

GEC Steering Group, Wednesday 26th August 2020– MINUTES



Attendees: Clara Axblad (PAGE alternate), Steve Bass, Oliver Greenfield, Kamal Gueye, Laura Kelly, Peter Poschen, Juha Siikamaki, Najma Mohammed – GEC Policy Director, and Programme Manager for Economics for Nature – agenda items 2 and 3, Zeenat Niazi.

Apologies: Thibaut Portevin, Andrew Norton, Asad Naqvi, Steven Stone, Holger Schmid, Mike Wilson.

NOTE: COVID continues to dominate our thinking and runs unapologetically through this month's agenda

Agenda 26th August 2020:

1. June minutes for SG approval.
2. GEC Big Programme Review – Economics for Nature (£4N) – making the most of our E4N assets in the COVID recovery – SG advice
3. Amazon HUB – An iconic country initiative and new GEC hub in partnership with FAS
4. COVID Campaign and Social contract (draft introductory blog attached) – SG advice
5. Reporting – SG advice on global policy
6. AOB and next SG meeting 26th October

1. Draft – June Minutes – attached

- **SG approval. ACTION The minutes are to be posted on our GEC website.**

2. GEC: Big programme reviews and sign-off – (Delayed from June) – big programme review - E4N

This agenda item is from our GEC Forward calendar¹. Economics for Nature (funded by MAVA)

NOTE – There are 2 main purposes of these SG programme reviews:

1. **A quality status check on progress and delivery**, escalating any issues and ensuring SG are aware of the work
 - This work does not have delivery issues to escalate, is on track with renewed contracts and proactive team. Therefore, the summary below is more about SG awareness
2. **Seeking SG strategic advice** on building synergies with other activities or programme choices
 - This E4N work is now operating within a COVID world – where both green recovery and explicitly the value/encroachment/management of nature are under greater scrutiny.

SG debate and advice on how do we make the most of our E4N assets in this COVID world?

1. Deploying the [GE Tracker](#). We are expanding the Tracker to more countries – explicitly as a national ‘hold your countries recovery to account’ COVID campaign tool (and assisting coalition building - geographical expansion). Initial positioning work on this – [COVID the GE opportunity](#), [COVID the GE Tracker Policies](#). How to make the most of this? 20 – 40 countries
2. Other SG suggested options and synergies? i.e. the growing importance of the term ‘resilience’, nature-debt swaps, green fiscal stimulus, revised E4N CBD influence and messaging.

Economics for Nature Programme UPDATE: – a 6 year programme run by GEC, with partners Capitals Coalition, WWF France, GGKP. Main aim is to bring together green economy communities and natural capital communities to support the national adoption of natural capital based green economies. [Project summary](#).

Snapshot of main achievements of the team to date:

- The programme visibly started by introducing Green economy at the [World Forum for Natural Capital in 2017](#)

¹ Forward calendar for SG meetings approved in December 2019

- Pushed the idea of limits to nature in economic models through the [wealth of nature report](#)
- Hosted a TV debate at the 2019 UN PAGE opening session – on [what is wealth](#)
- Hosted a 2019 [DAVOS debate on what is wealth](#)
- Supported increased emphasis on nature as part of the green economy framing by main Green economy organisations through the creation of [“Principles, priorities and pathways for an inclusive green economy”](#) —
- It worked with 13 governments to progress natural capital understanding in green economy by co-creating [Natural Capital for Governments – What, Why and How](#).
- Developed and launched at DAVOS a comprehensive a green economy policy framework, the [Green Economy Tracker](#) placing natural capital as a central policy area and ultimately conveying the message of economic development being dependent on nature and natural capital policy
- Developed EU debate and policy paper on how [finance serve nature](#)
- Currently hosting [African Forum on Green Economy: Investing in Natural Capital for a Resilient Africa](#)
- **Programme management:** GEC successfully coordinated the process for the Mid-Term Evaluation with all the programme partners. Collectively we improved our Theory of Change for the second phase of the programme, with strong buy-in from all partners and a clearer sense of contributions to outcomes. This is now funded till the end of 2022.
- **Main programme direction** – influence targets rebalancing between global, regional and national actions: global – CBD, regional EU, Africa, China, through iconic country policy areas: Brazil, Uganda, China. Trying to get practical actions in place – such as AFDB.
- **Main Programme Lessons:**
 - Collaboration is difficult, success takes considerable effort on behalf of all partners, commitment to two weekly calls and further bi-lateral.
 - A co-created theory of change and impact route map has been essential to orientate all partner’s work and support collaboration
 - Moving from influencing global communities to in-country stakeholder requires considerable efforts and is best achieved within project timescales by building on already active country partnerships – to this point GEC leverages connections to the EC funded GEC hubs.

