

# PROGRESSING NATIONAL SDGs IMPLEMENTATION:

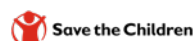
An independent assessment of the voluntary national review reports submitted to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2020



The **Fifth Edition** in an annual series commissioned by civil society organizations

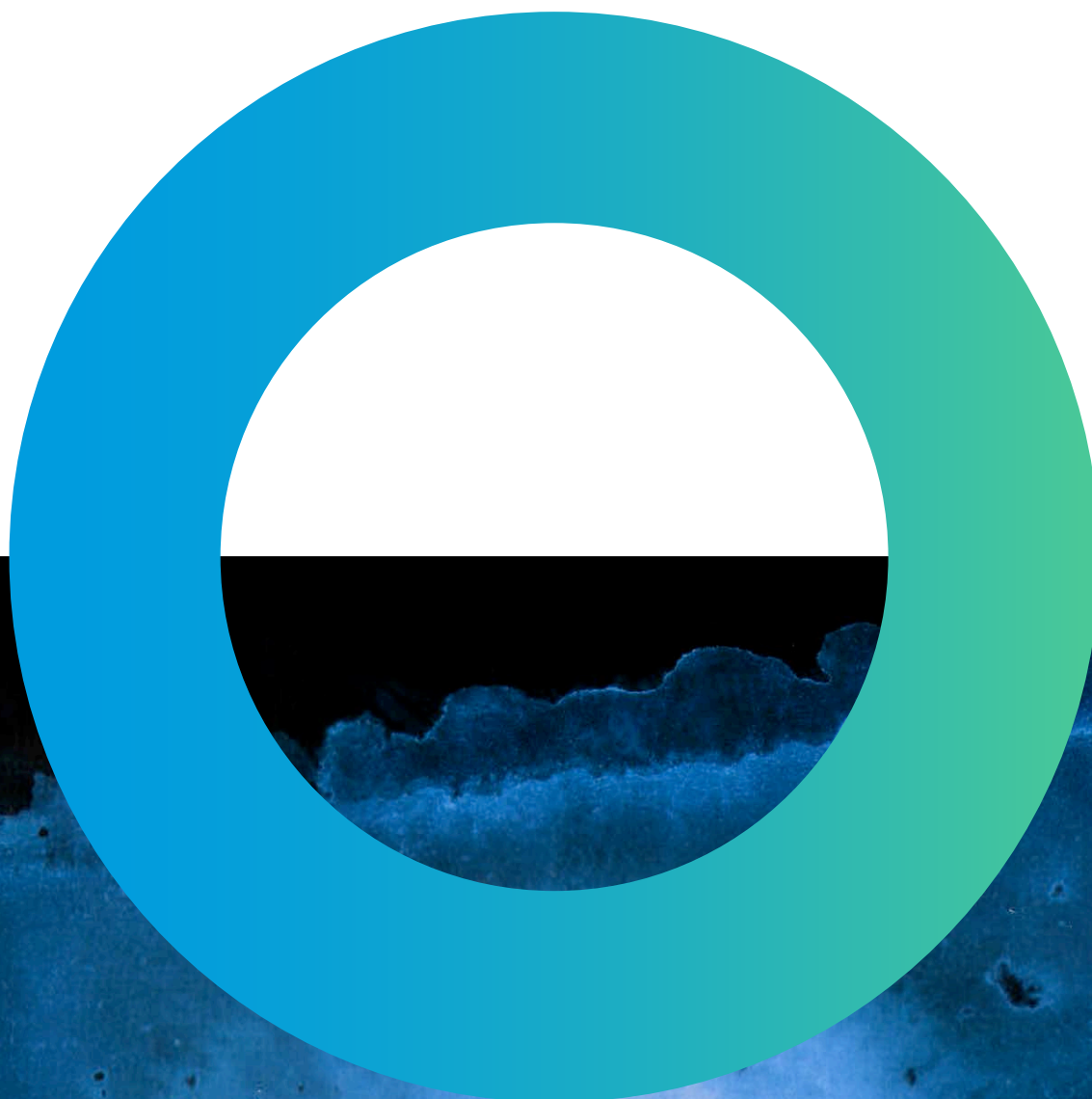


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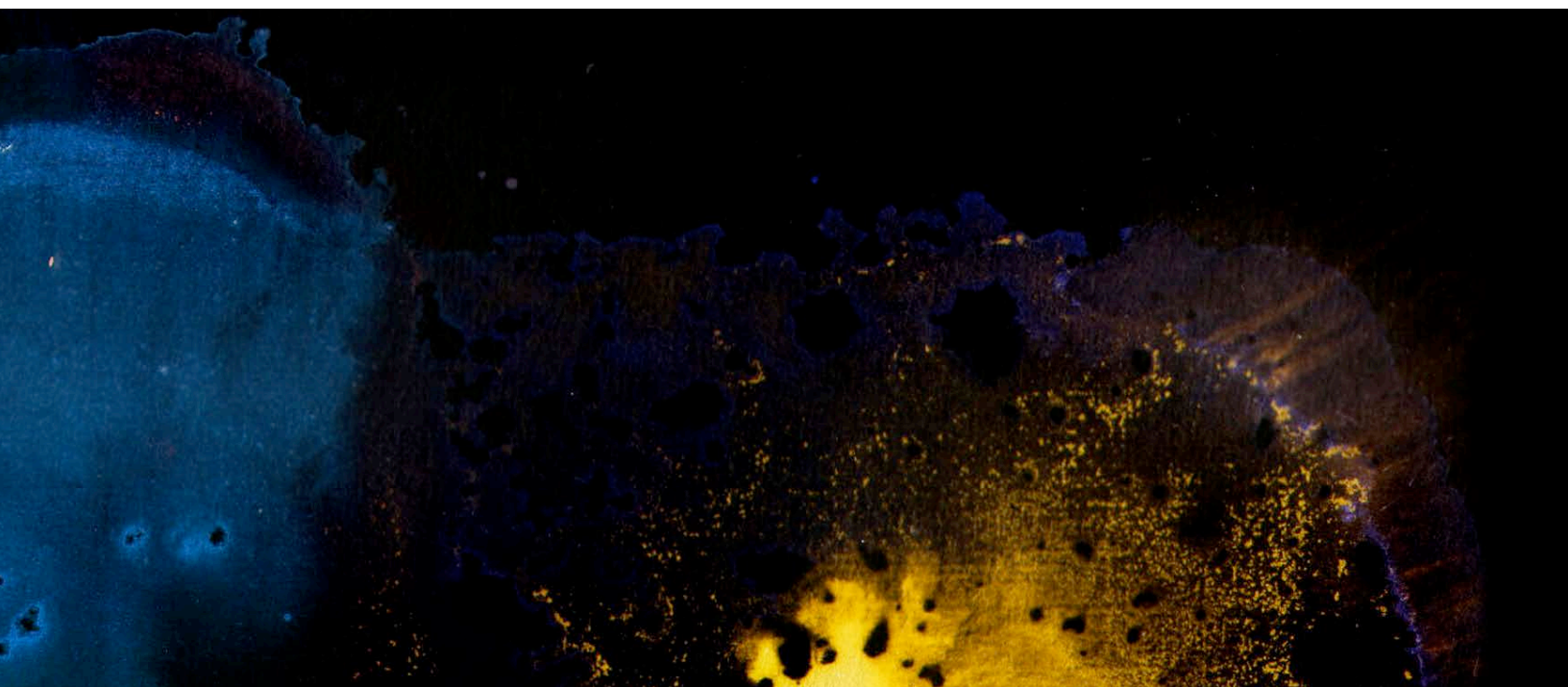
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## HIGHLIGHTS

Following commitments by heads of state and government around the world to a [Decade of Action and Delivery](#) to realize the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2019, 2020 saw the growth of an unprecedented global pandemic. In early 2020, the coronavirus (COVID-19) quickly spread around the world, leading to devastating health impacts. Containment measures negatively impacted decades of economic and social progress with some governments harnessing the pandemic response as an opportunity to further close civic space. **The need for governments to accelerate the 2030 Agenda has become more urgent in the context of a global response to COVID-19 with the 2030 Agenda's transformative principles remaining critical to ensure a participatory, just, equitable and sustainable recovery that ensures no one is left behind and harnesses lessons from the pandemic.**

For the past five years, civil society organizations have reviewed reporting by governments to the United Nations' High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). The Voluntary National Review (VNR) reports submitted by governments as part of the follow-up and review processes indicate the status of

2030 Agenda implementation at the national level. VNR reports are meant to be prepared through inclusive and participatory processes, serve as a source of information on good practices, lessons learned and challenges in implementation and provide a basis for peer learning and accountability at the global level.

The review of the 47 VNR reports submitted to the HLPF in 2020 revealed a range of good practices and both positive and concerning trends in implementation and reporting. ***The Progressing National SDGs Implementation report covers all aspects of 2030 Agenda implementation through an examination of governance, institutional arrangements and stakeholder engagement, policies, the means of implementation and reporting. Key findings, good practice case studies, emerging best practices and recommendations are presented throughout the report.*** The full sets of good practices spotlights and of recommendations are consolidated at the end of the report.

Here we highlight the key messages arising from the analysis of 2020 VNR reports. The messages have been numbered for ease of reference, and further details are provided below.



## KEY MESSAGES

1. Countries are more consistently providing information on most aspects of 2030 Agenda implementation.
2. Broad gains in reporting were also matched by decreased reporting on important issues such as 2030 Agenda budgeting, trade, technology and – not least – main challenges faced in implementation of the Agenda.
3. Many states continued to provide only partial information on the key components of the voluntary common reporting guidelines.
4. Reporting on leaving no one behind increased, as well as embedding this principle in national plans and policies. However, identifying left-behind groups, developing dedicated strategies, and using disaggregated data no leave no one behind remain as challenges.
5. In terms of a whole-of-society approach, non-state actors continue to be included in governance arrangements for implementation and formal processes for stakeholder engagement. However, reporting on multi-stakeholder engagement outside governance arrangements experienced some backslide.
6. The VNR reports are silent on closing civic space globally and ongoing attacks on human rights defenders and environmentalists. The COVID-19 pandemic has been used as an excuse by some governments to further close civic space.
7. Although fewer countries reported on contributions by non-state actors, there have been improvements in reporting on partnerships and recognising the role played by civil society.
8. Fewer countries reported conducting baseline and gap assessments, and fewer countries provided information on data availability. Conversely, there has been an increase in the number of countries reporting the integration of the SDGs into national policies and programs.
9. VNR reports from 2020 experienced improvements in the attention given to the transformative principles of the 2030 Agenda. However, there has not been an increase in the linkages with international agreements.
10. While more countries focused on policy coherence for sustainable development as a guiding framework for 2030 Agenda implementation, 2020 VNR reports revealed a limited analysis of domestic and foreign policies on the realization of the SDGs globally.
11. Overall information on national, regional and global follow-up and review processes suffered from backsliding. Most VNR reports lack reference to accountability mechanisms at the national level.

### **1. Countries are more consistently providing information on most aspects of 2030 Agenda implementation.**

In comparison to two previous years, VNR reports for 2020 showed increased reporting on most aspects of implementation. For example, information on awareness-raising activities was available for 98% of countries. Reporting on localization also continues to improve, as 83% of countries provided information on their efforts to localize the 2030 Agenda, and more countries reported on partnerships in 2020 than in previous years. In relation to other aspects, reporting on the means of implementation improved overall for information on international public finance (83% of the countries), capacity development (83%), systemic issues (70%), best practices (58%), lessons learned (53%), and learning from peers (15%). Information on these topics is important for ensuring the success of the HLPF as a forum for peer learning and exchange.

### **2. Broad gains in reporting were also matched by decreased reporting on important issues such as 2030 Agenda budgeting, trade, technology and – not least – main challenges faced in implementation of the Agenda.**

While more countries provided information on the means of implementation overall, 2020 saw decreased reporting on budgeting and costing for the 2030 Agenda, trade, technology, and challenges faced in implementing the 2030 Agenda. A little over half of the countries (51%) reported information on budgeting for the 2030 Agenda, and there was a slight decrease in reporting on trade (58%), challenges (94%) and technology (79%). While improved reporting on best practices and learning from peers is a positive gain for supporting the HLPF's mandate, declines in other areas are worrisome, particularly in terms of planning for implementation and addressing encountered difficulties.

### **3. Many states continued to provide only partial information on the key components of the voluntary common reporting guidelines.**

While VNR reports showed increased compliance with reporting against the Secretary-General's voluntary common reporting guidelines over 2016 to 2019, there has been little change between 2019 and 2020 in terms of overall compliance. Reporting increased in six components listed in the guidelines, with the most significant gains seen in reporting on structural issues, whereas reporting declined in six other components. Although many of the 2020 reporting countries have fully met various guidelines' components, there was still a considerable amount of countries providing only partial information.

### **4. Reporting on leaving no one behind increased, as well as embedding this principle in national plans and policies. However, identifying left-behind groups, developing dedicated strategies, and using disaggregated data to leave no one behind remain as challenges.**

There continues to be an increase in reporting on leaving no one behind (LNOB). In 2020, 92% of reporting countries provided either robust information throughout their VNR report, or a dedicated chapter to LNOB. Moreover, more countries reported incorporating the principle of leaving no one behind in the creation of national sustainable development policies. Although data to leave no one behind improved in 2020, with 40% of the VNR reports indicating that efforts to LNOB were informed by existing data, disaggregated data remains a challenge to many countries.

All countries (45) reporting in 2020 with full VNR reports identified groups left behind or at risk of being left behind, which indicates a positive upward trend in comparison to previous years. Most VNR reports listed people with disabilities (85%), women and girls (83%), and children and youth (79%) as at risk of being left behind. Although these three groups continue to be the topmost ones facing more vulnerabilities, there was a decline in the number of countries that promoted such identification between 2019 and 2020. In terms of countries' overall plans and approaches, there has been some positive movement towards incorporating the principle of leaving no one behind to create national sustainable development policies. In 2020, 28 countries (60%) highlighted embedding leaving no one behind or



efforts to address inequality and social exclusion as part of overarching development plans.

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**5. In terms of a whole-of-society approach, non-state actors continue to be included in governance arrangements for implementation and formal processes for stakeholder engagement. However, reporting on multi-stakeholder engagement outside governance arrangements experienced some backslide.**

Formal inclusion of non-state actors in governance arrangements is becoming a standard practice. Over 2016-2020, 70% of reporting countries noted that non-state actors are included in governance arrangements to guide implementation. Moreover, instead of engagement happening mainly through technical working groups, as it had been the case in the previous year, the countries reporting in 2020 mostly mentioned more lead councils or committees. The increase in engagement in high-level governance arrangements is positive, suggesting that there may be more opportunity for non-state actors to input overall strategic direction and coordination.

However, reporting on multi-stakeholder engagement outside governance arrangements experienced some backslide, as 47% of countries (versus 60% in 2019) reported on formal processes for stakeholder engagement, such as communication strategies to support awareness-raising, participatory budgeting processes, multi-stakeholder forums, youth councils or annual events. The percentage of countries reporting on consultations to define national priorities also decreased significantly, from 89% in 2019 to 47% in 2020.

Conversely, in terms of engagement in the VNR process, all but one (98%) of the countries that presented a full VNR report in 2020 referred to consultations and/or non-state actor engagement to prepare the VNR report. Although there continues to be a steady increase in the number of countries directly including non-state actors in drafting VNR reports or providing written inputs, the actual inclusion of non-state actors' recommendations in the final reports continues to be less verifiable. In 2020, 25 out of the

47 reporting countries (53%) included information on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on stakeholder engagement.

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**6. The VNR reports are silent on closing civic space globally and ongoing attacks on human rights defenders and environmentalists. The COVID-19 pandemic has been used as an excuse by some governments to further close civic space.**

While some countries emphasized the creation of enabling policies for non-state actors engagement and participation in 2030 Agenda implementation, no VNR report referred to closing civic space or to attempts to create a more enabling environment for civil society. Over 2017-2020, VNR reports have been largely silent on these issues despite increasing calls for action by civil society organizations and others worldwide to address the deteriorating human rights situation in many countries and protect human rights defenders and environmentalists. Moreover, reports by civil society organizations on 2030 Agenda implementation continue to point to the need for improvements in the quality of interactions and engagement between government and civil society.

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**7. Although fewer countries reported on contributions by non-state actors, there have been improvements in reporting on partnerships and recognising the role played by civil society.**

There has been a decline in the percentage of countries reporting on non-state actors' contributions, with 89% versus 98% in 2019. Conversely, there continues to be a positive trend in terms of countries recognizing the contributions by civil society organizations in their VNR reports. In 2020, 79% of countries provided this information. There has also been an improvement in how reporting countries showcase civil society organizations' actions and the role they play in 2030 Agenda implementation. Moreover, there has been an increase in reporting on the role of parliamentarians (53%), the private sector (75%), and academia (55%). In addition, 45% of the 2020 VNR reports specifically mentioned the participation of children and youth in

SDGs implementation, another increase in the category of partnerships noted compared to previous years.

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**8. Fewer countries reported conducting baseline and gap assessments, and fewer countries provided information on data availability. Conversely, there has been an increase in the number of countries reporting the integration of the SDGs into national policies and programs.**

In 2020, the percentage of countries that indicated their approach to 2030 Agenda implementation had been informed by an assessment of policies, data, or both declined to 64%. Significantly fewer countries (45%) provided information on data availability. Conversely, all the countries reported integrating the SDGs into their policies in 2020. Another positive trend in comparison to previous years refers to the selection of national priorities, with 45 countries (almost 96%) providing this information. Priorities related to social outcomes and economy were most commonly cited, followed by the environment. In 2020, 77% of countries provided some information on national targets and indicators selection, another increase in relation to the previous year.

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**9. VNR reports from 2020 experienced improvements in the attention given to the transformative principles of the 2030 Agenda. However, there has not been an increase in the linkages with international agreements.**

The reporting countries continue to refer more to the SDGs than to the broader 2030 Agenda and its transformational principles. Among these principles, leaving no one behind continues to receive more focus in the 2020 VNR reports, and there has been an increase in the number of countries pointing to the universal nature of the 2030 Agenda and human rights-based approaches.

There has also been an improvement in reporting integrated approaches to implement the SDGs. Although only 49% of countries gave equal attention to economic, social and environmental dimensions

of development in their VNR reports, more than half referred to appropriate linkages between the goals. Seventy percent of VNR reports assessed the full set of SDGs, a considerable increase in relation to 2019, where this figure had been 40%. On the other hand, reporting on linkages between the 2030 Agenda and relevant international agreements such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda showed mixed results in 2020 over 2019. Such linkages point to the recognition of synergies between the 2030 Agenda and other relevant agreements to promote sustainable development. The variation of results in relation to different agreements does not suggest an increase in such recognition. Moreover, a minimal number of countries (4%) referred to COVID-19-related actions apart from measures carried out at the domestic level. No country referred to global commitments regarding the pandemic.

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**10. While more countries focused on policy coherence for sustainable development as a guiding framework for 2030 Agenda implementation, 2020 VNR reports revealed a limited analysis of domestic and foreign policies on the realization of the SDGs globally.**

Furthermore, 2020 experienced an increase in the number of countries reporting on including the SDGs into national budgets: almost 45% of countries mentioned having already incorporated the SDGs into budgeting processes, and 4% of countries mentioned such incorporation as a plan. This might suggest an improvement in relation to the previous year in the sense that more countries are doing such incorporation, instead of mentioning it as a future plan. In terms of financing, 70% percent of countries reporting in 2020 identified finance sources to support 2030 Agenda implementation, pointing to domestic resources, private investment, remittances, and, where applicable, official development assistance (ODA) and South-South cooperation.

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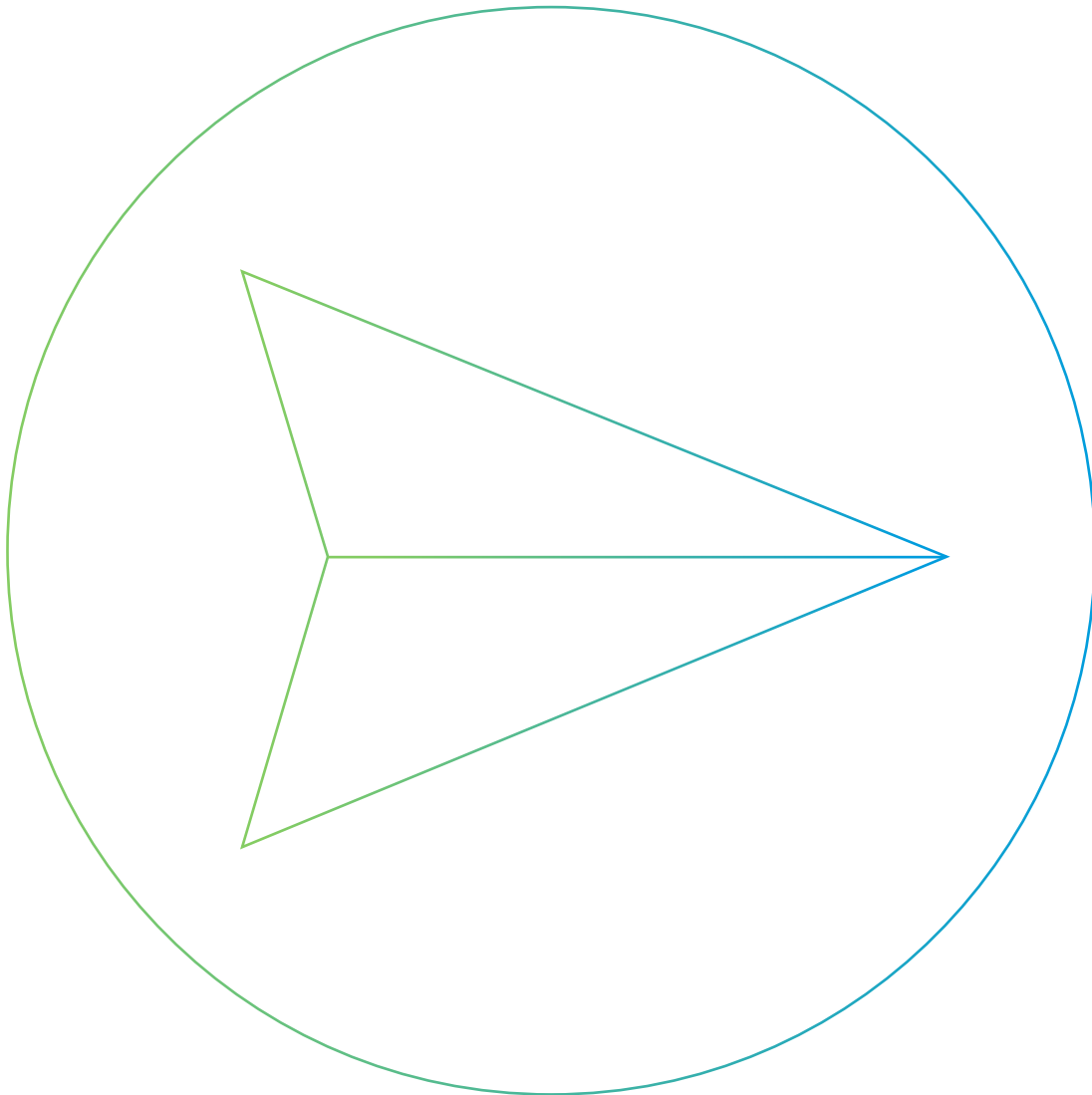
**11. Overall information on national, regional and global follow-up and review processes suffered from backsliding. Most VNR reports lack**



**reference to accountability mechanisms at the national level.**

In 2020, fewer countries provided information on follow-up and review processes at the national level (63%) and on data availability (45%). Apart from lesser reporting, countries continue to provide a limited reference to when, how and to whom national reporting will occur. Only five countries referred to parliament's role in follow-up and review processes, same as in 2019. This raises concerns over how countries are ensuring accountability through elected officials. On the other hand, two countries referred to engagement in regional review processes, and two mentioned future engagement at the HLPF.

In 2021, the global community starts a new cycle of follow-up and review. The procedures and mechanisms of the HLPF are under review. This provides an opportunity to strengthen comparative analysis and tracking progress further as many countries return for their second or even third VNR. The HLPF delivers the critical forum for VNRs to take place and links the monitoring and accountability cycle from national to regional and global level reviews. Following promising trends concerning stakeholder engagement at the national level, it is hoped that the future development of the HLPF will include even more time for meaningful dialogue and engagement between member states, civil society organizations, experts and other stakeholders.



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

At the July 2021 United Nations [High-level Political Forum](#) (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, United Nations member states and others will meet to review progress on the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs). While member states have committed to take stronger [action and delivery for sustainable development](#), the 2021 HLPF will serve as an important moment to take stock on the impacts of the global coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) on shared progress towards sustainable development, following preliminary reporting and discussion in 2020.

Governments, civil society and other stakeholders share their efforts to implement and monitor the SDGs at procedural and substantive levels during

HLPF. The Forum is mandated to carry out regular, inclusive, state-led and thematic reviews of 2030 Agenda implementation, with inputs from other intergovernmental bodies, regional processes and [Major Groups and Other Stakeholders](#). Different countries present [voluntary national reviews](#) (VNRs) on an annual basis. The follow-up and review process aims to promote accountability to citizens, support effective international cooperation and foster exchange of best practice and mutual learning.<sup>1</sup> To date, 183 countries have presented VNRs with 35 having presented more than once.<sup>2</sup> In 2020, 47 countries will present their VNR reports, 21 of which will be presenting their VNR for a second or third time. Though not presented as a formal component of the HLPF, civil society organizations and coalitions from around the world also regularly produce their own

1. See United Nations. 2016. *Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level*. Report of the Secretary-General. A/70/684. New York: UN.
2. Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Benin, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, and Uruguay.



independent reviews and analysis on their respective governments' implementation of the 2030 Agenda, complementing official processes.

This publication is the fifth in a series prepared by a coalition of civil society organizations to document and analyze progress on the 2030 Agenda through an annual examination of VNR reports and a sample of civil society reports.<sup>3</sup> **The review aims to improve the VNR process and the VNR reports and strengthen accountability around the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Complementary to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs' synthesis of VNR reports, the assessment provides an analytical critique of progress on 2030 Agenda implementation and identifies good and best practices as well as where VNR reports could be improved. The analysis provides a basis for recommendations on how governments, civil society organizations and other stakeholders can improve efforts to implement and report on the 2030 Agenda.**

The fifth edition includes an assessment of all 47 VNR reports submitted in 2020. Of those 47, all countries except for Barbados and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines submitted full VNR reports.<sup>4</sup> An overview of reporting countries by region and income level is available in Annex 1. Of the 47 countries that submitted a VNR report in 2020, 20 presented for the second time. One presented their third VNR report. The review follows the *Progressing National SDGs Implementation* assessment framework that was built and expanded upon since the first report in this series from 2016. Findings presented in the 2021 edition also include a comparison with the key trends identified in previous reports, where appropriate.<sup>5,6</sup> The fifth edition also includes special reference to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout, as relevant, given the significant impacts of the pandemic on sustainable development progress and attention to this topic in VNR reports for 2020.

## COUNTRIES REPORTING TO THE HLPF IN 2020

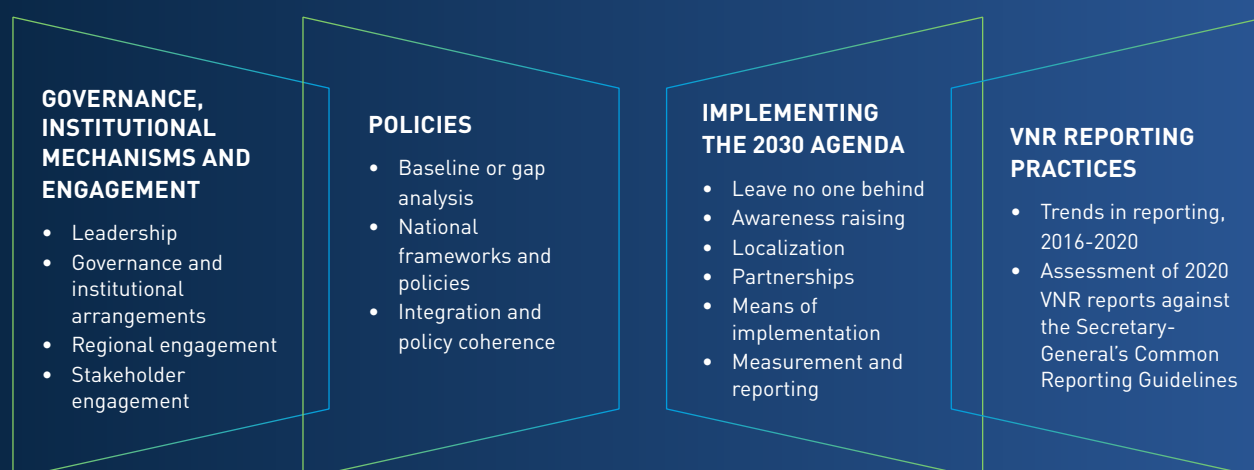
Austria, Barbados, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gambia, Kyrgyz Republic, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Micronesia, Mozambique, North Macedonia, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, Syrian Arab Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Zambia.

**Countries reporting for the 2nd time:** Argentina, Armenia, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Honduras, India, Kenya, Morocco, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Samoa, Slovenia, and Uganda.

**Countries reporting for the 3rd time:** Benin.

3. Details on the methodology, including the analytical framework, used for the assessment of all the VNR reports can be found in Annex 2.
4. Though these countries did not submit full VNR reports, they have been included in the data presented below. Both countries reported on a number of elements in the assessment framework and on components of the reporting guidelines through main messages.
5. The 2017, 2018 and 2019 reports are referred to throughout, however only cited once here for ease of reading. See Kindornay, Shannon. 2018. *Progressing national SDGs implementation: An independent assessment of the voluntary national review reports submitted to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2017*. Ottawa: CCIC. See Kindornay, Shannon. 2019. *Progressing national SDGs implementation: An independent assessment of the voluntary national review reports submitted to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2018*. Ottawa: CCIC. See Kindornay, Shannon and Gendron, Renée. 2020. *Progressing national SDGs implementation: An independent assessment of voluntary national review reports submitted to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2019*. Ottawa: CCIC. Similarly, for the 2016 edition of this report see Cutter, Amy. 2016. *Progressing national SDGs implementation: Experiences and recommendations from 2016*. London: Bond.
6. The 2017 edition of this report examined all countries except Belarus. The Kingdom of the Netherlands' VNR report included information on four countries – Aruba, Curaçao, the Netherlands and Saint Maarten. As such, the report included data for 45 countries, though only 43 VNR reports were submitted to the HLPF that year. Unless otherwise stipulated, data for 2017 is for 45 countries, not for the 42 VNR reports reviewed that year. The 2016 review of VNR reports by Bond only examined the 22 available English reports.

