# Repository of Good Practices in Voluntary National Review (VNR) Reporting

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Introduction: VNRs as the cornerstone of the follow-up and review framework of the 2030 Agenda

When the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted, Member States of the United Nations committed to engage in the systematic follow-up and review of the implementation of the Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A key element of this follow-up and review architecture is the preparation of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and the presentation of their results to the international community at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). This mechanism has become one of the more innovative contributions of the current global development agenda.

The VNR process was established by General Assembly Resolution 67/290 adopted in 2013, defines the format and organization of the HLPF. The resolution determined that VNR reporting exercises would replace the voluntary national presentations held in the ECOSOC annual ministerial-level substantive reviews. The same resolution determined that the new mechanism would start operating in 2016. Paragraph 74 of the 2030 Agenda outlines the principles for the follow-up and review process.

VNRs are presented annually to the HLPF. Even though these reports are voluntary, 176 of the 197 members of the HLPF[1] have already submitted at least one VNR report. This equates to approximately 90 per cent of UN member States.

This repository identifies good practices resulting from an analysis of VNR Reports. It is intended to contribute to the national effort to conduct good national reviews and submit robust reports by learning from practice. It results from desk research analyzing 247 VNR reports submitted to the HLPF between 2016 and 2021. The author of the repository identified these good practices after considering:

- Alignment with the 2030 Agenda principles for implementing the SDGs;
- Alignment with the 2030 Agenda principles for reviewing and reporting exercises;
- Replicability and scalability of selected practices;
- Reported results arising from the selected practices;
- Consideration of the economic, social, and environmental dimensions under an Integrated Approach to Sustainable Development.

The repository contains examples of good practices from almost 100 developing and developed countries, small islands developing States, landlocked developing countries, least developed countries, and OECD members. It assumes that no

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[1] The UN currently has 193 member states, but the HLPF has 197 countries as full members. The HLPF operates under the so-called "all-state formula," including non-UN members who are members of UN specialized agencies (Resolution 67/290, paragraph 4): The Cook Islands, the Holy See, Niue, and the State of Palestine. The State of Palestine is the only one from this group that has submitted a VNR (in 2018).

country is too small or underdeveloped to have noteworthy experiences to share, and no country is too big or developed to have nothing to learn from others.

One important caveat to note is that a good practice should be understood in the context in which it takes place. Good practices should not be replicated without further analysis, and what may be a good practice in one country could produce different results in others. Nevertheless, the good practices outlined in this repository may provide a gateway to identify successful practices that could be adapted to local contexts and implemented accordingly.

The repository is organized in three parts, sub-divided into chapters. The first two parts aim at responding to possible support needs across VNR exercises, with part A focused on VNR report building and part B concentrated on how the reports reflect SDG implementation efforts. Part C, which refers to the effects COVID-19 pandemic, was included to link the VNRs, the Decade of Action, and the United Nations Secretary-General's appeal to Build Back Better in the response to the pandemic. The author has also included several "Recommendation Textboxes" with suggestions for building a VNR report.

As UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated, *"We must seize the opportunity of this crisis to strengthen our commitment to implement the 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. By making progress on our global roadmap for a more inclusive and sustainable future, we can better respond to future crises"* (Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19. Secretary-General's Report, page 2).

Transforming our world is still in our hands.

Part A: Good Practices in VNR Preparations

The future of humanity and of our planet lies in our hands. It lies also in the hands of today's younger generation who will pass the torch to future generations. We have mapped the road to sustainable development; it will be for all of us to ensure that the journey is successful and its gains irreversible. (2030 Agenda, paragraph 39)

Chapter 1. Contents of VNR Reports

The SDGs are at the core of the 2030 Agenda, which also includes a political declaration, principles for action, a chapter on means of implementation, and the establishment of a complete system for follow-up and review of progress.

The UN Secretary-General has published "Voluntary Common Reporting Guidelines", which seek to support countries in the preparation of their VNRs. The guidelines include suggestions on which issues to assess as part of the reports. By following the guidelines it is possible to compare VNR reports from different countries, as well as to chronologically compare VNR reports from the same country over time. This facilitates mutual learning and knowledge exchange.

While taking into account the 2030 Agenda and the Voluntary Common Reporting Guidelines, a number of critical themes emerge in addition to SDG progress:

- Balancing environmental, social, and economic dimensions of sustainable development;
- Highlighting links between SDG implementation and other international commitments in related areas, such as environment, financing for development, and human rights;
- Considering the 2030 Agenda principle of "leaving no one behind";
- Localizing VNRs to align them to the specific contexts, including the different capacities and challenges; and
- Developing VNR related communication strategies.

This first chapter provides examples of good practices on each of these themes.

1.1. REPORTING ON THE 2030 AGENDA AS A WHOLE

2030 Agenda: Member States committed to achieving sustainable development in an "integrated manner" (paragraph 2). VNRs will track SDG implementation progress in a manner that "respects their universal, integrated and interrelated nature and the three dimensions of sustainable development" (paragraph 74.b).

Finland frames the reported information around leaving no one behind, universality, multistakeholder joint work, and no silos principles. It also explicitly considers the intergenerational solidarity that arises from the Sustainable Development concept, follows a human rights-based approach, and makes reference to the planetary boundaries set by the Stockholm Institute. The report also includes specific chapters on means of implementation, implementation efforts made at different state levels, and integration of the Sustainable Development three dimensions.

The 2017 El Salvador report establishes links between the 2030 Agenda implementation process, climate and disaster vulnerability reduction, and efforts oriented to supporting vulnerable groups. It relates the 2030 Agenda implementation with international documents such as the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The report is framed from its introductory chapter, signed by the President of El Salvador, in a leave-no-one-behind perspective, considering the 2030 Agenda as an opportunity to launch a renewed dialogue among stakeholders.

BOX 1. SUGGESTIONS ON REPORTING ON THE 2030 AGENDA AS A WHOLE
- Consider the opportunity for explicitly framing the report around the principles of the 2030 Agenda such as leaving no one behind, universality, no-silos, multi-stakeholder joint implementation, human rights, and partnership promotion.
- Highlight possible links between implementation efforts and commitments made under the binding and non-binding international documents such as the Paris Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.
- It could be helpful to show connections between the VNR reports and other national reporting.

1.2. ALIGNMENT WITH THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES

Secretary-General's Voluntary common reporting guidelines for VNRs: "The guidelines apply to the preparation of both the first and subsequent VNRs. As part of the Decade of Action and Delivery for sustainable development, launched at the SDG Summit (the HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly) in September 2019, numerous countries are now preparing their second and subsequent VNRs, which provide a new and unique opportunity for all countries to learn from each other how to launch an ambitious and accelerated achievement of the SDGs" (Introduction).

Kenya submitted its first VNR report in 2017. It followed the suggested structure in the voluntary guidelines but did not include a chapter on eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity, However, the report provides a complete vision of the country's situation and efforts in an easy-to-read 75-page document.

A second report was submitted in 2020, and wholly followed the guidelines. The preparation of the second VNR report involved retreat by the State Department for Planning and Inter-Agency Technical Working Committee to domesticate the Secretary-General's voluntary reporting guidelines and resulted in the creation of "domesticated VNR guidelines."

BOX 2. SUGGESTIONS ON FOLLOWING THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S VOLUNTARY COMMON REPORTING GUIDELINES
- Consider using the SG's voluntary guidelines to frame your VNR process. They include easy steps to take.
- Pay attention to the guidelines suggested content for each chapter. It could facilitate your country's VNR process.
- The guidelines are voluntary and indicative. They are not rigid and do not need to be followed step-by-step. Consider adapting its contents to national needs and messages as part of the VNR report design process.

1.3. INTEGRATING THREE DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

2030 Agenda: Countries committed to achieving sustainable development "in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental" (paragraph 2). VNRs would track SDG implementation progress in a way "which respects their universal, integrated and interrelated nature and the three dimensions of sustainable development" (paragraph 74.b).

Originating from the need to implement comprehensive public policies within the framework of implementing the Paraguay 2030 National Development Plan and the Paris Agreement, the project "PROEZA: Poverty, Reforestation, Energy and Climate Change" combines poverty reduction, reforestation, renewable energy, and climate change fighting goals. This project, launched in 2021, supports households living in poverty and extreme poverty that decide to implement reforestation actions through monetary transfers, benefiting more than 17,000 families in 64 municipal districts. In addition, it grants preferential loans to natural and legal persons for investments aimed at generating biomass energy.

Both components are complemented by strengthening the national institutions responsible for protecting the environment to guarantee environmental laws

compliance. The Green Climate Fund finances the project, technically supported by the World Bank.

Bosnia and Herzegovina used a mixed technique to strengthen an integrated approach in its report. It combined an analysis based on the areas of critical importance—people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership—outlined in the preamble of the 2030 Agenda, with references to the three dimensions of sustainable development, and a study of the SDGs and their alignment with national development goals. The VNR report also highlighted connections between SDGs and international agreements. This contributed to a balance among the social, economic, and environmental dimensions in the analysis.

Romania adopted an original approach, adding culture as a fourth cross-cutting dimension. By highlighting culture as a core element in the 2030 national implementation efforts, the report bridges the environmental, social, and economic issues impacting SDG achievement. Thus, culture is explicitly considered in the goal-by-goal analysis, from education and economic growth to sustainable cities and environmentally friendly consumption and production patterns.

> BOX 3. SUGGESTIONS ON INTEGRATING THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
> - Try to ensure that the analysis of each goal includes the possible social, economic, and environmental impacts of actions.
> - Even if the decision is made to prioritize one of the three dimensions, giving attention to possible effects on the other dimensions would enrich the analysis.

1.4. LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

2030 Agenda: "A robust, voluntary, effective, participatory, transparent and integrated follow-up and review framework will make a vital contribution to implementation and will help countries to maximize and track progress in implementing this Agenda in order to ensure that no one is left behind" (paragraph 72).

The VNR identifies individual and collective barriers based on structural, institutional or cultural bias, and nine groups most at risk of being left behind: extremely poor, Not in Education, Employment, or Training youth, elderly, people

with disability, immigrants, prisoners, children and adolescents at risk, sexual minorities, highlighting how those groups and women and girls face intersectional risks.

