

Summary Report

# GREEN GROWTH INDEX

Concept, Methods  
and Applications

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OCTOBER 2019

# PREFACE

It is a common adage that “you can’t manage what you don’t measure,” and this is no less applicable in countries’ ambitions to transition to a green model of economic growth and development. With this in mind, the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) embraced the significant challenge of developing a global index that measures the performance of its Member and partner countries as they pursue green growth.

This report presents the development, main findings and applications of GGGI’s Green Growth Index, which provides metrics for tracking national green growth ambitions of 115 countries including their achievements against some elements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

The SDGs, the Paris Agreement, and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets manifest the critical global challenges confronting humanity – poverty and inequality, global warming, and biodiversity loss. Green growth emphasizes achieving these goals and targets while supporting economic growth. As the new model of growth, “greening” the productive economic sectors entails innovative policy strategies and investment schemes. GGGI supports countries to develop, implement, and evaluate policies that will help them attain their green growth and sustainable development ambitions. As such, at the request of its Member countries, GGGI’s Green Growth Performance Measurement team, led by Dr. Lilibeth Acosta, developed the first composite Green Growth Index benchmarked against internationally-agreed sustainability targets.

GGGI’s Green Growth Index is a product of more than two years of intensive consultations with more than 300 global experts of various disciplines, inter alia, international organizations, government agencies, non-profit institutions, and the academia. The Index provides countries with a tool to assess the impacts of green growth policy implementation and compare their performance with peers in their respective regions over time. The indicators included in the Green Growth Index align with the key elements of GGGI’s six Strategic Outcomes, which promote poverty reduction, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, and economic growth.

As part of GGGI’s knowledge products, the Green Growth Index helps foster collaboration with international organizations that advocate the green model of economic growth. GGGI presently collaborates with the African Development Bank (AfDB) to apply the Index to the African socio-economic and institutional contexts and with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to link green growth baseline performance

to scenarios of progress. Through these collaborations, GGGI intends to further develop and improve the Green Growth Index in years to come. This can be done by leveraging the efforts of various international organizations to improve the indicators, targets, and underlying data for the SDGs; the work of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) to increase knowledge and data on biodiversity; and the ambitions of governments to develop Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.

In 2020, GGGI plans to pilot the Green Growth Index-related “Policy Simulation Tool” that will serve to explore ways and means by which governments can consider the implications of taking certain policy and investment actions with the goal of improving their green growth performance.

The development of the Green Growth Index would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our Member countries. We are grateful for the encouragement that our Members provided. We would also like to thank everyone who contributed through the technical workshops and technical reviews of early drafts of the Index for their valuable inputs. We also acknowledge Vivid Economics and The Economist Intelligence Unit for developing the initial version of the Green Growth Index in 2017, under contract with GGGI.

We hope that countries will find the Green Growth Index valuable and useful in making key decisions and taking action in their quest for a greener future.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frank Rijsberman'.

Frank Rijsberman  
Director General  
Global Green Growth Institute

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# HIGHLIGHTS

As a growing number of countries aspire to achieve the promise of green growth, measuring green growth performance is becoming an increasingly important priority. The Green Growth Index is the first benchmarked composite index designed to track and assess green growth performance of 115 countries in four dimensions of green growth. The Index is intended to engage policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders in identifying priorities and opportunities for achieving socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic development through green growth.

## 1 GGGI's Green Growth Index pioneered an inclusive and rigorous process that is concept-driven, expert-guided, and policy-relevant

The Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) launched the first global Green Growth Index to show how countries perform in using and protecting natural resources for a sustainable future and in creating economic opportunities for an inclusive society. The framework, representing 36 green growth indicators, was built on robust concepts, guided by multidisciplinary experts, and developed in consultation with policymakers.

## 2 Less than 25% of the 115 countries ranked in the Index are close to reaching sustainability targets for green growth

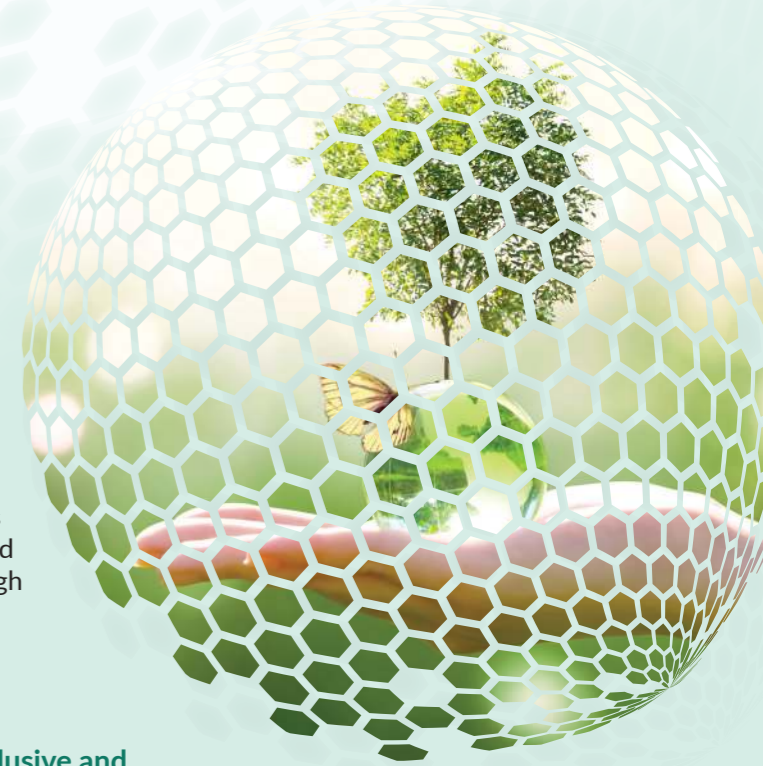
With half of the countries performing only moderately and more than 25% scoring low on the Green Growth Index, much more effort is needed to build a "greener" world. Actions are most critical for green economic opportunities where performance is lowest globally.