**Figure 1.** What is in the Progressing National SDGs Implementation Report?



The analysis in the review is based largely on the VNR reports, and where available, civil society reports.<sup>7</sup> No additional research was conducted to verify the accuracy and confirm the validity of the information governments included in their reports. This is a clear limitation of the findings.

## HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

This review of VNR reports is comprehensive and covers most, if not all, aspects of 2030 Agenda implementation and VNR reporting. The report has a lot to offer governments, civil society, researchers and others interested in understanding the current state of 2030 Agenda implementation and reporting, including good practices. While stakeholders are encouraged to review the report in its entirety to get a full picture of 2030 Agenda implementation, subsections of analysis can be read on a standalone basis, allowing readers to review topics that are of most interest.

### ***Find good practices***

For governments that are planning to carry out a VNR, this report serves as a useful guide of good practices in implementing the VNR and reporting. It also offers a range of examples from which governments can draw in establishing governance and institutional mechanisms, policies, programs and partnerships to support 2030 Agenda implementation.

### ***Inform civil society reporting and advocacy***

For civil society organizations, the content and structure of this report provides a basis for parallel reporting and highlights the key issues that civil society organizations may want to consider, including to improve their own reporting on 2030 Agenda implementation. The report is also a powerful advocacy tool that can be used to promote the adoption of best practice at the country level.

### ***Know where your country stands***

Finally, the country profiles included in this report provide a simple, short overview of the current status of 2030 Agenda implementation according to the pillars of analysis for reporting countries, serving as a useful reference document.

7. Civil society reports are available for eleven of the countries reviewed in 2020 and can be found under "Civil Society Reports." A civil society report from Denmark is also available, even if the country did not present a VNR in 2020. Such report was not assessed in the present analysis.



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## 2. GOVERNANCE, INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS AND ENGAGEMENT

This chapter has two main sections. The first one focuses on leadership, governance and institutional arrangements, and looks into how governments presenting VNR reports in 2020 organize mechanisms at the governance and leadership levels to realize the 2030 Agenda, including by engaging non-state actors and peers. The second section focuses on stakeholder engagement in 2030 Agenda implementation, examining processes of engagement apart from governance and institutional arrangements, including how multiple stakeholders have been engaged in defining national priorities and carrying out VNRs. This section addresses the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on stakeholder engagement. Both of this chapter's sections are followed by a dedicated list of recommendations.

### 2.1. KEY FINDINGS

#### 2.1.1. Leadership, governance and institutional arrangements

- **Governance trends:** As with 2017, 2018 and 2019, most countries reporting in 2020 – almost 79% – are making use of new or existing councils, committees or specialized offices to govern 2030 Agenda implementation. Leadership most commonly (43%) resides with the head of state or government. There was limited reporting on subnational institutional arrangements.
- **Inclusion of non-state actors:** Formal inclusion of non-state actors in governance arrangements continues to be an emerging standard practice. In 2020, 70% of countries noted inclusion of non-state actors, the same percentage as 2019. However, instead of engagement happening mainly through technical working groups, the countries reporting in 2020 largely mentioned lead councils or committees.
- **Peer engagement:** The 2020 VNR reports reversed the downward trend in terms of countries reporting on how they engage with peers at the regional level on the 2030 Agenda. In 2017, 53% provided this information, 41% in 2018 and only 34% in 2019. In 2020, this percentage rose to 47%.

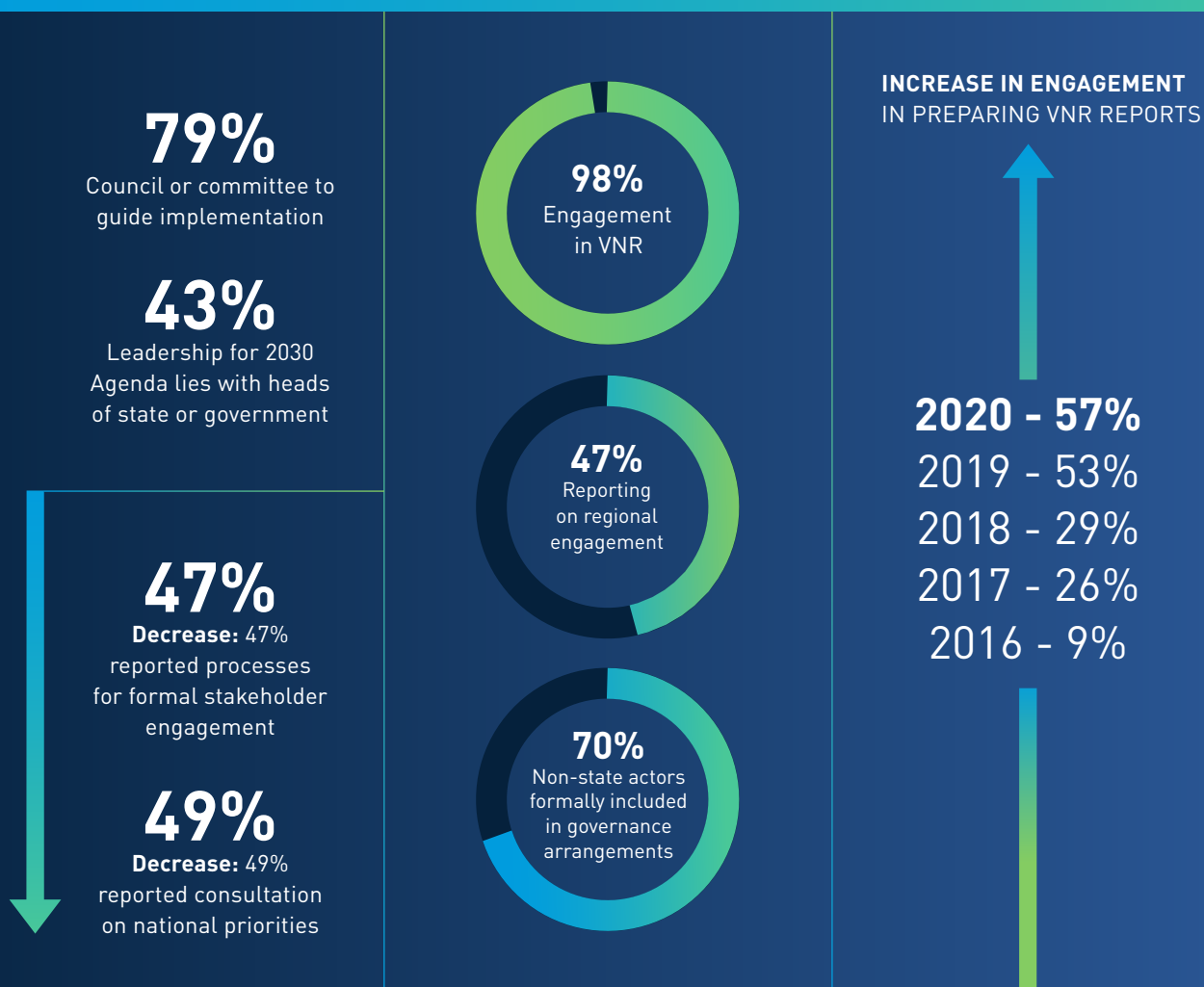


### 2.1.2. Stakeholder engagement in 2030 Agenda implementation

- **Multi-stakeholder engagement:** Reporting on multi-stakeholder engagement experienced some backsliding, as 47% of countries reported on formal processes for stakeholder engagement in 2020, against 60% in 2019. Information presented in VNR reports does not assess the quality of formal processes for multi-stakeholder engagement.
- **Civic space:** The VNR reports continue to ignore the issue of closing civic space and ongoing attacks on human rights defenders and environmentalists. The COVID-19 pandemic has been used as an excuse by some governments to further close civic space.
- **Consultations and the VNR process:** The percentage

of countries reporting consultations to define national priorities decreased from 89% in 2019 to 47% in 2020. Conversely, all but one (98%) of the countries that presented a full VNR report in 2020 referred to consultations and/or non-state actor engagement to prepare the VNR report. There continues to be a steady increase in the number of countries directly including non-state actors in drafting VNR reports or providing written inputs. In 2020, 57% noted such approaches, against 53% in 2019.

- **COVID-19 on stakeholder engagement:** In 2020, 25 out of the 47 reporting countries (53%) included information on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on stakeholder engagement.



VNR REPORTS **IGNORE** CLOSING CIVIC SPACE

## 2.2. LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Governance arrangements and institutional mechanisms are basic building blocks for effective 2030 Agenda implementation. With the 2030 Agenda in its fifth year at the time of reporting, VNR reports should demonstrate that basic foundational structures are in place. In this context, where governments assign leadership for 2030 Agenda implementation indicates the level of political commitment as well as lines of accountability. Information on governance arrangements for 2030 Agenda implementation was available in all VNR reports examined from 2017-2020.<sup>8</sup>

### 2.2.1. Leadership

Most VNR reports include information on leadership, identifiable through an examination of governance arrangements. VNR reports over 2017-2020 show a range of approaches (Figure 2). In 2020, information on leadership was available for most countries though leadership was unclear for ten out of the 47 countries reporting.

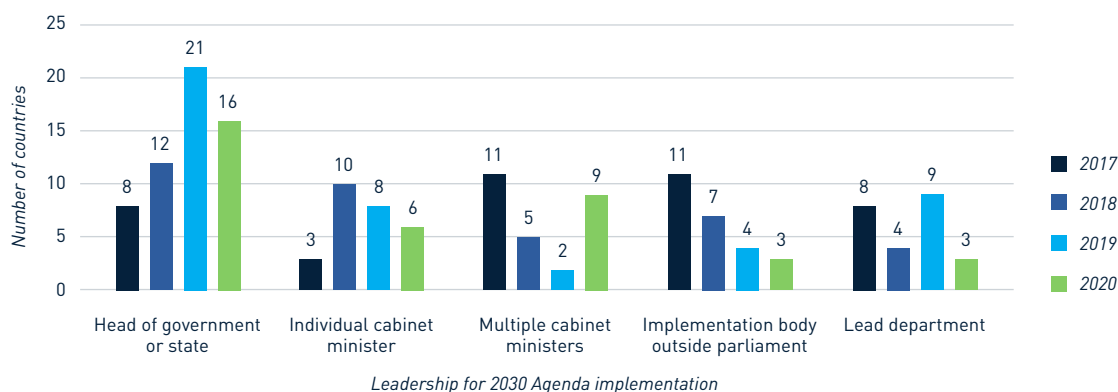
In 2020, the most common category of leadership for the 2030 Agenda was a head of state with 43% of

countries.<sup>9</sup> The second most common type of leadership was multiple cabinet ministers (24%), followed by an individual cabinet minister (16%), leadership by a body outside parliament (8%), and to have a lead department (8%). Among the countries reporting leadership for 2030 Agenda implementation, leadership continues to reside with the head of state.

### 2.2.2. Governance arrangements and institutional mechanisms

Effective governance arrangements and institutional mechanisms are important for orienting and providing impetus for implementation, ensuring policy coherence and coordinating action across government institutions, including at national and subnational levels. As with 2017, 2018 and 2019, most countries reporting in 2020 – almost 79% – are making use of new or existing councils, committees or specialized offices to govern 2030 Agenda implementation.<sup>10</sup> The use of councils, committees or other forms of coordinating bodies appears to be emerging standard practice with respect to institutional arrangements. In 2020, 15 countries noted creating a new council, committee or specialized office. Thirteen (13) countries noted that implementation occurs through government institutions and one (1) noted the use of a lead department for this purpose. Nine (9) countries are making use of existing councils or committees.

**Figure 2.** Most common sources of leadership for 2030 Agenda implementation



8. In 2020, Barbados is the only country not to provide information on either leadership or governance arrangements. On the other hand, Barbados did not present a full VNR report, but only main messages, thus the incomplete information.
9. Percentages refer to the 37 countries that provided information on leadership. Data includes countries submitting a subsequent VNR report to the HLPF following their first presentation.
10. Countries submitting a subsequent VNR report to the HLPF are included in this figure. A council or commission was still considered “new” if it was established following 2015, even if the country had reported on the council or commission in a previous VNR report.

Seven (7) countries referred to implementation through government institutions and did not refer to the existence of a council or similar governing body. Information provided by Solomon Islands was unclear in terms of the governance structure while Barbados did not provide any information in this regard.

As with previous years, the main responsibilities for governing bodies tend to include overseeing and driving nationalization of the 2030 Agenda, policy alignment, coordination, implementation and monitoring. In 2018, 13 countries noted the creation of technical and/or substantive working groups or other specialized bodies to support implementation, and in 2019 this was done by 26 countries. Such practice continued to be observed in 2020 VNR reports. For example, Liberia has established 12 Technical Working Groups (TWGs) composed of experts and specialists from ministries, agencies and commissions that ensure multi-stakeholder participation with regards to public planning and information dissemination on the country's development agenda.



**BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT**

Establish technical and/or substantive working groups or other specialized bodies for 2030 Agenda implementation. This shares responsibilities and enhances support towards implementation.

### 2.2.3. Non-state actor engagement in governance arrangements

The involvement of non-state actors in governance arrangements is one indicator of the extent to which a government is adopting a whole-of-society approach for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Information on the involvement of non-state actors in formal governance

arrangements was either unclear or not available for 30% of countries that reported in 2020, which is the exact same percentage as in 2019. Nevertheless, most countries reporting in 2020 (70%) provided information on engagement with non-state actors. As shown by others,<sup>11</sup> the formal inclusion of non-state actors in governance arrangements is an emerging standard practice with 70% of countries reporting to the HLPF noting formal inclusion of non-state actors in high and/or working-level institutional arrangements over 2016-2019. While this is a positive move towards a whole-of-society approach, VNR reports do not provide an indication of how policies and approaches change as a result of inclusive governance arrangements.



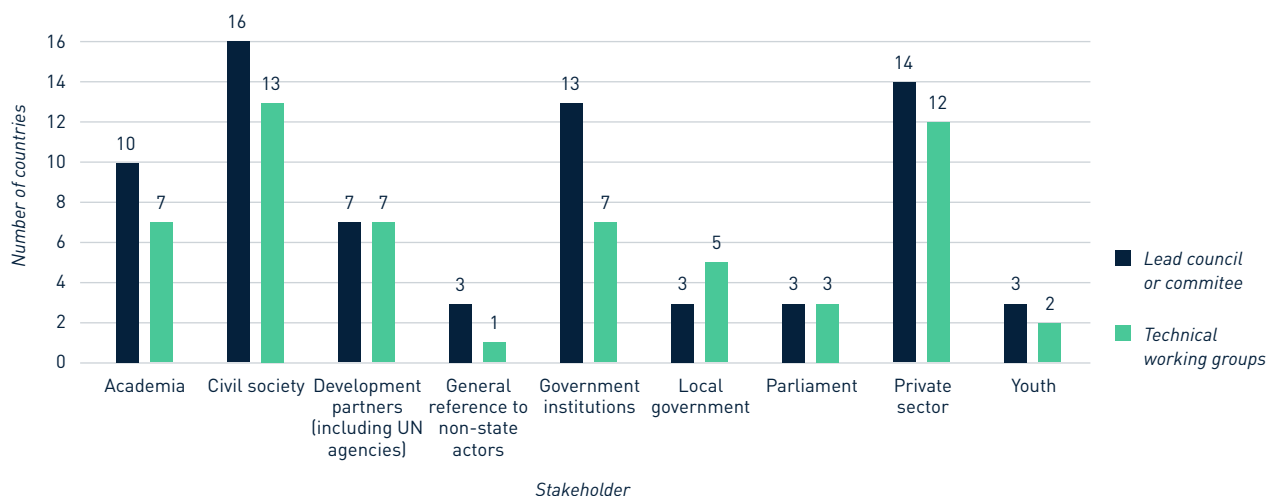
**BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT**

Formally include non-state actors in governance arrangements. This contributes to inclusivity, and a whole-of-society approach in 2030 Agenda implementation and the promotion of partnership.

Figure 3 presents figures regarding the inclusion of different stakeholder groups in working-level and high-level governance mechanisms. Working groups or technical committees tend to focus on progressing technical issues. High-level governance mechanisms refer to lead councils or committees that aim to provide overall direction for 2030 Agenda implementation and typically involve senior level officials.

11. Kindornay, Shannon and Gendron, Renée. 2020. *Multi-stakeholder engagement in 2030 Agenda implementation: A review of Voluntary National Review Reports (2016-2019)*. New York: UN DESA.

**Figure 3.** Participation in governance and institutional mechanisms for SDG implementation according to 2020 VNR reports



In 2020, both working group and lead council or committee governance arrangements had the highest levels of participation from civil society, the private sector and academia, like previous years. However, 2020 VNR reports mention a higher degree of participation of government institutions such as ministries, for example. Over 2017-2020, the review of VNR reports has consistently shown progress in terms of formal inclusion of non-state actors. While 2017 VNR reports tended to point to a commitment to engage non-state actors rather than formal inclusion, 2018 saw a significant increase in their inclusion, particularly through lead councils or committees. The trend towards formal inclusion continued in 2019, albeit predominantly through technical working groups. Conversely, the 2020 VNR reports present a broader level of multi-stakeholder engagement in lead councils and committees. However, the exact manners by which engagement occurs (e.g. if stakeholders have voting power) is not often clear, or information is not sufficiently detailed in the VNR reports.

Compared to 2019, 2020 saw an increase in the number of countries that pointed to the inclusion of academia, civil society, government institutions and the private sector in lead councils or committees. In 2019, 5 countries pointed to academia, 10 to civil society, 2 to government institutions and 7 to the private sector. In 2020, 10 countries listed academics as part of high-level governance mechanisms, 16 referred to civil society, 13 to government institutions and 14 to the

private sector. In 2020 there was also an increase in the number of countries pointing to formal inclusion of local governments over the previous year at 5 countries versus 3 in 2019. On the other hand, there was a decrease in terms of inclusion in working groups. Down from 14 countries pointing to academics in 2019 to 7 in 2020. Civil society was referred to by 14 countries in 2019 versus 13 in 2020 with similar trends for government institutions (down to 7 from 17 in 2019) and the private sector (12 versus 15 in 2019).

In addition to formal inclusion in governance mechanisms, the review also pointed to governments that have committed to engagement as shown in previous editions of this report. A commitment to engage was noted when the VNR report did not specify a formalized mechanism of engagement, but there is a well-established precedent for engagement or promise to engage non-state actors. For example, Uzbekistan indicated that civil society as an independent institution is still at the stage of formation, and that its development is supported by a presidential decree that aims to further involve civil society and enhance its role towards the renewal of the country's democracy. However, there are no details on which means will be used to ensure such engagement.

Overall, the 2020 VNR reports suggest a continued approach to formal inclusion of representatives from major stakeholder groups. This approach supports whole-of-society ownership over the 2030



Agenda, cross-sector relationship and trust building, and inclusive multi-stakeholder approaches to implementation. Moreover, in comparison to the previous year, there has been a greater focus on non-state actors in high-level governance mechanisms, which is positive in the sense that there might be more opportunities in place for non-state actors to input into overall strategic direction and coordination. However, direct impact resulting from such inclusion in formal governance arrangements remains unclear, as well as the extent to which policies and approaches are redesigned due to diverse voices being heard.

#### 2.2.4. Engaging peers on the 2030 Agenda

An important element of the 2030 Agenda is implementation at the regional level, including through engagement with regional organizations, peer learning and regional follow-up and review. A higher number of VNR reports provided information on regional activities in 2020, suggesting an increase in terms of countries reporting on this dimension in comparison to the two previous years. In 2017, 56% of countries provided this information, 41% in 2018, 34% in 2019, and 47% in 2020. Different from 2019, when most VNR reports tended to provide limited information on regional efforts that specifically addressed implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the 2020 VNR reports bring interesting examples in this regard.

Some countries referred to their contributions with respect to advancing partnerships and agreements towards the 2030 Agenda and/or specific SDGs. That is the case of Austria, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Georgia, Liberia, Mozambique, Seychelles and Uganda. Hosting or participation in regional events was noted by Benin, Brunei Darussalam, Burundi, India, Libya, Panama, Slovenia and Syria. Argentina and Solomon Islands mentioned participation in specific SDGs frameworks, and Costa Rica referred to its leadership in work progress around the SDGs. Finland referred to participation in special country groupings to advance the 2030 Agenda, in particular the Nordic Council. Nigeria and Samoa participated in peer review processes that regarded the SDGs.

Overall, reporting on regional country grouping and participation in special country groups to advance the 2030 Agenda continues to decline. The lack of activities

### A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Regional coordination to peer-review a VNR process in the Pacific

Samoa participated in a good practice initiative regarding regional coordination. Alongside Papua New Guinea, Australia, and a CSO representative from Fiji, Samoa engaged in the first global review of a VNR process. This initiative, named Pacific Islands Forum Peer Review, focused on Vanuatu's VNR report in 2019. The participation in Vanuatu's review bared lessons that were valuable for Samoa's own VNR process.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from Samoa's VNR report.*

within country groupings suggests there has not been a movement towards regional follow-up and review (particularly with respect to the development of regional frameworks and indicators), peer-to-peer engagement and collective efforts to promote sustainable development at regional levels. In the 2020 VNR reports, only two out of the 47 countries reported specific country grouping activities. As a European Union state, Austria mentioned its commitment to supporting sustainable economic development in partner countries, to mainstreaming environmental protection and to advancing human rights, democracy and good governance. Conversely, as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), Samoa referred to its participation in the Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and the Regional VNR Capacity Building Workshop for SIDS as an important opportunity for engagement with national and regional stakeholders.



### BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Engage with peers to promote learning, establish collaborative initiatives to realize the 2030 Agenda and review progress on implementation.

### 2.2.5. Recommendations

- **Clearly establish leadership and governance structures to support 2030 Agenda implementation and lay out lines of accountability between various national stakeholders.**
- **Formalize non-state actor engagement in governance structures to realize the 2030 Agenda. This includes lead councils or committees and technical working groups.**
- **Identify opportunities to realize the 2030 Agenda domestically and globally through engaging more formally in regional level initiatives and with like-minded countries. Such engagement offers opportunities to share best practice with and learn lessons from peers.**
- **Support a positive public narrative around civil society and its participation in policy-making and development processes.**

## 2.3. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN 2030 AGENDA IMPLEMENTATION



### BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Establish an enabling environment through the creation of appropriate legal, regulatory and policy frameworks that support non-state actors to contribute to sustainable development and set out how multi-stakeholder engagement and partnership will occur.

The multi-stakeholder and inclusive nature of the 2030 Agenda are well established through its emphasis on whole-of-society approaches to implementation and leaving no one behind. A prerequisite to effective

engagement is an enabling environment<sup>12</sup> for non-state actors to contribute. Some countries that reported in 2020 noted efforts to create an enabling environment through policies that support multi-stakeholder engagement in 2030 Agenda implementation. These included Austria, Bangladesh, Benin, Brunei Darussalam, Comoros, Finland, Gambia, India, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Liberia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Russian Federation, Samoa, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, and Trinidad and Tobago.

### A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Policy frameworks to promote an enabling environment for 2030 Agenda implementation

\* In **Benin**, a framework for consultation of civil society organisations (CSOs) was put in place to promote civil society's participation in SDG implementation of SDGs, especially at the community level.

\* **Gambia** adopted an institutional framework that, through a decentralized approach, enables different stakeholders (e.g. civil society, private sector, local government representatives, youth, academia) to play active roles and ensure accountability.

\* **Kenya's** VNR report pointed to the creation of a multi-stakeholder engagement framework, which was developed by means of consultations in order to strengthen engagements, institutional and coordination mechanisms towards the 2030 Agenda.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from Benin, Gambia, and Kenya's VNR reports.*

12. "The political, financial, legal and policy context that affects how CSOs carry out their work. It can include: 1) Laws, policies and practices respecting freedom of association, the right to operate without state interference, the right to pursue self-defined objectives, and the right to seek and secure funding from national & international sources; 2) Institutionalized, inclusive and transparent multi-stakeholder dialogue; 3) Effective support from development providers to empower CSOs." Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC), [FAQs for Participating in the Second Monitoring Round of the GPEDC: Indicator 2](#)

However, countries in general tend not to engage directly with the issue of closing civic space<sup>13</sup> in their VNR reports. This gap in VNR reports is particularly concerning given the increasing trend of closing civic space around the world.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been used as an excuse by some governments to further close civic space, compounding existing concerns regarding the enabling environment for all stakeholders to contribute to the 2030 Agenda, and more recently, recovery from the pandemic.<sup>15</sup>

According to the [CIVICUS Monitor](#), which examines the status of civic space around the world, civic space for over two thirds of the countries that reported to the HLPF in 2020 (62%) is characterized as “obstructed,” “repressed” or “closed.”

## UNDERSTANDING THE STATUS OF CIVIC SPACE IN VNR REPORTING COUNTRIES FOR 2020

CIVICUS’s Monitor of civic space has information for all 47 countries that reported to the HLPF in 2020. Only eight (8) of the countries that reported to the HLPF in 2020 were considered “open,” meaning the state enables and safeguards civic space.<sup>16</sup> For 10 countries, civic space is considered “narrowed.”<sup>17</sup> This means the rights to freedom of association, expression, and peaceful

assembly have been violated. For a country to be considered obstructed, civil space must have a series of legal and practical constraints on the practice of fundamental rights. In these conditions, illegal surveillance and bureaucratic harassment occur. There is some space for non-state media, but journalists are subject to attack. Sixteen (16) reporting countries were classified as “obstructed.”<sup>18</sup> The monitor ranks a country as “repressed” if civic space is severely restrained. Individuals who criticize a power holder may be subject to surveillance, harassment, intimidation, injury or death. The work of civil society organizations is often impeded and under threat of deregistration by authorities. Mass detentions may occur, and the media usually only portrays the position of the state. Websites and social media activities are heavily monitored. In 2020, nine (9) reporting countries were in the “repressed” category.<sup>19</sup> The last category in the CIVICUS scale is “closed.” In this category, there is a complete closure of the civic space. An atmosphere of fear and violence is prevalent. Powerful state and non-state actors routinely imprison people and cause injury and death to individuals who seek to peacefully assemble and express themselves. In such circumstances, criticizing authorities is severely punished. The internet is heavily censored and online criticisms of authorities are severely punished. In 2020, four (4) reporting countries were classified as “closed.”<sup>20</sup>

13. “Civic space is the bedrock of any open and democratic society. When civic space is open, citizens and civil society organizations are able to organize, participate and communicate without hindrance. In doing so, they are able to claim their rights and influence the political and social structures around them. This can only happen when a state holds by its duty to protect its citizens and respects and facilitates their fundamental rights to associate, assemble peacefully and freely express views and opinions. These are the three key rights that civil society depends upon.” [CIVICUS website](#).
14. See, for example, De Burca, Deirdre and Mohan Singh, Jyotsna. 2020. [Realising the potential of Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda to promote and protect Civic Space](#). Asia Development Alliance (ADA) and Forus. July, 2020. Rowlands, Lynda and Gomez Pena, Natalia. 2019. [We will not be silenced: Climate activism from the frontlines to the UN](#). *CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation position paper*, November 2019. Johannesburg: CIVICUS. Brechenmacher, Saskia and Carothers, Thomas. 2019. [Defending Civic Space: Is the International Community Stuck?](#) Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has also recently launched an [Observatory on Civic Space](#).
15. Cf. De Oliveira, Ana, Kindornay, Shannon and Tomlinson, Brian. 2021. [Forus International Scoping Study of National NGO Platforms’ Experiences in Promoting an Enabling Environment](#). Forus. January 2021. Cf. De Oliveira, Ana, Kindornay, Shannon and Tomlinson, Brian. 2020. [Executive Summary: A Scoping Study of CSO Platforms’ Experiences in Promoting an Enabling Environment](#). Forus. December 2020. Tomlinson, Brian. 2020. [Literature Review: A Scoping Study of CSO Platforms’ Experiences in Promoting an Enabling Environment](#). Forus. December 2020.
16. Austria, Barbados, Estonia, Finland, Micronesia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, and Solomon Islands.
17. Argentina, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Georgia, North Macedonia, Panama, Moldova, Seychelles, Slovenia, and Trinidad and Tobago.
18. Armenia, Benin, Comoros, Ecuador, Gambia, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Liberia, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Ukraine, and Zambia.
19. Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Honduras, India, Niger, Nigeria, Russian Federation, and Uganda.
20. Burundi, Libya, Syria, and Uzbekistan.

### 2.3.1. Process for stakeholder engagement

In addition to an enabling environment, formal arrangements for stakeholder engagement are an element of governance and institutional mechanisms that support participation and input by all stakeholders in 2030 Agenda implementation. They help to promote greater understanding of shared goals, objectives and potential synergies, build momentum and strengthen partnerships in implementation, particularly with a broader set of stakeholders than those captured through lead councils or committees and working group structures.

In 2020, 22 VNR reports (47%) provided information on processes for stakeholder engagement beyond governance mechanisms, or ad hoc consultations. This shows a decrease in comparison to 2019, where the number of VNR reports providing such information was 28 (60%), against 18 VNR reports (39%) in 2018. Of these, one country (Liberia) only noted that they plan to develop a formal process for engagement with non-state actors (versus seven countries in 2019 and one country in 2018). In Liberia, such mechanism is to be called Citizens Feedback Mechanism and intends to increase civil society's participation in SDGs implementation, including monitoring, redress and feedback. Other examples include different approaches to stakeholder engagement. As highlighted above, Benin, Kenya and Gambia pointed to the development of multi-stakeholder engagement frameworks. Seychelles mentioned stakeholders' participation during budget processes preparation. Panama referred to conferences and working meetings conducted for participating actors to know and take ownership of the SDGs' objectives and targets, while Austria pointed to general coordination and on dialogue with relevant actors. Papua New Guinea mentioned the existence of a platform that provides stakeholders (e.g. civil society organizations, non-government organizations, individuals) with an opportunity to connect and therefore collaborate on the SDGs. Libya set up a forum for dialogue and coordination around the SDGs, and Solomon Islands established coordination committees for minority groups.



#### BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Establish and report on formal mechanisms to ensure regular, inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement on 2030 Agenda implementation in line with good practice for ensuring effective and inclusive engagement.

As noted above, there appears to be a continued positive trend in terms of non-state actor participation in formal governance arrangements from reporting in 2019 to 2020, with an increase in participation in lead councils or committees). On the other hand, less countries are reporting on processes of stakeholder engagement. This might be a concern, as the establishment of policies to support an enabling environment and the creation of formal processes and mechanisms that allow for more widespread and regular engagement with stakeholders outside governance mechanisms are important. They contribute to ongoing awareness-raising efforts, national ownership and whole-of-society approaches to implementation. Such mechanisms have potential to make a positive contribution to leaving no one behind by ensuring that populations that are being left behind, and individuals or the organizations that represent them, are included and supported to engage.

Information presented in VNR reports does not assess the quality of formal processes for multi-stakeholder engagement. Nevertheless, civil society reports for 2020 provide some indication of the challenges related to multi-stakeholder engagement. Civil society reports were prepared for the following countries that reported to the HLPF in 2020: India, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria, Peru, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Uganda, and Zambia.<sup>21</sup> The VNR report for Finland, for example, included sections written by civil society. However important the views of civil society are in relation to their national experiences, civil society reports (e.g. spotlight, shadow, parallel reports) currently lack status in official United Nations' High-level Political Forum (HLPF) and its related processes.

21. A report was also available for Denmark, though this country did not submit a VNR report to HLPF in 2020. It is not examined as part of this review.



## A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Multi-stakeholder participation in assessing the SDGs for Finland's VNR report

In Finland, civil society participates in the analysis of the country's progress in each one of the SDGs. In the goal-by-goal analysis of the VNR report, one page is dedicated to the government's assessment and another contains other stakeholders' assessment. Under each one of the 17 SDGs, while the government describes successes and key policy initiatives, the pages written by civil society point out challenges and propose recommendations. This good practice of a joint analysis corroborates a whole-of-society approach and presents a more holistic view of the country's progress towards achieving the SDGs.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from Finland's VNR report.*

The reports and written inputs by civil society organizations in VNR reports point to challenges including the need for improved coordination, higher quality interactions between civil society organizations and government and increased capacity for all stakeholders, and the expansion of public space for civil society organizations to discuss, advocate and operate.

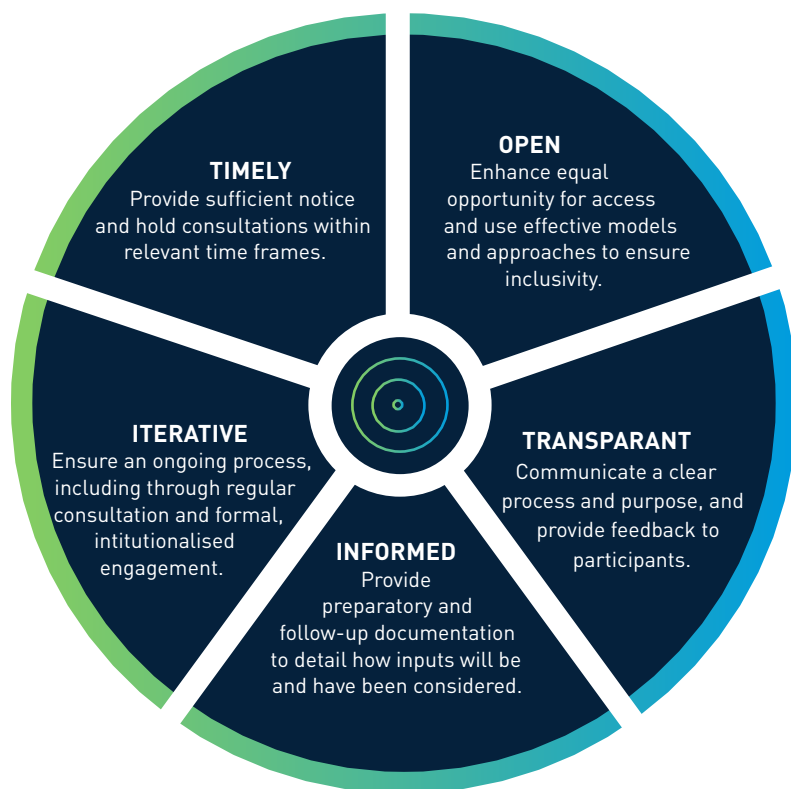
- In the case of **India's** civil society report, concern was raised over the challenges the country faces in achieving the SDGs, particularly with regards to securing them for the most vulnerable and marginalized communities.
- Civil society organizations in **Kenya** stressed the importance of non-state actors in influencing processes both at the local and the national levels. On the other hand, the report highlights that although there has been an improvement in the overall coordination of SDGs implementation among government institutions and non-state actors, such coordination is still considered weak.
- The civil society report for the **Kyrgyz Republic** praised the significant contributions that civil society organizations and other stakeholders provided to the VNR report, but presented concerns in the sense that weak coordination of development actors and lack of a multi-stakeholder partnership strategy creates barriers for the SDG implementation.
- **Malawi's** civil society report called for citizens' empowerment so that accountability and good governance are demanded and ensured.
- Civil society organizations in **Nepal** referred to the need for civil society organizations (CSOs)-friendly policies and the creation of enabling environment so that CSOs' strengths and expertise can accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.
- **Nigeria's** civil society report pointed out an extensive list of challenges, which include the need for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to have enabling environment to support communities and educate them on the SDGs. It highlights the importance of participatory governance and understands it as a right.
- The civil society report for **Peru** noted a lack of institutional channels to keep the dialogue with the government permanently open.
- According to the report produced by civil society in the **Russian Federation**, public authorities exert excessive control over non-profit organizations, which hampers the activities of independent human rights and environmental organizations, whose expertise is vital to the achievement of the SDGs.
- In **Slovenia**, the report acknowledges the institutionalized processes in place to involve civil society in policy formulation, but points out that the guidelines that guarantee such involvement are often disregarded.
- When it comes to **Uganda**, its civil society report reaffirms the importance of close work between civil society and the government to ensure the pursuit of a shared agenda on the SDGs.
- Finally, **Zambia's** civil society report mentions that the institutional mechanisms in place for stakeholder coordination have not been implemented in all levels (e.g. constituencies, districts), and this lack of representation potentially undermines accountability and inclusiveness.

As noted in the 2019 *Progressing National SDGs Implementation Report*, the quality and long-term engagement of civil society and other non-state actors supports a whole-of-society approach to 2030 Agenda implementation. Engagement should occur within a broader context of fostering an enabling environment for

civil society (and other stakeholders) with approaches centred around the five core elements that support meaningful engagement as presented in the 2019 edition of this report.<sup>22</sup> However, it should be noted that the

quality of stakeholder engagement is frequently unclear, as the states presenting VNR reports do not usually present details in this regard.

**Figure 4.** Core elements of effective and meaningful stakeholder engagement



In practice, an effective and inclusive approach to multi-stakeholder engagement means making use of varied and inclusive approaches to consultation such as online and offline methods and publicizing consultation opportunities widely and with appropriate lead time, including at subnational events in different parts of the country. It also means taking steps to include marginalized groups and their representatives and ensuring that information is available in local languages and accessible to all. As capacity for stakeholder engagement varies by country, there is also a role for development partners to support developing countries in this context.

## BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Support capacity development of civil society, including grassroots organizations representing marginalized communities, to participate in opportunities for stakeholder engagement and promote accountability for 2030 Agenda implementation.

### 2.3.2. Engagement in defining national priorities

Part of a whole-of-society approach to 2030 Agenda implementation is developing a shared, national vision for implementation that reflects priorities from stakeholders across society. This approach supports broad-based, democratic ownership over the nationalization process. Less than half (49%) of the countries reporting in 2020 noted consultation on national priorities with non-state actors. This represents a significant decrease in relation to previous years, as

22. For a historical review of VNR reporting on stakeholder engagement with a focus on lessons learned, see Kindornay, Shannon and Gendron, Renée. 2020. *Multi-stakeholder engagement in 2030 Agenda implementation: A review of Voluntary National Review Reports (2016-2019)*. New York: UN DESA. See also Wayne-Nixon, Laurel, Wragg-Morris, Tanya, Mishra, Anjali, Markle, Dawson, and Kindornay, Shannon. 2019. Effective multi-stakeholder engagement to realize the 2030 Agenda. *Good Practice in 2030 Agenda Implementation Series*. Vancouver and Ottawa: BCCIC and CCIC.

the figures regarding countries pointing to consultations to identify national priorities was 89% in 2019,<sup>23</sup> 57% in 2018,<sup>24</sup> and 69% in 2017.



## BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Ensure inclusivity and participation in the nationalization of the SDGs, including the creation of national targets and indicators, in line with the principles of the 2030 Agenda.

Overall, in the VNR reports that referred to non-state actors' participation in the definition of national priorities, there was enough information to understand consultation processes albeit with varying degrees of detail regarding who governments engage with and how. In the cases of the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan, non-state actors were not engaged in the identification of national priorities. Information was unavailable or unclear for 20 countries, plus the two that presented only main messages and not full VNR reports (Barbados, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines). For countries that reported national consultations, these tended to include online and offline elements. For example, Liberia and Malawi referred to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in consultations, which had to be either postponed to a later stage of the VNR process or moved into a virtual environment to ensure participation. Overall, governments tend to understand their VNR process as an opportunity to generate national ownership and select national priorities.

### 2.3.3. Engagement to carry out VNRs

The 2030 Agenda includes a commitment to participatory follow-up and review. The Secretary-General's voluntary

## A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Defining national priorities in Armenia

Armenia organized an ongoing approach to engage stakeholders into defining the country's priorities. Such priorities are named Mega Goals, have been established under Armenia's Transformation Strategy 2020-2050, and are intimately related to the SDGs. Armenia's current long-term strategy implies not only governmental approaches and actions, but involves other stakeholders such as the private sector, civil society and all Armenian people, including the Diaspora. To this end, the country has organized its strategy as a living document, meaning it can continuously change to provide answers to the challenges being presented to country over time. According to the VNR report, this initiative is unprecedented, and its approaches have been regularly discussed, receiving approval from civil society, the business community, and other stakeholders.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from Armenia's VNR report.*

common reporting guidelines encourage governments to provide information on how they carried out VNRs in their reports. As shown in previous reviews of VNR reports, governments tend to include this information, however, the level of detail can vary significantly. To support member states to carry out participatory VNRs, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs has prepared a 2020 edition of the Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews. Governments take a variety of approaches in this regard, including consultations, soliciting written inputs and commentary on draft reports and including non-state actors in drafting teams.

23. This analysis found a higher number of countries than Kindornay, Shannon, and Gendron, Renée (2020) as examples of prioritization carried out through governance mechanisms, in addition to broader consultations, are included in the figure above.

24. However, according to Kindornay, Shannon and Gendron, Renée (2020) 32 countries pointed to multi-stakeholder engagement to generate ownership over the 2030 Agenda. The difference in the figures is accounted for by countries that noted efforts in a more general sense rather than for the selection of specific national priorities.



## BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Solicit verbal and written inputs from all stakeholders in the preparation of VNR reports and provide stakeholders with an opportunity to review and comment on the first draft through public consultation.

## A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Youth engagement in Ukraine's VNR preparation

In Ukraine, youth was engaged in the process of the VNR preparation with a view of forecasting national development. As part of that process, the Ministry for Development of Economy, Trade, and Agriculture of Ukraine introduced a practice of involving youth in the forecasting and formulation of a set of long-term development priorities. For the first time, leading forecasting organizations, young scientists, students, and aspirants from higher educational institutions were engaged in formulating a national development consensus with the year 2030 as its horizon. To make that happen, the ministry and Ukraine's leading universities signed a memorandum of cooperation, giving students the possibility to assess and build the future common view.

*Source: Except adapted from Ukraine's VNR report.*

## A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Engagement of stakeholders in the Russian Federation's VNR preparation process

Seventeen thematic groups were established to draft the Russian Federation's VNR report, one for each SDG. In addition to government institutions, the following stakeholders were engaged: development institutions, civil society organizations, research institutions, and business associations. Draft VNR chapters as well as the entire VNR underwent a series of public consultations. In addition to official state statistics, data from development and research institutions were used. The VNR provides a comprehensive list of stakeholders from scientific and research organizations, business, non-profit and civil society organizations, and international organizations that were involved in VNR preparation.

*Source: Except adapted from the Russian Federation's VNR report.*

the case of consultations on national priorities, most countries made use of offline and online consultation formats like previous reporting years.

A trend that emerges from the review of 2020 VNR reports is the inclusion of non-state actors in drafting VNR reports – either as part of the official drafting team or through the inclusion of dedicated chapters or subsections prepared by non-state actors. For example, in Argentina, non-state actors, such as civil society, have contributed with inputs and also sent texts that were included in the VNR report as boxes.

In Micronesia, representatives from the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and development partners were identified to draft various sections of the VNR report. Through a government website, stakeholders that included non-governmental

Peru was the only country in 2020 that presented a full VNR report but did not refer to consultations and/or non-state actor engagement in the VNR. With 44 out of 45 countries<sup>25</sup> reporting non-state actor engagement, a positive trend is emerging towards non-state actor engagement in VNRs as standard practice.<sup>26</sup> As with

25. In 2020, 47 countries presented in the HLPF, but Barbados and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are being excepted from the above figures as they only presented main messages and not full VNR reports.

26. In 2019, 45 out of 46 countries reported engaging non-state actors in the VNR, while this figure was 43 out of 46 in 2018, and 34 out of 45 countries examined in 2017.



organizations were able to submit proposals and special stories for further inclusion in the Armenian VNR report. Consultations with different stakeholders were mentioned by 27 countries (57%), which include Austria, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Gambia, Kenya, Morocco, Nepal, Samoa, Syria, and Uzbekistan. Estonia established a questionnaire for stakeholders to provide information to the review, and Zambia mentioned that the VNR report was validated by different stakeholders through virtual conferencing. Ukraine included an annex containing a summary of recommendations based on a multi-stakeholder discussion on monitoring the SDGs' progress.



## BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Include non-state actors in institutional mechanisms responsible for the VNR and drafting the VNR report, and advocate for civil society reports to be given recognition and status in the United Nations' High-level Political Forum (HLPF) process.

## A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Trinidad and Tobago's VNR as a tool to highlight stakeholder engagement in SDGs implementation

By using "boxes", Trinidad and Tobago's VNR report showcased initiatives carried out by stakeholders towards SDGs implementation. Such initiatives, written using stakeholders' inputs, were linked to particular SDGs' targets and underlined as ways to bring the "leave no one behind" principle into reality. As a result, the VNR report highlighted efforts made by civil society, academia, and the private sector to contribute to national SDGs implementation. By presenting information in such a way, the VNR report increased the visibility of stakeholders' contributions.

*Source: Except adapted from Trinidad and Tobago's VNR report.*

## 2.3.4. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on stakeholder engagement

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted countries in various ways. With regards specifically to stakeholder engagement, 25 out of the 47 countries (53%) included information on the effects of the pandemic. Among those, most reported impacts and changes on VNR reporting, with a fewer number of countries reporting on overall engagement in terms of governance mechanisms. In terms of the VNR experience, countries mostly referred to the disruption of planned consultations or other forms of engagement, to meetings being delayed or postponed, and to the need of using virtual means to carry out participation and engagement.

Among the key impacts, 15 out of the 25 countries that included information on the impacts of COVID-19 on stakeholder engagement (60%) mentioned moving into online platforms, virtual meetings, or other forms of online engagement. Conversely, 11 out of 25 countries referred to planned engagements being cancelled, postponed, reduced, or put on hold, which represents 44% of the countries reporting on the pandemic impacts. Although Honduras and Niger have referred to complications arising from the pandemic, they did not detail the extent or consequences of such issues.

Despite the considerable negative impacts posed by the pandemic in consultative processes, some countries pointed to positive lessons learned. For example, Bangladesh's VNR report provided an appendix on COVID-19 that finishes by mentioning the opportunity for cooperation among different stakeholders. It notes the chance for the private sector and civil society to become agents of change by actively working on inclusion. According to the country's report, working on existing inequities can ensure that everyone in society receives fair opportunities for the post-pandemic context. In the case of Georgia, the VNR report did not refer to specific negative impacts, but to a coordinated response. The country's society perceived the need to resume economic growth while being mindful of the leave no one behind principle. In this sense, the response to COVID-19 brought more coordination within the Georgian government and with the country's society.

## **A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE:** Virtual engagement towards inclusivity in Uganda

Uganda noted that virtual engagement brought more inclusion and less costs. According to the country's VNR report, online consultations elicited the participation of more people than traditional workshops, and counted with a comparatively greater diversity of stakeholders. Secondly, such process was undertaken with lower expenses, allowing for the resources to be dedicated to other budget-constrained processes in the country. Finally, Uganda mentioned a higher level of participation of young, tech-savvy people, who engaged better than when invited to attend physical meetings.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from Uganda's VNR report.*

### 2.3.5. Recommendations

- Follow good practice in multi-stakeholder engagement by ensuring that approaches are timely, open and inclusive, transparent, informed and iterative.
- Support an enabling environment for multi-stakeholder engagement through the legislation, regulation and the creation of policies that set out how engagement will occur.
- Create and report on formal mechanisms to ensure regular and inclusive stakeholder engagement.
- Engage diverse stakeholders in the selection of national priorities and partner with non-state actors to reach the furthest behind.
- Develop a range of opportunities for multi-stakeholder engagement in VNRs including through online and in-person public consultation, soliciting inputs to and feedback on draft reports, and inclusion of non-state actors as partners in carrying out the review and drafting the VNR report.
- Ensure that stakeholders continue to be engaged even in light of challenging situations (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic) by promoting resilience and finding alternative ways through which to secure participation.



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## 3. POLICIES FOR 2030 AGENDA IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter covers four aspects related to policies towards 2030 Agenda implementation. The first one refers to the 2020 reporting countries' conduction of baseline or gap analysis to inform implementation strategies. The second section focuses on the incorporation of the 2030 Agenda into national frameworks and policies, including the extent to which countries have integrated the Agenda's principles, such as human-rights based approach, universality, intergenerational responsibility, planetary boundaries, and leaving no one behind. The third section of this chapter addresses the topic of nationalizing the 2030 Agenda, looking into how countries have defined national priorities and established national targets and indicators. The fourth section focuses on integration and policy coherence, and examines how countries have reported on the SDGs and how they covered policy coherence for sustainable development. All of the four sections are followed by lists of recommendations.

### 3.1. KEY FINDINGS

#### 3.1.1. Baseline or gap analysis

- **Conducting assessments:** In 2020, although most countries (64%) reported they carried out a baseline or gap assessment, this represents a reduction in view of 2019, when 79% of the countries reported having conducted such assessment.

#### 3.1.2. Incorporation of the 2030 Agenda into national frameworks and policies

- **SDGs integration:** All the countries reported integrating the SDGs into their policies in 2020. This is a positive trend in comparison to previous years, when 79% reported similar approaches in 2019, and only half of countries did so in 2017 and 2018.
- **2030 Agenda principles:** The reporting countries

continue to refer more to the SDGs than to the broader 2030 Agenda and its transformational principles. Among these principles, leaving no one behind continues to receive more focus in the 2020 VNR reports, and there has been an increase in the number of countries pointing to the universal nature of the 2030 Agenda and human rights-based approaches.

### 3.1.3. Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda

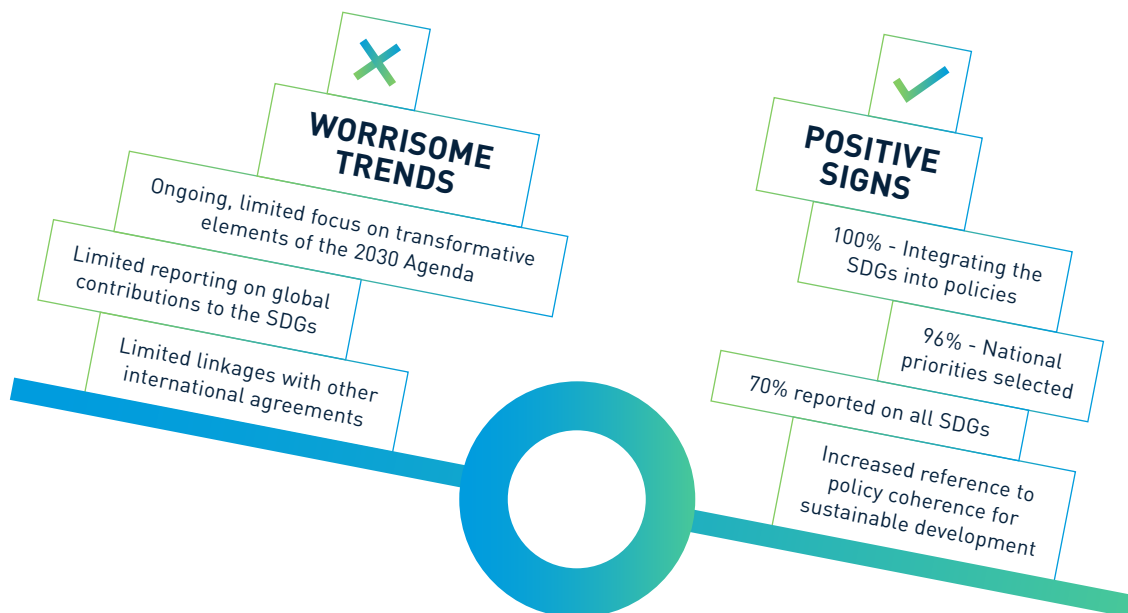
- **National priorities:** Five years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, 45 countries, or almost 96% that reported in 2020, noted the selection of national priorities. This compares to 89% in 2019 and 76% in 2018 and 2017. As in 2019, priorities related to social outcomes and economy are most commonly cited, followed by the environment.
- **National targets and indicators:** In 2020, 77% of countries provided some information on the selection of national targets and indicators, which represents an increase in relation to the 60% of countries in 2019.

### 3.1.4. Integration and policy coherence

- **SDGs reporting:** There has been an improvement on reporting integrated approaches to implement

the SDGs. Although only 49% of countries gave equal attention to economic, social and environmental dimensions of development in their VNR reports, more than half referred to appropriate linkages between the goals. 70% of VNR reports assessed the full set of SDGs, an increase in relation to 2019, when this figure had been 40%.

- **International agreements:** Reporting on linkages between the 2030 Agenda and relevant international agreements shows mixed results in 2020 over 2019. Such linkages point to the recognition of the synergies between the 2030 Agenda and other relevant agreements to promote sustainable development, and the variation of results in relation to different agreements does not suggest an increase in such recognition.
- **COVID-19 at the international level:** A very limited number of countries referred to COVID-19-related actions apart from measures carried out at the domestic level. No country made reference to global commitments regarding the pandemic.
- **Policy coherence:** More countries focused on policy coherence for sustainable development as a guiding framework for 2030 Agenda implementation. However, VNR reports revealed limited analysis of domestic and foreign policies on the realization of the SDGs globally in 2020, down from previous years.





## 3.2. BASELINE OR GAP ANALYSIS

Baseline and gap analyses typically examine policy alignment and/or data availability and baselines for 2030 Agenda implementation. These assessments inform decision-making, policy processes, programming and efforts to improve data availability. While the first four years of VNR reporting showed most countries reporting the completion of an assessment of all or some SDGs,<sup>27</sup> in 2020, only 30 countries (64%) provided this information. Alongside Barbados and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, who only presented main messages and not full VNR reports, Austria, Bulgaria, Brunei Darussalam, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Estonia, Honduras, Libya, Panama, Peru, the Russian Federation, Solomon Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uzbekistan did not indicate that they had carried out a gap analysis or baseline assessment. In the case of Gambia, the VNR report suggests an assessment is planned to identify data needs, as well as methodologies for sources and collection. More limited reporting on baseline assessments may be the result of 21 countries now submitting a second or third VNR report to the HLPF.

Overall, 2020 saw a reduction in the proportion of countries reporting that they had carried out a baseline or gap analysis over previous years.



### BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Assess policies, data availability and baselines to inform prioritization and nationalization of the 2030 Agenda and ensure an evidence-based approach to implementation. When submitting a subsequent VNR report, indicate if and how relevant assessments have been updated.

In terms of the content of assessments, the degree to which assessments were detailed varied, though what was assessed was often clear. The most common type of assessment noted in VNR reports related to examining data (40%). In 2019, the highest percentage referred to the assessment of policies and their alignment with the SDGs (36%). In 2018 the most common type of assessment noted in VNR reports was for data and policies (33%). In 2017, most assessments (36%) focused on data availability and/or the establishment of baselines.

**Figure 5.** Types of baseline or gap assessments listed in VNR reports



27. In 2019, 79% of reporting countries indicated they performed an assessment for all or some SDGs. In 2018, 70% of countries noted that they had carried out an assessment or planned to while in 2017, the number was 84% versus 62% in 2016.

## A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Making use of assessment tools to support 2030 Agenda implementation in the Kyrgyz Republic

The Kyrgyz Republic undertook a gap analysis using the United Nations [Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support](#) methodology, Complexity Analysis of the SDGs Interlinkages and [Rapid Integrated Assessment](#) tools.

The assessments helped identify the level of alignment between national priorities and SDG implementation and attainment on the subnational level, as well as areas that can benefit from accelerated actions. Gaps identified include a lack of sufficiently disaggregated statistical data, persistent urban-rural discrepancies, continued social and gender inequalities, insufficient capacities among central and local authorities and limited financial and human resources to work on multiple priorities simultaneously. A statistical capacity assessment revealed that the Kyrgyz Republic is ready to report on 102 indicators, or 50% of all applicable global SDG indicators. The Rapid Integrated Assessment of 36 strategic documents found 82% alignment of the national strategic development planning with the SDGs, with full alignment observed with SDGs 1 (No poverty), 2 (Zero hunger), 3 (Good health and well-being), 5 (Gender equality), 7 (Affordable and clean energy) and 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure).

*Source: Except adapted from Kyrgyz Republic's VNR report.*

As noted in previous *Progressing National SDGs Implementation* reports, VNR reports for 2020 that included an assessment of policies similarly tended to provide information regarding the extent to which the SDGs and their targets are aligned or integrated into national policies, with some countries providing details on the percentage of targets aligned. The results of data assessments tend to be presented in

terms of overall data availability. Information on gaps in terms of progress for 2030 Agenda implementation is also presented in the goal-by-goal analysis for some countries (however this information is not explicitly linked to the assessment carried out or showcased as results of the assessment). In the 2020 VNR reports, although some of the data showed assessments were carried out, information on how aligned policies were or how much data was available is not usually detailed. On the other hand, most reporting countries (30 out of 47) included SDG gaps.

In terms of COVID-19, while most VNR reports recognized the significant impact of the pandemic, particularly in terms of limiting and in some cases backsliding on sustainable development gains, most reports did not include a detailed description of implications for baselines. With respect to this area of analysis, Nigeria noted that their baseline data is outdated, but a new assessment was delayed due to the pandemic. Conversely, Trinidad and Tobago considered that the COVID-19 pandemic presented an opportunity for further assessment of gaps, but does not describe specific analysis being either carried out or postponed in view of the pandemic.

### 3.2.1. Recommendations

- **Conduct an assessment that identifies gaps in existing policies and programs, examines data availability, and sets out baselines from which to measure progress and assess where additional efforts are needed.**
- **Articulate how the assessment was conducted and provide a summary of the gaps identified for each goal.**
- **For countries presenting a subsequent VNR report to the HLPF, identify where progress has been made since initial policy and data assessments and provide information on changes between reporting years at national and subnational levels and for the furthest behind.**

### 3.3. INCORPORATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA INTO NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND POLICIES

National frameworks and policies set the overall direction for 2030 Agenda implementation and provide guidance to government institutions and other stakeholders. Incorporation of the 2030 Agenda includes the SDGs as well as the agenda's transformative principles including commitments to a human rights-based approach, intergenerational responsibility and leaving no one behind, for example. The review of VNR reports seeks to understand how governments have incorporated the SDGs as well as the guiding principles of the 2030 Agenda.

In 2020, all the countries reported integrating the SDGs into national policies. While most countries (34 out of 47) incorporated the SDGs into national development plans and related policies and frameworks, 11 have also included the use of a national SDG implementation strategy. Bulgaria and Barbados noted the creation of a national strategy to implement the SDGs without referring to national development plans. Overall, findings for 2020 show an increase in countries integrating the SDGs into their policies over reporting in 2019, when 79% of the countries reported similar approaches, and in 2017 and 2018, where only half of countries did so.



#### BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Integrate Agenda 2030 priorities into national policies and frameworks and develop a roadmap to accelerate implementation.

#### 3.3.1. Integrating the 2030 Agenda principles

The principles of universality, human rights, integration, partnership, inclusivity, pursuing development within planetary boundaries, inter-generational responsibility and leaving no one behind are critical foundations of sustainable development. These principles represent the spirit of the 2030 Agenda and serve as transformative elements of implementation. The assessment of VNR reports looks at whether they mention principles of the 2030 Agenda, including human rights-based approaches, leaving no one behind, universality, inter-generational responsibility and planetary boundaries.<sup>28</sup>

As shown in Figure 6, the principle of leaving no one behind is well established and referred to in VNR reports with the vast majority of the countries (43 out of 47, or almost 92%). This finding points to a slight decrease in a continued upward trend in countries referring to leaving no one behind from 98% in 2019, 89% in 2018 and 87% in 2017. Different from 2019 and 2018, when inter-generational responsibility was the next most cited principle, in 2020 universality was the second principle mostly mentioned, with 15 countries making this reference, against 8 on 2019 and 16 in 2018. In regard to the principle of a human-rights based approach, 13 out of 47 VNR reports made this reference, against only 4 out of 47 in 2019. As for inter-generational responsibility, the same amount of 13 out of 47 reports referred to this principle in 2020, against 18 out of 47 in 2019. Finally, the planetary boundaries principle was referred to by only 1 out of the 47 2020 VNR reports, which is the same as the 2019 VNR reports. Compared to 2019, the principles of inter-generational responsibility and leaving no one behind saw a reduction. On the other hand, reference to human rights-based approach and universality experienced increases, which is a positive trend. The principle of planetary boundaries was again mentioned by only one country.