SG debate and advice on how do we make the most of our E4N assets in this COVID world?

ACTIONS

3. Iconic region - AMAZON HUB UPDATE

The Amazon is the first GEC Hub region which was selected by GEC and led by its own strategy – as opposed to following donor preferences. The Amazon is iconic for biodiversity, for climate, for indigenous peoples – and perhaps for being the biggest example of stakeholders at loggerheads. It has some of the worst COVID infection rates. We now want it to be known as an iconic ‘build back better’ case.

We have examined fresh evidence of the linked environmental, social and economic challenges that threaten the Amazon and insights into a looming ‘tipping point’. We suggest the Amazon is ‘too big to fail’. But the business-as-usual ‘deforestation economy’ that produces a narrow range of commodities to serve an elite only is entrenched and it is failing every day: the politics and prevailing economic incentives are toxic. Recently, however, overtures towards the idea of a ‘bioeconomy’ have been raised by government, business, and civil society. For example, both the Brazilian VP and the three biggest Brazilian banks beginning separate initiatives. We have brought together examples of innovative approaches across the board. But what stands out is that they are all isolated, often tackle single issues, and they struggle to connect – so few have become mainstream.

One of the most effective innovations has been the work of FAS (the Fundação Amazonas Sustentável), the newest GEC partner (and well-known to some SG members). Like GEC, FAS was designed to deliver sustainable

development, is known for playing a role of convenor. It bridges community, government and business – and is trusted by each, undertaking key environment and development ‘delivery’ roles for them in Amazonas State, Brazil.

With the recent shifts in attitude, an opportunity has opened up for FAS to support the shift towards bioeconomy. This is to fill the niche for which GEC and FAS are both well-placed – a process of dialogue, learning, pilot investment and governance work to link Amazon initiatives and – in time and having built trust – engage with the tough underlying causes of Amazon problems. So GEC and FAS have:

- *Prepared a core script – ‘The Amazon, Too Big to Fail: The case for a new Amazon Strategy for Inclusive Bioeconomy’, with up-to-date evidence of problems and ‘of what works’. Unlike most papers on the subject which focus on single issues, it draws together material on climate, biodiversity, poverty, society and economic growth – and it offers a unifying vision: an inclusive and sustainable Amazon Bioeconomy that enables people and nature to thrive together, at little immediate cost to economic growth and indeed supporting wealth generation. (Draft available on request)*
- *Formed an agreement for the GEC Amazon Regional Hub to be based at FAS in Manaus, allocating £60,000 of EC funding as a contribution; FAS will also contribute. The Hub will be the primary mechanism for developing and coordinating the GEC Amazon Bioeconomy programme based on our Amazon vision. The Hub aims to generate a network of practitioners, investors, policy-makers and small enterprises focused on building a new Bioeconomy in the Amazon region. It will provide: a space for cross sectoral dialogue and exchange; a focal point of knowledge on different approaches; and incubator for bioeconomy small enterprise development The ToR for an *Amazon Hub Convenor* – to be hired locally, based in FAS staff and reporting to both GEC and FAS – has been agreed and recruitment is imminent.*

Next steps are:

- *To hold launch webinars in Brazil, the region and globally – to invite participation in our Hub work. We have already arranged for an international session at the UN General Assembly – Amazon Day on 23rd September, with FAS leading. This will enable GEC to present its global perspective, FAS to present the regional perspective, and jointly to present our vision and welcome responses from invited international players. (There will also be a Brazilian seminar and an Amazon regional seminar).*
- *To co-develop the GEC Amazon Bioeconomy programme of learning, dialogue, consensus-building and investment. Building on both FAS and GEC experience, it will link societal demand with policy reform and implementation. Activities may include both a major scale out of micro, small and medium enterprise and livelihood activities on the one hand, and governance changes that tackle the underlying causes of Amazon problems on the other. We will also link the Amazon with other major forested regions globally to explore ‘standing forest economies’. Although led by GEC and FAS, with the new Amazon Convenor facilitating, it will invite stakeholder participation, beginning with three webinars (above).*

SG is invited to comment on the implications of establishing an Amazon Hub. We would welcome thoughts on:

(a) Geographic focus. There is huge interest in Amazonas State where FAS has already offered proof of concept of a bioeconomy and the state government is supportive. But the political/business openings with biggest gains may be at Brazil federal level where FAS is being invited to contribute. It would ultimately be good to link positive (civil society) initiatives across the Amazon region where there is much potential for FAS-type work and – ultimately – where we want a paradigm change across the board.