The VNR identifies those groups' immediate, underlying, and structural causes of vulnerability and presents ongoing and to- be- developed government commitments to address them to guarantee full access to their rights for all the population.

Source: Kyrgyz Republic 2020 VNR

As part of the VNR process, an inter-institutional SDG working group conducted an assessment to identify groups furthest behind, the specific problems they face, and possible ways to address them. This work departed from national data analysis by focusing on identifying groups left behind. To that end, available country data was approached qualitatively to find nodes of difficulties faced by the most vulnerable. As such, the research identified vulnerabilities themselves as a cause of being left behind.

Source: Ethiopia 2017 VNR

Even though a chapter on "leaving no one behind" was not included in the Secretary-General's guidelines in 2017, Ethiopia decided to include it in its VNR that year. The chapter was split into four sub-chapters addressing the country's development plan and prioritized work areas, namely, financial inclusiveness, children's rights, road safety, and building a participatory system for SDGs monitoring.

> BOX 4. SUGGESTIONS ON INTEGRATING THE LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND PRINCIPLE
> - An essential prerequisite for integrating the leave no one behind principle is identifying the groups at risk of being left behind. Even though the 2030 Agenda identifies some of these groups in paragraph 23, each country should identify their own at-risk groups at the national level.
> - Looking at national priorities from the perspective of the principle to leave no one behind as part of the VNR exercise could help to frame the challenges that require urgent action.
> - While identifying groups at risk of being left behind, it could be useful to also identify blind spots in data availability, which prevent some groups from being identified as "at risk". Making every group visible in statistical terms is part of the challenge of leaving no one behind.

1.5. LOCALIZATION OF STRATEGIES

2030 Agenda: Governments committed "to fully engage in conducting regular and inclusive reviews of progress" at the subnational level (paragraph 77).

The Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) launched 27 reports for the localization of SDGs in different governorates. These reports are intended to be updated annually to document the progress of each governorate's efforts towards the SDGs achievement at the local level.

Indonesia has developed an approach to national SDG implementation that is firmly anchored at the local level. Their two VNR reports place high emphasis on local government and community led-implementation, as well as follow-up actions. Examples of local efforts are included under each SDG analysis. Based on local mid-term development plans and the 2030 Agenda alignment exercises, the reports highlight actions to promote stakeholder involvement in local SDG implementation governance, local priority identification, and local data system development.

BOX 5. SUGGESTIONS ON LOCALIZING THE 2030 AGENDA
- Engage local actors from the outset of the VNR process. It could be useful to ask them to identify promising local experiences in implementing the SDGs in their communities.
- Local communities have their leaders both inside and outside government institutions. It is important to identify and invite them to the VNR preparatory process.
- Localizing the 2030 Agenda requires data disaggregation. Investing in territorial data disaggregation could be included as part of localization efforts.

1.6. COMMUNICATING VNRs TO THE PUBLIC

2030 Agenda: As part of the follow up and review process, VNRs "promote accountability to our citizens" (paragraph 73).

The national government established partnerships with United Nations agencies in the fields of education and social development, among others, to promote citizenship awareness around the SDGs. In the same vein, a "Sustainability at the Heart of Public Policies" national day was held, informing citizens about opportunities to engage in the VNR preparatory process. In parallel, workshops for experts, media and journalists, and civil society were developed through governmental initiatives.

As a result, a national communication strategy was developed, utilizing media and digital coverage of the VNR preparatory process as the main channels to reach the broadest possible audience according to specific country characteristics.

BOX 6. SUGGESTIONS ON COMMUNICATION TO THE PUBLIC AROUND THE VNRS

- Conducting a VNR could be seen as an opportunity to expand public awareness of the 2030 Agenda. Including a communication component in the VNR strategy provides a critical step in that direction.
- Media, social networks, and influencers could replicate messages helping to keep the public informed on the evolution of the VNR process. It would be desirable to invite them to a focus meeting to explain the relevance of reporting to the HLPF and providing information on the process.
- Appointing a focal point for media and communications in the VNR process could help keep information circulating efficiently from the government to the public.

BOX 7. VNR ANALYSIS DEPTH: A TRICKY ISSUE

It is difficult to define good practices for the depth of analysis in VNR reports, because each country is unique, and situations may change dramatically, according to national capacities, resources, and data availability, among other variables. In spite of this, the following simple questions can help to define the VNR's analytical depth.

1. Does the VNR address the 2030 Agenda as a whole, or focus only on the SDGs?
2. Does the VNR follow the SG's Voluntary Common Reporting Guidelines?
3. Does the VNR explicitly consider the three dimensions of sustainable development as a cross-cutting issue?
4. Does the VNR link the 2030 Agenda with other global agendas and processes, such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, or the Human Rights Universal Periodic Review?
5. Does the VNR include an annex with easy-to-understand data? Is the data disaggregated as much as possible, considering each country's capabilities?
6. Does the VNR clearly present the next steps, challenges, and obstacles, followed by specific and well-explained requests of support to the international community?
7. If it is a second or subsequent VNR, does it build on the previous VNR? Does it report on progress in a dynamic way, illustrating the process instead of presenting only a static picture of the current national situation?

The frequency of "Yes" answers to these questions will determine the depth of the VNR analysis.

Chapter 2. Stakeholder Engagement

The level of ambition set by adopting the SDGs is impossible to meet through government actions and resources alone. To achieve the SDGs, all stakeholders must work together. States are called upon to lead and mobilize support for an open, transparent, and participatory processes of implementing and reporting on progress toward the 2030 Agenda.

This chapter presents good practices in awareness-raising, engaging stakeholders in reporting processes, and recognizing stakeholders' broad role as implementers of the SDGs. It also refers to good practices linked to the engagement of specific stakeholders, and illustrates actions taken in support of, or by, specific vulnerable groups.

2.1. MEANINGFUL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

2030 Agenda: Member States committed to building a revitalized Global Partnership to ensure implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This partnership would "facilitate an intensive global engagement in support of (the) implementation of all the Goals and targets, bringing together Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing all available resources" (paragraph 39). The same principle applies to the follow-up and review processes, characterized as being "open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people and will support reporting by all relevant stakeholders" (paragraph 74.d).

Source: Thailand 2021 VNR

The 2021 Thai VNR includes a chapter entitled "Views from All Sectors within Thai Society," which briefly presents the inputs provided by civil society and volunteer networks, youth, academia, and the private sector under three axis: Overall views on sustainable development, challenges, and recommendations.
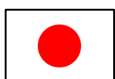
Source: Japan 2021 VNR

Japan encouraged every citizen to address the SDGs as their matter. Besides participating in lectures and events, contributing to publications, and disseminating information through the Internet, the government promoted and raised awareness through alliances with influencers such as "Hello Kitty" and media, entertainment, and transportation industries. These efforts have resulted in a high level of awareness of the 2030 Agenda in Japan: According to a survey conducted by Dentsu, as of April 2021, 54.2% of the population had become aware of the SDGs, up from 29.1% in the 2020 survey.

Source: Iraq 2019 VNR

The methodology followed by Iraq to prepare its VNR is explicitly linked with a nationally developed public set of guiding principles, consistently applied in each stage of the country review process. These principles reflect the Iraqi practical understanding of the 2030 Agenda follow-up and review commitments, referring to issues such as the adoption of international reporting standards to ensure the report quality and identifying those responsible for implementing the SDGs based on national laws and development planning documents.

The principles include elements that secure meaningful engagement of stakeholders in the VNR process, ensuring a voluntary and participatory approach, taking gender and differences among geographic areas into account to expand national ownership, and promoting high-level networking.

As a result, the VNR report preparation includes inputs directly provided by a broad spectrum of the Iraqi people, making gender, geographic area, and vulnerability the three most important inclusion criteria. This exercise was complemented by also inviting external partners to share their VNR preparation expertise.

Source: Jordan 2017 VNR

The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation led an exercise to design a strategy to strengthen non-State actors' engagement in SDG implementation. The strategy-building process considered the need to confront practices that could hinder the expected results, such as segregating the most marginalized groups from the discussions or only including the more powerful organizations.

As a result, the process was as expansive as possible. It resulted in the joint adoption of principles to guide Jordan's SDG adaptation to the national context, which was supported by multiple non-State actors.

BOX 8. SUGGESTIONS ON PROMOTION OF STAKEHOLDERS' MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT
- Establishing a strategy to promote stakeholder engagement is a promising first step, especially if stakeholders are invited to help design the process.
- To invite or consult stakeholders may not be enough to ensure their meaningful participation. Governments should avoid repeating widespread practices that inhibit real opportunities for small organizations to participate in the VNR process effectively.
- Efforts towards achieving meaningful participation go hand-in-hand with awareness-raising campaigns. They include providing support for organizations requiring human or economic capacity building, which will allow them to engage in the VNR process fully.

2.2. Engaging of supreme audit institutions and other relevant institutions

2030 Agenda: Member State reviews of progress at the national and subnational levels can be supported by "national parliaments as well as other institutions" (paragraph 79).

Source: Azerbaijan 2021 VNR

The Chamber of Accounts is Azerbaijan's Supreme Audit Institution. In 2020, it amended its mandate to incorporate SDGs. Thus, in 2020, the Chamber conducted the first performance audit, namely the "State Financial Control Measure on Assessment of Forest Management Activities of the Forest Development Service under the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan," which is following SDG15 indicators.

As a result, the Chamber acknowledges that forest management is of great social, public, economic, and cultural importance and has global significance in the context of climate change. Therefore, in addition to assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of forest development funds, lack of funding for forestry management should also be evaluated and more attention paid to the socio-economic significance of forests and greenery rather than the economy.

Source: Solomon Islands 2020 VNR

In 2018, the Office of the Auditor-General assessed the country's preparedness to implement the SDGs, analyzing national needs, resources, and capacities for their implementation, partnership mobilization, and risk management.

The findings of the Auditor-General's work, including recommendations on 2030 Agenda localization, were published as a "2018 Report of Office of the Auditor General on preparedness of SDGs implementation," and submitted to the Solomon Islands Parliament, as executive branch controller.

