RIO+20
United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

A Green Economy Knowledge-Sharing Platform: Exploring Options

Executive Summary

A potential deliverable that has emerged from the submissions to the Rio+20 compilation document is for the elaboration and implementation of country-specific green economy strategies or the mainstreaming of the green economy into existing development strategies. This would provide the means for Member States to select, design and implement a suite of green economy policy measures according to their own needs, priorities, development context and political processes. For developing countries, enhanced and more coordinated support from the international community in terms of capacity building, technology transfer, funding and technical support will also be critical.

To assist with the development of such strategies, many submissions underline the need to share experiences, lessons learned and good practices with regard to the implementation of green economy policies. Some submissions go further to propose that Rio+20 should deliver a green economy knowledge-sharing platform or a toolbox, toolkit or menu of policy options. Such proposals are linked with a variety of other proposals relating to capacity building mechanisms, technical support, technology transfer, and financing.

Ultimately, a green economy knowledge-sharing platform could come in a variety of forms and serve a variety of purposes. To be effective, it will need to have clear aims and objectives, effective governance arrangements, and sophisticated structural components to adequately service and achieve its aims and objectives. It should also build upon existing initiatives and efforts in this emerging field and must be carefully designed and effectively integrated into the existing sustainable development governance framework to avoid duplication, to streamline services, and to work towards commonly agreed sustainable development objectives or goals.

A green economy knowledge-sharing platform could have a variety of **aims and objectives** and these would ultimately influence its final structural components and governance arrangements. It could aim to provide for the sharing of experiences and good practices of different stakeholders, and to provide flexible, practical policy approaches and advice in line with the national circumstances of different countries. It could also serve to promote the free exchange of knowledge, data, lessons learned and operational guidance between practitioners and policy makers, and provide practitioners with a mechanism to explore, evaluate, discuss and synthesise data. More broadly, a platform could also aim to facilitate high quality research, partnerships and leadership, accelerate the transfer of technologies to support green economy policies, and assist international cooperation and access to finance.

With regard to **governance arrangements**, any effective platform is likely to require a strong political commitment and dedicated support structure with ongoing, reliable funding. This could include a secretariat, a decision-making body, an expert advisory committee and a mechanism for ongoing broader consultation with stakeholders. The aims and objectives of the platform and roles and responsibilities of its support structure could be formalised in a Memorandum of Understanding. Key roles for a secretariat might include: web development, maintenance and administrative support; development and management of a green economy toolbox; expert analysis of policy instruments and case studies and development of "how to" guidelines; coordination with other platforms, networks and global outreach; provision of advice on implementation and matching demand for services and expertise with suppliers; facilitating resource mobilisation and technology transfer; and monitoring and evaluating progress on GE strategies.

Importantly, any support structure would need to be integrated into the existing international sustainable development governance structure, building upon (and fostering synergies with) existing platforms and related capacity building initiatives and mechanisms, with various international organisations contributing according to their mandate and area of expertise. Important strengths required to successfully host a knowledge sharing platform are likely to include the international organisation's global outreach, accumulated cross-country and cross-sectoral knowledge and experience, research capacity, international convening power and resource mobilisation capacity. Institutional capacity to support the various structural components would also be necessary.

There are already a plethora of knowledge-sharing or similar platforms in existence or under development. Building on current initiatives will be critical and there are real opportunities for consolidating efforts made to date. The World Bank is clearly a leader in this field and coordinates a number of platforms including the South-South Knowledge Exchange and the Climate Change Knowledge Portal. It is also funding the development of a series of six new platforms: the Green Growth Knowledge Platform, the Urbanization Knowledge Platform, Information and Communication Technologies for Open Development, Jobs Knowledge Platform, the Knowledge Platform on Food Security and Nutrition, and The Hive: Fragility, Conflict and Violence.

Of particular relevance, work is underway on the development of the Green Growth Knowledge Platform, which has a Governing Council with representatives from its key partners the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the World Bank. This initiative has linkages with the work program of the GGGI and UNEP's Green Economy Initiative, which are supporting the development of national green economy pathways and green growth plans. The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific also coordinates a Green Growth Capacity Development Programme in the Asia Pacific region, and is currently expanding their online E-learning facility and developing a Green Growth Community of Practice. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) also undertakes

work in capacity development for preparing green, low-emission, climate-resilient development strategies. Any proposal for a green economy knowledge-sharing platform should aim to build upon, rather than duplicate, these emerging initiatives.