## 3 Gaps in SDG indicators to track performance in green economic opportunities is a challenge to developing the Index

The 36 indicators for the Green Growth Index guide policymakers to achieve the SDGs, Paris Climate Agreement, and Aichi Biodiversity Targets. More than half of the green growth indicators are based on SDGs, but there are insufficient SDG indicators to measure economic opportunities from green growth.

## 4 Rising momentum for green growth offers huge opportunity for global actions to reach targets and close gaps

Green growth targets remain distant for many countries. But growing interest among policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders in finding a common framework and policy-relevant indicators to measure green growth performance hints at an increasing green growth momentum. GGGI is contributing to this momentum.

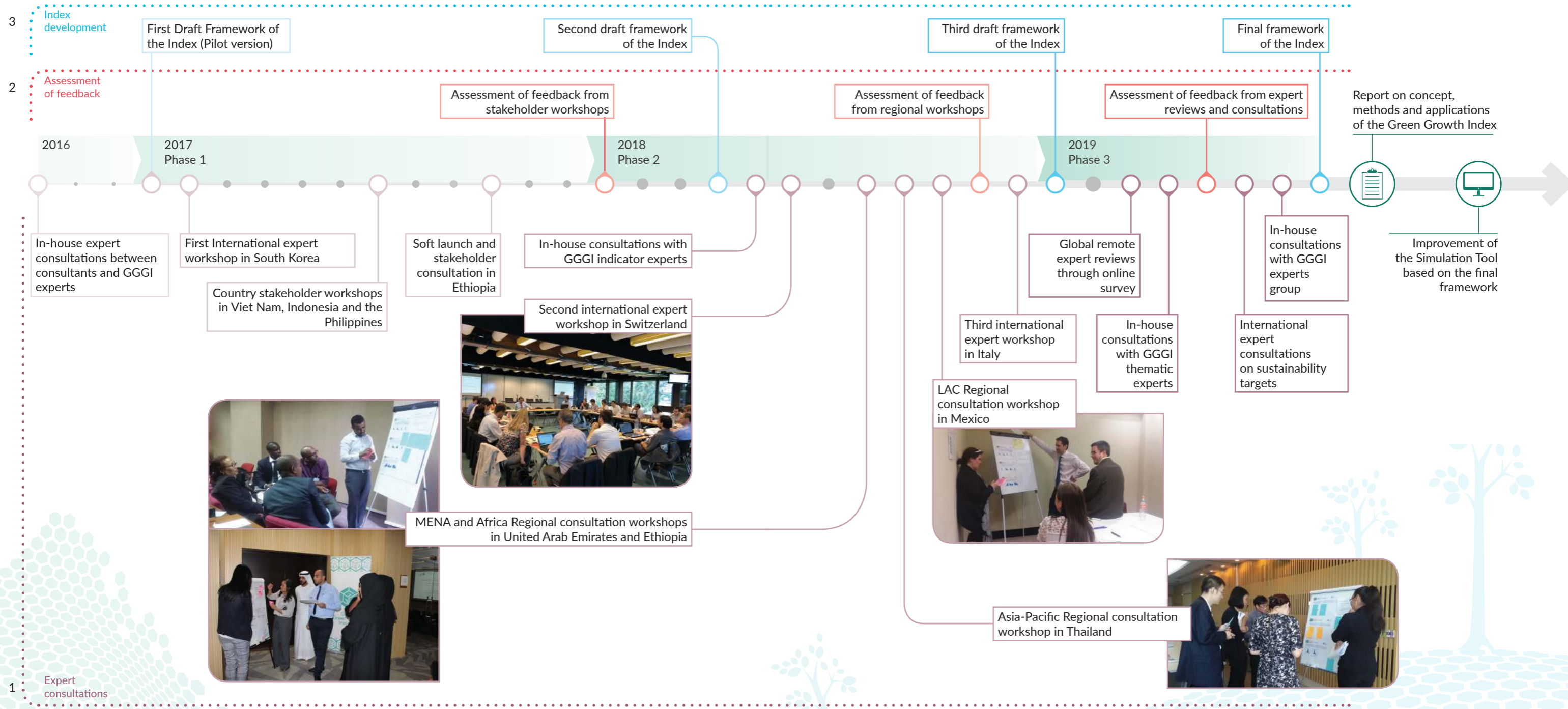


# 1 GGGI's Green Growth Index pioneered an inclusive and rigorous process that is concept-driven, expert-guided, and policy-relevant

More than 300 experts representing different organizations from various regions around the world participated in the review of the green growth framework for the Index. Expert feedback was assessed through iterative steps during three phases of Index development since 2017. This feedback was collected through workshops, expert group meetings, consultations, and an online survey.