As a result, Solomon Islands' Office of the Auditor General engaged in the national review process from the outset, comprehensively documenting the process and guaranteeing that the resulting VNR report circulated among stakeholders.

Source: Hungary 2018 VNR

In 2008, well before the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, Hungary created the Office of the Ombudsman for Future Generations, tasked to advocate for the interests of future generations at the national level. Its mandate includes defending the right to a healthy environment, preserving physical and mental health in

connection with sustainable development, and protecting the environmental and cultural heritage of the nation.

During the VNR process, the Ombudsman supported non-state actor participation, advocated for inclusion of stakeholder inputs, and provided recommendations on specific SDGs included in the VNR report.
In doing so, the Office of the Ombudsman for Future Generations organized a civil society roundtable for the SDGs to enhance the national appropriation of the Goals and channeled the conclusions into the VNR report.

BOX 9. SUGGESTIONS ON ENGAGING SUPREME AUDIT INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER STANDING INSTITUTIONS
- The SDGs need to be implemented and monitored using principles agreed at the global level, such as promoting human rights and inclusiveness and breaking down silos, which requires a whole-of-government effort. Government oversight bodies play an essential role in securing this course of action.
- Including reports and recommendations of supreme audit institutions and the human rights ombudsman would strengthen the VNR process.

2.3. ENGAGEMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

2030 Agenda: "Governments and public institutions will also work closely on implementation with regional and local authorities" (paragraph 45). The 2030 Agenda encourages Member States "to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at national and subnational levels" (paragraph 79).

Source: Argentina 2020 VNR

Following the 2030 Agenda adoption the national government promoted a dialogue with and among provinces (sub-national administrations), signing agreements to jointly implement and follow up the SDGs at both federal and local levels. Governors established a Provincial Governments National Network for the SDGs, providing inputs to the VNR on local governments' efforts to implement the SDGs.

Source: Uganda 2020 VNR

Uganda's 2020 VNR report highlights contributions coming from the Ngora Voluntary Local Review Report (2020). Developed with the support of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the Ngora report renewed multi-stakeholder engagement and mobilization to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Africa's Agenda 2063 locally, increasing population ownership, and identifying areas in which progress is lagging.

Source: Jamaica 2018 VNR

Jamaica's local authorities participated in defining the National Development Plan "Vision 2030 Jamaica" and its implementation strategy, the "Medium-Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework (2018-2021)."

Local governments also joined the "Strengthening local government's role as a partner in development," a European Union-funded project to help local authorities build leadership, institutional and operational capacities to implement the SDGs.

The combined result of enhanced local capacities and open space for work at the national level was reflected in the adoption of new local sustainable development plans aligned with the national development plan and the 2030 Agenda.

BOX 10. SUGGESTIONS ON ENGAGING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS
- Including local representatives in national SDG implementation and monitoring governing bodies can strengthen SDG ownership and promote awareness-raising across the country.
- Supporting local planning can lead to increased tailored management of the SDG achievement-oriented actions, following specific local needs and priorities, thus accelerating the implementation process.

2.4. PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

2030 Agenda: The 2030 Agenda calls for Member States to implement the SDGs in partnership with stakeholders, expressly including the private sector (paragraph 39), and to conduct reviews of progress drawing on contributions from stakeholders, among which the private sector is explicitly mentioned (paragraph 79).

Source: Croatia 2019 VNR

The origin of the Croatian Corporate Social Responsibility Index dates back to 2007. Led by the Croatian Business Council for Sustainable Development and the Croatian Chamber of Commerce, it evaluates Croatian private firm performance in seven critical areas, namely: economic sustainability, the inclusion of corporate social responsibility in business strategy, work environment, environmental protection, market relations, community relations, and responsible diversity and human rights policies.

Since 2008, the results have been published as part of an award ceremony to recognize best performers. More than 500 participants from the private sector decided the winners of the price in 2020 through a poll.

Source: Denmark 2017 VNR

A business community initiative partnered with the national statistics office to identify better ways to measure the impacts of SDG-related initiatives. The final goal of this work was to create a multi-stakeholder-based dataset to support evidence-based decision-making and the preparation of the government's annual SDG progress review. The Danish business community also conducted research on how SDG implementation could be measured and reported in private companies' reports.

Box 11. Suggestions on Engaging the Private Sector
- The private sector should be an SDG implementing partner in multiple areas, and not merely a source for financial support. Goal-oriented planning and management, data, marketing and advertising are fields in which private enterprises could contribute based on solid previous experience.
- Identifying the private sector associations that are more active and show higher degrees of interest in sustainable development issues would be a practical first step to create partnerships for implementing the SDGs.

2.5. Civil Society engagement

2030 Agenda: The 2030 Agenda includes civil society as a partner to implement the SDGs (paragraph 39) and calls upon Member States to conduct reviews of progress drawing on contributions from stakeholders, including civil society. (p.79).

Source: North Macedonia 2020 VNR

The Eco-Logic project is a civil society initiative introduced as a "Sustainable Development School". High school students take part in sustainability camps and learn through face-to-face meetings, interactive tools, and educational games. It is an informal, youth-targeted, educational and awareness-raising experience, to motivate young students to engage in North Macedonian efforts towards achievement of the SDGs. The project allows students to be proactive in finding solutions to local ecological problems.

Source: Guatemala 2019 VNR

Guatemala has a long and well-established tradition of engaging stakeholders in policy making. Through an articulated "system of councils", from national to regional and local councils, the country's decision-making includes representatives of indigenous peoples, civil society, the private sector, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), academics, and farmers. Since the adoption of the

2030 Agenda, it is also the channel to include stakeholders in sustainable development implementation and follow-up activities.

Source: The Bahamas 2018 VNR

Localizing the SDGs also means engaging local communities. The Bahamas' "Over the Hill" project is an excellent example. 'Over the Hill' is located in Nassau, an economically depressed area with high unemployment and crime rates, low-income population, and outdated infrastructure. Local civil society, academia, private sector, and government joined forces to implement a comprehensive poverty alleviation pilot project to improve preschool education, solid waste management, water availability, and public park maintenance. Local actors were the main ones responsible for implementing project activities, which resulted in increased levels of local participation and ownership.

BOX 12. SUGGESTIONS ON ENGAGING CIVIL SOCIETY
- Recognizing civil society contributions to national SDG implementation in VNR reports promotes ownership and facilitates future dialogue. Ensuring a safe space for civil society work is a prerequisite for meaningful engagement and building mutual trust.
- Supporting civil society human and technical SDG-oriented capacity-building, while ensuring that they have the necessary economic capacities to engage in the VNR process meaningfully, is a necessary part of the government's role in leading multi-stakeholder SDG implementation and follow-up processes.
- Providing an open space in which civil society can include their national SDG implementation perspective in the VNR report and including civil society representatives in the official delegation at the HLPF are two practices increasingly used by governments.

2.6. ACADEMIA ENGAGEMENT

2030 Agenda: The 2030 Agenda includes civil society as a partner to implement the SDGs (paragraphs 45 and 52) and calls upon Member States to conduct reviews of progress drawing on contributions from stakeholders (paragraph 79).

Source: San Marino 2021 VNR

Delegated Decree no. 60 of 31 May 2012 considers San Marino University a critical gender empowerment promotion partner. The Decree entrusts the Department of Human Sciences of the University to organize training courses and awareness-raising campaigns on gender equality in coordination with the San Marino's Authority for Equal Opportunities.

Awareness-raising activities focused on different groups were addressed to citizens and included conferences, seminars, debates, and cultural initiatives such

as theatre performances and film discussions on gender issues and violence against women.

 Source: Israel 2019 VNR

The Nitsan Innovation Villages Program is an Israeli academy led by the University of Tel Aviv, aimed at promoting innovation and sustainability in developing economies by facilitating the adaptation of Israeli innovations to the needs of low-income populations.

Nitsan harnesses the resources of the entrepreneurial student community, bridging the Israeli innovation ecosystem and developing countries. Its graduate students are based in communities throughout the developing world, working together with local partner universities to develop data-driven and evidence-based processes adapted to local realities.

 Source: Dominican Republic 2018 VNR

Early in 2016, the Government of the Dominican Republic signed an agreement with the United Nations national office, the Dominican Association of University Deans, and the Dominican Association of Universities, creating a standardized way to work together in following and implementing the 2030 Agenda at the national level. As a result, academia is considered in the country report as a primary partner, fundamentally contributing to increasing availability of knowledge and depth of analysis.

BOX 13. SUGGESTIONS ON ENGAGING ACADEMIA
- Supporting the internationalization of universities could be a way to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.
- Creating or strengthening the science-policy interface in institutionalized spaces could facilitate permanent dialogue between the government and academia.

2.7. SPECIFIC VULNERABLE GROUPS

2030 Agenda: "People who are vulnerable must be empowered" (paragraph 23) and the 2030 Agenda follow-up and review processes at all levels will "have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind (paragraph 74.e).

 Source: Togo 2017 VNR

Promoting a sustainable industrialization processes is a national priority and increasing youth employment opportunities is considered critical in this regard. To create a win-win scheme involving government, the private sector, and youth,

a Youth Economic Initiative Fund was established to mobilize seed financial resources supporting young entrepreneurs.

Source: Zimbabwe 2017 VNR

Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the Ministry of Macro-Economic Planning and Investment Promotion launched consultative processes to prepare Zimbabwe SDG Position Paper. A group of persons with disabilities played an active role in the consultation, and disability became a cross-cutting issue in the country's second VNR. The support required by persons with disabilities is reflected in measures addressing gender equity promotion, access to safe, clean, and potable water, and fighting food insecurity. The VNR report also highlighted the challenge of increasing data disaggregation related to persons with disabilities.

Source: Thailand 2017 VNR

Thailand combines different vulnerability causes among children to achieve a more complex understanding and adjust policy responses. As a result, the Government established a system to inform teachers of the needs of their students. Teachers assume responsibility for helping them, preventing and reducing their out-of-school difficulties. This mechanism addresses children who are living in poverty, left behind, homeless, living in remote areas, must follow their parents to work, live with disabilities, or who have no permanent residence.

