

First meeting of the EMG Consultative Process on Sustainable Infrastructure

17th March 2021

Meeting minutes

Moderator: Mr. Benjamin Simmons (GGKP)

Welcome remarks: Mr. Hossein Fadaei (UN, EMG)

Presenters:

Mr. Rowan Palmer (UNEP)

Ms. Mito Tsukamoto (ILO)

Other UNEP:

Mr. Fulai Sheng

Mr. Joseph Price

Participants: list appended

Time	Agenda Items
15h00-15h15	Welcome remarks and introduction to Consultative Process on Sustainable Infrastructure (Hossein Fadaei, UN EMG and Benjamin Simmons (facilitator), GGKP)
15h15-15h35	Overview of sustainable infrastructure workstream (Rowan Palmer, UNEP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>UN Environment Assembly Resolution on Sustainable Infrastructure</i> - <i>International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure</i> - <i>Accompanying tools in support of Member State implementation</i> - <i>2019 EMG Nexus Dialogue and value of UN system coordination</i> - <i>Infrastructure and economic recovery from COVID-19 (Mito Tsukamoto, ILO)</i>
15h35-16h20	Discussion on envisioned Consultative Process and outputs (Rowan Palmer, UNEP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Views on plans and outputs</i> - <i>Potential contributions from individual UN bodies</i> - <i>Ideas for improved coordination</i>
16h20-16h30	Summary and next steps (Hossein Fadaei, UN EMG)

Overview of sustainable infrastructure workstream

- **Mr. Rowan Palmer (UNEP):**

- The entry point for this work is the relationship between infrastructure and delivery of the SDGs. UNOPS has carried out useful analysis to demonstrate that infrastructure influences 92% of the SDGs. Infrastructure is relevant to the mandates of many UN entities, calling for collaboration. To date, the impacts of infrastructure on the environment have been negative, and physical infrastructure lasts many decades.
- In 2019, an EMG Nexus Dialogue established a common understanding among EMG members and partner organisations, producing an outcome statement on integrated approaches. The statement invited the EMG to follow-up on the event with further engagement. Member States passed a resolution on sustainable infrastructure at the 4th UN Environment Assembly (also in 2019), calling on cross-UN support.
- To deliver on this mandate, UNEP led the publication of the *International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure* through an Expert Working Group and consultation with Member States. The ten principles are illustrated by ten case studies in a companion publication; additional case studies will be added to an online database on an ongoing basis. The principles and case studies are further complemented by the online “Sustainable Infrastructure Tool Navigator”, which stakeholders can use to integrate sustainability at different phases of the infrastructure lifecycle in different sectors.
- A two-track approach with UN system coordination is required to scale up impact: 1) implementation of tools and principles and 2) keeping sustainable infrastructure on the global policy agenda
- The COVID-19 recovery context has added to the urgency and scale of infrastructure investment. However, thus far, only 18% of announced long-term recovery spending is earmarked for green initiatives, creating an imperative to act now to guarantee sustainability.

- **Ms. Mito Tsukamoto (ILO):**

- ILO’s Development and Investment Branch focuses on creating job opportunities through infrastructure to promote peace and resilience. In the context of COVID-19, half of the global workforce – including 1.6 billion in the informal economy - face immediate danger of losing livelihoods. The latest analysis found detrimental impacts on working time and income. There is therefore a need for a human-centred recovery policy.
- In 2018, ILO also found that 1.2 million jobs depend on a healthy natural environment. There is a growing demand for green, inclusive and digital infrastructure to recover better and achieve the SDGs – as part of a green and just transition.
- Informal workers’ grievances have been exacerbated by COVID-19. They often lack access to basic services such as water supply, which also has consequences for social cohesion and peace.