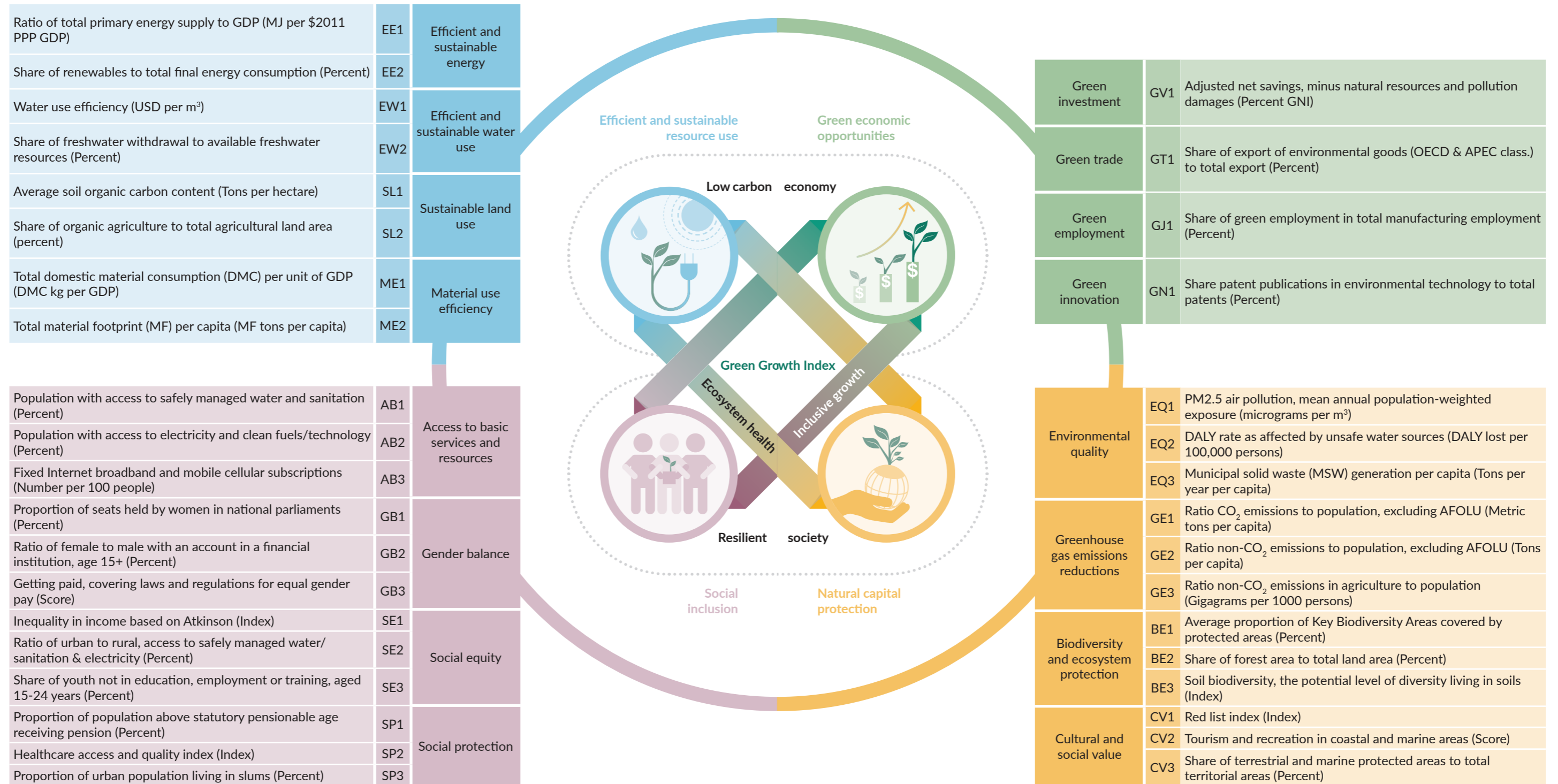
## 1.1 Design process for the Green Growth Index





## 1.2 Features of the Green Growth Index

The Green Growth Index is framed on four closely interlinked dimensions: (1) efficient and sustainable resource use; (2) natural capital protection; (3) green economic opportunities; and (4) social inclusion. Their interlinkages build on the concepts of low carbon economy, ecosystem health, inclusive growth and resilient society.



### Acronyms used in this report

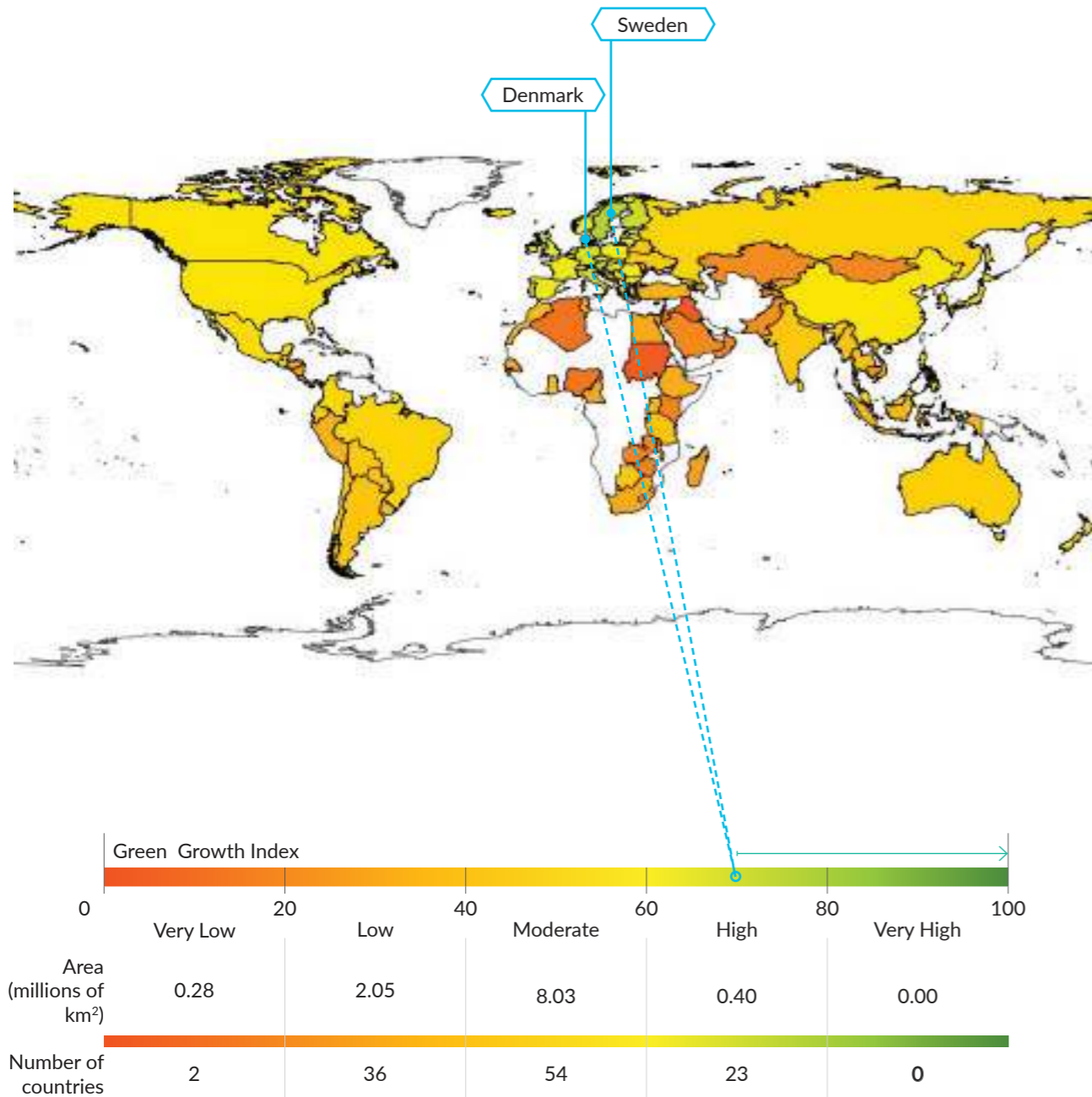
AB	Access to Basic Services and Resources	EW	Efficient and Sustainable Water Use	GT	Green Trade	PM2.5	Particulate matter with a diameter of less than 2.5 micrometers
AFOLU	Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use	GB	Gender Balance	GV	Green Investment	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation	GDP	Gross Domestic Product	LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean	SE	Social Equity
BE	Biodiversity and Ecosystem Protection	GE	GHG Emission Reductions	ME	Material Use Efficiency	SL	Sustainable Land Use
CO <sub>2</sub>	Carbon Dioxide	GGGI	Global Green Growth Institute	MENA	Middle East and North Africa	SP	Social Protection
CV	Cultural and Social Value	GGPM	Green Growth Performance Measurement	MF	Material Footprint	USD	United States Dollar
DALY	Disability-Adjusted Life Year	GJ	Green Employment	MSW	Municipal Solid Waste		
EE	Efficient and Sustainable Energy	GN	Green Innovation	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development		
EQ	Environmental Quality	GNI	Gross National Income				

