IGF Internet Governance Forum
Dynamic Coalition on Environment

Digital Health Associates

Environment as Economy & Economy as Environment

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Foreword

The climate crisis is no longer a distant warning—it is a present-day emergency reshaping economies, displacing communities, and exposing the fragility of our development models. As rising temperatures disrupt food systems, destroy infrastructure, and deepen inequality, the limits of treating the environment as an externality to economic policy have become painfully clear.

This report presents a transformative vision: to reverse our thinking and recognize the environment not as a constraint on prosperity, but as its very foundation. It marks a radical shift from a model of extractive growth to one of regenerative economics—where forests, oceans, biodiversity, and clean air are valued as core capital assets of national and global economies.

Drawing on international case studies and diverse stakeholder insights, this report offers compelling evidence that climate action and economic growth are not mutually exclusive. From circular economy innovations in Italy to green technology booms in China, nations are showing that aligning economic design with planetary boundaries is not only possible—it is profitable, resilient, and equitable.

To the political leadership of the UN member states, this report is both a call to action and a policy compass. It urges us to redesign governance, investments, and institutions to serve future generations—not just immediate returns.

Because reversing the climate crisis will demand more than innovation—it will demand imagination, cooperation, and courage. Let this report be the beginning of that new chapter. A chapter where environment and economy are not at odds, but inseparable pillars of a shared, sustainable future.

Best Regards,
Dr. Rajendra Pratap Gupta, Ph.D.
Chairman, Dynamic Coalition on Environment

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Introduction

In recent years, scientific research and real-world events have converged on one powerful truth: the environment is not separate from the economy—it is its foundation.

From rising sea levels affecting global supply chains to extreme weather events disrupting food security and GDP growth, we are witnessing how environmental degradation directly undermines economic stability. The 2023 IPCC report and multiple World Bank analyses have underscored that climate change could push hundreds of millions into poverty, reduce global income by trillions of dollars, and increase inequality within and between countries.

Traditionally, policy frameworks treated the environment as an externality—something to be managed, preserved, or corrected after economic decisions were made. But this model is no longer viable. Scientific consensus is clear: natural capital—our forests, water systems, soil health, biodiversity, and clean air—is as essential to national wealth as financial or physical capital.

So, what happens when we flip the narrative? What if we start thinking of the environment as the economy—as a generator of value, resilience, and well-being? And what if we embed environmental sustainability into the core design of our economic models, trade systems, digital infrastructures, and employment strategies?

This report explores precisely that shift. It is part of the ongoing work of the Dynamic Coalition on Environment (DCE) under the United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF), where we are advocating for a systems-based approach to environment and economy, grounded in evidence, ethics, and equity.

To bring this to life, we've used a multi-layered methodology:

a) We have collected case studies from countries that are pioneers in integrating environmental sustainability into their economic strategies. These include models of circular economy, eco-digital innovation, green finance, and climate-smart governance.

b) We conducted a short survey to bring in the voices of people—on how they perceive the evolving relationship between environment and economy in their context.

What we found confirms a growing global realization: green growth is not a contradiction—it is the only viable path forward. Innovation, prosperity, and equity in the 21st century will depend on how well we align our economic systems with planetary boundaries.

This report is not just a reflection of ideas; it is a call to action—one that urges governments, businesses, civil society, and global networks like the IGF to come together and design a future where economic success is measured not just by GDP, but by ecological health, climate resilience, and social inclusion.

Because the science tells us what is urgent.

And the stories we've gathered show us what is possible.

What Can the World Learn from National Success Stories?

To move from theory to action, we need to learn from real-world examples—where communities, cities, and nations are already reimagining the relationship between environment and economy in bold and practical ways.

This section brings together a series of case studies that highlight innovative, locally adapted approaches from across the globe. These examples were selected based on their relevance to our core theme—Environment as Economy and Economy as Environment—and their demonstrated impact in areas such as climate innovation, nature-positive digital infrastructure, green entrepreneurship, and circular resource use.

Bhutan: Gross National Happiness and Carbon Negativity[1]

Bhutan is internationally recognized for its holistic approach to sustainable development, guided by the philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH). This framework ensures that economic growth, social well-being, and environmental conservation are integrated at every level of national planning. Bhutan's Five-Year Plans are closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the nation has already graduated from Least Developed Country status after completing its 12th Five-Year Plan (2018–2023) (United Nations).