- ILO's Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) focuses on local resource-based approaches to connect infrastructure development with local employment creation. ILO has implemented emergency employment programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic, involving rural road maintenance and design of water infrastructure, while developing policy briefs to promote safety and health. EIIP has also engaged returning migrant workers on sustainable infrastructure works during the pandemic, and is promoting green infrastructure and global standards for nature-based solutions.
- Key messages: 1) It is important not to lose sight of the human perspective and the world of work (sustainable infrastructure should create jobs for the most vulnerable and provide multiplier effects for local economies, linking to Principle 7 - "Enhancing economic benefits"), 2) "Equity, inclusiveness and empowerment" should be incorporated in the design of programmes; building back better could focus on creating inclusive job opportunities linked to needed services such as health infrastructure, building climate resilience and reducing emissions and 3) strategies must align environmental, employment and social objectives to reduce tradeoffs and maximise synergies.

Discussion on envisioned Consultative Process and outputs

- 1. Ms. Giulia Carbone (IUCN):** the process provides a good opportunity to revisit and revise the principles. IUCN would be willing to consult on the principles with its members – should IUCN organise a session with UNEP? The EMG is excellent for aligning UN family and friends, and it is important to keep each other informed.
 - **Mr. Rowan Palmer (UNEP):** the suggestion may be useful and is appreciated, but will depend on the EMG timeline/resources.
 - **Mr. Hossein Fadaei (UNEP, EMG):** there is some flexibility, but a progress report must be submitted in September/October, with outputs of the Consultative Process ready in time for UNEA5.2. Knowledge gathering can be carried out longer term.
- 2. Ms. Kate Newman (WWF):** from a Member State perspective, the order in which to use sustainable infrastructure tools can be a challenge, and planning covers the purview of multiple government institutions. How do we use this Consultative Process to enable countries to improve capacity? The ToR are missing a direct link to finance. Funds to support the early planning phases of sustainable infrastructure development are not readily available currently, and it would be helpful for governments to know how to access resources.
 - **Ms. Mito Tsukamoto (ILO):** supporting social protection financing (linked to public employment and public works) and involvement of local communities in planning is also important. Infrastructure can be relevant to many different financing sources.
- 3. Mr. Debashish Bhattacharjee (UN-HABITAT):** UN-Habitat's programme on Infrastructure encompasses water, sanitation, waste management, urban mobility and energy. In the wake of the

pandemic, the agency has supported for example: water and sanitation improvements in informal settlements, systemic assessment of waste management and improving facilities for walking and cycling/road safety. In the context of the New Urban Agenda, one issue in cities is infrastructure *choices* (e.g. roadway versus public transport). UN-HABITAT has tools to contribute which can support such choices.

- **Mr. Rowan Palmer (UNEP):** tools and case studies can be integrated into the existing platforms on an ongoing basis.
4. **Mr. Scott Thacker (UNOPS):** UNOPS is very supportive of the proposed actions, in particular output a), but it is important to be aware of the effort required and limitations on the ground. With respect to WWF’s intervention, there is an existing infrastructure database which links infrastructure funding to the SDGs. This may provide useful data. What is the ambition with regards to case studies and tools?
 - **Mr. Rowan Palmer (UNEP):** the ultimate ambition is to have one case study for each tool in the Sustainable Infrastructure Tool Navigator.
 5. **Mr. Fredrik Haag (IMO):** the IMO’s work covers coastal infrastructure such as ports, as well as regulations for waste management and dumping/pollution at sea. Would these themes be relevant to the group?
 - **Mr. Rowan Palmer (UNEP):** a next step for the *International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure* could be a sectoral focus for implementation; coastal infrastructure is also relevant.
 6. **Mr. Christophe Xerri (IAEA):** in addition to energy infrastructure, IAEA’s work covers use of nuclear technologies for cancer treatment in hospitals and supports infrastructure development broadly. IAEA has tools concerning incineration and renewable energy which may be relevant. Which type/level of events are anticipated for the calendar of events?
 - **Mr. Rowan Palmer (UNEP):** originally, high priority global events were envisioned, but perhaps a “living document” could cover two tiers (i.e. in order to also include more specific events).
 7. **Ms. Edeltraud Guenther (UNU):** the UNU focus is on the Resource Nexus. On the content of Consultative Process: given that different ministries/actors with different path dependencies are involved in sustainable infrastructure, it would be useful to analyse barriers and tradeoffs between different natural resources (as part of the ToR). Digitalisation could also be integrated into the ToR. On the process: communication is also important, and UNU could take the lead on capacity development by bringing actors together to discuss/analyse barriers.
 8. **Mr. Maher Salman (FAO):** the management of infrastructure assets is an important aspect. FAO could contribute with case studies on managing water irrigation assets in Lebanon, for example.