# 2 Less than 25% of the 115 countries ranked in the Index are close to reaching sustainability targets for green growth



## 2.1 Distance from targets

Out of the 23 countries scoring high in the 2019 Green Growth Index, Denmark and Sweden rank highest, both with scores of about 75. But these top scores are still 25 points from the green growth target of 100. With 54 countries still halfway to reaching this target and 38 even further behind, there are ample opportunities to improve performance and make the world a greener place.



## 2.2 Top performers by region

Top ranks in other regions include Singapore in Asia, the Dominican Republic in the Americas, New Zealand in Oceania, and Botswana in Africa, all achieving moderate scores. Like in Europe, top ranks in the Americas and Africa are highly challenged by countries next in line. In contrast, Singapore and New Zealand firmly secure top ranks in their respective regions, at least 2 points ahead of other countries.

EUROPE			ASIA			THE AMERICAS		
Rank	Country	Rank Index	Rank	Country	Rank Index	Rank	Country	Rank Index
1	Denmark	75.32	1	Singapore	58.43	1	Dominican Republic	55.10
2	Sweden	75.09	2	Malaysia	55.88	2	United States	54.22
3	Austria	72.32	3	Philippines	55.54	3	Canada	54.04
4	Finland	71.69	4	Georgia	55.45	4	El Salvador	53.94
5	Czech Republic	71.29	5	China	55.41	5	Mexico	52.71
6	Italy	70.22	6	Republic of Korea	54.31	6	Colombia	50.77
7	Germany	70.04	7	Japan	53.86	7	Costa Rica	50.63
8	Estonia	68.50	8	Sri Lanka	52.74	8	Brazil	49.82
9	Latvia	68.24	9	India	45.58	9	Ecuador	48.87
10	Slovakia	67.60	10	Azerbaijan	44.98	10	Guatemala	46.77
11	Portugal	66.32	11	Myanmar	44.55	11	Chile	46.58
12	Belgium	64.94	12	Thailand	44.36	12	Bolivia	46.10
13	Hungary	64.82	13	Cyprus	44.03	13	Argentina	45.21
14	France	64.66	14	Nepal	43.54	14	Paraguay	43.72
15	Croatia	64.49	15	Israel	42.14	15	Honduras	43.08
16	Slovenia	64.00	16	Indonesia	40.81	16	Uruguay	42.99
17	Spain	63.67	17	Lebanon	39.45	17	Bahamas	41.36
18	Lithuania	63.65	18	Turkey	39.22	18	Peru	39.55
19	Netherlands	63.38	19	Viet Nam	39.05	19	Panama	38.29
20	United Kingdom	63.30	20	Kyrgyzstan	36.74	20	Nicaragua	32.74
21	Switzerland	62.72	21	Armenia	35.55	21	Trinidad and Tobago	29.99
22	Norway	62.10	22	Qatar	34.73			
23	Poland	61.67	23	Cambodia	30.13			
24	Romania	59.41	24	Pakistan	29.08			
25	Ireland	58.68	25	Kazakhstan	28.10			
26	Luxemburg	58.64	26	Saudi Arabia	27.92			
27	Greece	57.42	27	Mongolia	27.33			
28	Bulgaria	56.87	28	Jordan	26.71			
29	Iceland	54.42	29	Oman	26.25			
30	Serbia	52.43	30	Tajikistan	25.00			
31	Albania	51.66	31	Kuwait	24.62			
32	Russia	49.60	32	Iraq	17.32			
33	Ukraine	46.56						
34	Belarus	44.76						
35	Montenegro	40.41						
36	Republic of Moldova	38.68						
37	Bosnia and Herzegovina	34.98						
38	Malta	28.13						

OCEANIA		
Rank	Country	Rank Index
1	New Zealand	52.17
2	Australia	47.89
3	Fiji	45.48

AFRICA		
Rank	Country	Rank Index
1	Botswana	45.88
2	Tanzania	44.32
3	Mauritius	42.63
4	Morocco	42.61
5	Ghana	42.42
6	Uganda	40.96
7	Tunisia	38.88
8	Senegal	38.17
9	Ethiopia	37.48
10	Egypt	36.74
11	South Africa	36.62
12	Cameroon	35.30
13	Madagascar	33.79
14	Malawi	26.89
15	Zambia	26.89
16	Kenya	26.19
17	Zimbabwe	25.71
18	Burundi	25.22
19	Nigeria	22.84
20	Algeria	22.36
21	Sudan	16.96