Source: Republic of Korea 2016 VNR

In 2014, the Republic of Korea adopted a three-year Plan for Economic Innovation. Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, it became a core strategy for strengthening the social safety net for those at risk of being left behind in the process of economic innovation, including women. The Plan sought to strengthen women's participation in economic activities and was the framework on which the government supported action to promote women's career development after the SDGs were adopted. It imposed regulations to ensure maternity leave and the mandatory provision of childcare services by companies with more than 500 employees.

Source: Norway 2016 VNR

Representatives of indigenous peoples provided input to the country's first VNR through previously established mechanisms. The Norwegian government and the Sámediggi (the Sami Parliament) dialogue can be highlighted as a key example. It departs from the 2005 agreement on procedures for consultation signed by the

government and the Sámediggi, strengthening the Sami people's voice in public decisions that could affect them directly. Consequently, the government has established that the Sámediggi must be consulted on any measures to reach the SDGs that may affect them.

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BOX 14. SUGGESTIONS ON SPECIFIC VULNERABLE GROUPS

- To develop national responses in support of vulnerable groups, it is helpful to combine data to identify cases of "multi-vulnerable" groups that can define more specific policy actions.
- Vulnerable groups do not need to be "provided with a voice." Instead, they require support and a willingness to listen.
- Supporting vulnerable group measures should be included as part of general development planning, sometimes requiring special strategy documents focusing on particular group needs. This is critical when vulnerability is linked to social group invisibility in social policy planning and implementation due to insufficient data disaggregation.

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2.8. FACILITATING MULTISTAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

2030 Agenda: Follow-up and review processes would "support reporting by all relevant stakeholders" (paragraph 74.d).

 Source: Benin 2017 VNR

To ensure inclusive reporting, Benin has created a Coordination, Monitoring, and Evaluation mechanism led by a Steering Committee made up of representatives from the Government, the National Assembly, technical and financial external partners, academia, the private sector, civil society, trade unions, local governments, womens' federations, associations of persons with disabilities, and youth. The Steering Committee reports directly to Benin's President.

 Source: Malaysia 2017 VNR

The country established a multi-stakeholder, participatory governance structure helmed by a National SDG Council chaired by the Prime Minister. The Council's work is organized in five SDG Cluster Working Committees, including representatives of government, civil society, the private sector, academia, United Nations agencies, and youth.

This inclusive governance approach responds to the Eleventh Malaysia (Development) Plan 2016–2020, which is in line with the 2030 Agenda and stresses the country's need to move to a new and more participatory paradigm of government by citizens.

Chapter 3. Building data-based VNRs

According to the 2030 Agenda, the follow-up and review process must be "rigorous and based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts."

Availability is only one part of the data challenge. The quality of data is the second, and strengthening national statistical systems is the third. None of them will be complete if countries fail to communicate data in an open and understandable way.

This chapter underlines experiences related to data visualization, using non-official data sources, and including data annexes to show progress towards the SDGs.

3.1. ENGAGEMENT OF NATIONAL STATISTICAL OFFICES

2030 Agenda: VNRs will be "rigorous and based on evidence" (paragraph 74.g).

Source: Zimbabwe 2021 VNR

Responding to COVID 19 challenges to collect data through face-to-face interviews, the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency partnered with the World Bank and UNICEF to design the "Rapid PICES Monitoring Telephone Survey," a high-frequency telephone household survey to measure national socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.

Based on two survey rounds conducted between July and December 2020, the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency launched the "Zimbabwe COVID-19 Monitoring Dashboard" publicly on its website (https://zimbabwe.opendataforafrica.org/jfrsplc/covid-19).

The UK Government's Department for International Development led the coordination of the Voluntary National Review, working closely with the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the UK's national statistical agency. The early engagement of the ONS in the VNR building guaranteed data remained a central feature along the entire process.

3.2. MONITORING AND DATA VISUALIZATION

2030 Agenda: VNRs would be informed by high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable, and disaggregated data (paragraph 74.g).

'Statistics Estonia' developed a 'Tree of Truth,' an open data dashboard for national strategic program monitoring, including the Estonian National Strategy on Sustainable Development and the National Development Plan, 'Estonia 2035.'

This tool presents information on the country's progress towards the achievement of its goals as a 'tree-shape' data visualization in which branches represent core topics, its leaves are subtopics related to the branch, and leaf colors show the level of progress made towards the achievement of goals linked to them, making its navigation intuitive and accessible both for experts and non-experts.

The country VNR report uses a traffic light system of colors to quickly present the situation of progress, stagnation, or setback for each indicator, plus grey color to indicate a lack of data. A table in the report shows the complete picture in one image. Another illustration shows the relationship between SDGs, national development plan expected outcomes, and LDCs graduation criteria. The analysis of each goal contains graphics presenting key statistics on its current situation.

BOX 16. SUGGESTIONS ON DATA VISUALIZATION
- Using traffic lights or symbols to present the situation and evolution of SDGs and their targets could make information more understandable for non-experts, thus promoting overall accountability and inclusion.
- Including graphics and codes to follow on progress of goals and indicators over a period of time could help to improve reflecting different processes in the VNR reports instead of only presenting the current situation.

3.3. USING DATA ANNEXES TO SHOW PROGRESS TOWARDS THE SDGs

2030 Agenda: VNRs will be "rigorous and based on evidence" (paragraph 74.g).

Source: Czech Republic 2021 VNR

The Czech Republic includes a short annex in which instead of presenting statistics provides explained links to SDGs progress related data sources and reports such as the 2030 Agenda indicators official monitoring site (http://www.sdg-data.cz/), the national reports on sustainable development in the Czech Republic, the OECD's Czech Republic's progress in meeting SDGs assessment, the Bertelsmann Foundation annual Sustainable Development Report, and the Eurostat monitoring report, among others.

Source: Bulgaria 2020 VNR

The SDGs official national data is presented in an annex of the VNR report. Where data gaps are identified, the report turns to complementary data sources such as the Eurostat database, the European Patent Office, the OCDE, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat, and UNICEF. Measurement results are displayed as graphics showing the trajectory for each indicator between 2010 and the last year with available data, usually 2018. This facilitates a process perspective understanding of its evolution. Each illustration also has a brief text explaining its contents in understandable, layman's terms.

Source: Latvia 2018 VNR

Latvia 2018 Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals Report to the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

Latvia's VNR report statistical annex presents data for the SDG targets complemented by a simple system to assess trends, assigning one of three possible scores to each target. A '1' is allotted to indicators where movement is compatible with the progress required to meet the national development plan and the country's national SDG targets, on time. A score of '0' indicates that there have been minor changes, be it positive or negative. Finally, '-1' shows a consistent negative trend.

3.4. USING NON-OFFICIAL DATA SOURCES

2030 Agenda: VNRs would be informed by high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable, and disaggregated data (paragraph 74.g).

Source: Sierra Leone 2021 VNR

To face COVID-19 effects, Sierra Leone adopted a Health Sector Response Plan, including the planned cost to robustly respond to pandemics within the sector, capturing Government and partners commitments. It features the financing response gap in the early stage of the pandemic crisis. A table in the VNR shows the needs, financing availability, and the gap between them.

Source: Kazakhstan 2019 VNR

The country VNR data was prepared by an interagency working group including representatives from the government, civil society, international organizations, the private sector, and independent experts, under the supervision of the Committee on Statistics of the Ministry of National Economy. Consequently, the final dataset includes inputs from official and non-official sources. Among the last, we could mention data from the Economic Research Institute of the Akhmet Yassawi University on SDG coverage in national Planning documents, and the State Republican Enterprise 'Kazhydromet' on country water resources.

Source: Uganda 2016 VNR

In its first VNR, Uganda includes information on the establishment of a partnership between the government and the Pulse Lab Kampala2, a UN initiative to monitor progress of Uganda's progress towards the SDGs through real time data tools. The Pulse Lab Kampala produced information from data taken from social media and SMS text messages.

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[2] More information on Pulse Lab Kampala work is available at https://www.unglobalpulse.org/lab/kampala/

Chapter 4. Identification of gaps and challenges

The next chapter addresses questions which are often omitted from VNR reports. Why was a challenge considered a priority? How was the decision on identifying key priorities made? How is a specific challenge blocking sustainable development advancement? Is it affecting the three dimensions of sustainable development? Does the challenge adversely affect the most vulnerable groups? This level of detail is not always included in VNR reports but the following good practices could assist with its inclusion in future reports.

4.1. IDENTIFYING AND PRESENTING GAPS

2030 Agenda: VNRs would be "rigorous and based on evidence" (paragraph 74.g).

Source: Cyprus 2021 VNR

In Cyprus, the Directorate-General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development (DG EPCD) of the Ministry of Finance conducted a mapping exercise in cooperation with line Ministries responsible for leading each goal implementation.

This mapping exercise enabled the DG EPCD to obtain a clearer picture of policies and strategies in place and the extent to which they address the 2030 Agenda complete set of targets, identifying policy gaps for different SDG.

Source: Papua New Guinea 2020 VNR

Based on the National Demographic and Health Survey 2016-2018 complemented with a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, the country identified substantial development gaps, from bank account ownership and access to clean fuels to complete secondary education and access to basic sanitation.

In its first VNR report, submitted in 2016, Mexico presented information on territorial-based gaps (between regions and federated states) without providing more detail. As part of Mexico's second report, submitted in 2018, it included an analysis of inequality gaps associated with each Goal in a much more straightforward way. It refers, for example, to a "salary gap of 5.1 per cent between women and men" and highlights that the ten richest Mexicans have the same wealth as the poorest 50 per cent. As a result, the second VNR Report looks more robust than the previous one, demonstrating progress made by the country in identifying and measuring gaps.

BOX 19. SUGGESTIONS ON IDENTIFYING AND PRESENTING GAPS
- Identify gaps by using data in order to understand their depth.
- The UN system provides support to countries to improve data collection and analysis (see chapter 5.1).

4.2. IDENTIFYING AND PRESENTING CHALLENGES

2030 Agenda: VNRs would "maintain a longer-term orientation, identify achievements, challenges, gaps and critical success factors and support countries in making informed policy choices" (paragraph 74.c).