28. Other principles are captured in the sections that follow through the examination of integration, stakeholder engagement and partnership.

**Figure 6.** Reference to 2030 Agenda Principles



## BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Explicitly link the implementation of each SDG to relevant national and international human rights frameworks. Establish policies and institutions to ensure a human rights-based approach to sustainable development in 2030 Agenda implementation.

Thirteen countries explicitly referred to the human rights-based approach (versus four countries in 2019, six countries in 2018, and 10 in 2017). Nevertheless, 22 countries made some reference to human rights in their VNR reports, down from 29 in 2019 and 28 in 2018. For example, in Ecuador's VNR report, many links between country policies towards 2030 Agenda implementation are referred as links with human rights. In the case of Austria, even if the human rights-based approach is not identified, human rights are considered as a cross cutting reference along the VNR report. Liberia and Mozambique, for example, referred to the constitution and to legal and policy frameworks that include the protection of human rights. Kyrgyz Republic's VNR report outlines government efforts to improve human rights protection and compliance with international human rights obligations, including by establishing human rights institutions. The VNR report from Niger mentions that the country has ratified almost all legal instruments for the protection of human rights at the international, regional and national levels. In the case of Zambia, human rights are referred to under specific SDGs, such

as SDG 5 (Gender equality) and SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions).

## A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Slovenia's creation of a human rights centre

Human rights have been integrated throughout Slovenia's VNR report. Moreover, the foundation of a Human Rights Centre is mentioned as a form of good practice. Following an update in the Human Rights Ombudsman Act in January 2019, the country created a Human Rights Centre within the Ombudsman Office to perform broader tasks related to the topic of human rights.

The actions carried out by the centre include human rights-related promotion, information, education and training, as well as analyses, reports and panel discussions related to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Cooperating stakeholders include civil society, unions and other state bodies. Moreover, in partnership with education organizations such as universities and schools, the centre aims to conduct activities regarding education and awareness raising. Going forward, the centre is to continue its engagement with organizations at both the national and international levels.

*Source: Except adapted from Slovenia's VNR report.*

Only one country – Finland – referred to planetary boundaries,<sup>29</sup> compared to one country in 2019 and three countries in 2018. Of the [nine planetary boundaries identified by the Stockholm Resilience Center](#),<sup>30</sup> countries that do not refer directly to planetary boundaries tend to refer to aspects such as climate change, biodiversity, land system change, and chemical pollution. Even in the instances where reports refer to some of the planetary boundaries, they are not understood as such, but rather presented as part of country progress and commitments related to environmental goals.

As with previous reporting years, VNR reports show that countries tend to focus on the SDGs rather than the broader 2030 Agenda and its transformational principles overall. While the considerable reference to leaving no one behind continues to be welcome, even this principle experienced a decline in the VNR reports references. On the other hand, there has been an increase in the number of countries pointing to the universal nature of the 2030 Agenda and human rights-based approaches. The decline in countries pointing to inter-generational responsibility and the fact that there was no change in terms of a sole country referring to planetary boundaries is a worrying trend.

### 3.3.2. Recommendations

- **Fully integrate the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs into national and subnational plans and strategies based on an evaluation of existing policies, approaches and progress to identify gaps, adapt policies and target areas where further progress is needed especially for the furthest behind groups.**
- **Operationalize the principles of the 2030 Agenda in approaches to implementation recognizing the universal, human rights-based and interlinked nature of the agenda. VNR reports should demonstrate how approaches to sustainable development are transformative based on the principles of the 2030 Agenda and not just the SDGs.**

- **Ground plans and strategies in human rights, including by linking activities to international and national human rights commitments and establishing appropriate institutions and mechanisms to support a human rights-based approach to sustainable development.**
- **Undertake actions with reference to and respect for planetary boundaries and responsibilities towards future generations, including avenues for intergenerational partnerships.**

## 3.4. NATIONALIZING THE 2030 AGENDA

While successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires that governments work towards realizing all SDGs, governments are expected to implement the 2030 Agenda in line with their national context and priorities. This means identifying national (and local) priorities, targets and indicators through inclusive and participatory processes. This process helps countries situate implementation in light of baselines and existing progress, generate ownership and adapt the goals to country-specific contexts. In the context of prioritization, the integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda means that countries can be a leader on some goals but a laggard on none.

### 3.4.1. Priorities

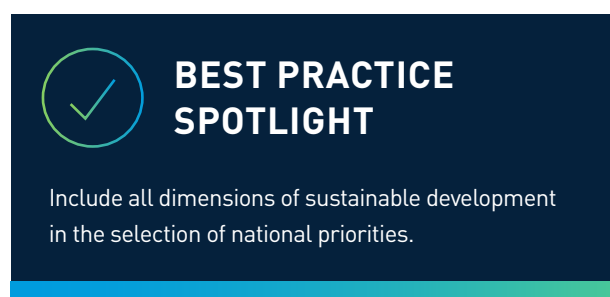
Five years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, 45 countries, or almost 96% that reported in 2020, noted the selection of national priorities. This compares to 89% in 2019 and 76% in 2018 and 2017. Barbados does not make reference to this topic in its main message. The only other country not referring to national priorities is Costa Rica, although this matter had been considered in detail in the country's 2017 VNR report. However, Costa Rica did refer to the COVID-19

29. The present analysis only considers the mentioning of "planetary boundaries" specifically. However, Slovenia's VNR report refers to a development "that takes into account the limits and capacities of our planet."

30. These include stratospheric ozone depletion, loss of biosphere integrity (biodiversity loss and extinctions), chemical pollution and release of novel entities, climate change, ocean acidification, freshwater consumption and the global hydrological cycle, land system change, nitrogen and phosphorus flows to the biosphere and oceans and atmospheric aerosol loading.



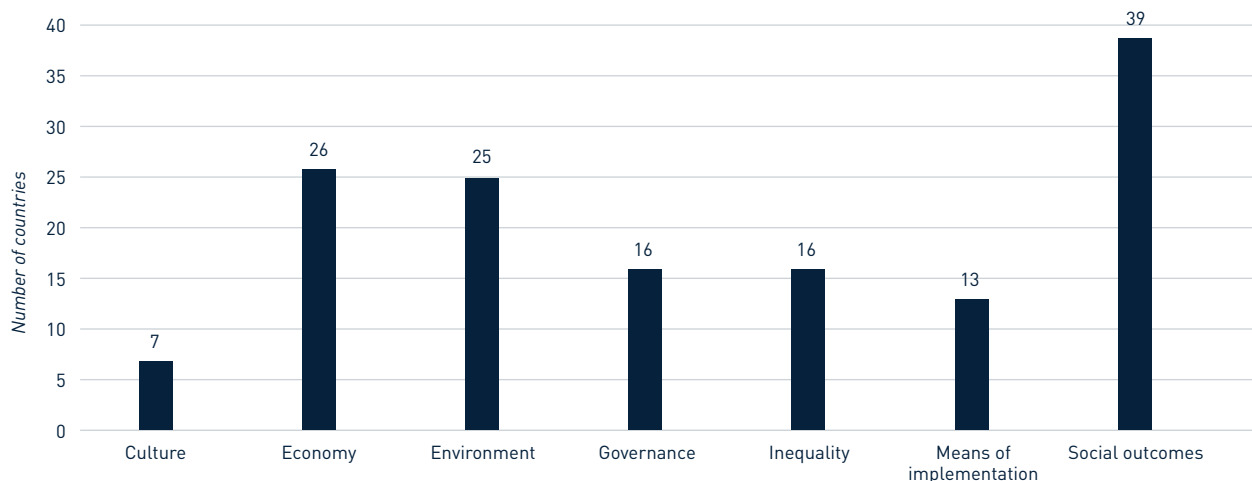
pandemic as a priority issue to be addressed in terms of emergency. Like previous reporting years, how countries articulate their priorities vary. Some list national priorities in terms of specific SDGs while others note priority areas, such as economic growth or social inclusion that apply to more than one goal. Others still point to priority targets within goals.



The 43 countries that provided more details on their priorities for 2030 Agenda implementation did not

consistently referred to specific SDGs. Overall, there has been a decrease in the references for most priority areas in relation to previous years. However, the most commonly cited priorities continue to be those related to social outcomes (39 countries) and economy (26 countries) (Figure 7). In 2019, these figures were 33 and 34, respectively, and 32 and 30 countries in 2018, respectively. A slightly smaller number of countries prioritized the environment in 2020 at 25 versus 28. In 2018, this number was 26. The number of countries reporting governance issues as a priority declined in 2020 with 16 countries, against 31 in 2019 and 21 countries in 2018 and 2017. Less countries prioritized inequality at 16 countries versus 21 in 2019, 13 in 2018 and nine in 2017. Thirteen countries pointed to issues related to the means of implementation, or SDG 17, a figure that stood at 20 in 2019, 14 2018 and 10 in 2017. Seven countries pointed to culture as a priority overall, versus only two in 2019 and six countries in 2018. Estonia included an SDG 18 to be the viability of the Estonian cultural space.

**Figure 7.** Priorities for 2030 Agenda implementation



In terms COVID-19, the 2020 VNR reports did not frequently noted how the pandemic impacted national priorities. For example, Argentina mentioned the establishment of unexpected and urgent priorities posed by the health emergency situation. According to the country's VNR report, the pandemic highlighted the importance of the state providing essential services such as public health and subsidies to people in situations of social and economic vulnerability.

### 3.4.2. National targets and indicators

The selection of national (and local) targets and indicators links national priorities to monitoring and follow-up and review. In 2020, 77% of countries provided some information on the selection of national targets and indicators, which represents an increase in relation to the 60% of countries in 2019. Most countries reported selecting national targets and indicators – 34

of the 36 countries that provided information. This is an improvement over 2019, when the figures were 17 of the 29 countries that reported identifying both targets and indicators, and over 2018, when only seven countries provided such information. Only two countries reported only having developed national indicators, and none mentioned the development of targets only. Costa Rica, Barbados, Gambia, and Trinidad and Tobago did not provide information on the selection of national targets and indicators. Information available in the VNR reports for Brunei Darussalam, Ecuador, Honduras, Nigeria, Panama, and Peru was unclear on whether the countries had developed national targets and indicators. In the case of Morocco, the preparation of national targets and indicators is mentioned as a next step.

## A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Mozambique's national framework of SDG indicators

In 2020, Mozambique created a National Framework of SDG Indicators (QNI) that adapts the global commitments to the country's context by the means of specific targets and indicators. Such framework aligns with the development priorities of Mozambique, particularly to its government's five-year program for the 2020-2024 period. Moreover, as the framework's indicators reflect the multidimensional nature of the SDGs, this mechanism offers further integration when it comes to programming. The framework informs the government's implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and specific agencies across sectors have been identified as being responsible for both achieving and monitoring particular targets. Furthermore, the framework will be useful to development stakeholders in terms of the integrating SDG indicators into management tools that look into planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

*Source: Except adapted from Mozambique's VNR report.*

### 3.4.3. Recommendations

- **Identify national sustainable development priorities that address all dimensions of sustainable development, recognizing the interlinkages between society, the economy, the environment and governance.**
- **Develop national targets and indicators through an inclusive and participatory process to complement global targets and indicators.**
- **In order to generate national ownership of the VNR process, present VNR reports for debate at the national level (e.g. in national parliaments and official multi-stakeholder sustainable development councils/commissions) before presenting at the international level (e.g. United Nations' High-level Political Forum).**

## 3.5. INTEGRATION AND POLICY COHERENCE

The 2030 Agenda covers economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, alongside issues related to governance, culture, inequality and partnership. It has implications for domestic and foreign policies as well as efforts at the local level. Importantly, the 2030 Agenda links to the international human rights framework and a range of international agreements related to issues such as climate action, gender equality, financing for development and aid effectiveness, among others. All stakeholders face the challenge of ensuring an integrated and coherent approach to 2030 Agenda implementation. Implementation must promote synergies to realize progress on all dimensions of sustainable development at local, national and global levels while addressing trade-offs.

### 3.5.1. Reporting on the SDGs

While the [HLPF](#) has an annual theme and sometimes establishes specific theme goals, countries are encouraged to report on all 17 SDGs. This facilitates assessment of how well countries are progressing on the SDGs. Although some countries opt to report only

against the theme goals, this was not a valid option for 2020, as no theme goals were defined for this year. In 2020, 33 countries (70%) provided information on all 17

SDGs (Table 1), which represents an increase in relation to the 28 (59%) countries informing this in 2019 and in 2018.

**Table 1.** Goal by goal reporting in the 2020 VNR reports

SDG Coverage	Countries		
<b>All SDGs examined</b> <i>(33 countries)</i>	Argentina Armenia Austria Bangladesh Benin Brunei Darussalam Bulgaria Burundi Comoros Costa Rica Democratic Republic of the Congo	Ecuador Estonia Finland Gambia Honduras India Kenya Liberia Malawi Micronesia Morocco Nepal	North Macedonia Panama Papua New Guinea Russian Federation Samoa Seychelles Slovenia Solomon Islands Uganda Ukraine
<b>Limited set of country-selected SDGs</b> <i>(9 countries)</i>	Libya Georgia Kyrgyz Republic	Mozambique Niger Nigeria	Trinidad and Tobago Uzbekistan Zambia
<b>SDGs examination not articulated in the VNR</b> <i>(3 countries)</i>	Barbados Peru Saint Vincent and the Grenadines		
<b>No specific goal-by-goal analysis but rather analysis based on 5Ps (people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership)</b> <i>(2 countries)</i>	Moldova Syria		

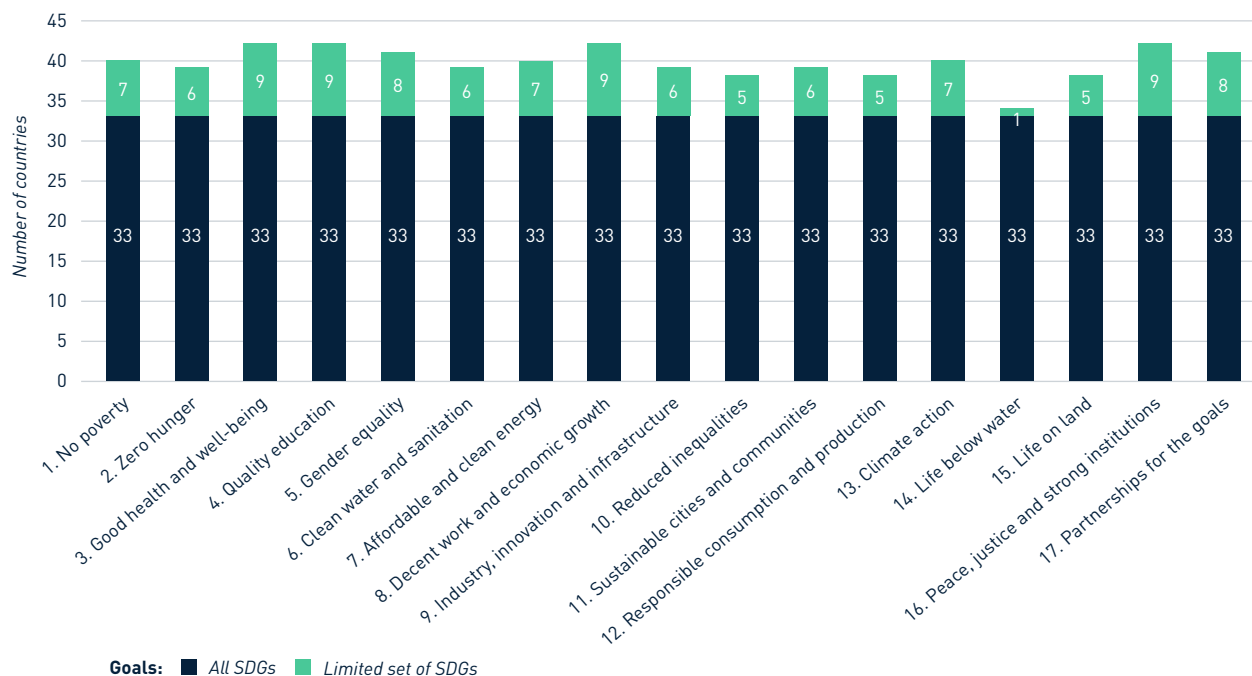


## BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Provide a detailed assessment of all 17 SDGs, with appropriate linkages to all dimensions of sustainable development and reference to domestic and global efforts to realize the 2030 Agenda.

Figure 8 provides an overview of the goals most cited in VNR reports according to the approach taken to the goal-by-goal analysis.

**Figure 8.** Specific SDG coverage



The review suggests a slight reverse in the positive trend in VNR reports towards greater detail in the examination of SDGs, targets and indicators. Most countries, 79%, provided a detailed examination, a decrease from the 89% of 2019, but still higher than the 65% in 2018 and 64% in 2017. Detailed examinations tend to include overall information on the status of a particular SDG, efforts to accelerate implementation, successes and challenges. Seven countries provided only summary level information while Barbados and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines did not provide details of the implementation of specific SDGs in their main messages. Peru did not mention an analysis of goals, targets and indicators mentioned in their VNR report. In the case of Moldova and Syria, the analysis was based on the 5Ps (people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership), and Syria was able to cover all the 17 SDGs via such analytical framework.

With respect to the integrated nature of the SDGs, the review of VNR reports also looks at the extent to which countries refer to linkages between the goals as well as coverage of all three dimensions of sustainable

## A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Reporting on SDG 14 in Armenia's VNR report

Armenia's VNR report covers SDG 14 (Life below water), which is not a customary practice for landlocked countries. Although this SDG is not subject to nationalization, the VNR report highlights that Armenia pays special attention to the management of fish resources, the preservation of fish species, the combat against illegal fishing, and that the country had allocated budget to care for the resources of a lake and its basin.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from Armenia's VNR report.*

development (social, economic and environmental) overall in the VNR report. Apart from the detailed reporting on the SDGs, the review of 2020 VNR reports

found a reverse in the decline seen in previous years with regards to the number of countries making applicable linkages to all three aspects of sustainable development between the goals. In 2019, 25% made references to linkages versus 37% in 2018 and 49% in 2017. Conversely, 51% of the countries reporting in 2020 provided such linkages. This result may positively indicate that countries are working towards ensuring integration in their approaches to 2030 Agenda implementation.

Despite the increase in the number of countries referring to linkages between the goals, 2020 VNR reports showed a decline in the number of countries giving equal attention to all three dimensions of sustainable development. Figure 9 provides an overview of the extent to which countries examined all three dimensions of sustainable development.<sup>31</sup> Twenty-three countries, or %49, placed equal emphasis on the three dimensions of sustainable development in 2020, versus %57) 27) in %63) 29 ,2019) in 2018 and %75) 33) in 2017. Thirteen countries (%28) addressed all three dimensions of sustainable development but placed greater importance on the social. Brunei Darussalam and Zambia addressed all dimensions of sustainable development but put greater emphasis on the economy. Conversely, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Solomon Islands put a more limited focus on

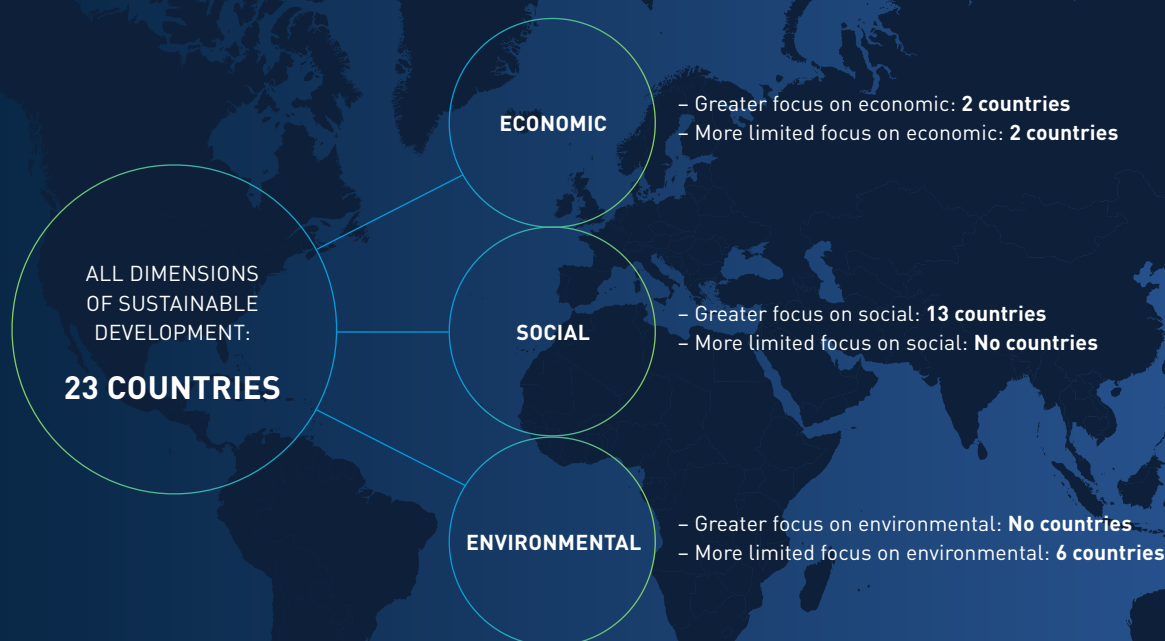
economy. Gambia, Georgia, Honduras, Peru, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan gave more limited attention to the environment. No countries placed limited focus on the social dimensions. Overall, the review of VNR reports over 2020-2017 suggests a worrisome decline in terms of the extent to which countries are reporting integrated approaches to implementing the SDGs.

## A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Interlinking the three dimensions in Samoa

Samoa's second VNR analyzed the country's priority areas established by its development strategy and highlighted that such strategy shares the 2030 Agenda's interlinkages of the three dimensions of sustainable development. In the goal-by-goal analysis of the VNR report, specific sections named "interlinkages" indicate such interrelations for each SDG.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from Samoa's VNR report.*

**Figure 9.** Attention to social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in VNR reports



31. Barbados is excluded from Figure 9 as it did not provide information on this matter.



### 3.5.2. Policy coherence for sustainable development

The review of VNR reports looks at the extent to which countries make linkages to international agreements related to the 2030 Agenda and policy coherence for sustainable development. There are many international agreements and frameworks that support implementation the 2030 Agenda. The review examined references to climate change and the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#), the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) and the [global aid development effectiveness agenda](#).<sup>32</sup> Given the significance of the COVID-19 pandemic, the review also included an examination of whether countries referred to international commitments related to responding to the pandemic.

Overall, reporting on linkages between the 2030 Agenda relevant international agreements shows improvement in 2020 over 2019 except for a decline in references to the Paris Agreement on climate change. In 2020, 32 countries (68%) mentioned the Paris Agreement on climate change. Eleven countries (23%) did not mention the Paris Agreement but provided information on how they were addressing climate change. Such figures represent a decline in comparison with previous years, given that in 2019 there were 45 countries (95%) mentioning the Paris Agreement, versus 82% in 2018. In 2017, 22% countries reported on climate change. As with previous years, 2020 VNR reports tend to point to national climate policies, efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energy and improved energy efficiency and efforts to reduce vulnerabilities to climate change and disasters. Some countries also referred to education initiatives, adaptation, and conservation initiatives. In terms of other environment-related agreements, the review found that 38% of countries referred to the Convention on Biological Diversity, an increase from 2019 when 29% reported on the link, versus 57% in 2018. In relation to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, 60% of countries noted the framework in 2020 versus 59% in 2019 and 41% in 2018.

### A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: An integrated approach in Mozambique

In its efforts to ensure an integrated approach to 2030 Agenda implementation, the government of Mozambique makes use of the SDG National Reference Group to enable different levels of government jointly towards integrating economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and strengthen policy coherence.

*Source: Except adapted from Mozambique's VNR report.*

With respect to financing the 2030 Agenda and other means of implementation, VNR reports reversed the positive trend from previous years in terms of references to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Thirty-four percent of VNR reports referred to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda in 2020 versus 57% in 2019, 46% in 2018 and 33% in 2017. However, VNR reports showed a slight increase in the reference to the aid effectiveness and development effectiveness agenda in 2020, with eight countries compared to four in 2019 and nine in 2018. Bulgaria referred to its approaches to planning and allocating development assistance as being in line with the standards set out in the 2005 Paris Declaration and the 2011 Busan Declaration. Gambia's VNR report mentioned links to the Istanbul Programme of Action. Moldova's VNR report mentioned that the government subscribed to international commitments to streamline foreign aid, such as the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action, the Busan Commitments and the Mexico Communiqué. Papua New Guinea pointed to the revision of the country's development cooperation policy in 2018 towards the principles of Aid Effectiveness and Global Partnerships for Effective Development Cooperation.

32. The revised Secretary-General's voluntary common reporting [guidelines](#) for 2020 now encourage countries to make specific reference to these agreements (and others) in the introductory section.

## A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Samoa's participation in aid and development effectiveness efforts

In 2010, Samoa was one of the few Pacific Island Countries (PICs) participating in the global evaluation on the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness implementation. Moreover, Samoa engaged in both global and regional aid and development effectiveness efforts, such as the High-Level Conferences carried out in Accra (2008), Busan (2011), Mexico (2014), Nairobi (2016), and the Pacific Forum Compact between 2010 and 2015.

*Source: Except adapted from Samoa's VNR report.*

In terms of COVID-19, VNR reports tended to focus on domestic responses to the pandemic. There were no countries that explicitly referred to global commitments in this area, either in terms of adapting their approaches to foreign assistance or commitments to global initiatives such as the [Access to COVID-19 Tools \(ACT\) Accelerator](#). However, Bulgaria mentioned its participation in the online pledging conference organized by the President of the European Commission and the Bulgarian commitment to contribute EUR 100,000 to expedite the work on a COVID-19 vaccine and its global deployment. According to the Russian Federation's VNR report, the country provided bilateral aid to countries such as Italy, China, the United States, and Serbia, as well as CIS member states (Commonwealth of Independent States) including Armenia, Belarus, Moldova, and Uzbekistan. Aid included personal protective equipment (PPE), medical equipment, COVID-19 test kits, as well as the assistance of medical personnel such as military doctors and virologists. Given the significant impacts of the pandemic at the global level, countries should report their global actions alongside their domestic ones.



## BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Link the 2030 Agenda to relevant international agreements that support sustainable development to ensure coherency and synergies in implementation.

Beyond coherence with relevant international frameworks, implementation of the 2030 Agenda also depends on policy coherence for sustainable development. Domestic policies have an impact on the realization of sustainable development at home and abroad. In this context, policy coherence for sustainable development is about ensuring that domestic policies maximize their positive contributions and minimize negative contributions to sustainable development globally. While just over half of reporting countries – 24 – referred to policy coherence in their VNR reports in 2019, this number rose to 28 countries (%60) in 2020. Still, the majority of VNR reports continue to refer to policy coherence in the context of domestic policies. Countries continue to tend to point to the challenges they face in realizing policy coherence at the domestic level with some pointing to efforts to ensure coherent implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Eleven countries examined the impacts of their foreign and/or domestic policies on the realization of the SDGs globally, against 12 in 2019. In 2020, four countries (Bangladesh, Kenya, Kyrgyz Republic, and Uganda) referred to the assessment of only domestic policies on the realization of SDGs globally. Conversely, six countries (Austria, Estonia, Finland, Morocco, Russian Federation, and Slovenia) pointed to the impacts of both their domestic and foreign policies on the realization of the SDGs globally (versus three countries in 2019, 10 countries in 2018 and 11 in 2017). Only one country (Argentina) noted the impacts of their foreign policies – largely in the form of the South-South and Triangular – on the SDGs globally. This compares to eight countries in 2019, 15 countries in 2018 and 17 countries in 2017. Some countries reporting in 2020 provided a systematic analysis of their global contributions. For example,

Austria referred to its support to the establishment of private funds aiming to secure SDGs financing for small and medium-sized companies in more economically challenged countries. Finland mentioned support towards post-conflict reconstruction, the facilitation of repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the recovery of arable land to lower tensions. Morocco pointed to South-South cooperation and support to refugees. As a country that included information on their contributions to the SDGs globally as part of the goal-by-goal analysis, Slovenia added a section on the country's global citizenship, showcasing its contributions, largely through foreign assistance, for each goal.

Overall VNR reporting for 2020 showed an increase in the extent to which countries focused on policy coherence for sustainable development as a guiding framework for 2030 Agenda implementation. However, there was a slight decline when it comes to policy coherence in terms of analysis of domestic and foreign policies on the realization of the SDGs globally.



## BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Include information on global contributions to the SDGs alongside assessments of progress at national and subnational levels, recognizing the impacts of domestic and foreign policies.