Country classification by region is based on the United Nations geoscheme (Source: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>)



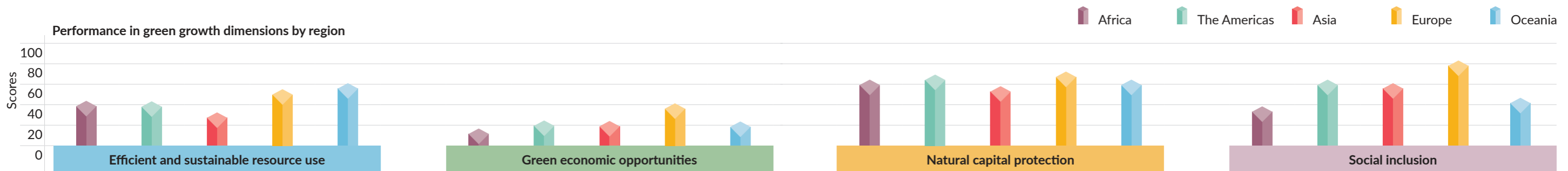
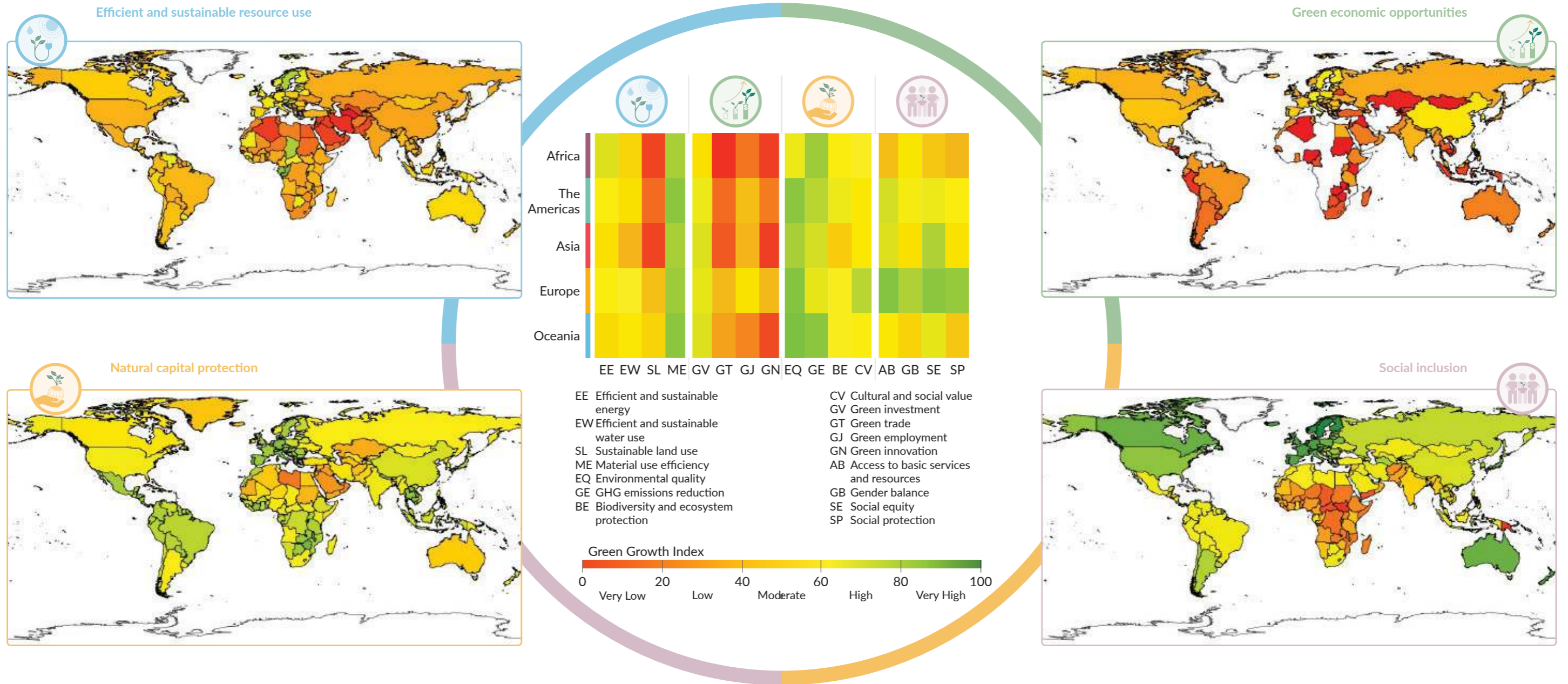
### 2.3 Performance on Index dimensions

Among the four green growth dimensions, performance is lowest for many countries for efficient and sustainable resource use, and green economic opportunities. Average scores for efficient and sustainable resource use are lowest for countries in Northern Africa as well as in Central and Western Asia.



### 2.4 Regional green growth challenges

Lack of green trade and innovation is the main constraint to reaching the targets for green economic opportunities across all regions. In addition, poor sustainable land use hinders efforts to improve performance in efficient and sustainable resource use, particularly in many countries in Africa, the Americas, and Asia.