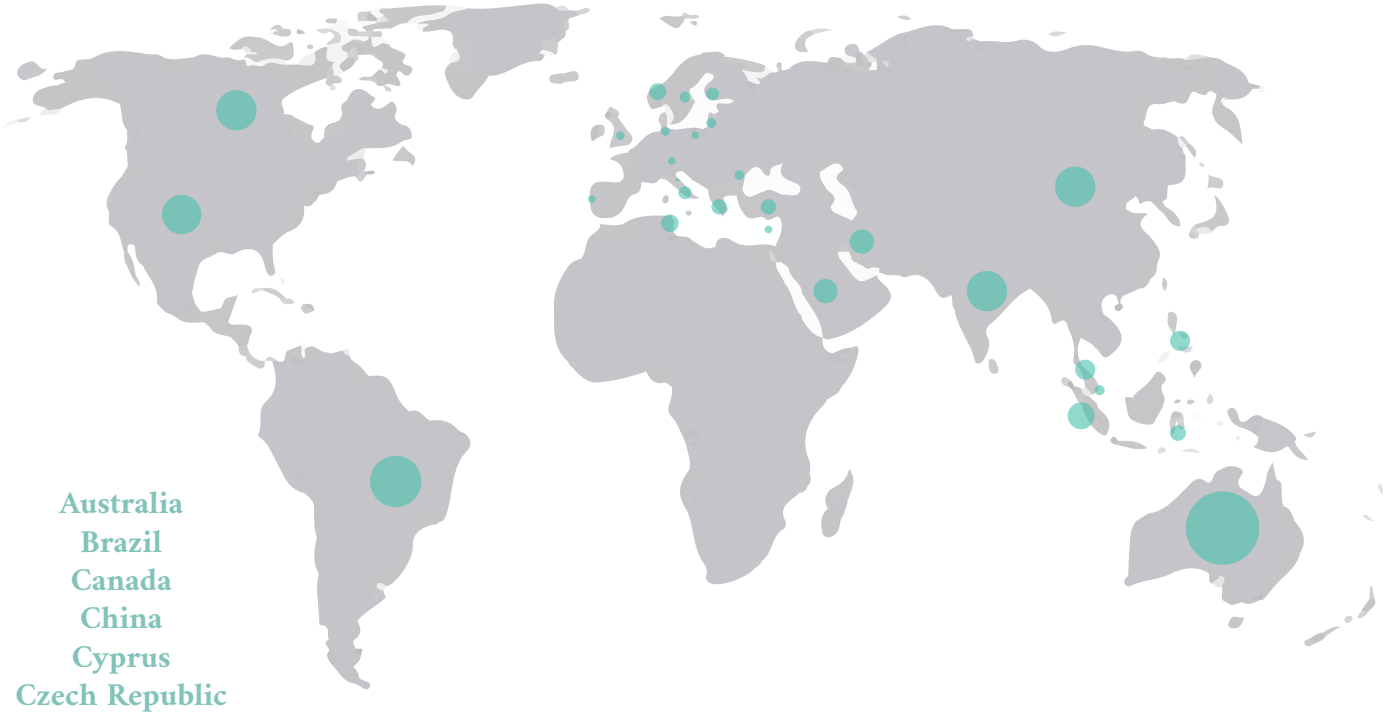
One of Bhutan's most celebrated achievements is its status as a carbon-negative country. The constitution mandates that at least 60% of the country remain under forest cover at all times, and as of 2023, forests cover over 70% of the land. This strong conservation policy enables Bhutan to absorb nearly three times more carbon dioxide than it emits, with a net national emission of 5,572.5 Gg of CO_2 as of 2015. Bhutan's renewable energy master plan and Electric Vehicle Road Map (2021–2035) are further diversifying clean energy sources, especially through hydropower and new solar investments.

Economically, Bhutan has made significant progress. The country's GDP grew at an average of 7.5% in recent decades, with the industry and service sectors now each contributing over 40% to GDP. Income poverty dropped from 23.2% in 2007 to 8.2% in 2017, and multidimensional poverty declined from 12.7% to 5.8% in the same period. The nation's unemployment rate remains low, and its population is increasingly urbanized and educated.

Tourism is managed through a "high value, low volume" strategy, exemplified by the Sustainable Development Fee (SDF) of USD 100 per night per visitor. This approach ensures that tourism revenues directly support conservation, infrastructure, education, and healthcare, while minimizing pressure on natural and cultural resources. In 2023, Bhutan's sustainable tourism initiative was internationally recognized with the 'Best Sustainability Initiative by a Destination' Award in Australia.