Source: India 2020 VNR; India 2017 VNR

The chapter on "leaving no one behind," was written by civil society. It identifies vulnerable groups, analyzing their situation, highlighting challenges, and recommending actions to be taken. Thus, concrete challenges for each group are identified and possible solutions are proposed. This methodology is a significant progression from 2017 India's first VNR report, which only identified general challenges.

Source: Egypt 2016 VNR

Stating the path towards achieving the SDGs encompasses local, regional, and global challenges requiring pooling and coordinating efforts, Egypt's VNR identifies three primary factors affecting SDG implementation: political will, mainstreaming of the SDGs in planning processes, and resource mobilization. The report identifies challenges in each area at the national, regional, and global levels.

4.3. REQUIREMENT OF EXTERNAL SUPPORT

2030 Agenda: "The revitalized Global Partnership will facilitate an intensive global engagement in support of implementation of all the Goals and targets" (paragraph 60). The SDGs "can be met within the framework of a revitalized Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, supported by the concrete policies and actions outlined in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda" (paragraph 62).

Source: Philippines 2019 VNR

This VNR report includes a chapter on "How the International Community Can Help", identifying which areas require external support to meet the SDGs. Areas include leveraging ICT to reduce the digital divide and inequalities, facilitating international technology transfer to accelerate the empowerment of vulnerable sectors, dedicating development assistance to address subnational development gaps, and helping to close environmental protection financing gaps. This provides a clear guide of needs of the country to possible partners.

Chapter 5. Good practices regarding UN system support to VNRs

The United Nations Development System is deeply involved in supporting VNRs. Tools to help SDG follow-up and implementation at the national level were developed by UN Regional Commissions, as well as by UN agencies, funds, and programmes, and shared with governments. The UN also facilitates dialogue among stakeholders using its convening power, in order to create space for peer

learning and knowledge sharing, and to support linking sub-national, national, regional, and global levels of implementation.

5.1. AT GLOBAL LEVEL

2030 Agenda: "We have mapped the road to sustainable development; it will be for all of us to ensure that the journey is successful and its gains irreversible" and "They will benefit from the active support of the United Nations system and other multilateral Institutions". (paragraphs 74.b and 74.i).

Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs' capacity-development work builds on its analytical expertise and access to networks of global experts, state-of-the-art knowledge, and good practices on sustainable development. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, DESA has collaborated with multiple partners to develop innovative approaches, methodologies, models, and analytical tools to address capacity gaps of countries and support the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. Each year, all VNR reporting countries are invited to global VNR workshops organized by DESA to support VNRs building.

Source: Executive Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations; 2019 SDG Summit Political Declaration

In the 2019 SDG Summit Political Declaration, Member States called the Secretary-General "to organize an annual moment to highlight inspiring action on the Goals, in the context of the general debate of the General Assembly" (paragraph 26). The first SDG moment took place in 2020, immediately before the UN General Assembly General Debate, which aimed at:

- Defining a vision for the Decade of Action and Delivery for sustainable development and recovering better from COVID-19;
- Providing a snapshot on SDG progress;
- Highlighting plans and actions to tackle major implementation gaps;
- Demonstrating the power and impact of action and innovation by SDG stakeholders.

Consequently, the SDG moment complements the VNR process. It provides space to underline the importance of strengthening links between SDG implementation COVID-19 response and recovery plans.

Source: Germany 2016 VNR

Germany's 2016 VNR report states that the German Council for Sustainable Development supports the international networking of councils for sustainable development and similar stakeholders. Germany has actively promoted the establishment of a Global Forum for National SDGs Advisory Bodies, a multi-stakeholder network of national councils for sustainable development, commissions, and similar multi-stakeholder bodies. The Global Forum was created in 2019 as part of the HLPF side events.

5.2. At regional level: Sharing experiences on VNR preparations

2030 Agenda: "Follow-up and review at regional and subregional levels can, as appropriate, provide useful opportunities for peer learning, including through voluntary reviews, sharing of best practices and discussion on shared targets" (paragraph 80).

Source: United Nations Regional Commissions and United Nations Development System regional and subregional offices

The five UN Regional Commissions play a crucial role in VNR preparation. Each commission, supported by UN DESA and UNDS entities working at regional levels, holds an annual Regional Sustainable Development Forum, and most also include a regional VNR workshop. These Forums are a central piece of SDGs implementation at the regional level, promoting multi-stakeholder dialogue and knowledge exchange. Each forum hosts technical meetings between countries that reported to the HLPF in previous years and countries committed to future reporting, to share lessons learned and good practices.

Source: Panama 2020 VNR

Panama's VNR refers to its participation in the "Regional Workshop on Voluntary National Reviews in Latin America and the Caribbean," convened by the Office of the Executive Director of ECLAC in the framework of Latin America and The Caribbean Countries Regional Forums for Sustainable Development. This technical meeting brings together officials from current and previous reporting countries, along with UN and non-UN experts on the 2030 Agenda reporting process, to facilitate peer-to-peer learning. Similar arrangements occurred in other regional forums.

5.3. At national level: Support provided by UN Country Teams

2030 Agenda: "Follow-up and review processes (…) will benefit from the active support of the United Nations system" (paragraph 74.i).

Source: Kingdom of Tonga 2019 VNR

The Tonga 2019 VNR report states that the country has applied a Rapid Integrated Assessments (RIA) methodology to the analysis of the Tonga Strategic Development Framework, to align that strategy with the Addis Abba Action Agenda, the SAMOA Pathway, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and regional established frameworks. The UN Tonga country team provided the necessary human and technical resources to conduct the assessments.

BOX 22. SUGGESTIONS ON WORKING WITH THE UNITED NATIONS IN YOUR VNR PROCESS
- Partnering with the United Nations Development System can be helpful for the VNR process. The UN experience, convening power, data, tools, and workshops all support and enrich the VNR process and its outcomes.
- Participating in UN regional and global meetings related to SDG implementation and follow-up can increase reviewing and reporting efforts, findings, and visibility at the national, regional, and international levels.
- Participating in the UN DESA global VNR workshops can provide specific guidance and support to the development of the VNR and its roadmap.

Part B: Good Practices in reporting implementation efforts

Chapter 6. Validation process of VNRs

VNR preparation processes and their reporting of results to the HLPF are more robust when validated by different government branches, specifically in the application of the checks and balances and by including non-governmental stakeholders. External peer reviewing is not an extended practice in VNR preparations, but it could be promoted to improve their quality.

6.1. BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT: EXECUTIVE BRANCH

2030 Agenda: The 2030 Agenda follow-up and review of implementation would "foster exchanges of best practices and mutual learning" (paragraph 73).

Source: Nigeria 2020 VNR

In Nigeria, the President engaged personally in creating a participatory mechanism for 2030 Agenda implementation. It started by creating an office within the Presidency, appointing a Senior Special Assistant of the Presidency on SDGs. Afterwards, by Presidential decision, an Inter-Ministerial Committee was created to ensure government coordination, followed by the establishment of a non-State actor advisory group under the Inter-Ministerial Committee, liaising the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs.

6.2. BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT: LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

2030 Agenda: Member countries acknowledged "the essential role of national parliaments through their enactment of legislation and adoption of budgets and their role in ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of our commitments" (paragraph 45).

Source: Georgia 2020 VNR

In June 2019, Parliament adopted a 'Strategy for Supporting and Monitoring SDGs national implementation'. With technical assistance from UN in-country agencies, parliamentarians developed the "youth policy concept 2030", which is the main document determining youth policy development in the country for the next ten years. Additionally, this legislative body joined the Open Government Partnership to promote accountable practices, resulting in its building infrastructure adaptation to the needs of people with physical and sensory disabilities, as well as a customized Parliament website for users with disabilities.

6.3. BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT: JUDICIARY BRANCH

2030 Agenda: The follow-up and review of implementation will "foster exchanges of best and mutual learning" (paragraph 73).

Source: Costa Rica 2020 VNR

The country's Judiciary Brunch signed the "National Pact for the SDGs" in 2016. To institutionalize its commitment, it created an SDGs promotion governance scheme led by the President of the Supreme Court of Justice. As a result, the Supreme Court adopted a Declaration of Institutional Interest of the SDGs, encouraged judicial bodies to promote SDGs compliance into their annual budgets, and aligned the Supreme Court of Justice jurisprudence with the SDGs. The Judiciary also publishes an annual Voluntary Accountability Report on progress in implementing the SDGs.

6.4. GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO ENSURE STAKEHOLDERS PARTICIPATION

2030 Agenda: Follow-up and review processes will be "participatory and transparent for all people" (paragraph 74.d).

Source: Samoa 2020 VNR

As part of the VNR, the government of Samoa organized a multi-stakeholder "data validation week," which was considered to be critical to defining the dataset on which reported information was based. Before the meetings, national

authorities shared a draft indicator matrix across government, civil society, and private sector stakeholders for input. Consultations led to a participatory discussion and validation of the existing data. This helped to identify better data produced by different actors of the Samoan data community. The data presented in the VNR report is thus the result of a multi-stakeholder validation and enrichment process.

> **BOX 23. SUGGESTIONS ON VALIDATING VNRS**
> - Incorporating the validation process as part of the VNRs since the beginning of their planning exercises could help integrate them more coherently and transparently.
> - Creating multi-stakeholder bodies tasked to validate VNR processes and results could contribute towards achieving stronger outputs and ownership.

6.5. PEER REVIEW ENGAGEMENT OF INDEPENDENT REVIEWERS, OTHER COUNTRIES, OR ACADEMIA AS PEER REVIEWERS

2030 Agenda: Follow-up and review processes will be "participatory and transparent for all people" (paragraph 74.d).

Source: Norway 2021 VNR

Norway conducted a peer review with the Governments of Denmark and Indonesia. The peer review was done based on a draft report. As a result, Norway received several recommendations and questions that were considered in its final report. The VNR includes the text of the suggestions received by the Norwegian government from their peer-reviewers.