(b) The ‘Inclusive Bioeconomy’ concept. While narrower than IGE, bioeconomy has increasing traction in the region. There are many players now aiming at the bioeconomy ‘space’ in the Amazon region. This could be good for GEC – more stakeholders to convene. But a broader GE perspective might be more distinctive.

Debate

ACTIONS

4. COVID CAMPAIGN UPDATE and Social contract (Attachment for this item – draft social contract blog)

The GEC COVID response has two main processes:

1. **Bottom up** – building activity and synergy with existing members. The first GEC members call was held on 22nd June 2020:
 - There was agreement that **stronger connections between local/national and regional/global** build back better campaigns are needed and this is a role GEC should play.
 - Most government responses are skin-deep. Our niche is **structural solutions that connect ‘green’ with the ‘fair’**.
 - Further calls are planned to deepen this collaboration and open it up to other coalition members. (Note holiday season has delayed this activity and it shall restart in September).
2. **Break-through** – listening to our partners and others – are there unique ‘coalition’ roles we could play? i.e. too big for individual organisations.
 - On this specific question the term and opportunity ‘**Social contract**’ has been raised by UN, ITUC and WEF’s great reset. **It is an interesting and potentially transformative idea but one fraught with complexity.** I attach a **draft** Social contract blog – to explain briefly how we are thinking about it. (see attachment)
 - **SG discussion and advice – how should GEC approach Social contract?**

SG discussion:

- What do people offer?
- Risk of moving away from SDGs, multilateralism and just jumping on new terms
- Social contract for nature? E.g. keeping oil in the ground
- Societal contract with nature
- Societal contract with power?
- Risk of becoming too political – versus need to become more political – we need to change power
- Vague term – could mean anything
- Stick to what we do
- A contentious term – GEC has a track record of engaging with contentious terms

SG DECISION – ACTION OG to create some research on it – what it does mean, could mean and how it might be useful.

5. GEC reporting - SUMMARY – STATUS OF FOUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

SG - A suggested evolution of this reporting approach is to 1. focus on one key development in each area rather than try to cover the whole subject and 2, Put this at the end of the agenda otherwise substantive strategic discussions may not have adequate time. SG decisions.

	Strategic Theme	Status Update	Status	Planned activities
1	Achieve mainstreaming economic reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tracker update China – ecocivilisation paper in draft – to guide our China influencing work <p>NOTE: this remains Amber because the COVID recovery creates a unique opportunity to ensure GE reforms are taken more seriously. How to influence this, particularly at the global level, is still unclear – for SG advice</p>	AMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deployment of COVID Tracker Campaign development – political economy thinking – China, EU, US, ROW
2	New Social movement plan in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging with social movements is an action learning activity. Past engagement focused on youth movements. Current engagement is predominately based around COVID campaign. Most interesting example of working with social movements is the VOLANS (Elkington) support for XR and a draft government climate emergency bill) 	GREEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidating lessons learned from this year of action learning into a SG paper ‘GEC and social movements’ for Dec 2020
3	GEC Building the coalition: network function co-defined with hubs and being implemented. Partnership growth enabled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EC dialogue contract signed and in it there is a explicit activity to develop the hubs Brazil hub piloting the new approach 	GREEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To deliver the EC funded hub process
4	New funding pipeline strong with Tracker funded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority was given to securing E4N follow on (to end 2022 and EC dialogue renewal to July 2022). Achieved. GEC funding strategy and team in place New pitches for COVID campaign, Brazil Hub, and Dialogue match funding being pursued 	GREEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion to US foundations being scoped Launch of ‘inclusion paper’ on the value of dialogues to Government development funders

SG Advice on COVID opportunities for global influence. At a global level what are the priority institutions, forums, or agreements we should be targeting to ensure and green and fair recovery? Not discussed

6. AOB

NEXT GEC Steering group MEETING: Wednesday, 28th October 12.30pm-2pm, UK.

Appendix: GEC Forward calendarⁱ that maps above agenda items to a year of SG activity:

December: Annual review of strategy and partnership. - Global meeting agenda

February: Annual plan – calendar of events – priorities and targets for the year

April: Building the coalition – including funding

June: Big programme reviews and sign-off

August: Influencing, Tracker, E4N review, other policy areas

October: Telling the story and Barometer - context

December: global meeting strategy, partnership, annual plan review

Each meeting could have 5-minute standing agenda item on ‘horizon scanning’ – to identify big strategic issues

Individual SG members could volunteer to take the lead for particular items in the calendar. The advantage of a forward calendar is this should enable members’ forward planning.

ⁱ Forward calendar for SG meetings approved in December 2019