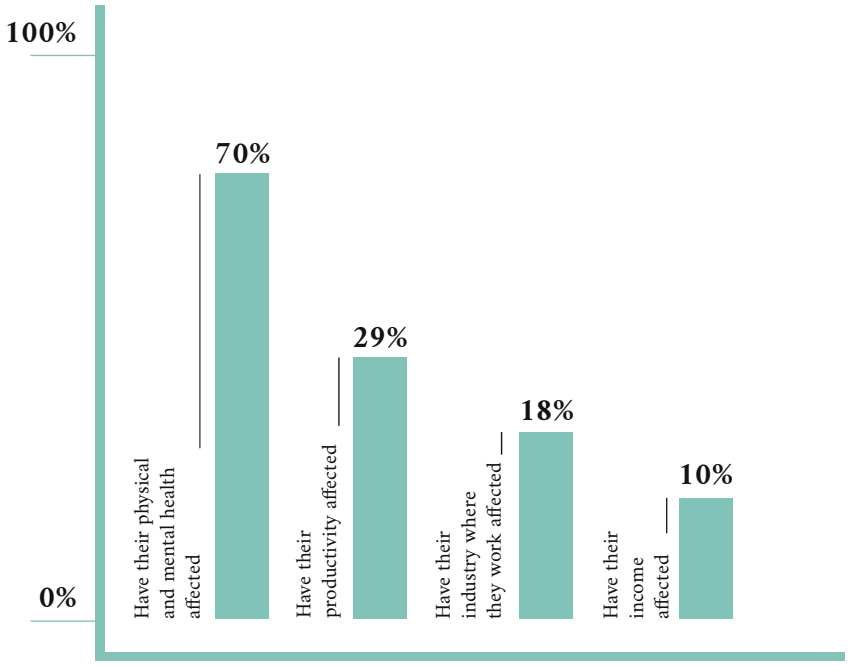
1
a) United Nations. (n.d.). Our work on the Sustainable Development Goals in Bhutan. United Nations Bhutan. Retrieved June 8, 2025, from https://bhutan.un.org/en/sdgs
b) Department of Environment and Climate Change, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, Royal Government of Bhutan. (2023). Bhutan's long-term low greenhouse gas emission and climate resilient development strategy (LTS). https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/LTS%20Report_final%20print_copy.pdf
c) United Nations Development Programme. (2023). Integrated SDG insights: Bhutan. https://sdgpush-insights.undp.org/reports/btn
d) Royal Bhutanese Embassy Canberra. (2023, November 29). Bhutan earns international acclaim for its commitment to sustainable tourism. https://www.mfa.gov.bt/rbecanberra/bhutan-earns-international-acclaim-for-its-commitment-to-sustainable-tourism/
e) Rabten, S. (2024, June 8). UN-Bhutan supported sustainable development with USD 35.57 million in 2023. Business Bhutan. https://businessbhutan.bt/un-bhutan-supported-sustainable-development-with-usd-35-57-million-in-2023/

Countries Represented in the Survey



Australia
Brazil
Canada
China
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Finland
Greece
India
Indonesia
Iran
Ireland
Italy
Lithuania
Malaysia
Norway
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Romania
San Marino
Singapore
Sweden
Tunisia
Turkey
United Arab Emirates
United Kingdom
United States

Self-Reported Impacts of Climate Change and Poor Environmental Conditions and Respondents



Impact of Climate Change and Poor Environmental Conditions on Individuals
(*sample size* =115)

United Arab Emirates: Green Agenda 2030 — Sustainable Growth and Economic Diversification[2]

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has positioned itself as a regional and global leader in sustainable development through its ambitious Green Agenda 2030. This comprehensive framework, launched by the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, is designed to guide the nation toward a greener economy and long-term prosperity. The Green Agenda 2030 aims to increase the UAE's GDP by 4–5 percent and boost exports by AED 24–25 billion by 2030, while reducing emissions and enhancing resource efficiency across all sectors.

At the heart of the Green Agenda are five strategic objectives: building a competitive knowledge economy, advancing social development and quality of life, ensuring a sustainable environment and valued natural resources, promoting clean energy and climate action, and fostering a green lifestyle and sustainable resource use . These objectives are supported by 12 main programs and 31 sub-programs, coordinated by the Emirates Green Development Council to ensure effective implementation.

The UAE's sustainability journey is deeply rooted in its heritage, with a focus on balancing rapid development with environmental preservation . Key initiatives include large-scale investments in renewable energy—such as the Dubai Clean Energy Strategy 2050, which targets generating 75% of Dubai's energy from clean sources by mid-century—and the development of Masdar City, one of the world's most sustainable urban communities powered entirely by renewables . The country also leads in sustainable finance, with initiatives like the Abu Dhabi Sustainable Finance Declaration encouraging environmentally responsible investments.

The Green Agenda emphasizes resource efficiency, circular economy practices, and integrated waste management, aiming for 100% transition to a green economy by 2030 and significant reductions in waste generation and pollution . The UAE's climate action is further reinforced by its commitment to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, as well as sector-specific targets for air quality, biodiversity, and sustainable fisheries.

These efforts have already yielded measurable outcomes: increased renewable energy capacity, reduced emissions, expanded green jobs, and enhanced international competitiveness. The UAE's approach demonstrates that economic growth and environmental stewardship can be mutually reinforcing, positioning the country as a model for sustainable development in the region and beyond.

China: Clean Energy and Green Growth as Economic Drivers[3]

China's recent economic growth has been closely tied to its unprecedented investment in clean energy and sustainable development. In 2023, China's GDP growth exceeded 5%, with clean-energy sectors emerging as the largest single driver of economic expansion.