Source: Republic of Vanuatu 2019 VNR

The Vanuatu 2019 VNR report was the first to be peer-reviewed. The government gathered a review team that analyzed the first draft of the VNR, providing feedback and recommendations. Senior officials from Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Australia, and a civil society representative from Fiji integrated the review team, assisted by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. Reviewers held consultations with the Vanuatuan government, civil society, the private sector, and international development partners. The final document produced by the experts was shared with all the interviewees to ensure transparency and accountability of the process.

Chapter 7. Reflecting national implementation of the 2030 Agenda in VNRs

Establishing governance mechanisms and clear national priorities, including tangible and measurable impacts of actions in development planning documents, and ensuring coherence among national and global policies are essential steps towards implementation of the 2030 Agenda. While institutional setup and priority setting have advanced considerably since the first round of VNRs in 2016, impact measurement and policy coherence often lag.

7.1. INSTITUTIONAL SETUP

2030 Agenda: "The new Agenda recognizes the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies (based) on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions" (paragraph 35).

Source: Afghanistan 2021 VNR

Based on Rapid Integrated Assessment results, the Ministries of Economy and Finance established a joint task force to align National Priority Programs (NPPs) with SDGs. The task force reviewed each of those programs working together with line ministries tasked with oversight and implementation. The task force subsequently developed a matrix to align the National Priority Programs with SDGs by integrating NPPs results with the relevant 2030 Agenda targets and indicators. Task force outcomes identified the thematic contribution of NPPs to each SDG and aligned NPPs' thematic areas with SDGs' targets, clustering the result in budgetary sectors: agriculture, health, education, economy, social protection, infrastructure, security, and governance to facilitate its integration into fiscal planning.

Source: Cabo Verde 2018 VNR

Cabo Verde defined its SDG implementation national governance on lessons learned during the years of the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015), underscoring the importance of creating a permanent mechanism to implement and follow up on progress. The report points out that institutionalization should not jeopardize national Public Administration by putting pressure on its resources and capabilities. Consequently, the country opted for a small, inclusive, and high-level led mechanism comprised of representatives from key ministries, parliament, local governments, civil society, the private sector, and academia in one main political orientation body, supported by the National Planning Directorate's technical capacities.

 Source: Chile 2017 VNR

In its first VNR, Chile presented information on the establishment of its National Council for the 2030 Agenda Implementation in 2016. The second VNR explained that the National Council decided to strengthen its structure based on a governance review exercise. The body incorporated the President's General Secretary as a new member, created an inter-sectoral governmental group to promote government coherence, assumed responsibility for presenting a 2030 Agenda Implementation Strategy to the President, and led VNR report preparations. Stakeholder participation was channeled across advisory councils.

BOX 24. SUGGESTIONS ON INSTITUTIONAL SET UP

- Even though there is no "one-size-fits-all" governance of national SDG implementation, some core elements could be considered, such as a high-level political leadership; whole-of-government approaches to promote coherence; multilevel and meaningful multi-stakeholder participation; inclusion of representatives from all three dimensions of sustainable development; and providing a governance structure with sufficient financial and human resources.

7.2. SETTING NATIONAL PRIORITIES

2030 Agenda: Follow-up and review processes will "respond to national circumstances, capacities, needs and priorities" (paragraph 74.f). "All of us will work to implement the Agenda within our own countries and at the regional and global levels (…) respecting national policies and priorities" (paragraph 21).

 Source: Palestine 2018 VNR

A National SDG Team leads the 2030 Agenda implementation in the State of Palestine. Its responsibilities include determining sustainable development priorities and integrating them within the national framework for planning. Twelve multi-stakeholder SDG work groups support its efforts, each with a focal point. Together, the focal points identified SDG priorities based on factors such as population needs, resource availability, the national planning timeframe, and service-providing restrictions resulting from Israeli presence in the field. Thus, SDG prioritization became aligned to national development through a multi-stakeholder process led by the government, and based on real opportunities, as well as financial and operational constraints.
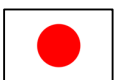
 Source: Japan 2017 VNR

Japan's government organized a series of multi-stakeholder roundtables aimed to review the 2030 Agenda commitments on national implementation. Based on their results, the country adopted its SDGs Implementation Guiding Principles,

representing Japan's national strategy to address the critical challenges for implementing the 2030 Agenda, including the definition of national priorities.

The Guiding Principles set by Japan establish that the international effects of domestic efforts should be considered, placing human security at the center of Japan's development cooperation. Based on the participatory nature of any 2030 Agenda implementation effort, the government commits to publicly disclose regular assessments on the national advancement of SDG implementation.

Finally, the principles assume that based on the Goals' indivisibility, the work should enhance synergies among policies.

> BOX 25. SUGGESTIONS ON SETTING NATIONAL PRIORITIES
> - It is important to ensure that national priorities are established as a result of participatory exercises, led by governments as the focal point for the country's development.
> - While prioritizing goals and targets, it is necessary to consider existing economic, social, and environmental constraints and the convenience of establishing short-, mid-, and long-term priorities.

7.3. ANALYZING STRATEGIES AND THEIR IMPACTS

2030 Agenda: Follow-up and review processes will be "rigorous and based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and data" (paragraph 74.c).

Source: Nepal 2020 VNR

Nepal's VNR report highlights national efforts in linked with SDG implementation, policy planning, and the National Evaluation Policy. The government leads yearly evaluation networking meetings, including representatives from government agencies, professional evaluators' organizations, UN agencies, training institutions, and academia. Supporting this effort, the House of Representatives adopted a Monitoring and Evaluation Bill, and a National Planning Commission developed frameworks for policy impact measurement at the subnational level.

Source: Spain 2018 VNR

This VNR analyses the impacts of the country's foreign policy in SDG achievement outside Spain, considering the international effects of its national policies. Consequently, Spain has developed an SDG impact analysis for legislative initiatives, including external and global impact, and extended its foreign policy impact assessment to include the SDGs. A forecast analysis on SDG impact is included in the country partnership framework with third states.

7.4. SDGs ORIENTED BUDGETING

2030 Agenda: "Public finance, both domestic and international, will play a vital role in providing essential services and public goods and in catalyzing other sources of finance" (paragraph 41).

Source: Colombia 2018 VNR

The second VNR report from Colombia extensively presents a national data analytics tool developed by the National Planning Department to track, collect, and systematize budget information, intending to quantify each public sector spending area's contributions to the SDGs. The same fund allocation analysis applies to incoming international cooperation resources and subnational budgeting.

Source: Belize 2017 VNR

The Ministry of Finance developed a program budgeting initiative to monitor specific ministry performance in goal and objective attainment. The program calls on ministries to align their budgets to the Belizean Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy in a national SDGs monitoring mechanism. Accordingly, ministerial requirements for new budget allocations or changes in budgetary lines should be based on indicators design, monitoring, and reporting.

Chapter 8. The presentation/layout/drafting of a VNR report

Reporting on VNR findings is not only beneficial for the international community; it is also primarily for informing the reporting countries' citizens, and thus it should particularly reach segments of the population that are at risk of being left behind. Conducting inclusive report drafting processes, using different available communication channels, and including graphics to simplify complex information could facilitate and increase access by various social group to VNR results. The VNR is therefore a tool for transparency and accountability, as well as supportive of national democratic principles in many countries.

8.1. DRAFTING A VNR REPORT

2030 Agenda: Follow-up and review processes will be "open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people and will support reporting by all relevant stakeholders" (paragraph 74.d).

Source: Madagascar 2021 VNR

Madagascar's 2021 report-building process was participatory and inclusive. Its actions were coordinated by the national SDGs Technical Committee and divided into three stages: 1. Preparatory work, awareness-raising, and organizational aspects; 2. Data collection, validation, and analysis; and 3. Preparation of expected products.

The first step was to raise awareness about the review's relevance within government institutions to ensure the whole government's commitment to the process. Subsequently, a questionnaire was shared with all ministerial departments. Results were processed during a three-day face-to-face and online consultation multistakeholder workshop, including the association of people with disabilities, private sector representatives, civil society, and the United Nations system in the country. In addition, documentary investigation allowed the identification of 67 evaluation reports previously carried out in Madagascar, recovering information from 51 of them, providing coherence in Madagascar's international reporting exercises.

Source: Greece 2018 VNR

The Greek Economic and Social Committee was established to promote stakeholder consultation on the SDGs, working under a tripartite structure representing the interests of employers, entrepreneurs, public and private sector employees, and other interest groups. It is led by an Executive Committee, which serves as the main channel to share the government VNR draft report with stakeholders and receive their comments on each SDG's analysis. The Committee

organized and communicated inputs to the Greek Office of Coordination, Institutional, International, and European Affairs, which was in charge of writing the VNR report. The Office also maintained consultations on issues to be prioritized with focal government stakeholders such as the Central Union of Municipalities and the Association of Greek Regions, which provided input directly to the Office.

Source: Guinea 2018 VNR

The government created an intergovernmental Technical Secretariat to draft the report. Working with United Nations system support, it shared a VNR first draft with stakeholders in a two-day open national consultation workshop, to analyze and refine its content. Clarifications and recommendations resulting from the workshop were included by the Secretariat in a revised version, which was shared with stakeholders again for further input, and then refined and submitted to the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation for its formal adoption.

BOX 28. SUGGESTIONS ON DRAFTING A VNR REPORT.
- Drafting a VNR Report is one of the most sensitive parts of the reporting process. It is the responsibility of both government and non-governmental actors to ensure that all voices are heard. Pre-existing dialogue channels with stakeholders represent a potential collaborative VNR drafting tool. When those channels do not exist or do not fit the requirements, establishing an open and participatory mechanism for input provision needs to be included in the VNR planning process.

8.2. USE OF GRAPHICS TO INDICATE PROGRESS AND SETBACKS IN SDG IMPLEMENTATION

2030 Agenda: "Operating at the national, regional and global levels, [follow-up and review processes] will promote accountability to our citizens" (paragraph 73).

Source: Ukraine 2020 VNR

Ukraine's VNR starts each specific SDG analysis with a graphic displaying the country's current achievement of its targets and whether its full achievement is within reach. Each illustration is developed using a visual color-coded table, which shows each indicator's progress, stagnation, or setback, contrasting it against benchmarks to be attained by 2025 and 2030.

