the SDG targets. Big data, spatial data and other indicator initiatives could also provide supplementary sources of information for the analysis and these can be developed through the partnership with CAS (as CAS is directly involved in the generation of this report).
- Including ‘anti-nature’ or nature-negative actions SDG indicators, such as on economic growth, that conflict with positive environmental outcomes. (The term nature positive action could also be used as the corollary.)
- It was agreed to define ‘actions’ as interventions that countries or other stakeholders make (like policy development, funding or other mechanisms) using a liberal definition of actions that we investigate. It was suggested that this could be further expanded as ‘nature-based actions that lead to sustainability’.
- There was general consensus of the need to look at interactions and synergies across the SDGs. This would require taking a step back to include the broad drivers of change--population, development, climate, etc. in the analysis with the SDG indicator framework as a lens on the overall change in pressures, state, and response.
- It was suggested to align with the 4 levers and 6 entry points for achieving the SDGs identified in the [Global Sustainable Development Report 2019](#), which will increase its relevance to the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and bring the work on nature closer to the global policy discussions that happen at the HLPF.
- Given the current situation, the context of the COVID-19 pandemic should not be ignored in the report, perhaps by considering where impacts will be captured by the SDG indicators.

The following presentations on relevant initiatives were presented during the end of the first and beginning of the second day:

- An index of strong sustainability presented by Paul Ekins (UCL). He discussed Strong Sustainability definitions and the Sustainability Gap approach.
- CBD post-2020 timeline from Jyoti Mather-Filipp, CBD Secretariat who highlighted the development of a measurement framework, including indicators that is being developed. She highlighted the publication of a document on 25th of May that will be made available for review, which will include their proposed indicators to monitor the post-2020 goals and targets. The post-2020 monitoring framework will be adopted at COP15.
- Multi-dimensional Biodiversity Index and other biodiversity related work Hilary Allison and Carolina Soto-Navarro, UNEP-WCMC. They discussed their work on the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership initiative which is a Coalition of support for the CBD. They have assessed 161 indicators for use in the post-2020 monitoring framework. Also presented their work on a Multidimensional Biodiversity Index which takes an approach of biodiversity for nature as a stock, and biodiversity for people as a flow.

- The opportunity to use Big Earth Data in Support of the Sustainable Development Goals was presented highlighting the work of CAS on EO and big data, and how this can support the SDGs. This includes a number of datasets which have been developed to support the SDGs, including land degradations, terrestrial water quality, forest cover, mangrove forest cover. They have developed an online toolbox to make this data publicly available and produced the report 'Big Earth Data in support of the Sustainable Development Goals' documenting this work which was presented at the UN Summit in Sept 2019.
- SDG Synergies approach of SEI was presented which highlights a method of analyzing synergies and trade-offs of the SDGs. This includes a combination of quantitative/qualitative approach to analysis. They have an online tool that experts use to report the interactions between SDG indicators. They consider relationship between indicators as bi-directional. Both indicators can impact other indicators, and be impacted by other indicators. In Colombia, a case study found that indicators on cities and on consumption and production were very important in terms of impacts on cities.

The second day of the meeting included the following conclusions:

- It may be useful to include investigation of SDG indicators that may be in conflict with environmental sustainability.
- If possible extrapolating relationships into the future would provide more information.
- There is a need to ensure the methodology is able to deal with non-linear data and relationships.
- Need to account for policy coherence and the approach outlined in SDG 17.14.1 on measuring mechanisms for policy coherence.
- There is a need to take a systems approach to the analysis. The Stockholm Environment Institute method provides a useful way of thinking about investigating interactions between SDG indicators. It was suggested that this approach could be further considered for application in this report. An analysis of synergies between the SDG indicators is also presented in the first chapter of the [Global Sustainable Development Report \(Box 1-2\)](#).
- A clear typology of nature-based actions in order to clearly define the scope of what we are considering must be developed as a first step. This should align with actions taken by Governments or other stakeholders, which aligns with the UNEA 5 theme.
- Several participants suggested supplementing with other data sources and indicators initiatives, particularly in relation to the environmental state indicators. Suggestions included from the IPBES Global Assessment and the CBD post-2020 biodiversity framework – however, this would be limited to indicators where country level data is available.
- A survey for gaining additional insight on the methodology and the definitions would be useful.