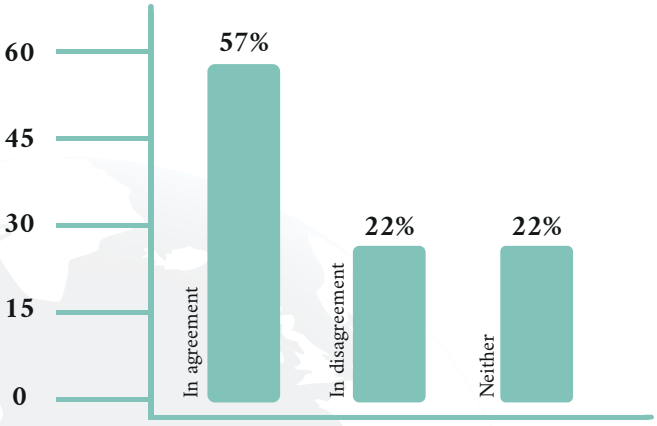
2
a) UAE Government. (n.d.). The UAE's Green Agenda – 2030. https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-visions/environment-and-energy/the-uaes-green-agenda-2030
b) Ministry of Climate Change and Environment. (2023). National Framework for Sustainable Development. https://www.uaelegislation.gov.ae/en/policy/details/the-national-framework-for-sustainable-development
c) United Arab Emirates. (2015). UAE Green Agenda 2015-2030. Climate Change Laws of the World. https://climate-laws.org/document/uae-green-agenda-2015-2030_f5c7
d) iConnect IT Business Solutions. (n.d.). UAE Vision 2030: Sustainable development. https://www.iconnectitbs.com/uae-vision-2030-sustainable-development/

3
a) Myllyvirta, L. (2024, January 25). Analysis: Clean energy was top driver of China's economic growth in 2023. Carbon Brief. https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-clean-energy-was-top-driver-of-chinas-economic-growth-in-2023/
b) Xinhua. (2025, March 4). How does China's green development contribute to global climate action? The State Council. The People's Republic of China. http://english.www.gov.cn/news/202503/04/content_WS67c66db6c6d0868f4e8f0493.html

Clean energy—including solar, wind, electric vehicles, and batteries—contributed 11.4 trillion yuan ($1.6 trillion) to the Chinese economy, up 30% year-on-year. This sector alone was responsible for 40% of China's GDP growth in 2023, with investment in clean energy rising by 40% to 6.3 trillion yuan ($890 billion) and making up all of the net investment growth across the economy. Without the clean-energy surge, China's GDP growth would have been just 3%, instead of the 5.2% actually recorded.

China's environmental achievements extend beyond energy. The country's forest coverage rate reached 25% by 2023, and the annual carbon-sink capacity of forests and grasslands now exceeds 1.2 billion tons of CO_2 equivalents, ranking first globally.

How Respondents Perceive their Countries' Progress in Integrating Sustainability into Economic Activities (Renewable Energy, Green Industries, Sustainable Agriculture)



Public Perception of National Progress Toward Sustainable Economic Development

Carbon emissions per unit of GDP have fallen by over 50% since 2005, and China's production and sales of new energy vehicles have topped the world for a decade. In 2023, clean energy accounted for 39.7% of total power generation, up 15 percentage points from 2013, and China was responsible for 60% of all new renewable capacity added worldwide that year.

China's green development model is not only transforming its own economy but also supporting global climate action. Through international partnerships, China has aided clean energy projects in developing countries, helping to strengthen adaptation capacity and reduce emissions abroad. These achievements reflect China's commitment to achieving peak carbon emissions before 2030 and carbon neutrality before 2060, while ensuring sustained economic growth and poverty reduction.

Italy: Circular Economy and Green Industry Leadership[4]