### 3.5.3. Recommendations

- **Assess all 17 goals in VNR reports, respecting the indivisible nature of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.**
- **Ensure all dimensions of sustainable development are addressed in SDG implementation and VNR reporting. Linkages and synergies between the different dimensions of sustainable development should be clearly stated in policies, supported through implementation and included in reporting - all to help ensure clear integration.**
- **Link implementation of the 2030 Agenda to relevant international agreements that support 2030 Agenda implementation, such as the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and global agreements on aid and international development effectiveness, including in VNR reporting.**
- **Given the importance of the COVID-19 pandemic to the global context, future VNRs should include reference to international and global commitments on COVID-19.**
- **Provide an assessment of domestic and global dimensions of sustainable development in the goal-by-goal analysis, demonstrating contributions to realizing the SDGs at home and abroad, and supporting policy coherence for sustainable development.**



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## 4. IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

This chapter has six sections. The first one focuses on leaving no one behind, and includes aspects such as understanding who is at risk of being left behind, efforts undertaken to address these groups, targeting domestic inequality, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on leaving no one behind. The second section addresses the topic of how 2020 reporting countries have raised awareness on the 2030 Agenda. The third section focuses on the topic of localization. The fourth section broaches the theme of partnerships to realize the SDGs, examining how countries have partnered with civil society, parliamentarians, the private sector, academia and experts, children and youth, other stakeholders (e.g. the media), and development partners. The fifth section of this chapter focuses on means of implementation, which include budgeting for 2030 Agenda implementation, international finance, trade, capacities for 2030 Agenda implementation (e.g. capacity development, technology, systemic issues), experiences in implementation (e.g. best practices, challenges, lessons learned, learning from others), and the impacts of COVID-19 on the means of

implementation. Finally, the sixth section of this chapter focuses on measurement and reporting, including how countries have reported on data availability, efforts for data improvement, and national reporting practices on 2030 Agenda implementation. Each one of the six sections is followed by a dedicated list of recommendations.

### 4.1. KEY FINDINGS

#### 4.1.1. Leaving no one behind

- **Reporting on leaving no one behind:** In 2020, 92% of countries mentioned the principle of leaving no one behind. Countries typically provided either robust information throughout their VNR report, or a dedicated chapter on LNOB. All countries (45) reporting in 2020 with full VNR reports identified groups that are being left behind or at risk of being left behind. These include people with disabilities (85%), women and girls (83%), and children and youth (79%).



- **Efforts to LNOB:** More countries noted efforts to leave no one behind are informed by existing data, in comparison to previous years. In 2020, VNR reports for 19 countries (40%) indicated efforts to LNOB as being informed by existing data (compared to 9 in 2019, or 19%, and 13 in 2018). In 2020, 13 countries (28%) mentioned that additional data is required to leaving no one behind.
- **National policies and plans:** There has been some movement towards incorporating the principle of leaving no one behind in the creation of national sustainable development policies. In 2020, 28 countries (60%) highlighted embedding leaving no one behind or efforts to address inequality and social exclusion at part of overarching development plans, compared to 17 countries (36%) in 2019.

#### 4.1.2. Awareness-raising

- **Awareness-raising activities:** In 2020, information on awareness-raising activities was available for 98% of countries. This compares to 87% in 2019, 83% in 2018 and over 90% in 2017. However, only three countries pointed to the creation of a communications strategy.

#### 4.1.3. Localization

- **Localizing the 2030 Agenda:** Reporting on localization continues to improve, as 83% of countries provided information on their efforts to localize the 2030 Agenda. A greater proportion of countries, 43%, pointed to the integration of the 2030 Agenda into local plans in 2020, (an improvement over 28% in 2019 and 13% in 2018), and 47% referred to coordination between the federal and the local levels.

#### 4.1.4. Partnerships to realize the SDGs

- **Civil society's contributions:** There continues to be a positive trend in terms of countries recognizing the contributions by civil society organizations in their VNR reports. In 2020, 79% of countries provided information versus 68% in 2019, 65% in 2018, and 56% in 2017. There has also been an improvement in how reporting countries showcase civil society organizations' actions and the role they play in 2030 Agenda implementation.

- **The role of other non-state actors:** The majority of countries (89%) reported on contributions by non-state actors, a decline over 2019 (98%). There has been an increase in reporting on the role of parliamentarians (53%, versus 23% in 2019), the private sector (75%, versus 53% in 2019) and academia (55%, versus 28% in 2019). Moreover, 45% of the 2020 VNR reports specifically mentioned the participation of children and youth in SDGs implementation, another increase in the category of partnerships noted in comparison to previous years.

#### 4.1.5. Means of implementation

- **Budgeting for 2030 Agenda implementation:** Same as in 2019, nearly 75% of countries reporting in 2020 have not costed 2030 Agenda implementation. There has been a decrease in the number of countries reporting information on budgeting to 24 countries, or 51% (versus 30 countries, or 64%, in 2019). On the other hand, 2020 experienced an increase in the number of countries reporting on including the SDGs into national budgets: 21 countries mentioned having already incorporated the SDGs into budgeting processes (versus 16 in 2019), and two countries mentioned such incorporation as a plan (versus 14 in 2019).
- **Means of implementation trends:** Reporting on the means of implementation improved overall for information on international public finance (83% of the countries, versus 77% in 2019), capacity development (83% of the countries, versus 68% in 2019), systemic issues (70% of the countries, versus 47% in 2019), best practices (58% of the countries, versus 38% in 2019), lessons learned (53% of the countries, versus 51% in 2019), and learning from peers (15% of the countries, versus 6% in 2019). On the other hand, reporting on the means of implementation declined with regards to domestic resources – 36% of 2020 VNR reports did not mention costing 2030 Agenda implementation, although they have identified sources of finance –, trade (58% of the countries, versus 60% in 2019), technology (79% of the countries, versus 87% in 2019), and challenges (94% of the countries, versus 96% in 2019).

#### 4.1.6. Measurement and reporting

- **National review processes:** In 2020, less countries provided information on follow-up and review at



the national level (63%, versus 85% in 2019) and data availability (45%, versus 76% in 2019). Apart to lesser reporting, countries continue to provide limited reference to when, how and to whom national reporting will occur. Only five countries referred to the role of parliament, same as in 2019.

- **COVID-19 on means of implementation:** Only eight countries (17%) did not make significant reference to COVID-19 in their VNR reports. Among the ones who reported on COVID-19, 25 countries produced a stand-alone chapter, sub-chapter or annex dedicated to the pandemic and its effects on 2030 Agenda implementation. Moreover, 35 countries (75%) reported on the impacts of COVID-19 on the means of implementation.

## 4.2. LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

The Secretary-General's voluntary common reporting guidelines encourage member states to include a chapter on leaving no one behind (LNOB). In 2020, 92% of countries mentioned the principle of leaving no one behind. Countries typically provided either robust information throughout their VNR report, or a dedicated chapter on LNOB. Countries that provided a chapter or sub-chapter on the topic include Benin, Comoros, Costa Rica, Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Seychelles, and Uganda. Leaving no one behind is shown as a cross-cutting topic in the VNR reports of countries such as Austria, Burundi, Brunei Darussalam, and Georgia. In the cases of, for example, Panama and Slovenia, they do not significantly address the LNOB issue in the sections of their VNR reports. Only four countries – Armenia, Barbados, Estonia, and Peru – did not provide any reference to the principle of leaving no one behind.



### BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Prepare a dedicated chapter on leaving no one behind in VNR reports and integrate information on efforts to leave no one behind in the goal-by-goal analysis.

### 4.2.1. Understanding who is at risk of being left behind

The availability of disaggregated data is critical for informing efforts to LNOB. This issue is well recognized by the international community and across VNR reporting countries as shown by attention to increasing disaggregated data highlighted in VNR reports submitted over 2016-2019. Reporting for 2020 indicates that although countries continue to face challenges in producing disaggregated data to monitor progress on leaving no one behind, there has been some improvement in relation to the VNR reports presented in 2019. In 2020, VNR reports for 19 countries (40%) indicated that efforts to LNOB were informed by existing data (compared to 9 in 2019 and 13 in 2018). In 2020, 13 countries (28%) mentioned that additional data is required to leaving no one behind. On the other hand, the review of the 2020 VNR reports showed that gender disaggregated data was mostly available or consistently available 57% of the time, which is the exact same figure as in 2019.<sup>33</sup>

### A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Bangladesh's identification efforts towards leaving no one behind

Bangladesh has identified an extensive array of persons as at risk of being left behind. Marginalized groups and vulnerable populations include transgender persons, persons with specific professions (e.g. tea gardeners, cleaners, domestic aides), Bede (gypsies), beggars and street children, people living in specific areas (e.g. char areas, people living in hilly regions), special needs children, neonate, adolescent girls and boys, HIV/AIDS affected people, people suffering from infectious diseases, people suffering from mental disorders, drug-addicted youths, people injured by road traffic accidents, persons with disabilities, children who have been dropped out from schools, youth not in education, employment or training, female students prone to violence, ethnic communities, and any other marginalized persons and communities.

*Source: Except adapted from Bangladesh's VNR report.*

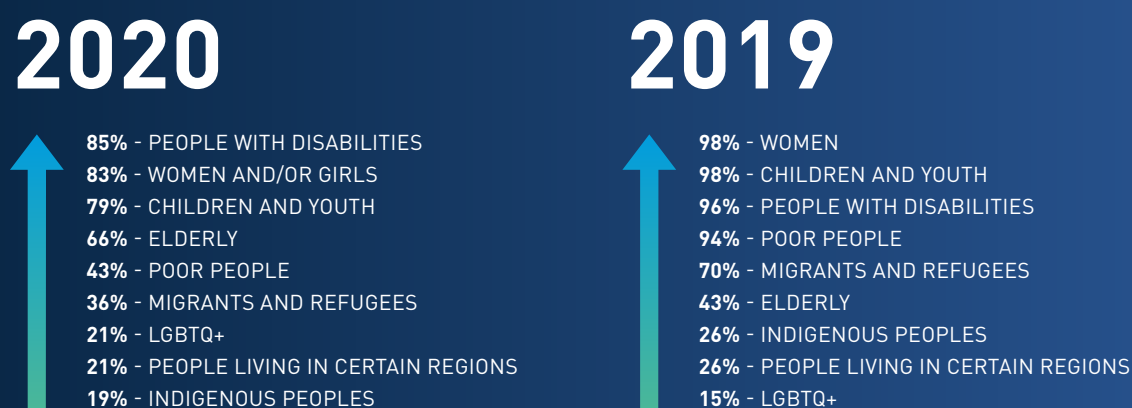
33. For a more comprehensive overview see the ODI's [leave no one behind index](#) which provides an independent assessment of status of the data of leave no one behind.

Regardless of data limitations faced by countries, all countries (45) reporting in 2020 with full VNR reports<sup>34</sup> identified groups that are being left behind or at risk of being left behind. For some of these countries, the identification is implicit, which means that the VNR report does not explicitly mention that particular groups are at risk of being left behind, but rather provide information that allows interpretation to infer that they are vulnerable. Such approach was taken by countries such as Argentina, Ecuador, Estonia, Peru, Slovenia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. The 45 VNR reports identifying vulnerable groups in 2020 compares to 46 countries in 42 ,2019 countries in 2018 and 33 in 2017, suggesting that reporting on the main populations at risk of being left behind has steadily improved. Identifying who is left behind (and why) enables countries to target efforts that work to ensure that all members of society benefit from progress on the 2030 Agenda.

Figure 10 provides an overview of the main groups identified as vulnerable or being left behind in the

2020 VNR reports. It shows that the groups identified as the most at risk of being left behind are people with disabilities (40 countries), women and girls (39), children and youth (37), the elderly (31), poor people (20), migrants and refugees (17), LGBTQ+ (10), people living in certain regions (10), and indigenous peoples (9). The findings for 2020 are in keeping with the vulnerable populations identified in 2018 ,2018 and 2017. In 2019, the VNR reports mostly referred to women (46), children and youth (46), people with disabilities (45), poor people (44), migrants and refugees (33), elderly (20), indigenous (12) and people from particular or rural regions (12) are most at risk of being left behind. In 2018, people with disabilities (34), children and youth (30), women (25), and elderly people (21) are the groups most often cited as being left behind or at risk of being left behind. In 2017, women (28) were cited more often than people with disabilities. Also, in 2017, children and youth were cited 27 times, people with disabilities 21 times, and the elderly on 16 occasions.

**Figure 10.** Groups most commonly identified as vulnerable in VNR reports



34. This excludes Barbados, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

In comparison with 2019, the 2020 VNR reports saw an overall decline in the number of countries identifying certain groups as being left behind or at risk of being left behind. Although women, children and youth, and people with disabilities continue to be the three topmost groups facing more vulnerabilities, there was a decline in such identification between 2019 and 2020. Other categories, such as poor people, migrants and refugees, Indigenous peoples, and people living in certain regions (e.g. rural regions, mountains, etc.) also experienced a decrease in the countries identifying them as at risk of being left behind. Conversely, more countries reporting in 2020 identified the elderly and the LGBTQ+ community as at risk of being left behind in comparison with the countries reporting in 2019. In addition to the groups identified in Figure 10, seven countries identified people with HIV/AIDS, seven countries identified unemployed people, six countries mentioned convicted people living in or released from detention centres, four countries identified single-parent households, and three countries reported Roma as at risk of or being left behind. Some countries provided additional categories of individuals and groups they identified as being at risk of being left behind, such as people with albinism, stateless persons, ethnic and religious minorities, people with drug addictions, and survivors of domestic or gender-based violence.

### **A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE:** India's civil society involvement in identifying vulnerable groups

India's civil society held a series of national consultations with vulnerable communities around the SDGs. The process was headed by Wada Na Todo Abhiyan, which coordinated the action with both the government (through NITI Aayog) and the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO). According to the civil society report, over a thousand organizations participated in the consultation process, and more than half of them also engaged in the national consultations carried out by the

government. Wada Na Todo Abhiyan's civil society report focuses each one of its chapters on a specific group likely to be left behind, and each chapter includes challenges and recommendations to address them. Moreover, the inputs from the civil society consultations were used by NITI Aayog while drafting the VNR report's standalone chapter on LNOB.

*Source: Except adapted from India's VNR.*

## **4.2.2. Efforts to leave no one behind**

In 2019, 46 countries provided information on efforts to LNOB, versus 41 countries in 2018, and 33 countries in 2017. Though not all countries included a dedicated section on leaving no one behind in their VNR report,<sup>35</sup> all countries presenting full VNR reports except Peru provided information on efforts related to at least one vulnerable group in 2020. This represents a total of 44 countries out of the 47 presenting to the HLPF, including the two ones presenting only main messages. The same situation refers to countries that provided information on efforts to realize gender equality, a decline in relation to 2019, when 46 countries provided such information, versus 40 countries in 2018. Like 2019 and 2018, the review of 2020 reports found a predominance of countries pointing to universal programs such as social assistance and existing specialized programs to LNOB. In 2020, 35 countries pointed to universal programs, 27 countries mentioned existing specialized programs to specific groups, and 25 referred to new specialized programs to specific groups. The creation of new programs is a positive sign that countries are not only relying on existing mechanisms to LNOB, but are also working to develop new initiatives. The combination of universal policies with targeted approaches and strong leadership can be an effective approach to reaching marginalized communities.<sup>36</sup>

It is also worth noting that 28 countries highlighted embedding leaving no one behind or efforts to address inequality and social exclusion at part of overarching development plans compared to 17 countries in 2019 and 10 in 2018, suggesting some movement towards

35. This excludes Barbados, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

36. Samman, Emma. 2016. 10 Things to Know about 'Leave no one Behind.' London: ODI.

incorporating the principle of leaving no one behind in the creation of national sustainable development policies. Moreover, some countries noted either reference to specific groups as part of national sustainable development policies or the creation of national policies related to targeting specific vulnerable groups such as women, children, migrants and people with disabilities.

### **A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Uzbekistan's efforts towards gender equality**

Despite the lack of data disaggregated by gender, Uzbekistan's VNR report highlights the country's recent efforts to promote gender equality and considerable shifts in achieving it. In 2019, the Parliament adopted the "Law to Ensure Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women" and the "Law to Protect Women from Discrimination and Violence." The proportion of women in leadership positions grew by 5.3 percentage points from 27.7% in 2015 to 33% in 2019. Women's employment is one of priority areas in Uzbekistan's socioeconomic development, and the VNR report highlights many initiatives to increase it. The proportion of women in the total workforce is currently 45%. The VNR report is also cognizant of areas where further progress is needed.

*Source: Except adapted from Uzbekistan's VNR.*

In terms of efforts not to leave specific groups behind, most countries reporting in 2020 provided information on actions being carried out. The group mostly covered by actions described in the 2020 VNR reports refers to people living in poverty, with 43 countries (92%) describing approaches to avoid them from being left behind. People with disabilities, and children are the two following groups, covered by actions from 40 countries (85%). Twenty-five countries (53%) referred to efforts to leave no migrants and refugees behind, and 15 VNR reports (32%) provided information on efforts towards ethnic groups. Only 9 countries (19%) mentioned actions not to leave Indigenous Peoples behind. Apart from these, 25 countries (53%) also referred to other groups as being at risk of being left behind and particular efforts to address them.

For example, Ecuador has been forming consultative councils for LGBTQI+ people, and has been providing assistance to public institutions to incorporate the gender approach. According to Brunei Darussalam's VNR report, since 1955, the country has been distributing old age pensions to citizens and residents upon reaching 60 years old, which is part of the country's social safety nets and is in accordance with legislation towards the elderly.

The 2020 data show a continued emphasis on similar approaches compared to 2019 and 2018. Still, overall approaches to LNOB tend to refer to vulnerable groups more generally, including people living in poverty. As shown above, more limited references were found across 2020 VNR reports to efforts related to supporting Indigenous Peoples, ethnic groups, and migrants and refugees. LGBTQI+ communities and people living in rural areas also received limited mention in the VNR reports. Nevertheless, where such less mentioned groups were referenced, countries tended to point to similar strategies for these groups as outlined for the most frequently mentioned ones. Such strategies and approaches include social protection, policies (national and sectoral), legal instruments, cash transfers, employment or training programs, institutions dedicated to specific groups, and improved access to health or education. In addition to these approaches, a limited number of countries also reported awareness-raising related to hate crimes and discrimination against the LGBTQI+ community (for example, in the case of Georgia), training programs to rehabilitate imprisoned persons (such as in the case of Trinidad and Tobago), and improvement of access to treatment for people suffering with drug addiction (for example, in the case of Bulgaria). No specific programs or efforts were reported at the international level.

### **A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Niger's strategy to leaving no one behind**

Niger's strategy of "les Nigériens Nourrissent les Nigériens" [Nigériens feed Nigériens] and the country's policy of free health care and education up to the age of 16 are good practices to leaving no one behind. Together they support multiple SDGs and have a multiplier effect on achieving a sustainable development that is inclusive.

*Source: Except adapted from Niger's VNR.*

In 2019 and 2018, VNR reports did not provide enough information on data to leave no one behind to evaluate the outcomes of activities. In the case of the 2020 VNR reports, 35 countries (75%) presented some information on progress. However, such progress is not always backed up with data, as with the case of Argentina, for example, that highlighted ongoing policies aimed to promote equality, but without pointing out concrete achievements. Conversely, lack of data was recognized as a problem by Liberia, whose VNR report mentioned that no comprehensive review of the implementation of the country's social protection policy has been done, although some limited evidence available suggests improvements in terms of food security, health and education, for example. On the other hand, some countries presented more specific figures, such as the Kyrgyz Republic, for example, whose VNR report referred to the level of extreme poverty falling from 2.8% to 0.6%. Apart from these data-related issues in the presentation of results of efforts to LNOB, information on progress is sometimes presented in the goal-by-goal analysis, such as for SDG 1 on no poverty or SDG 5 on gender equality. Countries that took this approach include Bangladesh, Benin, Brunei Darussalam, Estonia, Georgia, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, and Ukraine. Moreover, as in previous years, results and progress presented by countries in 2020 have not necessarily been disaggregated for groups at risk of being left behind. Except data on specific programs, the links between specific policies and actions and the results presented are not always clear.

#### 4.2.3. Targeting domestic inequality

Addressing inequality is a fundamental part of the 2030 Agenda to LNOB and as part of SDG 10 on reduced inequalities. In 2020, 29 reporting countries (62%) provided some information on their efforts to reduce domestic inequalities, which is tied to leaving no one behind. Countries point to national policies, guarantees to non-discrimination including through legal instruments and universal and specialized programs. Some countries, including Bangladesh, Ecuador, Niger, North Macedonia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zambia highlighted efforts related to social protection to address domestic inequalities.

## A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Efforts to reduce inequality

**Comoros** is conducting a poverty survey so that the country can have better data, necessary for the effective implementation of the SDGs. Other measures include training women working in different productive sectors (e.g. fishing, livestock, agriculture, handicrafts) and organizing them in cooperatives to ensure effective management of their production. These actions were carried out by the local financial system (microcredit institutions, in particular) and by development partners.

In **Panama**, the “Colmena Strategy” establishes the integrality of the multisectoral action necessary to fight against inequities and asymmetries. It is clearly a cross-cutting policy design issue in the country.

**Solomon Islands** developed Medium-Term Strategies (MTS) whose objectives are linked to the SDGs and to the principle of leaving no one behind. For example, MTS 5 aims to alleviate poverty, improve provision of basic needs, and increase food security. MTS 7's focus is on supporting the disadvantaged and the vulnerable, and on improving gender equality.

To address SDG 10, **Uganda** referred to the implementation of programs towards the support of social protection, and to the investment in regional economic growth and development. The VNR report also mentioned legislation to support women's ownership of land and access to technologies to enhance agricultural productivity while also reducing intensive work. Country policies will also focus on promoting inclusive growth and creating jobs for the most challenged sections of society.

*Source: Except adapted from the VNR reports for Comoros, Panama, Solomon Islands, and Uganda.*



#### 4.2.4. Impact of COVID-19 on leaving no one behind

A new category was added in the analysis for 2020 to specifically examine how VNR reports showcased the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the most vulnerable groups. Overall, 32 countries (68%) provided information on the specific impacts of the pandemic from an LNOB perspective. This reporting might positively point to countries' acknowledgment that the most vulnerable are most affected by crises. For those countries that did provide such information, supports focused mainly on strategies to tackle socio-economic impacts, even more than health-related ones. Targeted groups mentioned in the VNR reports include women, children, poor people, elderly, people with disabilities, people living in rural areas, and people who have lost their jobs or had their incomes compromised due to the pandemic. Some countries have further specified people most at risk of being left behind in the specific context of COVID-19. For example, Armenia referred to pregnant women, Bangladesh mentioned transport workers, widowed women and the transgender community, Moldova brought up people susceptible to domestic violence, Peru noted people with pre-existing diseases, and Samoa included people with mental health issues.

In terms of the efforts listed, reporting countries usually provided detailed information on the actions being carried out to tackle the effects of the pandemic over the most vulnerable. According to the 32 VNR reports referring to COVID-19 and LNOB, countries developed emergency and contingency plans, extended social protection and safety net programs, created special funds to address the pandemic, and provided financial aid to the population and to specific groups. Overall, reporting countries were able to show clear adjustments being made in their current approaches to LNOB. Some have expanded current policies. For example, Argentina provided a bonus for retirees, pensioners, holders of the Universal Child Allowance and the Universal Allowance for Pregnancy. In the framework of an existing program, Bulgaria allocated an additional 22.5 million Euros to focus on older people, people with disabilities, and people with chronic diseases. Other countries sought partnerships. For example, from a joint public-private effort, Costa Rica raised more than a million US dollars to be used to pay off local loans for food and cleaning products. In the case of Kenya, the government

developed a contingency plan focusing on the healthcare response with the support from the World Bank, the World Health Organization, UNICEF and other partners. Including major crises under the framework of leaving no one behind in VNR reports is useful to understand how countries adjust their approaches and seek solutions in critical times.

#### **A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE:** Georgia's communication strategy to leave no one behind during the COVID-19 pandemic

Among Georgia's actions to address the COVID-19 pandemic, the government created a dedicated website ([www.stopcov.ge](http://www.stopcov.ge)). It was made available in both of the country's official languages (Georgian and Abkhazian) and in two other languages spoken by ethnic minorities (Armenian and Azeri). Moreover, the country created a specific hotline was to safeguard the rights and address the needs of children amid COVID-19.

*Source: Except adapted from Georgia's VNR.*

#### 4.2.5. Recommendations

- **Ensure policies and programs are informed by and integrate efforts to leave no one behind, including by prioritizing those most in need to consistently reach marginalized communities.**
- **Include a specific chapter on leaving no one behind in VNR reporting and demonstrate how the principle of leaving no one behind is being translated into action in an overarching way.**
- **Provide information on the status of data collection or plans to improve data availability to inform efforts to leave no one behind. This includes information on gender disaggregated data. Ensuring no one is left behind means knowing who is being left behind, by how much, and in what areas.**

- **Highlight existing and planned efforts to leave no one behind, including how policies and program are being adapted, and in particular, new approaches to reach the people who are furthest behind first.**
- **Promote gender equality through international good practice such as gender budgeting, gender-based analysis and mainstreaming into policies and plans, and appropriate legal, policy and institutional frameworks.**
- **Report on the outcomes of efforts to leave no one behind, including by drawing on civil society expertise and citizen-generated data. Clearly present links between specific policies and actions with results, presenting progress for specific marginalized groups.**
- **Target domestic inequality in 2030 Agenda implementation, including in support of SDG 10 on reduced inequalities, and outline the current status of domestic inequality and how it is being addressed in VNR reports.**
- **Include major crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the efforts being made to ensure no one is left behind, outlining which groups are being covered and detailing what approaches are being taken.**

### 4.3. AWARENESS-RAISING

Raising awareness of the 2030 Agenda and educating citizens on sustainable development is an ongoing process critical for establishing a national vision for sustainable development, generating support, and promoting whole-of-society approaches to implementation. In 2020, information on awareness-raising activities was available for 98% of countries. This compares to 87% in 2019, 83% in 2018 and over 90% in 2017. Information was not available on activities only for Barbados, which presented only main messages to the HLPF.

While a range of methods to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda are emerging (Figure 11), two forms of awareness-raising were most commonly cited. Technical workshops and programs with and for stakeholders in government and beyond on 2030 Agenda implementation were mentioned by 16 countries in 2020, versus 12

### A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Democratic Republic of the Congo's approach to awareness-raising

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the "Sustainable Development Perception Index" is an innovative way of engaging and reaching out to the population. It measures the effectiveness of public policies implemented to achieve the SDG targets in terms of the perception of the population. It also provides the population with an insight into the state of SDGs, particularly with regard to development priorities, while also being an opportunity to understand the population's awareness of the 2030 Agenda.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from Democratic Republic of the Congo's VNR report.*

countries in 2019 and 10 in 2018. The same amount of 16 countries referred to the use of media and social media, while this was done by eight countries in 2019. Events were highlighted by 11 countries (9 noted events in 2019, and 8 did it in 2018). Five countries (versus seven in 2019 and nine in 2018) referred to the VNR process as part of awareness-raising efforts. Same as in 2019, four countries reporting in 2020 noted translation efforts, including local languages, Braille and signs language. While six countries prepared or planned to prepare a communications strategy in 2018, this number dropped to four countries in 2019, and this approach was noted by only three countries in 2020. Only three countries pointed to websites (versus five in 2019), and one (Estonia) mentioned the intention of developing a platform on sustainable development.

Other awareness-raising efforts referred to the inclusion of sustainable development topics in schools' curriculum or materials, such as in the case of Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh and Gambia. Some countries, including Austria, Gambia and Zambia, mentioned work with the local level, and Morocco included consultation with regional councils, while Niger referred to the establishment of local focal points for sustainable development. Consultations were also mentioned by

India, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea and Uzbekistan. Austria created an award for the best sustainability reports coming from Austrian companies. Although awareness-raising was referred to as an area for ongoing effort and challenge (such as in the case of Costa Rica's VNR report), data suggest that countries are continuously focusing on carrying out and improving work to disseminate knowledge around the 2030 Agenda.



## BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Develop a communication and engagement strategy to continue to raise awareness of and ownership over the 2030 Agenda with a wide range of stakeholders over the course of SDG implementation.

## A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Communications strategies towards awareness-raising

In 2020, three countries referred to the development of communication strategies towards awareness-raising efforts on the 2030 Agenda. In **India**, a communication plan was developed in the framework of the VNR process, and included media outreach, the presentation of a short video, and awareness and publicity through social media. In the framework of raising awareness on the SDGs, the National Statistical Committee from the **Kyrgyz Republic** started implementing a communication strategy for SDG statistics, including measures to increase statistical capacity and strengthen interaction. In the case of **Trinidad and Tobago**, the government designed a strategy that included the creation of media (both electronic and print) to disseminate information on the SDGs, and both the VNR process and the country's projects targeting the SDGs were guided by the theme "Connecting the dots to the SDGs."

*Source: Except adapted from India, Kyrgyz Republic, and Trinidad and Tobago's VNR reports.*

**Figure 11.** Common methods of raising awareness of 2030 Agenda



### 4.3.1. Recommendations

- **Develop a communication strategy to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda on an ongoing basis.**
- **Continue to promote innovative ways to raise awareness of the SDGs among the general public, including in partnership with civil society and other non-state actors.**

## 4.4. LOCALIZATION

Regional and local governments are critical players in delivering locally tailored sustainable development solutions. For 2030 Agenda implementation, localization requires coordination between different levels of government, incorporation of the 2030 Agenda into local plans and policies and often financial support and capacity development for local governments to effectively participate.<sup>37</sup> Rooting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in local priorities and activities at the community level makes the agenda meaningful and practical in the day-to-day lives of citizens. While the 2019 VNR reports did not mention voluntary local reviews, two countries reporting in 2020 referred to this practice, one that paves the way for subnational accountability structures

In 2020, 83% of countries provided information on their efforts to localize the 2030 Agenda, an increase from the 75% seen in 2019, the 65% from 2018, and the 73% from 2017. As was the case in previous years, the VNR reports continue to show wide variance in terms of where countries and their local governments are in terms of

localization. Consistent reporting helps to assess the status of localization overall. Some countries presented dedicated sections on localization or showcased initiatives by local governments throughout their reports, whereas others provided more limited space in their VNR report on the topic, or information was unclear, or efforts were not sufficiently detailed, such as in the cases of Honduras and Syria, for example.

Figure 12 provides an overview of the main elements of localization reported in VNR reports.

