
Well-being as One of the Next Goals of the SDGs at the UN Summit of the Future

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About the UN Summit of the Future

The UN Summit of the Future, scheduled to be held in September 2024, is a significant event organized by the United Nations. The summit aims to strengthen cooperation on major global challenges and discuss the next global agenda for the SDGs, looking ahead to the UN's 100th anniversary in 2045.

In Japan, Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa emphasized the importance of well-being (a state of happiness and contentment) in her speech in the Diet, stating that "well-being is crucial for the post-SDGs agenda." Following this, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established an expert advisory panel to discuss the formulation of the "post-SDGs" (Nikkei Newspaper, June 4, 2024, "Foreign Minister Kamikawa: 'Well-being is important for the post-SDGs'").

The background of the Summit of the Future includes the UN's 75th-anniversary declaration in 2020, which called for international cooperation to address various global challenges such as inequality, poverty, hunger, armed conflicts, climate change, and pandemics. In 2021, UN Secretary-General António Guterres presented the "Our Common Agenda" report, proposing the acceleration of SDGs achievements and the promotion of the 75th-anniversary declaration.

At the summit, "Beyond GDP" is proposed as a key framework for the next global agenda of the SDGs. GDP is widely

used as an indicator of economic growth and distribution in countries, and its importance is undeniable. However, there has been long-standing debate that GDP is insufficient as an indicator of citizens' well-being and the sense of richness.

For instance, the "Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress" published in France in 2009 raised concerns that current statistics represented by GDP may not adequately capture the realities of economic and social life and suggested the need for appropriate indicators to measure societal happiness.

Following this trend, new indicators to measure well-being, such as the UN's "World Happiness Report" and the OECD's "Better Life Index" have been developed. The Beyond GDP framework has been proposed based on these studies and discussions.

About Beyond GDP

In the Beyond GDP framework, under the guidance of Secretary-General Guterres, existing organizations within and outside the UN are attempting to create a set of 10-20 indicators from data measuring countries' economic activities, social development, and environmental sustainability for the UN Summit of the Future.

The Beyond GDP framework consists of two main components: "outcomes" to be aimed at and "processes" that drive

sustainable change to achieve these outcomes (Material).

Material Foundational dimensions of a framework for Beyond GDP

2. **Respect for life and the planet:** Respect for life and the planet means protecting and conserving human beings, flora and fauna, and the natural environment, including



(Source) United Nations System (2022) “Valuing What Counts – United Nations System-wide Contribution on Progress Beyond Gross Domestic Product (GDP)”.

The three outcomes indicate key elements towards realizing an inclusive (leaving no one behind) and sustainable society, inheriting the spirit of the SDGs.

1. **Well-being and agency:** Well-being in this framework includes not only material and financial aspects but also health, safety, self-fulfillment, and social relationships. Agency refers to the ability to make autonomous life decisions and actively participate in society.

sustainability and biodiversity. This aligns with the concept of sustainability.

3. **Reduced inequalities and greater solidarity:** Inequality is considered in multiple dimensions, including economic, health, safety, education, social participation, economic stability, political participation, personal life, and self-expression. Solidarity refers to strengthening social bonds through shared interests, goals, and empathy to correct these inequalities.

The three processes to achieve these outcomes are as follows:

1. **Participatory governance and stronger institutions:** According to former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, "good governance means respecting human rights and the rule of law, strengthening democracy, and promoting administrative transparency and capacity." Effective governance requires robust national institutions, including government effectiveness, citizen political participation, the rule of law, and accountability.
2. **Innovative and ethical economies:** An innovative economy provides products and services that enhance people's well-being and sustainability. An ethical economy means maintaining ethical standards in both supply chains and value chains.
3. **From vulnerability to resilience:** Vulnerability refers to a state's susceptibility to stress and shocks due to various factors. Resilience means the ability to absorb shocks and recover, achieved through risk management and strengthening fundamental structures.

These processes aim to achieve the desired "outcomes."

Future Prospects for the Beyond GDP Framework

The UN proposes a political challenge to position the Beyond GDP framework as the next goal of the SDGs by 2025. According to the current schedule, informal consultations have been conducted from 2022 to the present in preparation for the

UN Summit of the Future in September 2024. The summit in September is expected to commit to setting a common vision and concrete targets. Until 2025, the agenda will be promoted with the involvement of stakeholders. After 2025, annual summaries and reviews every 3-5 years are planned.

As highlighted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' initiatives, Japan should actively participate in discussions on this framework. Reflecting East Asian values, such as the "Interdependent Happiness Scale" proposed by Professor Uchida of Kyoto University, in the Beyond GDP framework is important for enhancing Japan's well-being.

The UN Summit of the Future aims to strengthen international cooperation towards a more inclusive and sustainable future, considering these challenges and new indicators. The formulation of a new global agenda that prioritizes enhancing people's well-being, considering not only economic growth but also quality of life and environmental protection, is anticipated.

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