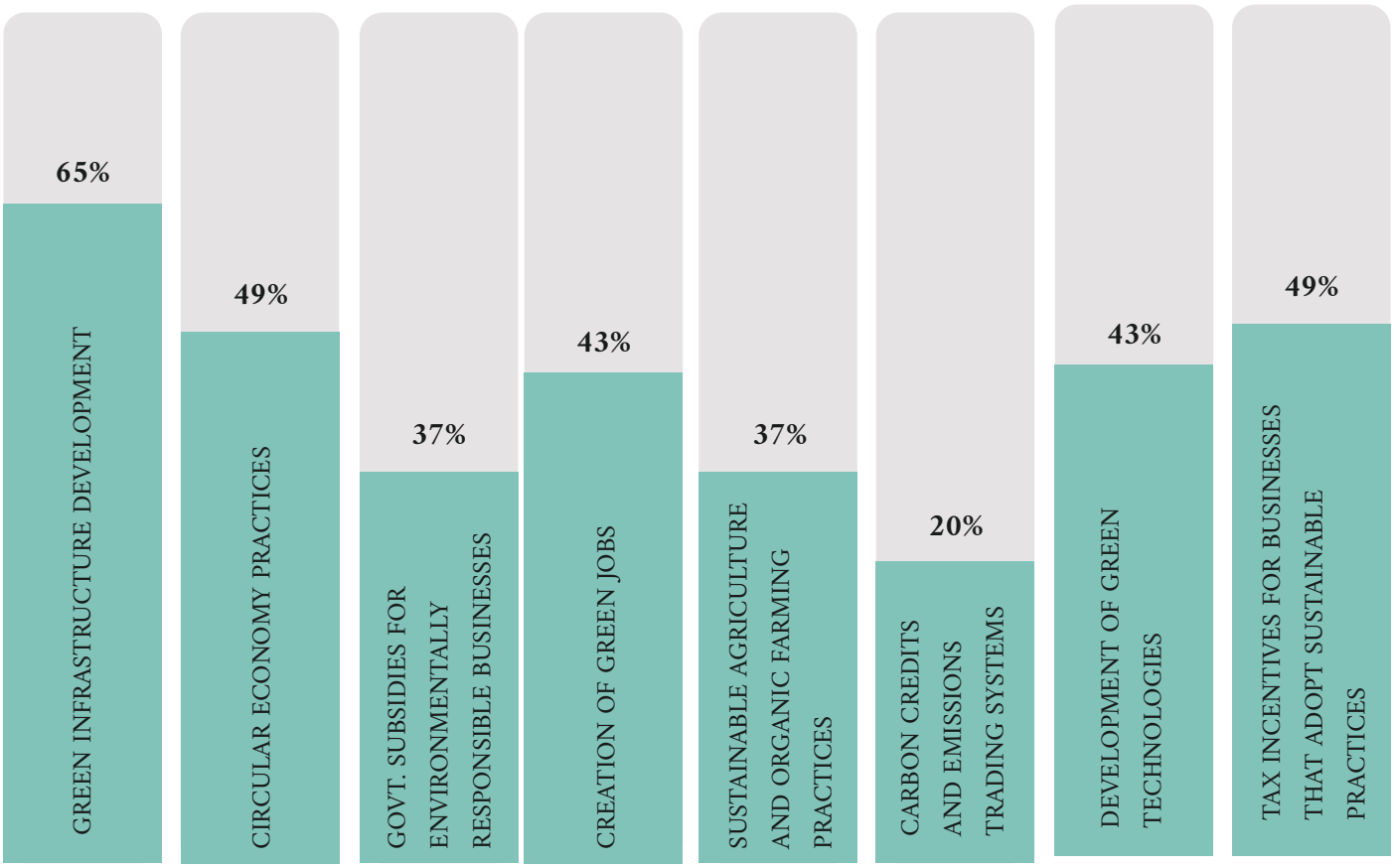
Italy has established itself as a European leader in environmental stewardship and is demonstrating how circular economy policies directly benefit its economy. The country's emission intensity is among the lowest in the G20, and its resource productivity (€3.6/kg) far surpasses the EU average (€2.2/kg), reflecting a highly efficient use of materials in production processes. Italy consistently exceeds EU recycling targets, with municipal waste recycling at 53.3% and packaging recycling rates for plastics, glass, and metals all above the European average.

The circular economy sector now contributes 2.7% of Italy's total value added—higher than any other major European economy—and employs over 613,000 people, highlighting its growing importance as an engine for job creation and economic resilience.

4
a) Confindustria. (2025). Sustainability and circularity of Italian companies. https://www.confindustria.it/en/publications/sustainability-and-circularity-of-italian-companies/
b) Circular Economy Network. (2025). Italy's circular advantage: How circularity can drive sustainability, competitiveness and climate goals. https://www.thegoodintown.it/italys-circular-advantage-how-circularity-can-drive-sustainability-competitiveness-and-climate-goals/
c) Renewable Matter. (2023, June). For Italian businesses, investing in the circular economy pays off. https://www.renewablematter.eu/en/For-Italian-Businesses-Investing-in-the-Circular-Economy-Pays-Off

Between 2017 and 2021, the value added by circular economy activities grew at an average annual rate of 3.6%, outpacing the broader economy. Investments in circularity have more than doubled since 2012, and in 2024 alone, circular practices saved Italian manufacturers over €16.4 billion in production costs, with projections of up to €119 billion in savings by 2030 if circularity is further optimized. Italian businesses are increasingly recognizing the financial returns of these investments: 62% of companies reported higher economic returns from sustainability and circular economy projects in 2023, and half noted improved corporate reputation.