A variety of other international organisations have also developed knowledge platforms and related initiatives, including the World Intellectual Property Organisation's new WIPO Green platform for technology transfer; the UNDP's Adaptation Learning Mechanism, Learning Network on Capacity Development and *Teamworks*; the African Union Commission's Africa Platform for Development Effectiveness; the International Institute for Sustainable Development's series of Knowledgebases; the OpenEI knowledge-sharing community on energy information; and a number of green economy web portals including the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), the Stakeholder Forum's Earth Summit 2012, and the Green Economy Coalition – to name but a handful. Other innovative and sector-based initiatives include the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and the Global Water Partnership Toolbox.

The ever-growing number of knowledge-sharing platforms and initiatives with separate governance arrangements, partnerships, agendas, memberships and networks, along with their potentially duplicative spheres of responsibility and influence, is not an ideal or efficient arrangement. There is a real risk of "platform fatigue" as platforms begin to duplicate services and membership, where members do not have the time and resources to commit to multiple initiatives, and where partners/collaborators do not have the resources to support multiple, uncoordinated initiatives. There may therefore be considerable benefit in forging enhanced linkages between complementary platforms, consolidating duplicative platforms wherever possible, and providing a coherent overarching international framework for connecting these platforms together to support a more coordinated sustainable development capacity building agenda and facilitate global progress towards agreed sustainable development goals.

The green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication could be a common thread that links these platforms together and may provide the opportunity for establishing an overarching framework supported by effective international governance arrangements. Rio+20 could provide the impetus for such an ambitious commitment.

Any green economy knowledge-sharing platform would ultimately comprise a number of core **structural components**, as required to meet its aims and objectives. Based on the submissions to the Rio+20 compilation document, along with an analysis of some existing knowledge platforms and a review of recent literature on the topic, these could include the following five components:

1. *A mechanism for promoting connections, networks, discussions and partnerships that support implementation.*

This could comprise a sophisticated web portal with formal membership and professional networking capabilities, such as messaging, online forums, access to

online communities of practice, links to global online networks, structured online policy dialogues and video conferencing capabilities. A real challenge will be to build upon existing initiatives that are already being used by practitioners. Consolidation of membership and access arrangements across various related platforms and forums into a single network may be an option - for example a single portal access point for members to a unified online professional network comprised of communities of practice and forums relating to key sustainable development and green economy sectors or priority issues (i.e. a global sustainable development *professional* networking platform, similar to the *social* networking Facebook platform). A unified network could be used as the connection mechanism for multiple platforms and hubs, providing an important linkage point for coordination, communication and exchange.

2. *A demand-driven brokering mechanism to support capacity development by matching 'knowledge seekers' with 'knowledge providers'.*

This search-and-match mechanism would facilitate knowledge exchange, providing practical guidance and information on green economy policies and case studies by matching supply with demand. This could be in the form of practitioner expertise (as per South-South Knowledge Exchange) or be extended to facilitate technology transfer (as per WIPO Green). It would need to be an 'active' mechanism rather than just the 'passive' communication or networking platform outlined above. For example, a mechanism might incorporate a database supported by a brokering team which systematically matches demand for knowledge or technology with supply as required to effectively design and implement green economy measures.

3. *A sophisticated online data platform and toolbox integrating a structured menu of policy options with "how to" guidelines, case studies and principles.*

This could integrate a range of green economy data and resources, accessed via an intuitive interface and powerful search or query facility. Green economy resources compiled in the database could include: a structured menu of GE policy options, intuitively grouped and categorised; "how to" toolkits and guiding principles; analysis of case studies synthesising good practice elements and lessons learned in different contexts and at different scales; and a library of practitioner resources and reference materials.

Key components of the data platform could include: a geo-referenced resource database with an interactive global map interface and sophisticated search engine query facility to access a variety of open data, policy options, case studies, practitioner resources etc.; numerous searchable categories, including country, year, sector, type of policy measure, and lead organisation; and a variety of useful search outputs, for example country profiles, detailed and consistently-structured case study reports (e.g. including analysis of outcomes, lessons learned, and good practice elements), links to "how to" guides, links to relevant practitioner resources, contact points for follow-up, and communities of practice or other networks of experts and practitioners. An important consideration for the database will be the categories used to intuitively structure the data, for example, based on key sectoral or cross-sectoral issues (e.g. food security, energy, green jobs, cities etc.), and by the 'type' of

policy measure (e.g. market-based instrument, environmental regulation, public procurement etc.). It would be ideal if any database structure aligned with other initiatives, for example the sectors used could be based on the priority green economy sectors for the proposed sustainable development goals.