8.3. EFFORTS TO MAKE VNR REPORTS FULLY ACCESSIBLE TO VULNERABLE GROUPS

2030 Agenda: Follow-up and review processes will be "people-centred, gender-sensitive, respect human rights and have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind" (paragraph 74.e).

Source: Pakistan 2019 VNR

In 2018, global and national disabled people's organizations in Pakistan partnered to publish a "Pakistan Disability Perspective VNR report." The Ministry of Planning, Development, and Reforms and the country's Chief SDGs Unit joined the process. As a result, the Ministry included the report's recommendations in the country's VNR, published a braille written version of the VNR, and produced a companion video supported with sign language.

Source: Sierra Leone 2016 VNR

The country explains that conducting an inclusive VNR requires stakeholders to be informed about the SDGs and their national implementation. To allow broad engagement, the government published a simplified version of the 2030 Agenda and related issues, such as the transitioning from the MDGs to the SDGs, reasons for embarking on the SDGs, the correlation between the SDGs and Sierra Leone's development priorities, and how the SDGs are expected to be implemented in Sierra Leone.

> BOX 29. SUGGESTIONS ON MAKING A VNR REPORT FULLY ACCESSIBLE TO VULNERABLE GROUPS.
> - During the VNR planning and budgeting process, steps need to be planned to reach the entire population, particularly vulnerable groups and those at risk of being left behind. It would be important that all possible formats, languages, and communication channels required to reach them are considered and utilized.

Chapter 9. Next steps

VNR reports focus on what countries have done; however, it is equally important to report on what countries seek to do in the near future and identify areas in which external cooperation will be needed to reach the SDGs. The reporting cycle encompasses the opportunities and links between VNR reports submitted by a country over time. Second and subsequent VNR submissions have been increasing over time, and a new generation of VNRs is demonstrating a progressively more meaningful VNR reporting scheme that evolves with each year.

Following the VNR presentation at the HLPF, there is room for improvement and an important opportunity to present the VNR results at the national level. VNR reports often mention that national reporting is planned but should also include further details.

9.1. NEXT STEPS TO BE TAKEN

2030 Agenda: Follow-up and review processes would "maintain a longer-term orientation, identify achievements, challenges, gaps and critical success factors and support countries in making informed policy choices" (paragraph 74.c).

Source: India 2020 VNR

India's 2020 VNR report establishes SDG-related and thematic cross-cutting future steps. In both cases, future actions are first broadly introduced, then divided into specific areas, and translated into concrete measures to be implemented.

For example, after identifying the need to improve the Statistical System as a cross-cutting issue, India introduces four next steps linked to adding indicators for targets that are not covered, improving the frequency of data collection, augmenting data disaggregation, and increasing the quality of data. As part of the latter, three concrete future actions are mentioned: expanding the use of third-party independent survey schemes for data validation, promoting new statistical tools based on communication technologies, and expanding citizen-generated data.

Source: Timor Leste 2019 VNR

The country highlights five next steps to be taken following the prioritization of national gaps for SDG implementation. Each step is explained with sufficient detail and points out specific actions the government will implement, providing a blueprint to understand the degree to which the next steps will be advanced, and establishing a concrete basis for a subsequent reporting exercise.

BOX 30. SUGGESTIONS ON NEXT STEPS.
- The call to include next steps in VNR reports is a way of connecting the dots between challenges and gaps identified during the VNR process and future actions to be implemented. Having a short list of concrete next steps would be more helpful in this regard than just including an extensive "to-do" list of vague ideas, which may be impossible to monitor.

9.2. INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

2030 Agenda: Follow-up and review processes will "help to mobilize the necessary means of implementation and partnerships, support the identification of solutions and best practices and promote the coordination and effectiveness of the international development system" (paragraph 74.c).
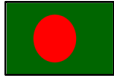
The country identifies three areas to be strengthened, namely: calling for peer learning in order to know how other countries found sustainable solutions to rapidly growing urban demand; augmented agricultural productivity while keeping the environment sustainable; and enhanced educational quality with affordable means. It also calls for vocational and technical training on climate change mitigation.

Eswatini's 2019 report identified areas that required external support to make progress towards sustainable development, which were categorized under individual SDGs. Some examples are mapping out or locating the poorest households (linked to SDG 1), research on food and nutrition, including the diversification of crops and livestock (SDG 2), monitoring education quality (SDG 4); developing a labor market information system (SDG 8), strengthen the technical capacity of the Human Rights and Integrity Commission (SDG 16), and improving ICT infrastructure (SDG 17).

The UK's VNR included the commitment to hosting an international pledging conference in mid-2020 with the purpose of raising funds for life-saving vaccinations for some of the world's most impoverished children by supporting vaccination efforts by the Global Vaccine Alliance (GAVI).

BOX 31. SUGGESTIONS ON SEEKING INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT.

- VNRs are tools to communicate to the international community where support or advice to implement the SDGs is required. They can also be an instrument to highlight efforts and ask for strengthened international partnerships aimed at implementing global goals. It is useful for reporting countries to identify those areas as part of the VNR process and include them in the report in an unambiguous manner.

9.3. CONTINUITY BETWEEN FIRST AND SUBSEQUENT VNR REPORTS

2030 Agenda: "We commit to engaging in systematic follow-up and review of the implementation of this Agenda" (paragraph 72).

 Source: Honduras 2020 VNR

Honduras' first VNR presents the country's work in establishing SDG implementation governance and the second report starts where the first one finished, elaborating on the SDG progress review. Moreover, the first VNR identifies five main challenges in Honduras SDG implementation and the second shows progress since their introduction, thus bridging both review processes.

 Source: Switzerland 2016 VNR

Switzerland's first VNR (2016) highlighted the start of a 2030 Agenda implementation "transition phase" managed by a temporary inter-ministerial work group. It aimed to clarify institutional arrangements, conduct an SDG baseline study, and expand the Swiss system of sustainable development indicators as appropriate. The report announced that the country would share the results in a new presentation in 2018, the year in which Switzerland submitted its second report based on the results of the transition phase.

BOX 32. SUGGESTIONS ON SECOND AND SUBSEQUENT VNR REPORTING.
- It is important to consider the different nature of the first and subsequent VNRs. A second VNR report is not a "Second First-VNR" document. Instead, it needs to show progress made by the country since its previous report, focusing on what changes have occurred at the national level.
- It is key in any VNR to identify clear challenges and future steps that could be revisited in a subsequent VNR, acting as a bridge between them and ensuring coherence in the analysis.
- It is also important that a country prepares a roadmap for subsequent VNR presentations up to 2030 in order to be able to show milestones achieved and progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

9.4. POST-VNR PROCESS: PRESENTATION OF VNR RESULTS TO THE NATIONAL AUDIENCE

2030 Agenda: "Operating at the national, regional and global levels, [follow-up and review processes] will promote accountability to our citizens" (paragraph 73).

 Source: Spain 2021 VNR

The government developed a National Sustainable Development Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation indicators framework to serve as a reference in elaborating annual government Progress Reports.

Those yearly reporting exercises will be the basis of an accountability mechanism that will engage all stakeholders, including citizenship. Its results will be

presented to and debated with the parliament. Moreover, considering the 2030 Agenda's intergenerational nature, the government will submit the annual progress reports to the national Child Participation Council.

In addition, Spain assumed the commitment of carrying out an exhaustive mid-term evaluation in 2024 to produce a detailed assessment of the country's progress towards the SDGs and its compliance with the promises made in the 2030 Agenda.

Source: Slovenia 2020 VNR

The 2020 Slovenia VNR states that the government bodies leading the 2030 Agenda national implementation and follow-up are also responsible for sharing the VNR experience and its results with stakeholders. To that end, as part of the VNR process, focal points were designated in every federal ministry. Stakeholders could contact them to ask for specific information regarding policies and activities linked to its area of concern.

Part C. Covid-19 response, Building Back Better and the Decade of Action and Delivery

Since 2020, countries have been including good practices on national, regional, and global strategies for the post-COVID-19. It is relevant to underline that governments take the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs as a blueprint to build back better and achieve sustainable recovery. The Decade of Action and Delivery is important in this regard as it encourages accelerated actions to speed achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The following chapters illustrate how COVID-19, the appeal to 'Build Back Better,' and the Decade of Action and Delivery were reflected in VNRs during the last two years.

Chapter 10. Reporting on the response to COVID-19

The updated 2020 Secretary-General Guidelines encourage reporting on COVID-19 measures by suggesting the following:

- Linking COVID-19 recovery plans with the 2030 Agenda;
- Providing examples of good practices and lessons learned that might be relevant for other countries in the context of COVID-19 response and recovery;
- Describing how countries are recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, including plans and concrete measures to build back better;
- Outlining planned future steps to enhance and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the framework of the Decade of Action and Delivery while promoting an inclusive and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2020 VNRs reflected four different approaches, namely not reporting on COVID impacts at all; including COVID-19 related issues across the report; including a separate chapter or an appendix on COVID-19; or focusing on the specific effects of COVID-19 on some priority issues for the country.

The restrictions to human mobility as a response to COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021 disrupted VNR related meetings and consultations. Organizations and people without access to technologies and means of virtual collaboration were left out of VNR consultations in many instances.

The efforts made by governments and stakeholders to overcome this situation have been commendable. Adaptations to the VNR process due to the pandemic restrictions have included calendar and format adaptations, use of alternate means of outreach including virtual consultations and collaboration, extension of deadlines for input submissions, and adjustment of VNR preparation timelines.

10.1. REPORTING ON THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN THE VNR PREPARATIONS

Source: Antigua and Barbuda 2021 VNR

The VNR of Antigua and Barbuda has been prepared in the framework of COVID-19 social distancing and virtual meetings restrictions. Notwithstanding, the country strove to ensure that the VNR reflects viewpoints and experiences of citizens using inclusive approaches that included stakeholder consultation through virtual meetings and the distribution of "SDG/VNR" questionnaires to stakeholders to ensure that their inputs were reflected in the VNR. The consultations and feedback from the questionnaires provided information that informed the VNR report. The Government also engaged stakeholders in an online review of the draft VNR to solicit feedback and ensure consensus on the report.