Survey Responses on Initiatives Perceived as Most Effective for Achieving Both Economic Growth and Environmental Conservation



Most Effective Initiatives for Simultaneously Boosting the Economy and Conserving the Environment

Norway: Sustainable Prosperity[5]

Norway is consistently ranked among the world's top countries for progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with particularly strong performance in areas such as poverty reduction, health, gender equality,

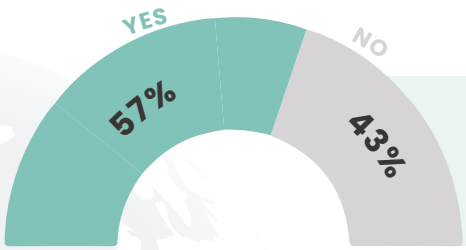
5
a) Sachs, J. D., Lafortune, G., & Fuller, G. (2024). Sustainable Development Report 2024: The SDGs and the UN Summit of the Future. SDSN; Dublin University Press. https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/rankings
b) United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (n.d.). Norway: Sustainable development knowledge platform. Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (archived). https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/norway
c) Nordregio. (2023). The Nordic Region and the Sustainable Development Goals. https://pub.nordregio.org/r-2023-4-the-nordic-region-and-the-2030-agenda/the-nordic-region-and-the-sustainable-development-goals.html
d) European Environment Agency. (2020). Norway country profile – SDGs and the environment. https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/sustainability-transitions/sustainable-development-goals-and-the/country-profiles/norway-country-profile-sdgs-and
e) Re-thinking The Future. (n.d.). 7 ways Norway is leading in sustainability. https://www.re-thinkingthefuture.com/sustainable-architecture/a2964-7-ways-norway-is-leading-in-sustainability/
f) Government of Norway. (2016). Initial steps towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda: Voluntary National Review presented at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), UN, New York, July 2016. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10692NORWAY%20HLPF%20REPORT%20-%20full%20version.pdf

clean energy, and global partnerships. Norway's approach to sustainability is characterized by a holistic, cross-sectoral commitment, integrating climate and environmental concerns into all aspects of national and international policy.

A cornerstone of Norway's sustainable economy is its energy system: nearly all of Norway's domestic electricity is generated from hydropower, leveraging the country's abundant water resources and mountainous terrain. This has enabled Norway to maintain some of the lowest carbon emissions per unit of GDP among advanced economies, while supporting a high standard of living and robust economic growth.

Norway's focus on clean energy extends to its leadership in electric mobility—Norway has the highest per-capita adoption of electric vehicles globally—and to the electrification of its maritime sector and public transport.

Percentage of Respondents Indicating Whether their Country has Implemented Innovative Economic Policies that Leverage the Environment for Growth



Perceived Presence of Innovative Environmental Policies for Economic Growth

Norway's sustainable development strategy also prioritizes the protection of its oceans and marine resources, recognizing the importance of healthy seas for the national economy, food security, and global trade. The government has adopted integrated ecosystem-based management plans for its sea areas and is actively reducing sources of marine pollution, including microplastics. These efforts support Norway's "blue economy," with fisheries and shipping remaining key contributors to national prosperity.

Norway's SDG implementation is coordinated at both national and local levels, with strong involvement from municipalities, civil society, and the private sector. The government's national action plan for the 2030 emphasizes leaving no one behind, promoting innovation, and supporting a transition to a circular economy, with scalable platforms for smart resource management and regenerative communities.

Singapore: From Dense City to Green Leader[6]

Singapore has established itself as a global leader in sustainable urban development and climate resilience, despite its limited natural resources and dense urban landscape. The Singapore Green Plan 2030 is the nation's comprehensive government strategy to advance sustainable development, strengthen commitments under the UN 2030 Agenda, and achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Singapore's sustainability strategy also includes a major expansion of green spaces, with 200 hectares of nature parks and a goal to ensure every household is within a 10-minute walk of a park.

6
a) Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2018). Towards a sustainable and resilient Singapore: Voluntary National Review report to the 2018 UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19439Singapores_Voluntary_National_Review_Report_v2.pdf
b) Government of Singapore. (n.d.). Singapore Green Plan 2030. https://www.greenplan.gov.sg/
c) ZunoCarbon. (2024). Singapore's sustainability efforts: The guide to Singapore's Green Plan. https://www.zunocarbon.com/blog/singapore-sustainability-efforts
d) Economic Times. (2025). Singapore Budget 2025—SG60: AI, R&D, clean energy, and sustainability emerge as focus areas. https://ciosea.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/policy/singapore-budget-2025sg60-ai-rd-clean-energy-and-sustainability-emerge-as-focus-areas/118354533

The plan to plant one million trees by 2030 will sequester an additional 78,000 tonnes of CO_2 and improve urban livability. The city-state is also investing in circular economy solutions, such as transforming incinerated waste into construction material (NEWSand) and setting a target to reduce landfill waste by 30% by 2030.