4. *Expert focal points or hubs for accessing and integrating expert analysis and policy review.*

Expert and practitioner input into the platform and its work program would be required to support development of green economy resources and guidelines for the design and implementation of policies across various sectors. The platform should also forge linkages with other platforms, communities of practice, research centres and other networks. This could be achieved via connections with expert focal points or hubs for accessing and integrating expert analysis of key issues and gaps, undertaking policy review, convening members and partners in focal events, administering communities of practice, reviewing case studies and developing good practice principles, lessons learned, and monitoring success.

Expert hubs could be intuitively grouped in line with the platform structure, for example one for each of the green economy sectors or cross-cutting issues (or, for example, for each of the sustainable development goals). An existing international agency or group of partners could host and coordinate each hub in accordance with their mandate and expertise, with hubs located in both developed and developing countries.

5. *A finance facility to support developing countries in designing and implementing green economy policies.*

Ongoing funding would be required for the establishment and maintenance of the platform, for knowledge exchange exercises, and for designing and implementing green economy strategies and policy measures. This could be achieved by the establishment of a new dedicated facility or trust fund, or through utilising an existing facility (e.g. the Global Environment Facility). Funds could be made available to support knowledge exchanges for the design of national strategies (organised via the brokering mechanism) and for the implementation of green economy policies and the transfer of technologies to developing countries (as per their national green economy strategies). Various options for the commitment of funds by donors could be provided via a single fund to support an agreed and approved work program, such as general donations or more targeted donations for specific programs or initiatives in different sectors, regions or countries. This could provide a range of options for donors whilst still channelling resources through a central fund.

The diagram below provides an overview of the key components for a potential comprehensive green economy knowledge-sharing platform.

For further information or for a copy of the full-length version of this paper, please contact Cameron Allen (allen5@un.org).

Potential key components of a Green-Economy Knowledge Sharing Platform

Aims/Objectives (for example):

- To promote and facilitate (via a global communication platform) the exchange of knowledge, data, good practices, lesson learned and operational guidance amongst practitioners and policy makers at global, regional and local scales.
- To provide flexible, practical policy approaches that respect the national circumstances of different countries.
- To identify and fill gaps in theory and practice and facilitate high quality international research, partnership and leadership.
- To facilitate the accelerated adaptation, adoption and transfer of technologies.

To **support implementation** and in-country capacity – for example a sophisticated web portal with membership and professional networking capabilities, such as messaging, online forums, access to Communities of Practice, links to global online networks that cater for in-country capacity to design and implement knowledge sharing, structured online policy dialogues and video conferencing among government officials.

Options could be explored for consolidating various existing online networks into a unified professional networking platform for sustainable development, with a unified membership and access portal linking various communities of practice and providing a central hub for supporting knowledge sharing and connections.

To match 'knowledge seekers' with 'knowledge providers'. This could include:

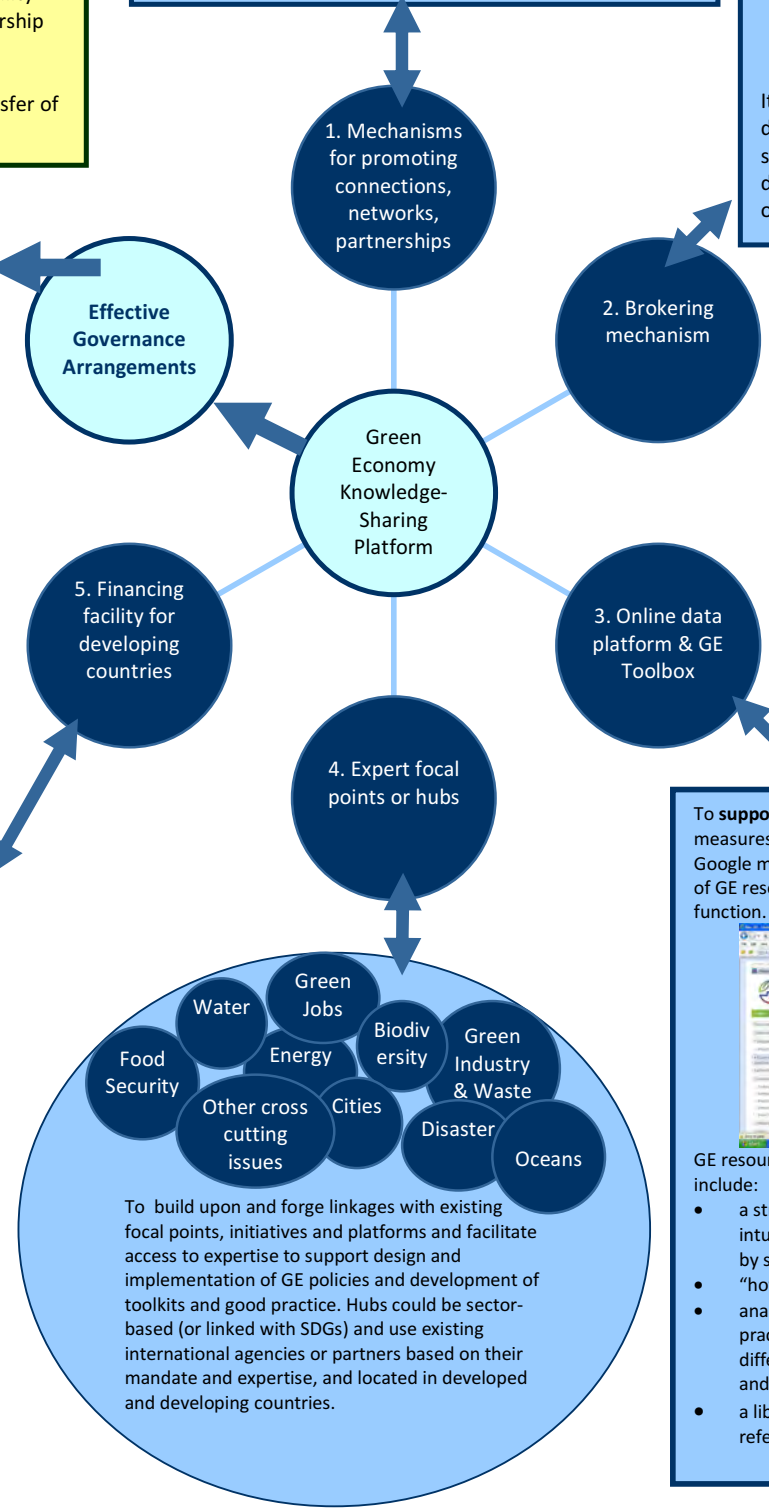
- A mechanism for exchange of practitioner expertise (e.g. the South-South Knowledge Exchange pilot); and
- A mechanism for exchange of technology (as per WIPO Green).

It could be supported by a database and brokering team to systematically match supply with demand and offer a variety of other services.

A strong political commitment and dedicated support structure with ongoing, reliable funding. Comprising, for example:

- a dedicated Secretariat or support unit
- a decision-making body
- an expert advisory committee
- a mechanism for ongoing, broad consultation and input from a variety of stakeholders
- a MoU or Terms of Reference

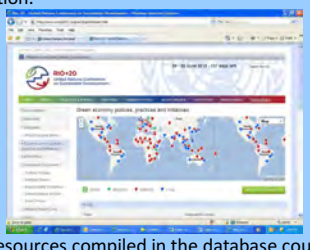
Any support structure would need to be integrated into the international sustainable development governance structure and should build upon current initiatives, including GGKP and GGGI, and Rio+20.



To fund knowledge sharing processes, support the platform and the design and implementation of GE strategies and policy measures. Options include utilising existing fund facilities or establishing a new stand-alone facility. Various options for the commitment of funds by donors could be coordinated via a single fund inline with an agreed work plan, such as general donations or more targeted donations for specific initiatives in different sectors, regions or countries.

To build upon and forge linkages with existing focal points, initiatives and platforms and facilitate access to expertise to support design and implementation of GE policies and development of toolkits and good practice. Hubs could be sector-based (or linked with SDGs) and use existing international agencies or partners based on their mandate and expertise, and located in developed and developing countries.

To **support the design** of GE strategies and measures, including an interactive online Google map interface for accessing a database of GE resources and a sophisticated query function.



GE resources compiled in the database could include:

- a structured menu of policy options, intuitively grouped and categorised (e.g. by sector and policy type);
- "how to" toolkits and guiding principles;
- analysis of case studies synthesising good practice elements and lessons learned in different contexts and at different scales; and
- a library of practitioner resources and reference materials.