Source: Comoros 2020 VNR

The Comoros VNR shows efforts made by stakeholders to adapt the VNR process plans in terms of data collection, consultations, and outcome validation. Thus, to respect the barrier measures decreed by the government to counter the spread of COVID-19, it was decided to favor remote meetings and email exchanges. At the same time, the report assumes that lack of access to an Internet network and bad Internet connections affected the process, even when national experts, supported by the General Planning Commission, went into the field to meet various stakeholders in several small groups while complying with social distancing measures.

10.2. COVID-19 IMPACT ANALYSIS REPORTING STRATEGIES.

Source: Russian Federation 2020 VNR

Russian Federation dedicated a chapter to reporting national measures in response to COVID-19, clustering them under four main groups, namely an anti-crisis plan; non-working days due to a self-isolation regime; a limitation of flights, state border crossings, as well as humanitarian aid and assistance to foreign partners in combatting COVID-19; and actions to ensure sustainable economic development. Each group is linked to a subset of SDGs considered the most directly affected by measures taken or to be taken.

Source: Democratic Republic of Congo 2020 VNR

The Democratic Republic of the Congo incorporated references to the impacts of COVID-19 across the VNR report chapters. It included a separate box under the primary effects of the virus in the country's SDG progress.

10.3. USE OF DATA TO REPORT ON THE **COVID-19** EFFECTS ON THE **SDGS**

Source: Armenia 2020 VNR

The Armenian VNR affirms: "The state budget 2020 has envisaged around 13 per cent rise in social spending and allocations for human capital development (although the situation concerning COVID-19 will change these numbers)".

10.4. REPORTING ON THE IMPACT OF **COVID-19** ON THE NATIONAL **SDGS** FRAMEWORKS

Source: Bhutan 2021 VNR

The VNR of Bhutan indicates that the country started to adopt measures to build back better after the pandemic, connecting the process with the SDGs acceleration. At the same time, the report links efforts to build back better with national steps towards Least Development Country graduation and the achievement of higher levels of Gross National Happiness.

Source: Seychelles 2020 VNR

The country presents COVID-19 as a shock, impacting SDG progress. Linking environment, economy, and COVID-19, this VNR Report states that the national

economy is "vulnerable to shocks, which have the potential to derail SDG implementation. One recent shock is the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected all segments of society, as well as the Government's fiscal position and delayed projects aimed at SDG implementation".

Source: Liberia 2020 VNR

Liberia's VNR states that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the projected decline in foreign aid assistance as a result have caused setbacks to progress toward the SDGs. Liberia intends to reassess the SDGs roadmap for the next ten years, and to "prioritize based on the radically changed development landscape".

10.5. REPORTING ON THE NEED FOR SOLIDARITY IN COVID-19 RESPONSE

Source: Japan 2021 VNR

In June 2021, the Government of Japan and Gavi co-hosted the COVAX AMC Summit online to fund equitable access to safe, effective, and quality-assured vaccines for developing countries through the COVAX Facility. Prime Minister Suga called for further solidarity and commitment from the international community to fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and achieve universal health coverage. Japan's government emphasized the concept of "last mile support" to deliver vaccines. As a result of this meeting, many governments and the private sector expressed their willingness to contribute additional funds.

Source: Republic of Moldova 2020 VNR

Moldova's VNR reports that the COVID-19 pandemic has made it clear that "global challenges require coordinated efforts, solidarity and global responses. Addressing complex challenges and making the most of the situation also require strong political commitment, sustainable partnerships and determined action at all levels and by all stakeholders".

Source: Brunei Darussalam 2020 VNR

The foreword of their VNR recalls that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in loss of lives, impacted the livelihoods of people, and affected socioeconomic development. "This unprecedented situation highlighted that our lives are increasingly interconnected and dependent, with challenges cutting across borders requiring global solidarity and concerted efforts".

Chapter 11. Building Back Better

In March 2020, the Secretary-General published his report "Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19", calling states to "Build Back Better" in the COVID-19 post-pandemic world. Even without explicitly mentioning this call, most VNRs in 2020 and 2021 reaffirmed the links between COVID-19 recovery and SDG implementation. Moreover, the "leave no one behind" principle is becoming increasingly integrated in planning national response and recovery plans and is strongly reflected in the sections of the VNRs that address the pandemic.

11.1. REFERENCES TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL APPEAL TO BUILD BACK BETTER[3]

 Source: Angola 2021 VNR

Angola is in the process of designing its 2023-2027 National Development Plan. The country 2021 VNR explicitly states that it will take the Plan building process as an opportunity to align recovery plans with development programs and the State's general budget. It allows for identifying what funding is needed to build back better.

 Source: Malawi 2020 VNR

Malawi's report underlines that "the VNR could also inspire a framework for build back better after COVID-19 to boost the health and education systems, tackle climate change challenges, open job and life opportunities for the youth, promote gender equality and dynamize private sector though innovation and better trade links with the region".

11.2. LINKING COVID-19 AND LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

 Source: China 2021 VNR

At the 73rd World Health Assembly, President Xi Jinping stated that China's COVID-19 vaccine would be made a global public good to ensure vaccine accessibility in developing countries. At the Global Health Summit, China also announced its support for an intellectual property rights waiver on COVID-19 vaccines and proposed an international forum on vaccine cooperation to promote fair and equitable vaccines distribution worldwide.

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[3] The formula "Build Back Better" was used in the 2006 report *Key Propositions for Building Back Better* written by Bill Clinton as the UN Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery and became one of the Sendai Framework principles. In this sense, Kenya and Samoa's 2020 VNRs included the expression explicitly linking it to risk management.

Consequently, by May 2021, the Chinese government provided 300 million vaccine doses in the form of assistance to over 80 developing countries with urgent needs. China has also donated vaccines to UN peacekeepers and announced the provision of 10 million vaccine doses to developing countries through the COVAX initiative. The country was also among the first members of the WHO-sponsored Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A) initiative.

Source: Niger 2020 VNR

The VNR informs that the COVID-19 pandemic notwithstanding, country progress toward the SDGs has been inclusive, following the principle of leaving no one behind. It underlines that it was only possible because government and non-governmental stakeholders joined forces to that end.

Chapter 12. Decade of Action and Delivery

Recognition of the 2020 to 2030 period as the Decade of Action and Delivery for sustainable development, as called for in the political declaration of the 2019 SDG Summit, is widely recognized in the 2020 VNR reports. Many countries have also emphasized that COVID-19 response and recovery plans should support and complement efforts to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.

12.1. CONSIDERATION OF THE DECADE OF ACTION AND DELIVERY

Source: Germany 2021 VNR

Following a German Council for Sustainable Development recommendation, the German government has organized since 2019 annual high-level preparatory conferences for the HLPF and the 2030 Agenda dialogue forums. The 2020 conference focused on the 2020-2030 Decade of Action for the 2030 Agenda implementation.

Source: Zambia 2020 VNR

Zambia's VNR notes that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to diverting of resources from other programs to safeguard the health of the citizens, among other challenges. However, the country does not intend to lose momentum in the Decade of Action and Delivery".

The Government reaffirms its commitment to sustainable and inclusive development, following the principle of "leaving no one behind" and "identifying pathways for accelerating action toward sustainable development and implementing of the 2030 Agenda over the next decade".

Annex: Overview of resources of good practices for VNR presentations

REPORTS AND OTHER USEFUL PUBLICATIONS

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DE OLIVEIRA, Ana and KINDORNAY, Shannon (2021). Progressing National SDG Implementation: An independent assessment of the voluntary national review reports submitted to the United Nations High-level Political Forum in 2020. Ottawa: Cooperation Canada. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/19004/pdf/progressing_sdgs_2020_full-report_final-1.pdf

DESA (2021). 2021 Knowledge Exchange on Approaches and Tools for the 2022 Voluntary National Reviews. Summary of Approaches and Tools. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/29435Knowledge_Exchange_Booklet.pdf

DESA (2021). UN DESA World Public Sector Report 2021. https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/books/9789210057783

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DESA & UNDP (2020). What is a ·Good Practice"? A framework to analyse the Quality of Stakeholder Engagement in implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda. https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/UNDP-UNDESA%2C%20Stakeholder%20Engagement%20Report%20FINAL.pdf

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REGIONAL RESOURCES

ECA: Knowledge Gateway. https://knowledge.uneca.org/

ECE: Dashboard for SDGs. https://w3.unece.org/SDG/en

ECLAC: 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean Regional knowledge management platform. https://agenda2030lac.org/

ESCAP: SDG Gateway Asia-Pacific. https://data.unescap.org/

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WHO (2020). Guide for WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Parties on including SDG Target 3.a in Voluntary National Reviews. https://www.who.int/fctc/VNR_Guide_7July2020.pdf

WORLD VISION INTERNATIONAL (2020). Ensuring Children are Not Left Behind Guidance Note Supporting countries preparing for Voluntary National Reviews at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2020-11/World%20Vision%20Guidance%20Note%20for%20countries%20preparing%20%20Voluntary%20National%20Reviews%20for%20HLPF%20%281%29.pdf

USEFUL WEB BASED TOOLS (GLOBAL AND REGIONAL)

AMBITION TO ACTION PROJECT: SDG Climate Action Nexus tool (SCAN-tool). https://ambitiontoaction.net/scan_tool/

CEPEI: SDGs-LAC Position Tracker. https://cepei.org/initiative/position-tracker/

COVID-19 DATA AND INNOVATION CENTRE: Data-driven knowledge. https://knowledge4recovery.org/

DATAREPUBLICA: Data Laboratory for Sustainable Development. https://datarepublica.org/en

DANISH INSTITUTE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS: SDGs-Human Rights Data Explorer. https://sdgdata.humanrights.dk/

DESA: 2020 Knowledge Exchange on Approaches and Tools for the 2021 Voluntary National Reviews. Summary of Approaches and Tools. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/27069Knowledge_Exchange_Booklet_2021_VNR.pdf

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DESA, STATISTICS DIVISION: Global SDG Database.
https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/

DESA, STATISTICS DIVISION: Global SDG Country Profiles.
https://country-profiles.unstatshub.org/

EUROPEAN COMMISSION: JRC Interlinkages Tools.
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