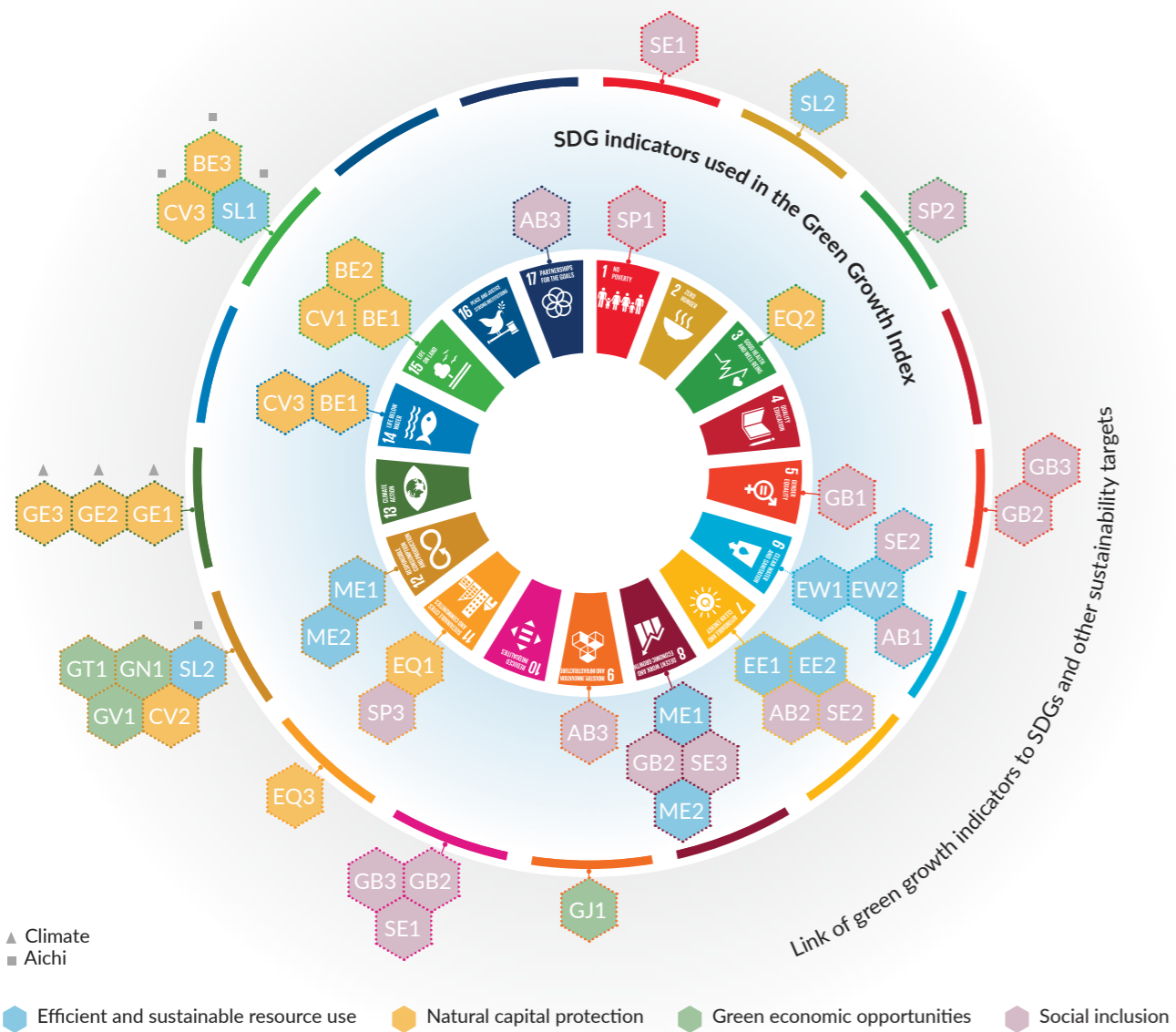


# 3 Gaps in SDG indicators to track performance in green economic opportunities is a challenge to developing the Index



## 3.1 Sustainability targets

Twenty-one indicators of the Green Growth Index are directly derived from the SDGs. The remaining fifteen, while not SDGs indicators, contribute to achieving the SDGs, the Paris Agreement on Climate, and Aichi targets. The Index is the first to benchmark green growth performance against the targets of these international agreements.