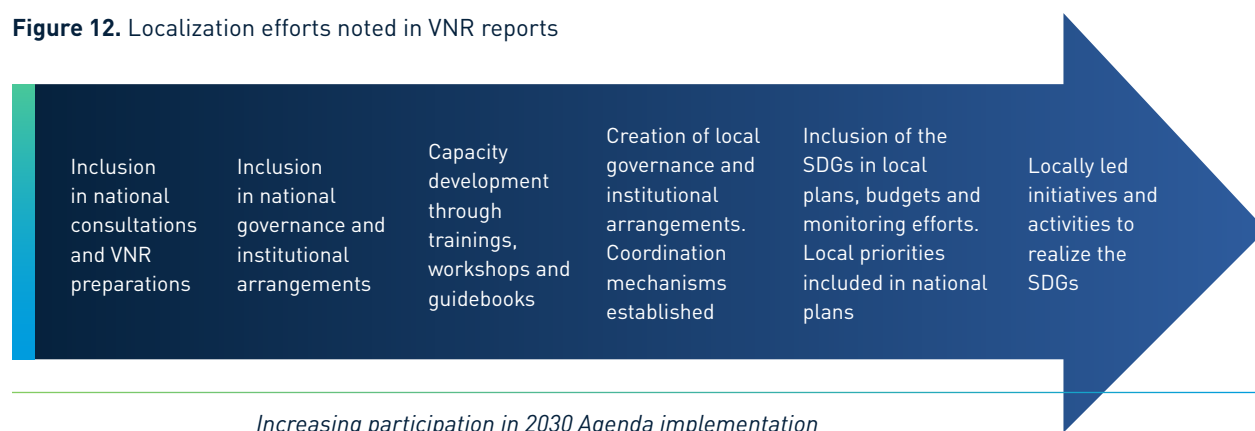
### A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Local efforts towards the SDGs in Finland and Uganda

According to the VNR report, Finland's cities conduct extensive work around sustainable development. For example, the region of Åland has integrated the SDGs into core strategies, and many cities and municipalities are developing plans to promote the SDGs. A good practice arising in terms of localization is the presentation of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). For example, the cities of Helsinki, Espoo, and Turku have prepared such reports in 2019 and 2020, and should be followed by other cities in the future. In the case of Uganda, the country's VNR process was informed by the Local Voluntary Review Report produced by residents and leadership of the Ngora District.

*Source: Except adapted from Finland and Uganda's VNR reports.*

37. For a report relating localization, the SDGs and the COVID-19 pandemic, see Local and regional governments' report to the 2020 HLPF. 4th report. (2020). Towards the localization of the SDGs: how to accelerate transformative actions in the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak. Global taskforce of local and regional governments; United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). For results of a project on SDGs and local governments, see Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (2020). VVSG SDG pilot project with local governments 2017-2019: approach and lessons learned. Belgium, VVSG. For an overview of good practice in localizing the 2030 Agenda, see Wayne-Nixon, Laurel, Wragg-Morris, Tanya, Mishra, Anjali, and Markle, Dawson. 2019. Localizing the 2030 Agenda. *Good Practice in 2030 Agenda Implementation Series*. Vancouver and Ottawa: BCCIC and CCIC.

**Figure 12.** Localization efforts noted in VNR reports



Beyond references to local government engagement in the VNR process or national governance arrangements, VNR reports provided some insights on the status of localization. In 2020, 20 countries (43%) referred to integrating the 2030 Agenda into local plans and policies, an increase from the 18 countries (38%) doing so in 2019 and the 16 countries (35%) making similar references in 2018.

## **A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE:** Communities taking ownership of SDGs and development projects in Uganda

Local governments in Uganda promote community-based local development. Through cooperation and small-scale, self-help projects, communities have started to undertake projects without the need of government intervention. Some projects relate to infrastructure, such as community road construction to facilitate transportation of goods to market, children to school and access to health facilities, and the construction of a vocational schools for children to learn practical skills. In another district, communities gave local names to each one of the SDGs, based on the specific meanings they have for the community.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from Uganda's VNR report.*

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Coordination between national government institutions and local governments was noted by 22 countries reporting in 2020, an impressive increase from the seven countries mentioning such approach in 2019. One country (Nigeria) mentioned subnational coordination as a priority, but the VNR report did not mention specific localization actions being carried out. Reference to local initiatives were presented by 10 countries, the same as in 2018, whereas 2019 had 13 countries making such reference. Four countries referred to capacity development efforts for local government, down from the 12 countries mentioning this in 2019. Three countries noted having integrated local governments into monitoring and evaluation (versus five countries in 2019), with one country (Papua New Guinea) noting that tools for monitoring and evaluation exist at the local level, but they are not being used. Six countries, up from three in 2019 and 2018, mentioned they engaged associations of local municipalities as part of their localization efforts. Likewise, six countries referred to local institutional



arrangements (e.g. local councils or bodies supporting 2030 Agenda implementation). No country (versus two countries in 2019) referred to localization as part of an SDG roadmap, although Benin mentioned mapping SDGs priority targets of each one of its communes. Georgia noted that SDG implementation at the local level is lagging.

### A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Benin's SDGs local mapping and award

Benin's localization efforts led to specification of ten priority targets accompanied by standards for action in its 77 communes. This mapping enables the translation of international commitments such as the SDGs into local contexts and supports policy coherence between different international, national and local levels. Moreover, to stimulate the development of good practices at the local level (communes), Benin established an initiative called "Local Agenda 2030 Competition", which rewards the best local projects that constitute good practices for integrating the SDGs.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from Benin's VNR report.*

Almost no country reported on the impacts of the COVID19- pandemic in relation to localization. One exception refers to the case of Moldova, whose VNR report mentions that meetings were held with local authorities on measures to be taken at local level to prevent the spread of COVID19-. Such lack of information is worrisome, as outbreaks require a localized response.

#### 4.4.1. Recommendations

- **Include localization as part of 2030 Agenda implementation strategies, strengthen coordination with local governments and local institutional structures, capacities and resources.**
- **Support the translation of the SDGs into local plans, programs and monitoring efforts and ensure local priorities inform national plans.**

## 4.5. PARTNERSHIPS TO REALIZE THE SDGS

Most countries agree that all stakeholders in society contribute to sustainable development. Accelerate actions are needed by all stakeholders to realize the SDGs by 2030, even more so with the backsliding of progress on sustainable development as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, VNR reports should showcase contributions from a wide range of stakeholders towards the 2030 Agenda.

Among the 2020 reporting countries, 42 out of 47 (89%) provided examples of contributions by non-state actors to 2030 Agenda implementation beyond consultation on priorities and participation in governance arrangements.<sup>38</sup> This represents a decline over 2019, where only one country out of 47 (98%) provided this type of information, versus 85% in 2018. In 2020, Barbados, Burundi, Libya, Syria, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines did not include information on whether non-state actors are engaged in implementation of the SDGs. For those who did so, approaches to showcasing efforts varied. Some countries, such as Uganda, included information on efforts by non-state actors and local governments in the goal-by-goal analysis. Finland included assessments from civil society, the private sector, academia, and other non-state actors on the progresses and backslidings in relation to the country's government's assessment. India used inputs collected by civil society with regards to leaving no one behind. Moldova highlighted the youth participation over other local non-state actors, and Austria's VNR report showed a broad participation of non-state actors at all levels. The inclusion of activities by a wide range of stakeholders provides a national picture of implementation efforts, including and moving beyond government. This approach to VNR reporting respects the principles of inclusivity and participation embedded in the 2030 Agenda.



### BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Submit a *national* report for the VNR that systematically outlines the contributions made by a wide range of stakeholders, not just the national government.

### 4.5.1. Civil society

Civil society organizations support 2030 Agenda implementation by representing and advocating for citizens and those left behind, contributing to policy development, implementing projects and programs and promoting accountability through independent analysis and reporting, among other things. Reporting on civil society contributions to the 2030 Agenda as increased over 2017-2020 suggesting a positive trend in terms of countries recognizing the contributions by civil society organizations in their VNR reports. In 2020, 79% of countries provided information versus 68% in 2019, 65% in 2018, and 56% in 2017.

#### **A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Empowering marginalized groups “face to face” in North Macedonia**

“Face to Face” is a program run by the CSO Public Association for Research, Communications, and Development in North Macedonia. The program’s mission is two-fold: contributing to socio-economic empowerment for marginalized groups (youth from the street, homeless people, persons with disabilities, and people in social risk), and educating the public on topics related to the SDGs. Since 2012, the program publishes the “Face to Face” bimonthly street magazine, an open platform for collaboration, co-creation, multi-stakeholder partnerships, progress, and knowledge activation among social stakeholders as communities, civil society, public institutions, and the business sector. Since the 2030 Agenda adoption, each magazine issue focuses on one SDG and, in early 2019, the publication was rebranded to “Magazine on Sustainable Development.”

*Source: Excerpt adapted from North Macedonia’s VNR report.*

society over 2017-2020. Information for 2020 shows a continued emphasis on the role of civil society in implementing individual projects (23 countries) and forming coalitions to support 2030 Agenda implementation (12 countries). The role of civil society in ensuring accountability for 2030 Agenda implementation as declined in relation to previous years, with only three countries mentioning this aspect. Conversely, the number of countries highlighting CSOs’ actions towards awareness raising rose substantially, with 17 countries noting this element in 2020. In addition to examples of civil society organizations providing guidance on 2030 Agenda implementation, five countries referred to their role in preparing tools on implementation. For example, Nepal mentioned CSOs’ engagement in developing a plan to mainstream the SDGs in the districts level, and their work on skills development and capacity building. Only one country – North Macedonia – referred to civil society organizations as recipients of funding to implement the SDGs, versus three countries in 2019 and 2018. In terms of participation in multi-stakeholder partnerships or initiatives, 29 countries presenting VNR reports in 2020 noted civil society engaging with government, academia, the private sector and other stakeholders in joint efforts.<sup>39</sup>

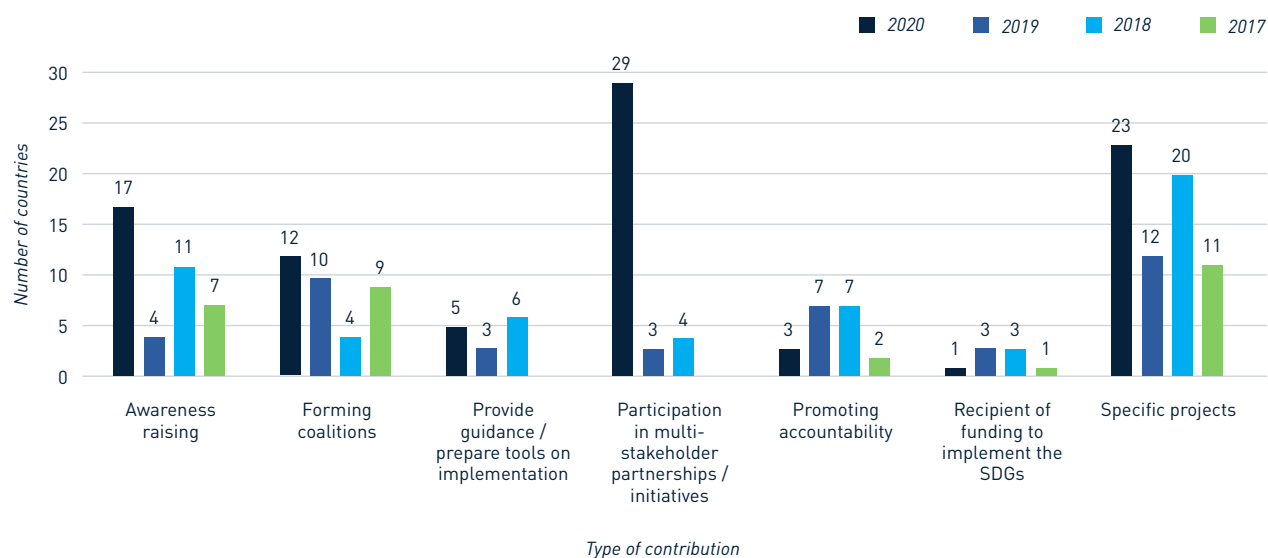
In previous years, a limited number of countries referred to research, promoting structured dialogue and incorporating the SDGs into institutional operations. While no countries referenced these activities in 2019, there were some mentions in the 2020 VNR reports. Bulgaria, Nigeria, Malawi, and the Russian Federation referred to the conduction of research. Actions carried out by Moldova and by Uganda’s civil society pointed to the promotion of a structured dialogue around the SDGs. And Bangladesh’s civil society formulated an “NGO’s SDG action plan” to map all activities and contributions related to the SDGs. Overall, VNR reports continue to recognize a wide range of the roles of civil society organizations. Although countries reporting in 2018 and 2019 tended to portray narrow perceptions of the roles of civil society organizations in their individual VNRs, there has been some improvement in the 2020 VNR reports, as evidenced a higher number of countries reporting on different types of contributions. Countries should showcase activities carried out by CSOs in order to more fully recognize their role in 2030 Agenda implementation.

Figure 13 provides information on the most common activities emerging with respect to reporting on civil

38. This section deals with the forms of engagement and participation that have not yet been addressed in the earlier sections of the report looking beyond engagement through consultation and governance arrangements.

39. There might be some discrepancy in terms of data interpretation in comparison to the previous year. For the present report, any partnership or joint initiative or effort involving civil society and other stakeholders were considered, regardless of the VNR report defining them as “multi-stakeholder.”

**Figure 13.** Main civil society contributions highlighted in VNR reports, 2017-2000



Civil society reports and written inputs as part of VNR reports provide useful insights on the challenges civil society organizations face in contributing to the 2030 Agenda. Ranging from 2017 to 2019, civil society reports noted a range of challenges that prevent civil society delivery of the 2030 Agenda, including low levels of awareness of the agenda by the public, civil society and government, limited engagement and coordination with government, poor institutional preparedness to implement the 2030 Agenda by national and local governments, lack of an enabling environment, limited

finance, and structural factors such as deeply rooted behaviours and changes in government. Figure 14 provides an overview of the challenges noted in civil society reports for 2020, which are consistent with the challenges highlighted in previous years. Such consistency is worrisome, as it points to a global trend towards closing civic space and a disabling environment for civil society, and suggests that the issues hindering civil society's action towards 2030 Agenda implementation are not being properly addressed in a concerning amount of countries.

**Figure 14.** Challenges identified by civil society organizations to 2030 Agenda implementation

### Data availability and monitoring capacities

**Kenya:** Lack of quantitative data, limited availability of disaggregated data and evidence, inconsistencies among available datasets, limited data sharing practices.

**Kyrgyz Republic:** need to develop qualitative and quantitative indicators for each SDG.

**Malawi:** Mismatch between data collected by government and by CSOs; need to develop a roadmap and a plan for monitoring and evaluation to improve data quality and availability.

**Nepal:** Lack of baseline data and of sufficient disaggregated data, particularly regarding leaving no one behind.

**Zambia:** Improve civil society's involvement in monitoring progress and collection of data.

### Coordination

**Kenya:** Weak coordination among government institutions and between government and non-state actors in SDGs implementation.

**Kyrgyz Republic:** Weak integration/coordination and lack of a multi-stakeholder partnerships; low level of SDGs integration into local strategies/plans.

**Malawi:** Weak mobilization of resources at the local level.

**Nepal:** Need for more coordination across the government, including the local level, and more alignment between policies, plans and budgeting.

**Nigeria:** Limited coordination to reach the rural areas.

**Peru:** Coordination and articulation with civil society has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Russia:** Lack of a coordinating state structure for the implementation of the SDGs; ineffective procedures and mechanisms of public engagement.

**Slovenia:** Need for effective long-term support for CSOs' projects/programmes; need to strengthen policy coherence for sustainable development to be open, inclusive and participatory.

**Zambia:** Lack of accountability, inclusiveness, and participation in policy dialogue.

### Quality of engagement

**Kenya:** Need for transparency and accountability in SDGs implementation; weak environment for civil society in some legislations and policies.

**Kyrgyz Republic:** weak accountability from the government and other stakeholders for SDGs implementation.

**Malawi:** Need of empowerment of citizens to ensure accountability; need for more regular engagement of civil society in SDGs-related processes; need of more participation in policy dialogue.

**Nigeria:** Need for more participatory governance so that citizens, especially youth, can engage effectively.

**Peru:** Lack of institutional channels to keep the dialogue with the government permanently open.

**Russia:** Excessive control from public authorities over civil society organizations; increasing awareness of the SDGs not supported by the state.

**Slovenia:** Lack of a consultative body for civil society.

**Zambia:** Need to strengthen engagement and collaboration between government and civil society in the development processes around the SDGs.

## Capacity of government and civil society organizations

**India:** Government's capacity in securing the SDGs for the most vulnerable and marginalized communities and ensure that no one is left behind.

**Kenya:** CSOs require capacity building for SDG's reporting; there is limited data analysis skills among community-based organizations.

**Kyrgyz Republic:** Insufficient capacity of the public sector.

**Malawi:** Need for good governance; failure to address corruption.

**Nigeria:** Need to address insecurity, corruption.

**Peru:** Lack of ownership; social and political instability; lack of processes or bodies for accountability from the state as the leader for sustainable development implementation.

**Russia:** Lack of reporting on SDGs implementation; corruption; unfavorable civic space; disabling environment for civil society, which is virtually deprived of the state's capacity to help it attain the SDGs.

**Uganda:** Lack of capacity to address social and political issues such as organized crime, religious extremism, corruption, illicit financial flows, etc.

## Lagging areas of progress

**Kenya:** Challenges in food security (including food prices, storage, and post-harvest losses), extreme weather events, and gender equality.

**Kyrgyz Republic:** Gender equality.

**Nigeria:** Lack of provision of public utilities (e.g. energy, health facilities, potable water, learning materials); gender equality; employment; general access and development in rural areas; leaving no one behind.

**Slovenia:** Need for a comprehensive analysis and relevant measures for full implementation of the 'leave no one behind' principle.

**Uganda:** Health (COVID-19 pandemic), equality, education, sustainable use of natural resources.

**Zambia:** Debt crisis, health (COVID-19 pandemic), climate change, leaving no one behind.

### 4.5.2. Parliamentarians

Parliamentarians advocate for the priorities and concerns of the citizens they represent and hold governments to account for progress. More countries provided information on the role of parliaments in 2020 than in previous years. Twenty-five countries (53%) reported on efforts by parliamentarians to support SDG implementation, beyond consultations and engagement in governance arrangements in 2020, versus 11 in 2019, 18 in 2018, and 15 in 2017.

The majority of countries (16) noting parliamentarian's actions mentioned the folding of SDG-related activities into regular parliamentary work, which includes committees and budgeting, for example. Among these, Costa Rica prepared, with the support of the United

Nations, a roadmap for the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda in Congress. Parliaments in Finland, Gambia, Georgia, and Nepal have undertaken efforts to raise awareness of the SDGs. Argentina, Finland, and India's parliaments have undertaken the writing and dissemination of SDG-related reports, and Seychelles produced a booklet on the role of parliamentarians in SDG implementation. India, Malawi, and Papua New Guinea mentioned parliament being involved in accountability and transparency actions in relation to the SDGs. India, Morocco, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, and Uganda have organized conferences and forums of parliamentarians. Kenya has undertaken efforts to enhance capacity for implementation of the SDGs. Ecuador, Georgia, Kenya, Macedonia, Morocco, Papua New Guinea, Trinidad and Tobago, and Ukraine have adopted SDG-



related legislation. Localization efforts carried out by parliamentarians were referred by Bangladesh, Malawi, and Papua New Guinea.

The activities showcased by parliaments in the 2020 VNR reports are similar to what was reported in previous years, but went beyond in terms of the variety of efforts. Overall reporting on parliamentarians was broader in the 2020 VNR reports, suggesting an important improvement given the role of parliamentarians in ensuring accountability for 2030 Agenda implementation, identifying priorities and approving national budgets.

### **A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE:** Including parliament in 2030 Agenda implementation in Kenya

The parliament in Kenya is involved in 2030 Agenda implementation. Its Parliamentary Caucus on SDGs and Business was formed in 2017, mandated to promote sustainable development and socially responsible business. It meets this mandate through activities related to legislation, resource mobilization, oversight and partnerships. The Caucus has invested in capacity development and includes eight Parliamentary Committees. An SDGs Open Day in Parliament was held in 2019 and the Caucus launched a 2019-2023 strategic plan. Parliament has also been engaged in the preparation of the 2019 SDG progress report and the 2019 HLPF.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from Kenya's VNR report.*

#### **4.5.3. The private sector**

The role of the private sector in contributing finance and innovative solutions to development challenges has received a lot of attention in the context of 2030 Agenda discussions – both globally and in many

country contexts. In 2020, 75% of reporting countries (35 out of 47) highlighted private sector contributions beyond consultations and engagement in governance arrangements, an improvement in relation to previous years, when only 53% of countries reported such actions in 2019, versus 61% of countries in 2018, and 53% of countries in 2017.

### **A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE:** Business networking to promote sustainable solutions in Bulgaria

"CleanTech Bulgaria" is a business network established in 2012 to promote sustainable economic development through clean technology and ecological innovation. A virtual ecological innovation lab has been set up as part of the "Ecolnn Danube" project co-financed by the network and the Interred Danube Program, a European Territorial Cooperation project. The project's main objective is to improve cooperation between ecological innovation professionals, emphasizing the development and implementation of green technologies in the Danube region. CleanTech Bulgaria is also the official partner of the two most extensive public-private partnerships in the EU in the field of climate and sustainable energy.

*Source: Source: Excerpt adapted from Bulgaria's VNR report.*

Table 3 outlines the main activities noted in 2020 and includes a comparison with 2019, 2018 and 2017. Similar to previous years, two of the most prominent activities relate to specific projects, and alignment by the private sector with the 2030 Agenda. However, in 2020, the creation or use of forums to raise awareness and coordinate decreased in relation to previous years, while multi-stakeholder partnerships experienced a high increase.

**Table 3.** Main private sector contributions highlighted in VNR reports, 2017-2020

Activity	Year, number of countries			
	2020	2019	2018	2017
Specific projects	13	12	12	7
Alignment through corporate social responsibility and/or business practices	14	9	14 <sup>40</sup>	5 <sup>41</sup>
Creation or use of forums to raise awareness and coordinate	4	6	6	8
Events	2	5	-	6
Research	1	4	4	5
Provision of finance for SDG related activities	7	3	-	-
Multi-stakeholder partnerships	17	2	10	-
Creation of prizes or competitions	3	2	4	-

Two countries in 2018 noted mapping private sector impacts, an activity that was mentioned by two countries in 2020 (Finland, and the Kyrgyz Republic). One country in 2019 pointed to monitoring progress by the private sector on sustainable development, something that was not mentioned in the 2020 VNR reports. Some countries specified the involvement of the private sector in the context of COVID-19. For example, Nigeria noted the mobilization of telecommunications companies to send out text messages raising awareness on the importance of handwashing. In the case of Seychelles, the private sector provided medical supplies and equipment, non-medical goods and services, cash donations to support the government, and produced products such as hand sanitizers.

#### 4.5.4. Academia and experts

Academics and experts contribute to 2030 Agenda implementation through research, project implementation and education initiatives. Reporting on the contributions from academics or experts to SDG implementation increased in 2020 in relation to previous years. While only 13 countries provided information on the role of academics in 2019 (28%) – versus 23 countries in 2018 and 14 in 2017 –, 26 countries reported on this aspect in 2020 (which represents 53%

of the reporting countries). This suggests a greater involvement by academic and expert communities in 2030 Agenda implementation.

While the most common examples of academic or expert contributions noted in VNR reports related to research in 2019 (seven countries, versus six countries in 2020), in 2020, countries most commonly referred to expert contributions (13 countries). The same number of 11 countries mentioned engagement of academia/experts in multi-stakeholder initiatives (versus only two countries in 2019), and in the participation in academic networks (versus only three countries in 2019). Three countries noted the creation of courses or incorporating the 2030 Agenda into curricula (versus the same number of three countries in 2019 and four countries in 2018). Contributions to capacity development initiatives were mentioned by five countries in 2020, versus two countries in 2019. In terms of contributing to monitoring and evaluation, three countries mentioned initiatives in this sense from academia and experts, while this was noted by two countries in 2019.

Overall, there has been an increase in the reporting of activities carried out by academics and experts. Such engagement is important in view of partnerships to achieve the 2030 Agenda and should continue to be pursued. One example of going forward initiatives

40. Ten of which were in the form of company-specific commitments.

41. Company specific commitments.

was noted by Papua New Guinea, whose VNR report mentioned the need to enhance research capacity related to the SDGs, especially among university students and staff, the need to streamline the role of universities in research and contribution to SDGs, and to better coordinate efforts to promote interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research approaches.

#### 4.5.5. Children and Youth

The engagement of children and youth as partners in the process of multi-stakeholder implementation of the SDGs was mentioned by 21 VNR reports (45%) in 2020. This was noted by only nine countries (19%) in 2019, and 10 countries in 2018.

The VNR reports mostly (15 countries) mentioned the engagement of children and youth in initiatives focused on them, such as consultations, capacity development, multi-stakeholder discussions, awareness raising campaigns and initiatives, volunteerism, and the design of case studies, best practices, and priorities around the SDGs. The second most mentioned type of engagement was through youth organizations, councils, or networks. Countries that referred to the existence of such groupings were Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Moldova, North Macedonia, Seychelles, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, and Uganda. Finally, the third form of engagement was by the means of specific projects and/or initiatives designed and carried out by children and youth, which was mentioned by Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, North Macedonia, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, and Uganda.

#### **A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE:** Youth engagement in Solomon Islands

In Solomon Islands, youth had an interesting participation in the implementation of SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) by organizing a film festival on the topic of anti-corruption. Through this action, a youth group was able to engage a number of candidates running in their constituency to sign political and integrity commitments.

*Source: Except adapted from Solomon Islands' VNR report.*

#### 4.5.6. Other stakeholders

Beyond the stakeholders noted above, a wide range of groups contribute to 2030 Agenda implementation, including volunteers, trade unions, the media, *inter alia*. In 2020, 17 VNR reports referred to stakeholders not previously mentioned in this report. While volunteers were mentioned by eight countries in 2019, five countries (Benin, India, Kenya, Malawi, and the Russian Federation) did so in 2020. Other stakeholders referred to in 2020 were auditor institutions (mentioned by four countries), United Nations agencies (four countries), "citizenship" (four countries), national institutions such as the judiciary and the chamber of labor (three countries), and trade unions (two countries). Only Finland made reference to the media and the marketing industry, which have been working together to develop young people's literacy and skills in the context of a digital world. Comoros highlighted the role of village communities, which are at the forefront of initiatives such as facilitating access to water and energy, reducing the pressure on ecosystems and natural resources, and participating both materially and financially to make various services accessible to the population.

#### **A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE:** An initiative from a police department in India

A police department in India developed an initiative called "Police Uncle Tutorial", which focuses on dropouts and more academically challenged students from specific areas of the district where the initiative is being implemented. Several segments of society have been engaged in the project, such as teachers of government schools, elders, social workers, and volunteers, who participate as teachers for the targeted students.

*Source: Except adapted from India's VNR report.*

#### 4.5.7. Development partners

The Secretary-General's voluntary common reporting guidelines ask countries to outline their main priorities for development partner support. In 2020, key areas in which the government requires additional support to realise the SDGs were noted by 27 out of the 47 reporting countries (58%), against 38 of 47 countries (81%) in 2019. Out of these, only Morocco did not provide further details on the type of support required from development partners or, in other words, on how the support is to be provided. The other 26 countries (55%) reporting in 2020 mentioned more specific forms of support, which include financing, coordination, technical assistance, and capacity development. While the 2019 VNR reports had only one high-income country referring to development partners, in 2020 there were three that indicated the need for further capacity building and good practices and lessons learned exchange (Panama), enhanced partnerships (Seychelles), and financial support, tailored international cooperation, and technical support in trade-related issues, including customs (Trinidad and Tobago). As with previous years, countries tended to provide general information on the support they require.

The following areas were mentioned in 2020 as priorities for support:

- goal specific priorities – five countries, versus 12 in 2019, four in 2018 and seven in 2017;
- strengthening systems to collect data and monitor SDG implementation – seven countries in 2020, versus 10 in 2019, five in 2018 and 10 in 2017; and
- support for general plans or SDG implementation – seven countries, versus four in 2019, and five in 2018.

In supporting country priorities, the provision of finance (official development assistance, finance from international financial institutions and South-South cooperation) continued to be the most common role identified by countries (13, the same number as in 2019, versus 12 countries in 2018). Technical assistance, including technology transfer, knowledge sharing, and capacity building were noted by nine countries, while general coordination and partnerships were mentioned by seven countries. Overall, these types of support are consistent with VNR reports from previous years. The role of development partners in 2030 Agenda implementation was also connected with

the COVID-19 pandemic. Countries such as Burundi, Georgia, Malawi, and Niger specifically referred to the need of development partners' support for the COVID-19 response and recovery, to address its effects on the SDGs implementation, and into the process of building back from the pandemic.

Finally, the number of countries noting support to carry out their VNR rose again in 2020 over the previous years. In 2020, 25 countries noted support from the United Nations, whereas in 2019 there were 22 countries, versus 14 in 2018 and seven in 2017.

#### 4.5.8. Recommendations

- Support civil society to engage in 2030 Agenda implementation by creating a more enabling environment, including through institutionalized dialogue and consultation, inclusion in formal governance arrangements, finance, and capacity development.
- Integrate the 2030 Agenda into parliamentary work, recognizing the critical role parliamentarians play as citizens' representatives and in ensuring national level accountability for progress.
- Support and develop partnerships with a variety of non-state actors, including academia, the private sector, children and youth, volunteers, trade unions, and the media.
- Where relevant, clearly stipulate and provide details on priority areas for support from the international community, laying out the role development partners can best play to support the acceleration of 2030 Agenda implementation.
- Outline how multiple stakeholders can be involved to address crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

### 4.6. MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Governments have committed to supporting a diverse range of means of implementation to realize sustainable development. Beyond aspects related to policy coherence and monitoring – captured elsewhere in this report – finance is a critical aspect including national and international dimensions. At the national level, activities include costing, budgeting allocations

and identifying sources of finance. Domestic public resources, private investment, trade and international public finance contribute to varying degrees. In addition to supporting implementation in their own countries, development partners also have a role to play internationally by supporting developing countries, notably through effective official development assistance (ODA) and South-South cooperation, capacity development, technology transfer and by promoting fair trade, including preferential trade access where relevant. Cooperation to address global systemic challenges such as those related to climate change, peace and security, illicit capital flight and taxation are also included as part of the means of implementation. In addition to reporting on these aspects of 2030 Agenda implementation, countries are also asked to report on best practices, challenges, lessons learned and where they would like to learn from others. In 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic had implications for all aspects of 2030 Agenda implementation, particularly with regards to means of implementation, as most countries had their resources diverted to address the immediate impacts of the crisis. The present review specifically looked for information on the impacts of COVID-19 on the means of implementation presented by VNR reporting countries.