9. **Mr. Garo Batmanian (WB):** on financing, there are both short- and long-term considerations. There is a need to make short-term investment attractive. In terms of the sustainability of infrastructure more broadly, how far does the analysis extend? For example, if a road was built in a rainforest, the asset itself could be sustainable, but there are important indirect impacts, such as surrounding land use. Analysis should also be carried out in connection with NDCs.
- **Ms. Mito Tsukamoto (ILO):** assessment tools must be comprehensive. For example, not all green technologies necessarily create jobs, so there is a need to synergise further.
 - **Mr. Rowan Palmer (UNEP):** integrated approaches and understanding impacts at the aggregate/systems level is indeed an important focus of UNEP's work and the *International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure*.
10. **Mr. Mateo Salomon (UNDP):** sustainable infrastructure is a broad topic, so there is a need for "deep dives" in specific sectors. It would be interesting to link the Principles to the finance sector, and also to consider specific linkages with COP and the High-Level Dialogue on Energy.
11. **Ms. Amanda Kron (OHCHR):** In 2018, OHCHR developed a publication with the Heinrich Böll Foundation on human rights and environmental perspectives, entitled "The Other Infrastructure Gap: Sustainability". OHCHR are happy to share further contributions in consultation with colleagues and look forward to following the process going forward.
12. **Mr. Zaal Lomtadze (UNECE):** UNECE would be glad to continue cooperation and to have UNEP as a partner in preparing for the next Ministerial Conference in Nicosia.

Next steps

- **Mr. Hossein Fadaei (UN, EMG):** the minutes of this first meeting will be shared, and the ToR will be adjusted to reflect the discussions.



UNITED NATIONS

ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP

EMG



Appendix 1: participants list

Number	Name	Institution
1	Mr. Maher Salman	Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
2	Mr. Benjamin Simmons	Green Growth Knowledge Partnership
3	Mr. Christophe Xerri	International Atomic Energy Agency
4	Mr. Lorenzo Gavilli	International Civil Aviation Organization
5	Ms. Renee Ankarfjard	International Fund for Agricultural Development
6	Ms. Mito Tsukamoto	International Labour Organization
7	Mr. Fredrik Haag	International Maritime Organization
8	Ms. Robin Zuercher	International Telecommunication Union
9	Ms. Giulia Carbone	International Union for Conservation of Nature
10	Ms. Amanda Kron	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
11	Mr. Henrique Pacini	UN Conference on Trade and Development
12	Mr. Mateo Salomon	UN Development Programme
13	Mr. Curt Garrigan	UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
14	Mr. Zaal Lomtadze	UN Economic Commission for Europe
15	Ms. Fatema Johara	UN Environment Management Group
16	Mr. Hossein Fadaei	UN Environment Management Group
17	Mr. Diego Dewar	UN Environment Programme
18	Mr. Fulai Sheng	UN Environment Programme
19	Mr. Joseph Price	UN Environment Programme
20	Mr. Rowan Palmer	UN Environment Programme
21	Mr. Debashish Bhattacharjee	UN-HABITAT
22	Ms. Nives Costa	UN Office for Project Services
23	Mr. Scott Thacker	UN Office for Project Services
24	Ms. Edeltraud Guenther	UN University
25	Mr. Garo Batmanian	World Bank
26	Ms. Agnès Lostis	World Intellectual Property Organization
27	Mr. Daniel Ramos	World Trade Organization
28	Ms. Kate Newman	World Wide Fund for Nature