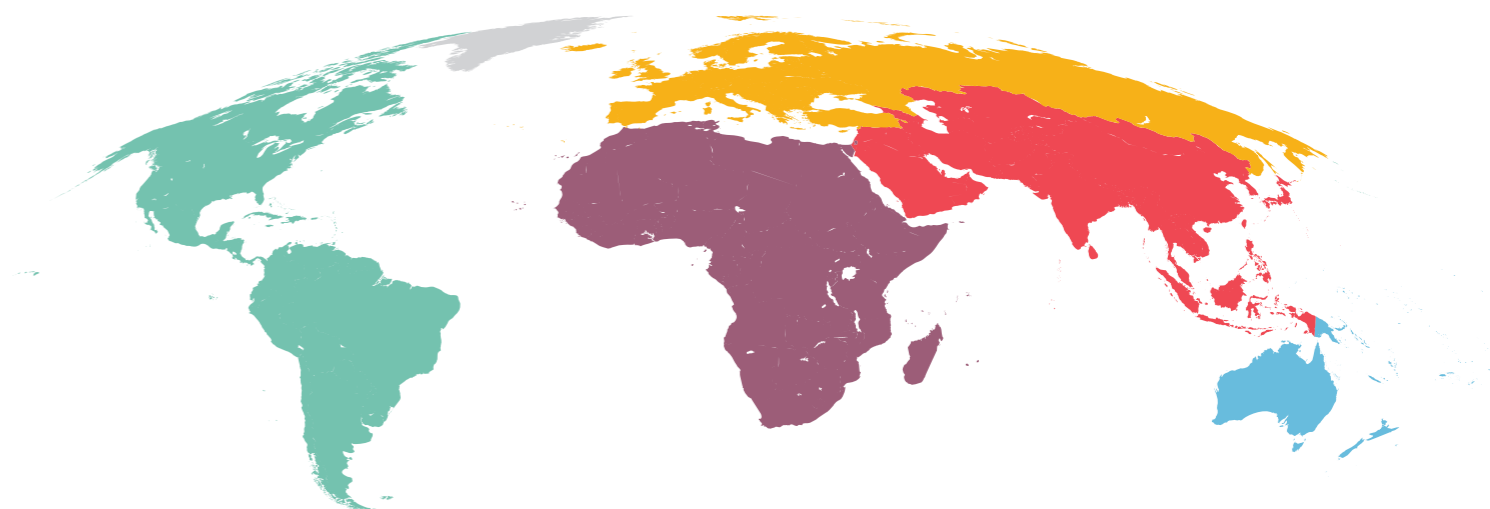


EE1	Ratio of total primary energy supply to GDP	EQ1	PM2.5, mean annual population-weighted exposure	AB1	Access to safely managed water and sanitation
EE2	Share of renewables to total final energy consumption	EQ2	DALY rate due to unsafe water sources	AB2	Access to electricity, and clean fuels and technology
EW1	Water use efficiency	EQ3	Municipal solid waste generation per capita	AB3	Internet broadband and mobile cellular subscriptions
EW2	Share of freshwater withdrawal to available freshwater	GE1	CO <sub>2</sub> emissions per capita, excl. AFOLU	GB1	Seats held by women in national parliaments
SL1	Average soil organic carbon content	GE2	Non-CO <sub>2</sub> emissions per capita, excl. AFOLU	GB2	Ratio of female to male with a financial account
SL2	Share of organic agriculture to agriculture area	GE3	Non-CO <sub>2</sub> emissions in agriculture per capita	GB3	Laws and regulations for equal gender pay
ME1	Total domestic material consumption per GDP	BE1	Proportion of KBAs covered by protected areas	SE1	Inequality in income based on Atkinson
ME2	Total material footprint per GDP	BE2	Share of forest area to total land area	SE2	Ratio urban-rural, safe water/sanitation and electricity
GV1	Adjusted net savings	BE3	Soil biodiversity, the potential level of diversity	SE3	Youth not in education, employment or training
GT1	Share of environmental goods	CV1	Red list index	SP1	Proportion of population receiving pension
GJ1	Share of green employment in manufacturing	CV2	Tourism and recreation in coastal and marine areas	SP2	Healthcare access and quality index
GN1	Share of environmental technology to total patents	CV3	Share of terrestrial & marine protected areas to territorial areas	SP3	Proportion of urban population living in slums

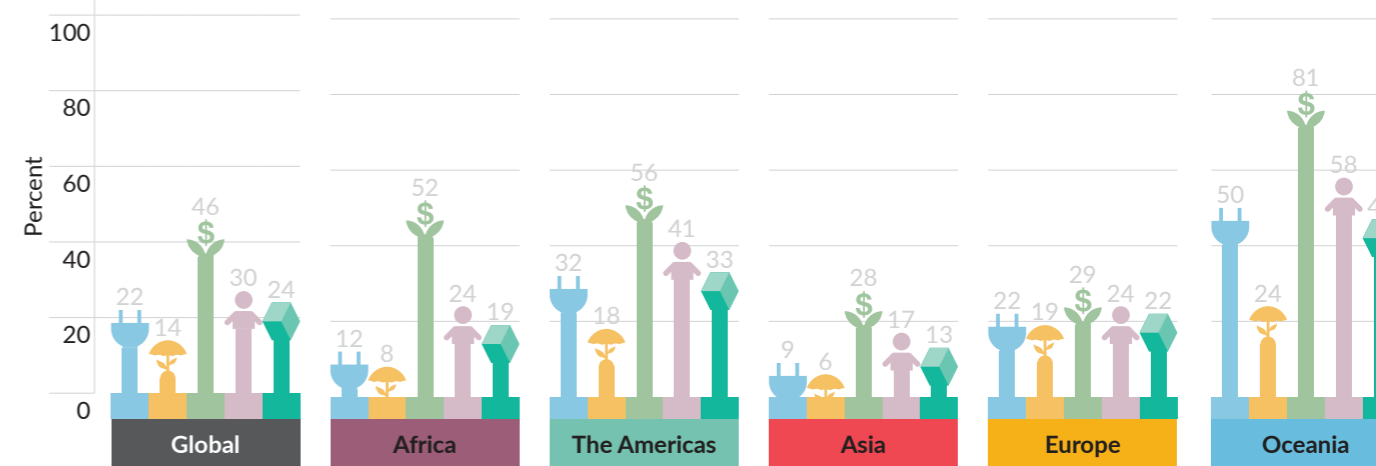


## 3.2 Information gaps

There is a large information gap for the green economic opportunities dimension. First, there is no single indicator for it with sufficient data in the SDGs. Second, due to a lack of data, only four indicators outside the SDGs could be included for this dimension. Third, among the four dimensions, indicators for green economic opportunities have the largest data gaps across all regions. Finally, the concept of "green" economic opportunities remains ill-defined.