The economic dimension of Singapore's sustainability efforts is clear. The Green Economy pillar promotes home-grown innovation, supports R&D in decarbonization technologies, and positions Singapore as a testbed for sustainable solutions in Asia. The government's 2025 budget includes major investments in AI, clean energy, and electrification, including schemes to accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles and zero-emission heavy vehicles. Singapore's maritime and aviation sectors are also committed to international emissions reduction targets, further strengthening the nation's role as a global sustainability hub.

Singapore's integrated, forward-looking approach demonstrates how a city-state with significant constraints can achieve both environmental and economic gains, serving as a model for urban resilience and green growth worldwide.

Did you Know?

>50% World's GDP

Depends directly on nature, underlining the deep economic vulnerability to biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation.

10 million hectares

Loss of forest area in the world every year, primarily due to industrial agriculture—threatening both environmental stability and economic foundations.

72% consumers

Globally are willing to pay more for sustainable products. Gen Z and Millennials are driving this shift, and businesses increasingly see sustainability as a competitive advantage, with many executives expecting significant returns from sustainable strategies by 2030.

$2,328 trillion (USD)

Estimated economic loss due to climate change globally between 2025 and 2100 under a business-as-usual scenario. Limiting warming to 1.5°C could avoid over $1,200 trillion in losses, with less than $300 trillion needed for global climate finance between 2025 and 2050—about 20% of the avoided losses.

2.5x growth

Rate of ocean economy growth between 1995 and 2020, outpacing the global economy's 1.9-fold growth. About 600 million people depend on the ocean economy, which supports 100 million jobs, mainly in fisheries, aquaculture, and tourism.

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Kenya: The Role of Policy, Innovation, and Feed-in Tariffs in Sustainable Development[7]

Kenya's transition to a circular economy is underpinned by a robust policy framework and targeted initiatives that drive both environmental sustainability and economic growth. The country's Sustainable Waste Management Act (2022), Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regulations, and the ban on single-use plastic bags have significantly reduced pollution and promoted resource efficiency. These measures are complemented by active stakeholder engagement, including the Kenya Association of Manufacturers and the Kenya Plastics Pact, which foster innovation and collaboration in waste reduction and recycling. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation estimates that Kenya could unlock up to $3.4 billion in annual economic benefits by 2030 through circular economy adoption.

Feed-in tariffs (FiTs) have also played a crucial role in Kenya's renewable energy expansion, incentivizing private investment in wind, solar, hydro, and geothermal projects. This policy has helped raise the share of renewables to nearly 90% of Kenya's electricity mix, supporting green job creation, rural electrification, and reduced reliance on fossil fuel imports. Collectively, these policies demonstrate that Kenya's circular economy and renewable energy incentives are not only advancing environmental goals but are also generating substantial economic opportunities and resilience.

Future Generations and the Intergenerational Imperative- Why the Economy – Environment Relationship Must Be Reimagined for Tomorrow's World

The intricate link between environment and economy is not only a contemporary concern—it is a legacy issue. The decisions we make today, from energy policy to land use, will shape the ecological and economic world inherited by future generations.

Intergenerational equity is the principle that future generations should have the same, if not better, opportunities and environmental conditions as the current one. It requires us to evaluate policies, practices, and investments based not only on their immediate returns but also on their lasting impacts. In the context of this report, it emphasizes the need to treat environmental resources as inherited capital—not disposable income.

7

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b) Koech, H. K., & Munene, L. (2023). Kenya's circular economy policy landscape: Progress, challenges, and opportunities. Frontiers in Sustainability, 4, Article 1190470. https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/sustainability/articles/10.3389/frsus.2023.1190470/full

c) Karcher, S. Y., Wekesa, Z. W., Waweru, J. K., Käsner, S., Desmond, P. K., Smit, T. A. B., Hemkhaus, M., Ahlers, J., Van Hummelen, S., Chewpreecha, U., Smith, A., & McGovern, M. (2020). Circular economy in the Africa-EU cooperation: Country report for Kenya. European Commission, Directorate-General for Environment. https://circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform/sites/default/files/kenya_report.pdf

A) Risks of Inaction

—Ecological Irreversibility: Loss of biodiversity, climate tipping points, and ecosystem collapse have long-term, potentially irreversible consequences.
—Economic Fragility: Over-reliance on finite resources may leave future economies vulnerable to scarcity, inflation, and collapse of sectors such as agriculture and fisheries.
—Social Instability: Environmental degradation disproportionately affects the poor and may lead to increased conflict, displacement, and inequality in future societies.

B) Environment as Foundational Economy

—Recognize forests, wetlands, oceans, and the climate as productive assets with tangible long-term returns.
—Avoid costs of future crises—climate disasters, water scarcity, health emergencies—through proactive, sustainable economic choices today.
—Build systems that can adapt and regenerate ensures continuity for future generations in a changing world.