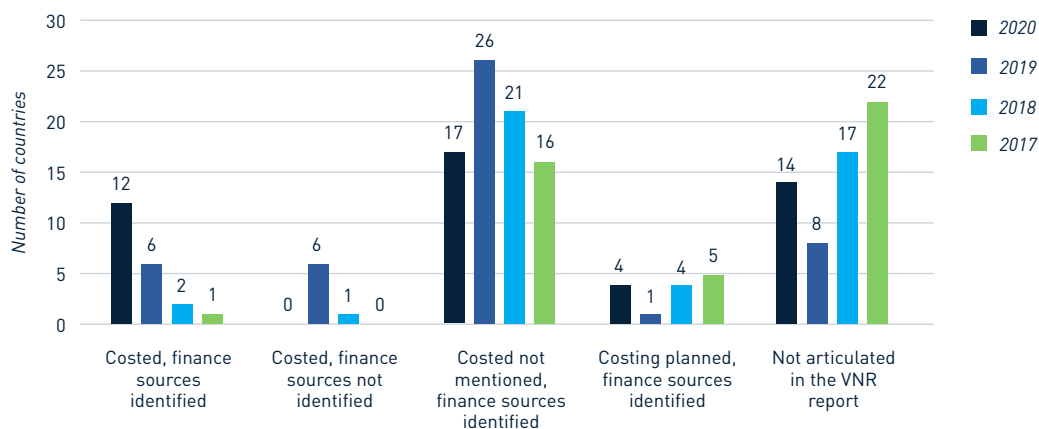
#### 4.6.1. Budgeting for 2030 Agenda implementation

Costing 2030 Agenda implementation, identifying sources of finance and incorporating the 2030 Agenda into budgets assists countries in preparing realistic

implementation strategies, identify financing shortfalls and setting clear expectations regarding needs when working with development partners. Figure 15 provides an overview of whether VNR reports refer to costing for domestic implementation of the 2030 Agenda and identified sources of finance for 2017-2020. Reversing the trend from previous years, most countries reporting in 2020 (17 out of 47, or 36%) did not mention costing 2030 Agenda implementation, although they have identified sources of finance. Secondly, 14 out of 47 (30%) did not indicate that they have or plan to cost out implementation. A positive trend, however, continues to emerge with respect to countries that both costed and identified sources of finance, with 12 countries doing so in 2020 (26%). Among these countries, the majority are located in Africa (Benin, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Nigeria, and Uganda), followed by four countries in Asia (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Syria), two in Oceania (Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea), and one in Europe (Finland). No country did so in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Considering all the countries that have identified sources of finance (regardless as if they have costed implementation or not), the figures for 2020 is 33 countries, or 70%. This is the same percentage as for 2019, versus 57% in 2018 and 49% in 2017. Like previous years, for the countries that identified sources of finance, these tend to include domestic resources, private investment, remittances, and where applicable, official development assistance and South-South cooperation. Overall, countries to not cost out 2030 Agenda implementation but do identify sources of finance.

**Figure 15.** Resourcing the 2030 Agenda







## BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Cost out SDG implementation and identify sources of finance. Assess budget allocations for SDG implementation at national and subnational levels and incorporate and clearly denote activities aimed at realizing the SDGs in budgets.

The inclusion of the 2030 Agenda into national (and subnational budgets) ensures that resources are effectively allocated for implementation. Budgetary allocations also give life to government commitments and priorities, making clear the actions that are being undertaken to realize the SDGs. While 64% of the VNR reports for 2019 provided information on inclusion of the SDGs in national budgets or budgeting processes, 2020 saw a decrease to 51% of countries (24 out of 47, versus 30 out of 47 in 2019). In 2018, this figure had been under 46%. Of the 24 countries reporting this information in 2020, two (Micronesia and Uzbekistan) indicated plans to incorporate the SDGs into budgeting processes, compared with 14 countries in 2019, and 10 countries in 2018. This shows improvement in the sense that more countries are actually doing such incorporation, instead of mentioning it as a future plan. Twenty-one countries (versus 16 in 2019) noted that

### A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Integrating the SDGs into development strategies in Samoa

According to its VNR report, Samoa has budgeted all the SDGs, having allocated resources for their implementation. For every financial year, the country's budget reflects both projects and resource allocation in specific sectors, therefore linking financing and partnerships to relevant SDGs. By integrating the SDGs into its national development strategy, Samoa ensures that their implementation is both contextualized and part of the overall national planning, budgeting, and accountability processes.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from Samoa's VNR report.*

the SDGs are incorporated into national budgets. This is largely through allocations pertaining to national sustainable development plans that are aligned with the SDGs. Countries that have taken this approach include Gambia, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uganda. Although Georgia's VNR report mentioned that budget has been allocated to specific SDGs, it also refers to a plan for improvement, which includes the incorporation of the SDGs into planning and budgeting processes of the municipal and regional levels, and the undertaking of a detailed budget review in view of SDGs implementation. In the case of Zambia, the VNR report referred to an ongoing process of enacting legislation, which should strengthen the coordination between the national development plans and the SDGs in terms of planning and budgeting processes. Armenia and Malawi made reference to the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to budgeting for the 2030 Agenda.

### A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: SDGs incorporation in Benin's national budget

Regarding SDGs incorporation in the national budget, Benin implemented a programme approach for the preparation of the state budget, which facilitates the taking into account of SDGs and allows a better understanding of the budgetary resources mobilized for sectoral interventions contributing to the advancement of the SDGs. This integration promotes efficiency and effectiveness in financing and implementing the SDGs.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from Benin's VNR report.*

#### 4.6.2. International finance

International public finance, including ODA, other official flows and South-South cooperation remains important contributors to national sustainable development efforts for many countries. The examination of international public finance provides an indication of how development partners see their responsibilities with respect to

supporting the realization of the SDGs globally and in developing countries. Reporting on international public finance improved in 2020 following a decline in 2019. Thirty-nine countries (83%) reported on international public finance, versus 36 countries (77%) in 2019, 44 (96%) in 2018, and 38 (84%) in 2017.

For the nine high-income countries that reported in 2020, seven provided some information on international public finance. Of these, five countries referred to their role as providers (with three specifically mentioning ODA and one referring to South-South cooperation), and two commented of their receipt of funds and resources. Barbados and Brunei Darussalam did not provide information on international public finance.

- Austria referred to its role as a provider of support to establish private funds to secure the financing of the SDGs for small and medium-sized companies in more economically challenged countries.
- Estonia noted its target to keep the share of 0.15% of the GNP allocated to development cooperation and humanitarian aid, and to achieve the level of official development assistance (ODA) within 0.33% of the GNP by 2030.
- Finland mentioned its financing several international organizations through ODA, and indicated that other sources and mechanisms of international financing, trade and partnerships can also be effective means of implementation for both developing and developed countries.
- Panama referred to a framework for international cooperation as the benchmark for cooperation between the government and the United Nations system. Panama also highlighted technical assistance, capacity building, and monitoring of the human rights situation, as well as the promotion of South-South / horizontal to integrate and transfer knowledge between nations.
- Seychelles mentioned the implementation of an economic partnership agreement, for which the country received an allocation envelope of EUR 10 million from the European Union.

- Slovenia highlighted its international commitment to increase the share of GNP allocated to ODA to 0.33% by 2030. In 2018, the country allocated EUR 70,758,241 to ODA, of which 35% was used for bilateral development aid and 65% for multilateral development aid.
- Finally, Trinidad and Tobago referred to the establishment of an international development cooperation division within the government to coordinate its relationship with international development agencies, including the United Nations, development banks and other multilateral and bilateral entities. The VNR report also mentions that, as the country is not eligible to ODA, its primary source of funding for the 2030 Agenda implementation is the government, which counts with the support of international financial institutions, bilateral donors and the private sector.

Among low- and middle-income countries, Georgia, Libya, Peru, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Uzbekistan did not report on international public finance. Ukraine did not mention international cooperation at all in their VNR report. Conversely, 32 low- and middle-income countries (68%) provided information on international public finance and covered a wide range of issues related to international public finance and their ongoing needs for such support (Figure 16). The figure below does not show references to ensuring donors meet their ODA commitments. In 2020, only one country (India) noted this. Similar calls were done by one country in 2019, two countries in 2018 and seven in 2017. Only one country (Costa Rica) referred to climate finance, down from two in 2019 and three in 2018. Bulgaria mentioned its process of joining the ERM II (Revised Exchange Rate Mechanism, or 'the Euro waiting room') as a way to improve national macroeconomic policy. North Macedonia mentioned the dual role it plays in international cooperation, acting as a donor and as a recipient of funding and technical assistance. The Russian Republic generally only referred to support provided, not support received.

**Figure 16.** Issues related to international public finance highlighted by low and middle-income countries



#### **DECLINING AID FLOWS**

- Armenia pointed to the low level of foreign direct investment (FDI) and highlighted its importance.
- Liberia mentioned efforts to revert the fall in aid inflows.
- Zambia noted the decline in ODA flow since it was not classified as a highly indebted and poor country anymore.



#### **INCREASING INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC FINANCE RECEIVED**

- Honduras and Solomon Islands highlighted importance of external funds received.
- Kenya referred to ODA and the demand for more financial resources and aid.
- Micronesia referred to opportunities to increase ODA.
- Nepal noted efforts to increase financial and non-financial resources.
- Syria called the international community for financial support.



#### **IMPROVING AID EFFECTIVENESS**

- Kyrgyz Republic mentioned ODA as one of the funding sources for conservation efforts.
- Malawi mentioned its great dependence on ODA and the need of resources than go beyond ODA provisions.
- Mozambique is restoring and ODA financing database to identify and monitor SDGs financing.
- Samoa mentioned amounts of ODA received and included a significant discussion of GPEDC and aid effectiveness processes.



#### **SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION**

- Argentina, Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Moldova, Morocco, and Niger referred to both South-South and Triangular cooperation.
- Comoros referred to the need to strengthen South-South cooperation.
- Costa Rica included a subchapter on the promotion of South-South cooperation and mentioned amounts received.
- Ecuador placed itself as both a provider and a receiver of South-South cooperation.
- India mentioned the support provided through South-South cooperation.
- Micronesia pointed to specific projects and support in the context of South-South cooperation.



#### **LEVERAGING PUBLIC FINANCE**

- Benin organized advocacy discussions to find innovative forms of financing.
- Burundi highlighted the importance of South-South cooperation, bilateral and multilateral cooperation.
- Gambia formed a strategic board to undertake resource mobilization.
- Nigeria and Uganda referred to the growth of foreign direct investment (FDI), ODA and South-South Cooperation.
- Papua New Guinea referred to a financial gap and a mobilization strategy to promote North-South and South-South cooperation, as well as ODA.

### 4.6.3. Trade

Participation in international trade is a key strategy for realizing sustainable development across countries. Moreover, the international community has committed to establishing a universal, rules-based, fair trading system that enables developing countries to reap the benefits of trade. Different from international public finance, reporting on trade declined once again in 2020, as it had between 2019 and 2018. In 2020, 27 countries (58%) reported on trade, versus 28 countries (60%) in 2019, 35 (76%) in 2018 and 22 (49%) in 2017. Countries tend to note the importance of trade in general terms with a focus on increasing trade overall through integration into regional and global trading systems (12 countries, versus nine in 2019), specific initiatives to strengthen trade such as creating trade strategies and focusing policy (10 countries, versus nine in 2019) and finalizing specific trade deals (two countries, Brunei Darussalam and Liberia, versus also two countries in 2019). Finland and the Russian Federation pointed to efforts to reduce trade barriers, particularly for least developed countries. Panama commented on the impact of COVID-19 as leading to a breakdown of the global supply chain, with both external and internal restrictions, and the reduction of the export of services offered by the Panama Canal.

#### A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Trade by sea in landlocked Nepal

Even being a landlocked country, Nepal included information under SDG 14 (Life below water). As a party to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Nepal has the right of access both to and from the sea. This promotes a smooth and efficient transit that reduces the costs of international trade and therefore contributes to poverty reduction and the promotion of sustainable development.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from Nepal's VNR report.*

### 4.6.4. Capacities for 2030 Agenda implementation

In the examination of capacities for 2030 Agenda implementation, the review examines how members

refer to capacity development, technology transfer and systemic issues that impact capacities to implement the 2030 Agenda.

#### 4.6.4.1. Capacity development

In 2020, 39 countries (83%) referred to capacity development in some way in their VNR report, an increase from 2019, 2018 and 2017 (32 countries in each year). As with previous years, discussions on capacity development tend to focus on capacities for implementation such as institutional and human resources and monitoring and evaluation. In 2020, the majority of countries reporting on capacity development (23 countries) referred to capacity development in general ways, including both its importance and efforts and initiatives being carried out towards capacity building.

Capacities related to monitoring and data collection were noted – both in terms of challenges but also efforts to improve capacities – by five countries: Argentina, Comoros, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, and Trinidad and Tobago. Another five countries – Armenia, Liberia, Libya, Micronesia, and Uzbekistan – provided analyses of capacity challenges within the goal-by-goal analysis. High income countries such as Austria, Estonia and Finland, and countries that provide South-South cooperation, such as Morocco and the Russian Federation, tended to showcase their efforts to support capacity development in other countries. Morocco also highlighted support received, and so did Moldova. Overall, the issues related to capacity development as reported in VNR reports in 2020 are consistent with reporting in 2019, 2018 and 2017.



#### BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Articulate specific capacity constraints to 2030 Agenda implementation and with respect to realizing specific SDGs in VNR reports. Indicate the type of support needed to address capacity constraints.

#### 4.6.4.2. Technology

With respect to technology, SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals includes three targets on technology transfer to developing countries. Less countries reported on technology in 2020 in comparison to previous years. In 2020, information was available for 79% of countries (37 countries), versus 87% in 2019, 80% in 2018 and roughly 75% in 2017. In 2020, all countries reporting on technology made some reference to leveraging technology to implement the SDGs, mostly referring to technology to advance the SDGs domestically. Moreover, countries such as Costa Rica and Peru, for example, discussed technology in terms of environmental management or improving the quality of their environments. Seven countries – Armenia, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Costa Rica, Ecuador, North Macedonia, and Trinidad and Tobago – discussed ways of improving the education system with technology or enhancing learning through the mobilization of technology.

Three countries referred to technology transfers. For example, Nigeria referred to such transfer as a means to improve information and performance management; the Russian Federation's VNR report mentioned the provision of technological and financial aid to other countries, particularly CIS member states, and highlighted examples of such assistance; and Uzbekistan provided examples of cooperation and partnerships with other countries on technology and technology transfer. These three countries mentioning technology transfers in 2020 compare to six countries in 2019, three in 2018, and eight in 2017.

#### 4.6.4.3. Systemic issues

Finally, systemic issues such as global macroeconomic stability, peace and conflict, migration and illicit flows impact the capacity of countries to pursue sustainable development. In 2020, 33 countries (70%) referred to systemic issues, up from 2019 (22 countries, or 47%) and from 2018 (32 countries, or 70%). Twenty-one countries referred to the COVID-19 pandemic as a systemic issue hindering the countries' capacity to realize the 2030 Agenda. Apart from this new and unprecedented challenge, some of the other systemic issues identified in 2020 are consistent with the ones mentioned in the 2019 VNR reports. Fifteen countries (versus six in 2019) referred to climate change or environmental degradation as systemic issues. Eleven countries (versus five in 2019) referred to regional instability, terrorist organizations, or otherwise hostile illegal activities on their territories as

a systemic issue. Libya and Trinidad and Tobago noted the fluctuations in oil prices as a systemic issue, and Estonia and North Macedonia referred to the migration and refugee crises. In a comparison with 2018, global economic and financial crises or instability was the most commonly cited issue (nine countries) followed by efforts to combat illicit flows (seven countries).

#### 4.6.5. Experiences in implementation

The Secretary-General's voluntary common reporting guidelines ask member states to outline their best practices, lessons learned in accelerating implementation, challenges and what they would like to learn from peers. Honest reflection on these elements is critical for the promotion of peer learning and the identification of areas for greater support by domestic and international stakeholders.

Figure 17 shows that there has been improvement in reporting on best practices, lessons learned and peer learning in 2020 over 2019, with slightly fewer countries reporting on challenges. Almost all countries reported on challenges at 94% (44 out of 47 countries). Over half of countries reported on lessons learned (53%) and on best practices (58%). Fifteen percent of countries reported on learning from peers, an increase from the 4% of 2019. Despite such increase, there is still significant room for improved reporting on learning from peers, and to a lesser extent, best practices lessons learned. Reporting on these elements is critical to meeting the learning objectives of the HLPF. Despite the encouragement for member state to include this information throughout their VNR reports, there continues to be a need for the United Nations to explore with member states why there is underreporting on these dimensions, particularly given the focus of the HLPF follow-up and review process on knowledge and lesson sharing.

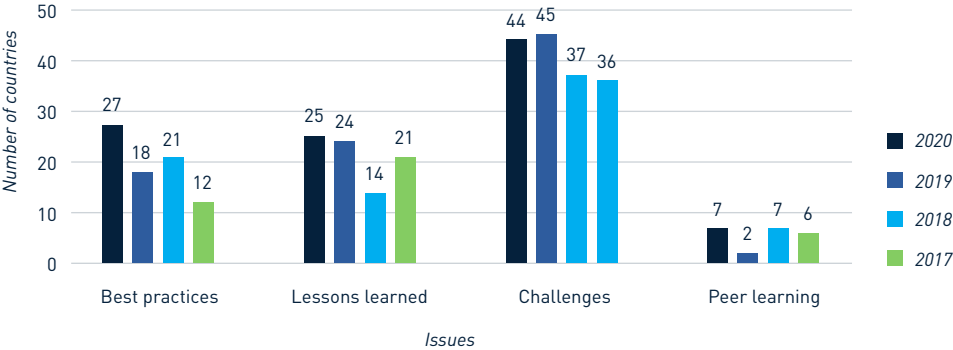


### BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Report on best practice, lessons learned to accelerate 2030 Agenda implementation, challenges and areas countries would like to learn from peers.



**Figure 17.** Countries highlighting areas requested in the voluntary common reporting guidelines, 2017-2020



**A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE:** Linking SDGs implementation and gender equality national policies in Costa Rica

In Costa Rica, under the leadership of the National Institute for Women, established in 2007, and through multi-stakeholder processes involving the government, the United Nations agencies, civil society, and academia, three significant gender policies were adopted: The National Policy for violence against women of all ages care and prevention 2017-2032, the National Policy for Effective Equality between women and men 2018-2030, and the National Policy for Equality between Women and Men in the training, employment and enjoyment of the products of Science, Technology, Telecommunications and Innovation 2018-2027. All of these are explicitly aligned with the 2030 Agenda. As part of the country's efforts to implement those policies, a characterization study for gender equality was published in 2020, identifying actual gender gaps, specific measures to close them, and providing public financial orientations.

Source: Excerpt adapted from Costa Rica's VNR report.

and learning. More countries presented information on best practices in 2020 compared to previous years, with 27 countries (almost 58%) providing this information versus 18 in 2019 (38%) and 21 in 2018. Like previous years, most countries reporting in 2020 highlighted specific programs or practices related to the realization of specific SDGs. Countries that inserted examples of good practices in the goal-by-goal analysis include Bangladesh, Estonia, Samoa, Seychelles, and Slovenia. Some countries referred to national policies in relation to the SDGs, such as Costa Rica (particularly towards gender equality and prevention of gender-based violence), Georgia and Panama, that mentioned good practices in terms of aligning the SDGs to national plans and objectives. Benin and the Democratic Republic of the Congo mentioned good practices in SDGs indices and targets, and on people's perception on the SDGs. Bangladesh and Russia highlighted good practices being carried out by different stakeholders other than the government.

Many countries reported best practices in relation to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) – such as Estonia, Kyrgyz Republic, and Uganda – SDG 3 (Good health and well-being) – including Kenya, Uganda, and Samoa – SDG 4 (Quality education) – such as Austria, Georgia, Honduras, Niger, North Macedonia, and Russian Federation – SDG 5 (Gender equality) – such as Austria, India, Russian Federation, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uzbekistan – and SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation) – including Kenya and Slovenia. There was also consistent reporting around SDG 13 (Climate action), as countries that include Austria, Bulgaria, Ecuador, Kyrgyz Republic, Niger, Papua New Guinea, and Trinidad and Tobago highlighted good practices related to environmental protection and climate change. Other good practices

**4.6.5.1. Best practices**

The information shared for best practices tends to be detailed across reports particularly through case studies and text boxes, providing a good basis for understanding

were highlighted on topics such as local region development (Honduras), migration and displacement (Kyrgyz Republic), energy, forestry and social protection (Nepal), literacy (Trinidad and Tobago, and Uzbekistan), poverty (India and Panama), religious tolerance (Liberia), agriculture (Papua New Guinea), housing (Uzbekistan), human rights (Slovenia).

### **A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE:** The Russian Federation's showcasing of multiple stakeholders' best practices

There is a consistent presentation of examples of non-state actor contributions throughout the Russian Federation's VNR report, which includes numerous examples of good practice termed "case studies." The vast majority of these examples highlight SDG implementation efforts by civil society, business, and other stakeholders rather than government.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from the Russian Federation's VNR report.*

#### **4.6.5.2. Challenges**

Identifying challenges in 2030 Agenda implementation is an important contribution of VNR reports. Frequently cited challenges across VNR reports signal areas where more support is needed from the United Nations and development partners. Moreover, the discussion of challenges can inform expectations regarding the speed and scale of 2030 Agenda implementation and provide a basis for addressing bottlenecks in individual countries.

In 2020, 44 countries (94%) identified and reported on challenges to 2030 Agenda implementation. Two out of the three countries that did not present such information had only presented main messages to the HLPF – Barbados, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The third country not reporting on challenges was the Russian Federation, even if identifying challenges in SDG implementation was listed as one of the goals of their VNR report. As it was the case in 2019 and 2018, most countries reporting in 2020 presented implementation challenges as a list of key issues without significant details provided. Greater details tend to be available for challenges identified for specific SDGs. Figure 18 shows the main challenges emerging in 2030 Agenda implementation over 2018-2020.

### **A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE:** Presentation of challenges in Kyrgyz Republic and Samoa's VNR reports

The Kyrgyz Republic VNR report brought a consistent presentation of challenges encountered in SDG implementation and next steps. Similarly, in its goal-by-goal analysis, Samoa's VNR report included a section on challenges and one on opportunities. This format is user-friendly and helpful for analyzing any future VNR reports.

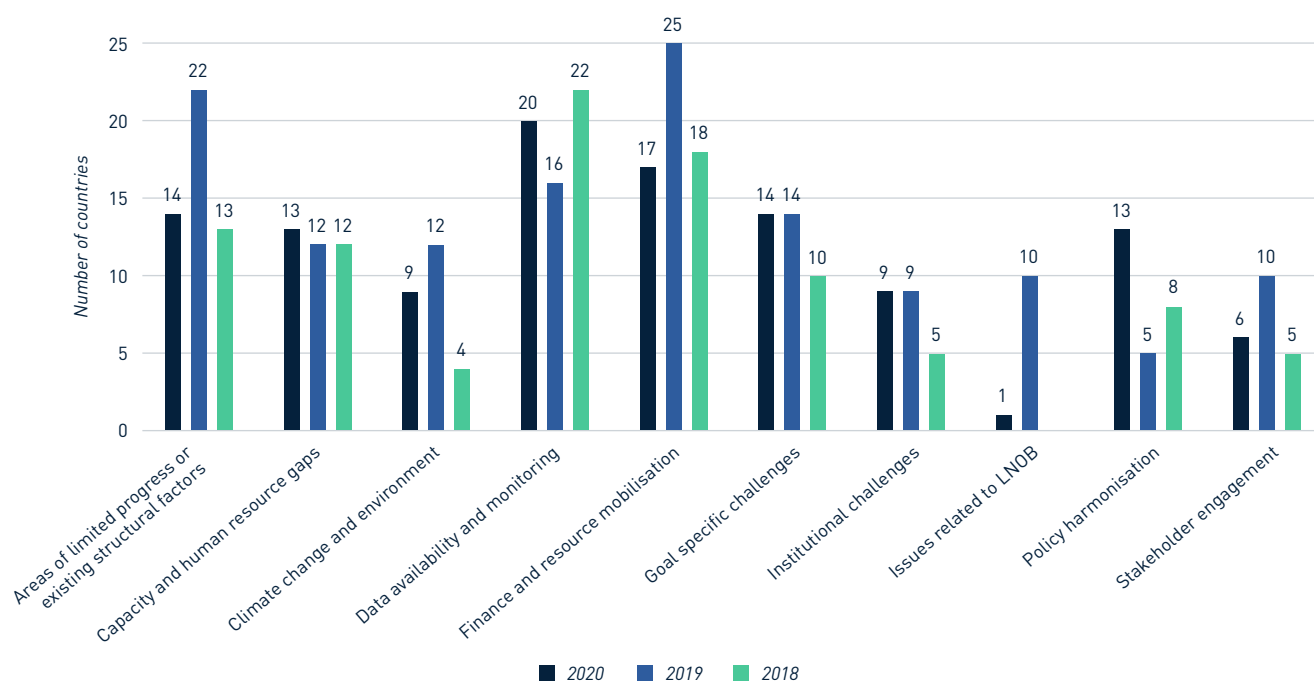
*Source: Excerpt adapted from Kyrgyz Republic and Samoa's VNR reports*



### **BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT**

Articulate clear and detailed challenges in 2030 Agenda implementation to inform how the country can best be supported by domestic and international communities.

**Figure 18.** Most common challenges in 2030 Agenda implementation, 2018-2020



Data availability and monitoring emerged as the top challenge in 2020, mentioned by 20 countries. Similarly, data constraints and monitoring progress had been the most commonly cited concern for both 2018 and 2017. Second for 2020 came finance and resource mobilization (mentioned by 17 countries), which had been the most mentioned challenge in 2019, and the second one in 2018 and 2017. Thirdly, in 2020, 14 countries mentioned areas of limited progress, such as poverty and malnutrition, or structural factors, such as war, occupation, corruption, and geographical realities. Another 14 countries referred to goal-specific challenges in 2020. Capacity constraints were cited by 13 countries in 2020, versus 12 countries in 2019 and 2018. Similarly, another 13 countries referred to challenges in terms of policy harmonization in 2020. Countries continue to face challenges related to broader 2030 Agenda implementation, including ensuring institutions are fit for purpose (mentioned by nine countries in 2020), and stakeholder engagement (referred to by six countries in 2020). In 2019, an emerging challenge had been the issue of ensuring inclusivity and meeting the promise to leave no one behind, with 10 countries citing issues related to this topic, whereas in 2020 only India specifically mentioned LNOB among listed challenges. Finally, in 2020 VNR reports, COVID-19 was referred to as a challenge by

17 countries, although a higher number of countries included the pandemic in other parts of their VNR reports.

#### 4.6.5.3. Lessons learned

Pointing to lessons learned in VNR reports is another aspect of reporting that supports peer learning. In 2020, 25 countries (53%) highlighted lessons learned, versus 24 (51%) in 2019. Among the countries that provided such information in 2020, 10 emphasized stakeholder engagement for successful 2030 Agenda implementation, compared also to 10 in 2019 and five in 2018. Four countries pointed to lessons learned related to developing appropriate systems for follow-up and review, compared to eight countries in 2019. Three countries highlighted the roles of local governments, versus four countries in 2019. One country pointed to the importance of prioritization under the 2030 Agenda (versus four in 2019), and eight countries emphasized country ownership as critical to success (versus another four in 2019).

In 2020, integrating the agenda into government systems including policies, budgets and monitoring

and evaluation was highlighted by the majority of countries reporting lessons learned – 14 countries, versus four in 2019. With respect to leaving no one behind, two countries highlighted issues related to addressing the needs of vulnerable populations (versus four again in 2019). For example, Georgia highlighted the need to ensure no one is left behind, and Samoa noted the lesson of recognising and engaging the vulnerable groups in a meaningful way. In addition to the issues noted above, Costa Rica mentioned the need of strengthening cooperation with the United Nations system to achieve transformative effects in the social, political, and economic levels. Zambia noted key lessons arising from a performance audit conducted to assess the country's preparedness to implement the SDGs. The lessons learned in the 2020 VNR reports are largely aligned with what was reported in the VNR reports examined in 2019, 2018 and 2017.

#### **4.6.5.4. Learning from others**

Reporting on what countries are keen to learn from others saw an increase in 2020, with seven countries (15%) providing this information, up from three (6%) in 2019 and equal to seven countries in 2018. Brunei Darussalam mentioned they would benefit from other countries' experiences in the SDGs implementation and welcomed collaboration, including in technical assistance and capacity building. The Democratic Republic of the Congo referred to the elaboration of their VNR report and how they benefited from attending a regional workshop organized with the support of UNDP and KOICA (Korean International Cooperation Agency). As a member and former chair of the Open Government Partnership, Georgia mentioned continuous engagement to both learn and share positive experiences. India referred to the domestic level and localization, mentioning the importance of promoting peer learning among states and union territories. Solomon Islands referred to peer sharing and learning for capacity development of the country's National Statistics Office in order to improve data collection systems. Zambia's VNR report had peer learning as a one-off mention under SDG 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure).

