



Lunch Session

MYANMAR SPECIAL SESSION: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR GREEN GROWTH

Objectives

After the formation of a new administration in 2011, Myanmar has been seeking a new development model in which economic development, social equity and environmental conservation have been harmonised. This session gave an overview of current efforts towards green growth, and featured discussions on challenges and opportunities in the search for a leap-frogging type of development.

Eminent experts on the subject were invited to the session. Prof. Nay Htun is one of the key leaders of green growth in Myanmar, and Dr. Bindu Lohani represented the ADB which is one of the important developing agencies working in Myanmar. Mr. Kazuhisa Koakutsu also gave a presentation on IGES operations in Myanmar.

List of Speakers

[Moderator]

Hideyuki Mori, President, IGES

[Speakers]

Nay Htun, Professor, State University of New York, Stony Brook

Bindu N. Lohani, Vice-President, Knowledge Management and Sustainable Development,
Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Kazuhisa Koakutsu, Leader / Principal Policy Researcher, Climate and Energy Area, IGES

Key Messages

- **As the investment increases, Myanmar needs to be equipped with appropriate institutions and human resources for environmental management.**
- **As Myanmar is rich in natural resources such as forest, water and fossil fuels, it is imperative to use the resources wisely and sustainably.**
- **Myanmar's government is strongly committed to green economy and green growth at the highest level.**
- **Participation to Green Economy Green Growth (GEGG) is a good entry point to understand environment-related discussions in Myanmar.**

Summary of the Session

Prof. Nay Htun introduced the actions taken for a Green Growth in Myanmar.

- World investors are coming to Myanmar and window of opportunities are opening. Investment will massively increase over the next 5 years. Along with attracting investment, Myanmar needs to be equipped with appropriate institutions and human resources for environmental management.
- There is full commitment at the highest level governments in Myanmar to work on environment, including the President. This commitment is backed by some challenges and opportunities that Myanmar is facing, such as increasing labour productivity, preparing for urbanisation, and adding value to natural resources. With regards to urbanisation, lessons can be learned from Japanese cities, by reviewing historical examples of pollution damage in Yokohama and Kawasaki.
- Green Economy Green Growth (GEGG) Forum is a good opportunity as an entry point to participate in the discussion on environment. The third GEGG is taking place this November.
- "Centers of Excellence", to be established in every region of Myanmar, can serve as venues to showcase green technologies, develop human resource and conduct research and development. The first one will be established in Yangon.

Dr. Bindu Lohani then explained how ADB supports Myanmar.

- Strategic importance of Myanmar is about its location. The coastline is an important gateway to Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Northeast Asia. Myanmar is also rich in natural resources.
- ADB now has a project in Myanmar worth half a billion US dollars. ADB's main work in Myanmar is how to mainstream environmental issues into key sectors of development projects, such as agriculture, energy and urban development.
- ADB strongly advocates the necessity to build capacity in Myanmar and fully supports the idea of "Centers of Excellence" which can bring in experiences from other parts of Asia.

- Myanmar currently lacks good environmental laws and regulations. How to make these appropriate for Myanmar's context is a major challenge.
- ADB is conducting assessment on most renewable energy resources in Myanmar. Myanmar has more than 100 thousands megawatts potential in hydropower. ADB is now focusing on energy and can facilitate the introduction of overseas private sectors (Yangon, Mandalay, Sagain), while directly financing more public infrastructure such as power distribution. ADB also supports the development of a law on electricity.

Mr. Kazuhisa Koakutsu introduced the work of IGES in Myanmar.

- IGES participated in GEGG. The government and people in Myanmar are keen to gain knowledge and learning experiences from overseas. High-level commitment in Myanmar is impressive and very important to move forward.
- Many things can be done in cities in Myanmar, such as Yangon (e.g. reducing traffic jams) and Nay Pyi Taw (Bus rapid transit). Institutional building and capacity development present both major challenges and opportunities.
- IGES is organising a domestic working group on low-carbon Myanmar.

In the discussion, Mr. Hideyuki Mori shared his observation that rich natural and human resources are very important features of Myanmar. The country's strategic position in terms of geopolitical context should be considered. Then he asked Prof. Nay Htun for his comments on how a low-carbon pathway would be different from other areas, especially in the energy sector. Prof. Nay Htun commented that Myanmar has very rich natural resources and still relies on fossil fuels, but these have lower and lower carbon content. Off-grid supply of energy is a tremendous opportunity, and energy conservation and consumption should be carried out. Responding a question about whether Myanmar can be a good example for low-carbon development for other countries, he answered that Myanmar is the only country that had a persistent and strong military rule and subsequently experienced a peaceful transition. It is against this background that Myanmar could achieve a new type of leapfrogging. Related to the question, Dr. Bindu Lohani commented that economic growth in other countries had generated a great deal of inequality and this model of growth must not be repeated in Myanmar. Population increase and immigration from Great Mekong Sub-region presents a very good opportunity for regional cooperation in terms of bilateral opportunities.

There were two questions on how to set a best strategy for deforestation and what the situation is regarding political stability in Myanmar. Prof. Nay Htun explained that Myanmar had the best forest management system for nearly 200 years. Recently laws have been enacted and GEGG members are helping to establish remote sensing GIS systems. Regarding the second question, he commented that the government has signed peace accords with most of the country's ethnic groups. By 2015, there will be an election in Myanmar and whatever government is elected, it is unconceivable that Myanmar will return to the old regime. He gave reassurances that the private sector need not worry in that regard.