C) Designing the Future Economy

—Transitioning to an economy that respects environmental limits and fosters regeneration.
—Future generations can work with viable ecosystems and renewable capital, not degraded systems and ecological debt.
—Green technologies, circular economies, and ecological restoration can become the norm, not the exception.
—Policies must be guided by long-term outcomes, incorporating youth perspectives and science-based foresight.

A growing number of global frameworks recognize the rights of future generations. From the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to national constitutions that enshrine environmental stewardship, the narrative is shifting. Legal innovations such as guardianship models, intergenerational councils, and youth climate litigations underscore a broader societal commitment to the future.

The challenge before us is profound: to reimagine prosperity not as short-term growth, but as long-term well-being. A sustainable economy must function within ecological limits, and policy must operate with foresight. For future generations to thrive, the environment and economy must be treated as a single, integrated system—valued not just for today's returns, but for tomorrow's survival.

Key Recommendations

Based on the case studies, global insights, and survey findings we have gathered, we propose the following broad recommendations:

a) Adopt a Systems Approach

Environmental and economic planning must be integrated from the start. Ministries of environment and finance should collaborate to ensure that climate and sustainability goals are baked into national budgets, development plans, and digital policies.

b) Leverage Digital Innovation for Sustainability

Digital tools—AI, satellite monitoring, blockchain, and IoT—should be used to improve environmental governance, track climate impact, and enable green entrepreneurship. Governments must support open access to environmental data and invest in eco-digital infrastructure.

c) Invest in Green Skills and Jobs

Economic recovery plans must prioritize the creation of green jobs. This includes re-skilling workers for renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, climate technology, and conservation-based tourism, especially in rural and vulnerable communities.

d) Support Local Innovations and Traditional Knowledge

Solutions must be culturally rooted and locally led. Indigenous knowledge systems and community-based resource management have shown resilience and should be recognized, resourced, and protected.

e) Create Enabling Policies and Incentives

Policymakers should provide fiscal and regulatory incentives for sustainable businesses—such as tax breaks, green bonds, and environmental credits—while removing subsidies that harm ecosystems.

f) Ensure Environmental Justice and Equity

Climate and economic policy must work together to close inequality gaps. Special focus should be on ensuring the participation and protection of youth, women, and marginalized communities in decision-making and benefit-sharing.

g) Promote Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

Governments, civil society, academia, industry, and digital platforms must co-create solutions. The IGF community can be a space to bridge these actors and ensure transparency and accountability.

This report is a starting point, not an endpoint. It is an invitation to think differently and act boldly. The stories and ideas within reflect a quiet but powerful shift taking place across the world—where the environment is not seen as a cost to growth, but as the core of what a sustainable and inclusive economy looks like.

As we take this report forward into IGF discussions and beyond, our hope is that it sparks deeper conversations, concrete actions, and long-term collaborations that recognize this essential truth:

There is no economic future without a thriving planet.

And there is no environmental sustainability without economic systems that are just, inclusive, and forward-thinking.

Let us build that future—together.

Innovations from the Ground

What Respondents See Working in their Countries

"Australia's investment in large-scale solar farms and clean energy hubs showcases how renewable energy can drive economic growth while reducing carbon emissions." - Survey Respondent, Australia

"The Singapore Government has provided Climate Vouchers to all citizens and permanent residents so they can purchase more environmentally sustainable appliances such as refrigerators, air conditioners, and washing machines. This not only offers welfare benefits to Singaporeans, but also stimulates economic growth by increasing business and sales for household appliance retailers and department stores like Harvey Norman." - Survey Respondent, Singapore

"My state uses hydroelectric power, and I think other countries with strong rivers can also incorporate it."
- Survey Respondent, USA

"China's "ecological product value realization mechanism" is an innovation that integrates environmental protection with economic growth and offers a model other countries can adopt. It transforms ecological resources into economic value through reform and innovation while promoting sustainable environmental use, balancing "green mountains and clear waters" with "golden mountains and silver mountains." Key examples include the green development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt, where ecological restoration is combined with industrial upgrading; the construction of Hainan Free Trade Port, which fosters low-carbon industries while protecting the environment; and the Belt and Road Green Development Initiative, which advances clean energy and green investment through international cooperation. The mechanism demonstrates how green industries, eco-tourism, and sustainable innovation can drive both ecological protection and economic progress. China's emphasis on technological innovation, supportive policies, and global collaboration provides valuable lessons for countries seeking to align economic growth with sustainability."
- Survey Respondent, China

"The UK has made significant strides in implementing and investing in green technologies, particularly in areas like offshore wind, electric vehicles, and green finance, with a focus on achieving net-zero targets."
- Survey Respondent, UK

"India is promoting energy literacy and energy efficiency through various initiatives such as the UJALA Program, PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, PM KUSUM Yojana, five-star rated appliances, natural farming, compressed biogas (CBG), bio-CNG (ONG), agri-based farming, hydrogen energy, and many more—aimed at creating a healthier, wealthier, and more sustainable future."
- Survey Respondent, India

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