Data gaps in green growth indicators



Efficient and sustainable resource use



Natural capital protection



Green economic opportunities



Social inclusion



Green Growth Index



# 4 Rising momentum for green growth offers huge opportunity for global actions to reach targets and close gaps



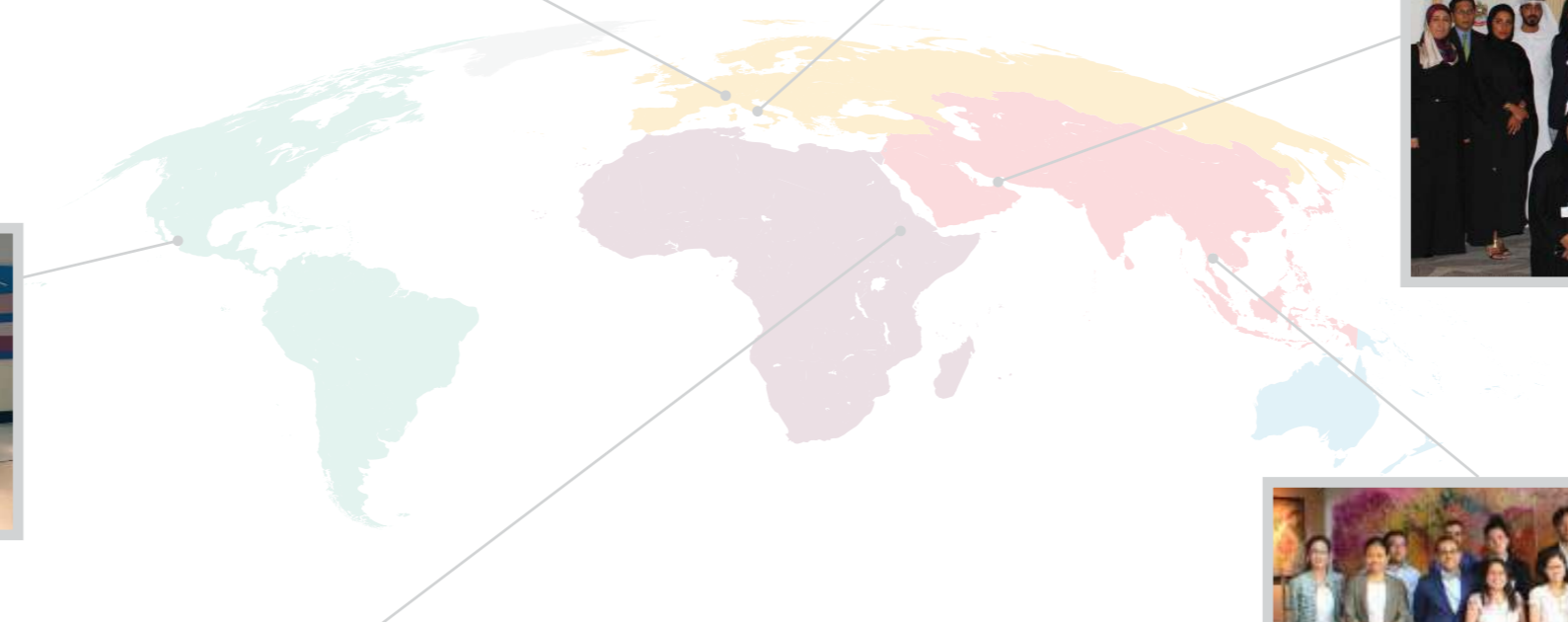
## 4.1 Sharing Expertise

Experts who participated in the consultation process reflected on opportunities for applications of the Index in their respective countries and regions. GGGI is committed to supporting policymakers and practitioners in applying the Index at the regional, national, and sub-national levels to catalyze green growth transition.



## 4.2 Global Partnerships

Experts from many international development and research organizations have joined the international expert group for the Green Growth Performance Measurement Program, which GGGI formed to support the development of the Index. GGGI will continue to work with the expert group to further improve the Index framework and highlight data gaps in green growth indicators.



## 4.3 Ongoing collaborations

GGGI is currently collaborating with the United Nations Environment Programme to emphasize complementarity between the Green Growth Index and Green Economy Progress Index. Moreover, it collaborates with the African Development Bank to develop the second phase of the African Green Growth Index using GGGI's green growth framework.

# Summary of Key Messages

**1** GGGI's Green Growth Index was designed through a rigorous and inclusive process. The process was guided by a bottom-up approach and multiple iterative steps in consultation with experts working on indicators, metrics, and green growth policies in their respective organizations. To ensure its robustness and policy relevance, GGGI developed and improved the Index through multiple revisions of the conceptual and methodological frameworks based on the assessment of the expert feedback.

The indicators that were selected for the four dimensions of green growth have undergone systematic assessment, with regional experts rating their policy relevance to different countries and regions. International and GGGI expert groups then reviewed the assessment results to define sets of indicators that are applicable to measure green growth performance at the global level, as well as aligned with GGGI's six strategic outcomes and four thematic priority areas of sustainable energy, green cities, sustainable landscapes, and water and sanitation. As a result of this process, the green growth framework developed for the Index is directly applicable for tracking green growth performance at the national, regional, and global levels.

**2** Roughly half of the ranked countries have moderate performance in attaining their green growth targets, and low-performing countries still outnumber high-performing ones. The call for action to increase efforts in making the world "greener" is growing, and all countries can now work towards identifying areas where opportunities for improving green growth performance are most abundant.

Regionally, Europe leads the world in green growth performance. Africa, on the other hand, is the region where green growth work remains imperative, but also where opportunities for the most conceivable impacts are most significant. Continued enhancement of local skills and infrastructure can help improve Africa's green growth performance. The switch to more efficient technologies also offers the region opportunities for leapfrogging to a greener future.

Across regions, improving green economic opportunities present the largest prospects for performance improvement, and can be targeted through innovation and green trade. For countries in Africa, the Americas and Asia, enhancements in efficient and sustainable resource use will enable better green growth performance through more sustainable land use.

**3** The Index is the first metric for green growth that explicitly links to sustainable development. In order to make the Index relevant at the national and international level, it has been essential for GGGI to align the Index with global sustainability goals and targets such as the SDGs, the Paris Agreement, and Aichi biodiversity targets. This complementary set of internationally accepted targets and related indicators serve as a reliable reference for the Green Growth Index and allow governments to align their pathway to green growth with achieving the SDGs, and national climate and biodiversity goals.

For the Green Growth Index to be wide-reaching and support transformational impact on a global scale, it is imperative that this broad set of indicators is supported by high-quality data. In particular, data gaps for green economic opportunities need to be addressed across all regions, but most urgently in Oceania and Africa. As one of the dimensions of green growth with the most potential for improving green growth performance across regions, improving data availability for green economic opportunities can help catalyze meaningful progress and impact. Complete data for green economic opportunities would also increase the global coverage of the Green Growth Index from 115 to 207 countries.

**4** To date, there is no universal definition of green growth, thus resulting in different ways of measuring related targets. GGGI is bridging the gap by developing a common understanding of green growth performance through the Green Growth Index.

GGGI is contributing to the increasing momentum for green growth through collaborative efforts to increase the applicability of the Index. The participatory Index development process opened new doors to enhance collaborative work on green growth and sustainable development. GGGI has strengthened collaboration not only with its Member countries but also with various international organizations that jointly support global and national sustainability targets. Today, the United Nations Environment Programme and the African Development Bank have partnered with GGGI to benefit from its experience with the Green Growth Index and to further increase understanding and engagement on green growth.

GGGI is also complementing the Green Growth Index with a "Policy Simulation Tool." The purpose of the Tool is to estimate the impact of different policies on country performance within the Green Growth Index framework. The Simulation Tool will further improve the policy relevance of the Index.

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