### **A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Specifying areas of interest for peer learning in Bangladesh**

In its VNR report, Bangladesh comprehensively specified their areas of interest with regards to peer learning. The country mentioned that good cases from other countries would help Bangladesh to solve challenges. These include the maintenance of sustainability in view of rapidly growing urban demands; ways of improving agricultural productivity while also keeping a sustainable environment; and how to affordably improve the quality of education. The VNR report also recognizes that mitigating the impacts of climate change requires an enhanced collaboration with international partners, particularly in terms of skills and capacity development.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from Bangladesh's VNR report.*

#### **4.6.6. Impact of COVID-19 on the means of implementation**

Among the 47 countries presenting VNR reports in 2020, 35 reported on the dimension of the impacts of COVID-19 on the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which represents almost 75% of countries. The majority (27 countries) reported the design and application of national plans, emergency contingency plans or funds, national stimulus packages, and general preventive measures, such as social distancing, the mandatory use of protective equipment such as masks, and the closure of non-essential services. Support to people, reported by 15 countries, was another category highlighted in the VNR reports, which included the population in general and the most vulnerable sectors of society. Another reported action was the provision of support to businesses – particularly small and medium enterprises, including the small trade level of craftsmen and artisans –, which was reported by 14 countries. Eleven countries referred to external collaboration, including the United Nations system, the European Union, and partner countries. The closure of borders or the suspension

of air traffic and limitation of travel was mentioned by three countries (Bulgaria, Kenya, and Slovenia). In terms of infrastructure, Argentina, Bangladesh, and Slovenia referred to the building of hospitals or the setup of mobile hospitals and health facilities.

Still other actions were highlighted by some countries. For example, Bangladesh and Kenya mentioned the establishment of specific committees to address the COVID-19 pandemic, the first one at the local level (city corporation, municipality, district, union), and the second at the national level (Kenya's National Co-ordination Committee on Coronavirus Pandemic, NCCCP). Bulgaria and the Russian Federation referred to the provision of humanitarian aid to foreign partners, actions that can be related to SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals). The COVID-19 dedicated chapter in Seychelle's VNR report described both impact and actions taken in different aspects of the three dimensions of the 2030 Agenda. Morocco worked in terms of scenario planning, describing three possible scenarios related to the national economy and its repercussions on SDGs implementation. Libya, Nigeria, and Peru referred to how COVID-19 might limit the possibilities of them effectively implementing the SDGs.

### **A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE:** India's COVID-19 information exchange platform

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, India leveraged digital and information capacity to develop an information exchange platform to be used by the eight countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). In addition to this platform, named 'SAARC COVID-19 Information Exchange Platform (COINEX)', India put a digital network in place to deliver medical expertise content to be used for training purposes of healthcare personnel in neighbouring countries.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from India's VNR report.*

#### **4.6.7. Recommendations**

- **Clearly include best practices, lessons learned in accelerating implementation, challenges going forward and where opportunities exist to learn from peers in VNR reports.**
- **Examine national and subnational budgets as an essential part of the implementation process and start integrating the SDGs into them to ensure that resources are allocated for implementation. In doing so, build on the good practice in costing out SDG implementation and identify sources of finance to implement the 2030 Agenda at country level.**
- **Report on all means of implementation, including clearly specifying capacity constraints. Such information is critical for assessing gaps, identifying where greater domestic and international efforts are needed and informing development cooperation frameworks.**
- **Bolster efforts to support development partners' capacity development priorities, including strengthening statistical systems and the capacities of local stakeholders to implement the 2030 Agenda.**
- **Scale up efforts to address systemic issues that impact SDG implementation, in particular international peace and security, illicit and other illegal activities, effects of climate change, and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.**
- **In view of COVID-19, report on how it affected the means of implementation of the SDGs, highlighting actions taken to address the crisis and reduce its impact.**

## **4.7. MEASUREMENT AND REPORTING**

The Secretary-General's voluntary common reporting guidelines suggest countries include information on how they intend to review progress at the national level. The guidelines also recommend countries provide information as to how they will report to future HLPFs.

In 2020, 64% of countries provided information on follow-up and review processes at the national level. This reverses the positive trend from previous years in terms of reporting on this dimension of 2030 Agenda implementation. In 2019, 85% of countries discussed measures to report on the national level, versus 67% in 2018 and 72% in 2017.





## BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Provide an account of national level reporting and accountability processes for 2030 Agenda implementation in VNR reports.

The Secretary-General's voluntary common report guidelines strongly encourage repeat reporters to present progress made since their last VNR. In 2020, 20 out of the 47 reporting countries presented a VNR report for the second time, and one (Benin) presented for the third time. All the 21 repeat reporters provided information on their progress since their last VNR report. For example, in the case of Argentina, as there was a change in the political party in government between the two VNR reports, the 2020 one shows both continuities and divergences in politics aimed to implement the 2030 Agenda. Benin presented a balanced view of their current status since the previous VNRs, assessing progress as both satisfactory and unsatisfactory, adequate and inadequate. Ecuador included a specific section showing the actions that have been carried out to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Despite the heavy impact of COVID-19, Niger presented progress in relation to the 2018 baseline in the VNR report's goal-by-goal analysis. Uganda reported both progresses and backslidings under specific SDGs, and presented an SDGs matrix with data comparison from 2015 to 2019. Peru presented progress in a very general way.



## BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Provide an account of progress made between VNR reports with reference to trends for SDG targets and changes to policies, institutions and partnerships for 2030 Agenda implementation.

In terms of how countries reported on COVID-19, 25 out of 47 (53%) produced a stand-alone chapter, sub-chapter or annex dedicated to the pandemic and its effects on the country's progress on the 2030 Agenda implementation. Among these countries, most have also mentioned COVID-19 in other parts of their VNR reports. Fourteen countries did not necessarily present a dedicated chapter to COVID-19, but referred to the pandemic's impacts throughout their VNR reports. Eight countries did not make significant reference to COVID-19. Among these, there was Austria, Barbados, Finland, and Libya. Estonia did not refer to the pandemic at all. Niger briefly mentioned the adoption of a response plan being implemented with the support of development partners. In the case of Syria's VNR report, the analysis of the implications of COVID-19 and the description of related policies are limited. Ukraine referred to the conduction of a survey to assess risks and challenges amid the pandemic, but the VNR report does not bring much reference to COVID-19 overall.

The case of Peru stands out, as COVID-19 became the main theme of the country's VNR report (with both a dedicated chapter and as an integrated topic throughout the text), taking the place of sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda. This presents an issue in the sense that if these topics – which should be the very focus of the whole VNR processes in view of the HLPF – are not presented, it is hard to follow overall progress on the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda implementation. In view of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, good practice would be not to ignore the effects and impacts of the crisis, but to relate them to current overall 2030 Agenda implementation, highlighting areas where more support is needed, showing efforts and solutions to address the challenges imposed by the crisis, and presenting lessons learned from the whole process.

## A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Seychelles' traffic light system to monitor progress

Seychelles presented progress on specific SDGs' indicators through a traffic light system. Green means that an indicator has been achieved; indicators listed as yellow have "on track" status; and red marks the indicators that are "trailing". Seychelles' traffic light system is accompanied by information on baseline data and progress throughout the years. This information was presented in the VNR report as a statistical annex.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from Seychelles' VNR report.*

### 4.7.1. Data availability

Data is important to ensure monitoring and evaluation of 2030 Agenda efforts. While reporting on data availability for 2030 Agenda monitoring had improved significantly in 2019 over previous years, 2020 experienced a decline in this sense. In 2020, 21 countries (45%) provided information on data availability. In 2019, 36 countries (76%) provided clear information on data availability for SDG monitoring, versus 18 countries in 2018 and 14 in 2017.

Like previous years, there is no consistent method countries use to measure and report on data availability making it difficult to provide an overall assessment of data availability for 2030 Agenda monitoring based on VNR reports. In addition, countries often do not provide information on the specific data they lack. Some countries providing an overall percentage on data availability and others note data gaps for specific SDGs.

Table 4 provides a year-by-year comparison of data availability according to the reporting countries' calculations. The data presented does not attempt to

reconcile the differences in how countries calculate data availability. Rather the table provides an indication of where countries situate themselves in terms of data availability, and further demonstrates the need for countries – regardless of their income level – to strengthen data availability for SDG monitoring. The information presented in the table is based on available data, proxy data, or partial data according to information in VNR reports. For 2020, 11 countries reported that data was available for less than 50% of SDG indicators, which represents an improvement in relation to 2019, when over half of the reporting countries (25) had less than 50% of data available. Panama experienced a decrease in data availability from 2017 (in a range of 31-40%) to 2020 (ranging from 21-30%). The same happened with Nigeria, which ranged between 41-50% in 2017 and declined to 21-30% in 2020. Niger declined from 51-60% in 2018 to 31-40% in 2020. Conversely, Benin saw gains in terms of data availability according to reporting in 2018 versus 2020, moving from availability 41-50% to between 71-80% of indicators. Peru did not present information on data availability in 2020, though it had in 2017.

**Table 4.** Data availability for global SDG indicators

Percentage	COUNTRIES			
	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>11-20%</b>	Guatemala	Paraguay	-	-
<b>21-30%</b>	Azerbaijan, the Maldives	Jamaica	Cambodia, Croatia, Eswatini, Fiji, Iceland, Iraq, Mauritius, New Zealand, Pakistan, Palau, Serbia, Tonga, Vanuatu	Honduras, Nigeria, Panama
<b>31-40%</b>	Japan, Panama, the Netherlands	Bahamas, Dominican Republic	Algeria, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Turkey	Gambia, Mozambique, Niger, Zambia
<b>41-50%</b>	Belgium, Italy, Nigeria, Peru	Benin, Egypt, State of Palestine	Côte d'Ivoire, Kuwait, Oman, Saint Lucia, Tunisia	Kyrgyz Republic, Morocco, Syria, Uzbekistan
<b>51-60%</b>	Denmark	Ecuador, Niger, Spain, Uruguay, Viet Nam	Lesotho, Mongolia, Philippines, Tanzania, Timor-Leste	Costa Rica
<b>61-70%</b>	Indonesia	Bhutan, Cabo Verde, Lithuania, Senegal	Indonesia, Israel, Rwanda, South Africa	Finland
<b>71-80%</b>	Bangladesh	Hungary, Mexico	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guatemala, United Kingdom	Benin, Ecuador, Libya, Malawi, Moldova
<b>81-90%</b>	Malaysia	-	-	Austria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya

As noted in the section on leaving no one behind, information on disaggregated data is not well reported in the VNR reports. Yet, this information is important for establishing baselines and informing evidence-based approaches to policy-making and programming. While only 12 countries in 2018 noted the need to improve disaggregated data, this figure jumped to 30 in 2019. In 2020, 13 countries pointed to the need of additional data to leave no one behind. Five years into reporting on the 2030 Agenda, this suggests a continuous recognition – although at a lesser extent in comparison to 2019 – by governments that efforts to LNOB will require improvements to the availability of disaggregated data. Countries not always provided more information regarding the forms of disaggregated data required, but they should report better on what forms of disaggregated data are needed (e.g. gender, age, region, disability, income or socio-economic status, ethnicity or social group, migration status, housing).

### **A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Kenya's open data platform**

Kenya's Open Institute collaborated with local governments (at the counties level) to enhance counties' capacity to produce high quality, timely and reliable disaggregated data. From such collaboration, an online platform was developed to foster citizen engagement and a source of open data. Through the Open County Platform ([www.opencounty.org](http://www.opencounty.org)), county management teams can follow data related to development in a more systematic way. The platform is also an efficient channel for citizens to engage and provide feedback.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from Kenya's VNR report.*

#### **4.7.2. Improving data availability**

Thirty out of the 47 reporting countries (64%) in 2020 indicated efforts to improve data availability. This is a decline in relation to 2019, when all 47 reporting countries reported the same, versus 31 countries in 2018. As seen in Figure 19, the three most cited ways

to address data availability in 2020 VNR reports were improving capacity (11 countries, versus nine in 2019), building of a statistical plan (nine countries, versus five in 2019), and building or expanding on data (seven countries, versus 11 in 2019). Less countries (4) referred to developing or modernizing indicators in comparison to 2019 (eight countries), and the same number of countries (5) in 2020 and 2019 mentioned institutional changes to strengthen statistical systems. For example, the government of Panama created the Technical Bureau of Statistics and Social Indicators, and Ukraine established a special unit within its statistics service's structure to provide information support for SDGs monitoring.

Still other types of efforts were mentioned in 2020 VNR reports. Armenia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo referred to the use of data from different (non-governmental, or non-national) sources as a way of improving data availability. India promotes a healthy competition among its states towards the achievement of the SDGs: primarily through the SDG India Index and Dashboard, states collect data and present them on indicators in a disaggregated way. Nepal's VNR report mentioned that its 2021 national census will be aligned with the SDGs and should address specific issues related to data generation, disaggregation and gaps. Although Austria's VNR report stated that several groups of experts are working to close data gaps and further break down existing data sets, it is unclear which exact means are being used to attain this objective.

### **A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Zambia's efforts to improve data availability**

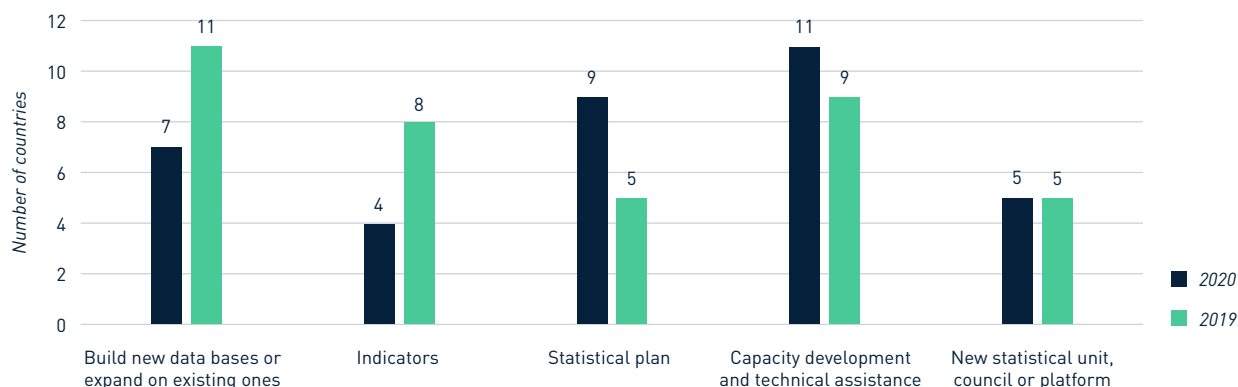
Zambia worked to improve its Central Statistical Office's statistical capacity. This body, now called Zambia Statistics Agency (ZamStats), embarked on strengthening statistical capacities through a national strategy (NSDS, 2019 -2024). Moreover, national ownership of the SDGs improved after the adoption of Zambia's "Monitoring and Evaluation Policy" (2019), which also contributes to improve accountability. Such policy aims to support capacity enhancement for collection, management and dissemination of information on development indicators, including the SDGs.

*Source: Excerpts adapted from Zambia's VNR report*

The efforts noted in 2020 are consistent with 2019, though with more focus on capacity development, which aligns more to efforts carried out by countries presenting VNR reports in 2018 and 2017. Reporting

in 2018 and 2017 also provided greater attention to improving coordination, resource mobilization and data dissemination, which have not been largely mentioned by countries reporting in 2020.

**Figure 19.** Efforts to improve data availability



#### 4.7.3. National reporting on 2030 Agenda implementation

Reporting at the national level ensures visibility of the 2030 Agenda and encourages a country-level follow-up and review process. In 2020, 29 countries (63%) provided some information on national level reporting, a decline in relation to the 40 countries (85%) presenting this in 2019. The lack of data on national reporting, including how countries report, when, and to whom, is worrisome in terms of transparency and accountability. Countries should better inform their progress to attain the SDGs both at the national level (being accountable to citizens) and the international level, including at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

While 18 countries (38%) indicated their national reporting process or mechanism was in development in 2019, this was only pointed out by Papua New Guinea and Uzbekistan in 2020, which might suggest that more countries currently have reporting mechanisms in place. In 2020, 16 countries (34%) pointed to regular national reporting, versus 19 countries (40%) in 2019. Of these, seven countries (the same as in 2019) referred to the intention of reporting annually. These countries include Bangladesh, Finland, Malawi, Micronesia, Nepal, Slovenia, and Ukraine. VNR reports were not always clear on who would prepare reports, with the exception of

Slovenia, that mentioned government bodies appointing contact persons for monitoring the 2030 Agenda and the preparation of a list containing all SDGs indicators and contact persons. Another aspect over which VNR reports are usually unclear is to whom reporting would occur, except for Austria, whose VNR report mentioned that the federal government will regularly inform parliament on the progress being made in SDGs implementation.

Twelve countries (versus eight in 2019) listed the presence of coordination bodies in reporting, and seven countries (versus two in 2019) highlighted the use of a national statistics bureau or national evaluation council as the writers of or contributors to national reporting. Only five countries – Malawi, Papua New Guinea, Seychelles, Uganda, and Uzbekistan – noted involvement of parliamentarians (compared to five in 2019, and two in 2018). A dashboard, platform or dedicated website for online national reporting was noted by 13 countries (28%) in 2020. This number is in keeping with findings from 2019, when 12 countries (26%) commented on using or developing online platforms, and 2018, with 11 countries reporting the same.

While in previous years VNR reports did not refer to regional-level follow-up and review processes, Nepal and India mentioned monitoring and reporting actions at the local level. Moreover, as previously mentioned

in the present report, Finland and Uganda referred to the presentation of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). Finally, while in 2019 no countries provided information on planned HLPF reporting for the future, Finland mentioned its decision of reporting on the progress of achieving the 2030 Agenda through VNRs every four years, and Nigeria referred to a planned presentation of another VNR report in 2022-2023.



## BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Link accountability for progress on 2030 Agenda implementation to regular, planned parliamentary reviews.

## A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: The role of Malawi's parliament and national auditing institution

Malawi's VNR report outlined efforts towards annual national reporting on the 2030 Agenda as well as the role of parliament and the national auditing institution in follow-up and review.

*Source: Excerpts adapted from Malawi's VNR report*

Some of the 2020 reporting countries provided information on national auditing institutions. These include Finland, Malawi, Solomon Islands, and Uganda. The role of audit offices, including through support,

overseeing monitoring, and auditor's reports assists overall accountability for national reporting on 2030 Agenda implementation, and connects the reporting processes to parliament. Finally, VNR reports usually lack information about citizen engagement in follow-up and review processes. In 2020, only five countries – Comoros, Finland, India, Malawi, and Samoa – made some reference to stakeholders such as civil society and general citizens being engaged in national reporting.

### 4.7.4. Recommendations

- **Report on data availability, including disaggregated data, and country efforts to improve data availability – given the importance of data for SDG monitoring and accountability, as well as leaving no one behind.**
- **Link reviews of progress for 2030 Agenda implementation to parliamentary oversight mechanisms in order to ensure accountability at the national level. Supreme auditing institutions can be key players in national follow-up and review processes.**
- **Spell out plans to review progress at the national level and be accountable to citizens for progress on the 2030 Agenda beyond reporting to the HLPF. This should include consulting with non-state actors and articulating plans for future HLPF reporting. These elements are important for ensuring accountability for progress on the 2030 Agenda, identifying gaps in implementation, allowing for course correction and ensuring transparency in reporting processes.**
- **Include an assessment of progress on 2030 Agenda implementation in VNR reports to the HLPF, particularly with reference to the status of implementation in previously submitted VNR reports.**





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## 5. REPORTING ACCORDING TO THE VOLUNTARY COMMON REPORTING GUIDELINES

### 5.1. KEY FINDINGS

#### 5.1.1. Use of the voluntary common reporting guidelines

- **Overall guidelines compliance:** The review of VNR reports shows increased compliance with reporting against the Secretary-General's voluntary common reporting guidelines over 2016 to 2019, with a steadier situation between 2019 and 2020.
- **Guidelines' components:** All countries presenting full VNR reports in 2020 provided full or partial information on all components of the guidelines. This proportion compares to 75% in 2019, showing that countries are more compliant with the Secretary-General's instructions.
- **Structural issues:** There was a substantial increase in the quality of information provided on structural issues in 2020, which reverses the trend from 2018 and 2019.
- **Increases and declines in reporting:** An equal

number of components of the guidelines saw increased and decreased reporting in 2020 in comparison to the previous year, with the most significant gains seen in reporting on structural issues and methodology for the VNR. Declines include reporting on creating ownership, and on integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development from 2019.

### 5.2. VOLUNTARY COMMON REPORTING GUIDELINES

The United Nations Secretary-General proposed a set of voluntary common reporting guidelines to help countries frame their VNR reports to the HLPF. The guidelines have evolved over time with an updated [handbook for reporting in 2020](#). VNR reports submitted for the following year will also have a [new set of guidelines \(2021\)](#) to better incorporate how countries should report against the impacts of a global crises

such as COVID-19 and how to build back together, and to further clarify information that should be provided for countries submitting a subsequent report

to the HLPF. The guidelines are voluntary however and countries ultimately decide how to present their findings.

## WHAT IS IN THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S VOLUNTARY COMMON REPORTING GUIDELINES?

- **Opening statement** by the Head of State or Government, a Minister or other high-ranking Government official.
- **Highlights** presented in a one-to-two-page synthesis overview of the review process, status of SDG progress and how the government is responding to the integrated and indivisible nature of the 2030 Agenda and working to leave no one behind.
- An **introduction** that sets the context and objectives for the review, outlines the review cycle and how existing national reports were used. The policy architecture for implementation and policy tools to support integration of the three dimensions, as well as linkages to relevant international agreements could also be mentioned.
- Presentation of the **methodology for the review**, outlining the process for preparation of the national review.
- **Policy and enabling environment**
  - **Creating ownership** of the SDGs with an outline of efforts towards all stakeholders to inform them on and involve them in the SDGs. This section can address how specific groups have been engaged.
  - **Incorporation of the SDGs in national frameworks** understood in terms of the critical initiatives countries undertook to adapt the SDGs and targets to its national circumstances, and to advance their implementation. This section should include challenges in implementation, and their cause, and refer to efforts taken by other stakeholders.
  - **Integration of the three dimensions** through a discussion of how the three dimensions of sustainable development are being integrated and how sustainable development policies are being designed and implemented to reflect such integration. Could include analysis related to the HLPF theme.
  - Assessment of how the principle of **leaving no one behind** is mainstreamed in implementation. Includes how vulnerable groups have been identified, efforts to address their needs, and particular attention to women and girls.
  - **Institutional mechanisms** described in terms of how the country has adapted its institutional framework in order to implement the 2030 Agenda. Would be useful to include how the country plans to review progress and can note where support is provided by United Nations Country Teams in the preparation of national SDG reports.
  - Relevant **structural issues** or barriers, including external constraints that hinder progress. Transformative approaches to addressing these challenges can be highlighted.
- A brief analysis of progress on all **goals and targets**, including whether a baseline has been defined. Discussion can also include trends, successes, challenges, emerging issues, lessons learned and actions to address gaps and challenges. Countries completing a subsequent VNR are encouraged to describe progress since the previous review.
- Presentation of the **means of implementation**, including how means of implementation are mobilized, what difficulties this process faces, and what additional resources are needed. The section can include reference to financial systems and resource allocation to support implementation, the private sector, the role of technology, concrete capacity development and data needs and the role of multi-stakeholder partnerships.
- **Conclusion and next steps** include the plans the country is taking or planning to take to enhance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Can also outline how implementation will be reviewed at national and subnational levels. Countries can also provide a summary of the analysis, findings and policy implications. Lessons learned from the VNR could be highlighted.
- **Annexes** that can include an annex with data, using the global SDG indicators as a starting point and adding priority national/regional indicators and identifying gaps. Additional annexes can also showcase best practice or comments from stakeholders.

### 5.3. USE OF THE GUIDELINES

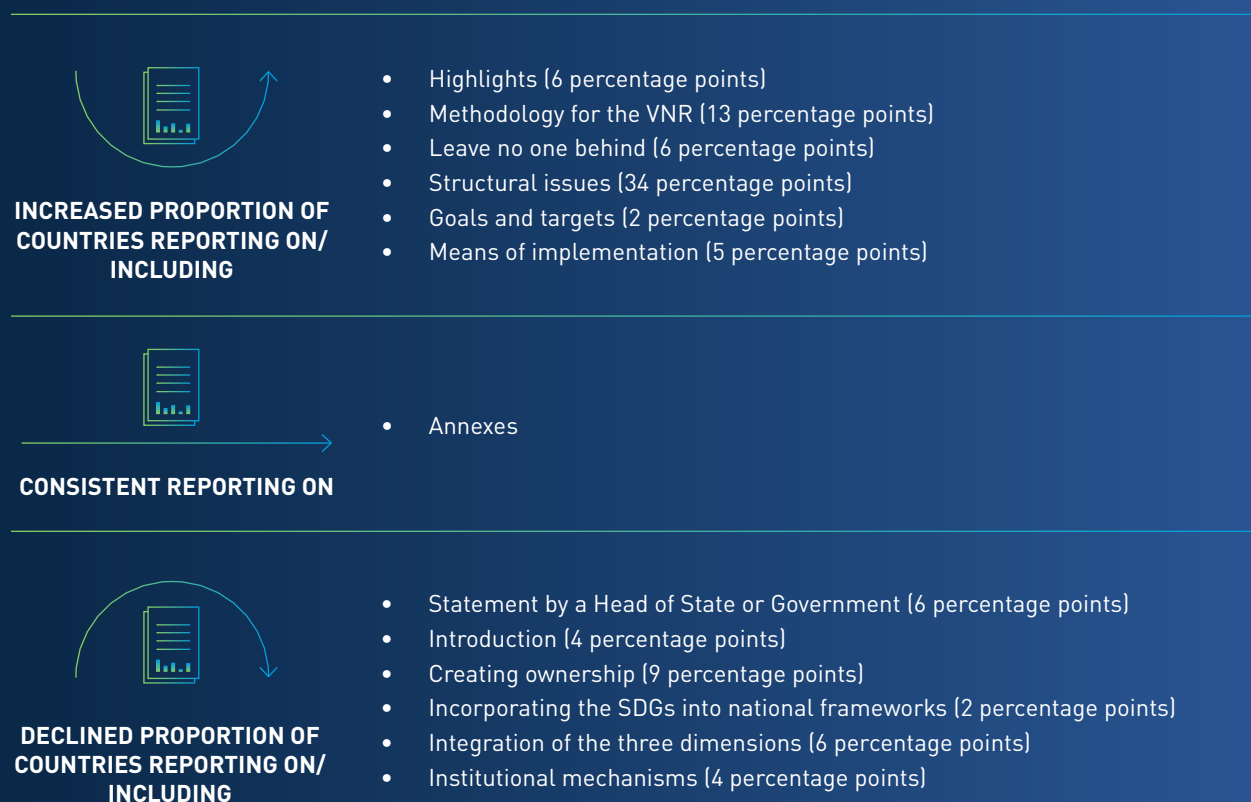
All the VNR reports presented in 2020 were reviewed against the guidelines to identify which of the suggested components are being addressed by countries. Figure 21 provides an overview of trends, outlining countries that:

- have fully met the guidelines for a component indicated in green;
- partially met the guidelines by referring to the component but not most aspects requested in the guidelines, indicated in yellow; or
- did not include the component at all, indicated in red.

As shown in Figure 21, most countries provided the information – in full or partially – as recommended by the Secretary-General's voluntary common reporting guidelines. Reversing the trend from 2018 and 2019, there was a considerable increase in the

number of VNR reports presenting information on structural issues in 2020. In comparison to previous years, VNR reports have not particularly changed in terms of overall compliance with the guidelines. Reporting increased in six components listed in the guidelines in 2020 compared to 2019, with the most significant gains seen in reporting on structural issues, followed by information on the methodology for the VRN (Figure 20). Declines were seen in also six components: inclusion of a statement by a Head of State or Government, introduction, creating ownership, incorporating the SDGs into national frameworks, integrating the three dimensions, and institutional mechanisms. The proportion of countries including annexes remained the same over 2019 and 2020. In the case of conclusions and next steps, no accurate assessment could be done, as for 2020 the guidelines merged both components, which used to be separate in 2018 and 2019.

**Figure 20.** Trends in reporting against the Secretary-General's voluntary common reporting guidelines over 2019-2020



**Figure 21.** The extent to which countries incorporate elements of the SG common reporting guidelines, 2020

2020	Statement by HoSG	Highlights	Introduction	Methodology for review	Creating ownership	Incorporation in national frameworks	Integration of three dimensions	Leave no one behind	Institutional mechanisms	Structural issues	Goals and targets	Means of implementation	Conclusion and next steps	Annexes
Argentina														
Armenia														
Austria														
Bangladesh														
Barbados														
Benin														
Brunei Darussalam														
Bulgaria														
Burundi														
Comoros														
Costa Rica														
Democratic Republic of the Congo														
Ecuador														
Estonia														
Finland														
Gambia														
Georgia														
Honduras														
India														
Kenya														
Kyrgyz Republic														
Liberia														
Libya														
Malawi														
Micronesia														
Morocco														
Mozambique														
Nepal														
Niger														
Nigeria														
North Macedonia														
Panama														
Papua New Guinea														
Peru														
Republic of Moldova														
Russian Federation														
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines														
Samoa														
Seychelles														
Slovenia														
Solomon Islands														
Syrian Arab Republic														
Trinidad and Tobago														
Uganda														
Ukraine														
Uzbekistan														
Zambia														
Percentage of countries including component in 2020	77%	87%	92%	96%	85%	96%	79%	87%	94%	87%	96%	96%	94%	72%
Percentage of countries including component in 2019	83%	81%	96%	83%	94%	98%	85%	81%	98%	53%	94%	91%	[*]	72%
Percentage of countries including component in 2018	83%	72%	96%	93%	80%	96%	72%	63%	96%	67%	91%	76%	[**]	61%
Direction of change over previous year	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	↑	↑	-	-

[\*] 2019 – Conclusion 77%, Next steps 79%    [\*\*] 2018 – Conclusion 74%, Next steps 80%

Overall, most countries presenting VNRs in 2020 fully meet the Secretary-General's reporting guidelines. Figure 21 shows a majority of "fully met" assessment (green), as opposed to "partially met" (yellow) in all the 14 components. In nine components, the proportion of countries fully meeting the guidelines in relation to those that met them partially was over 75%. However, the difference between fully and partially meeting a guideline was less prominent in five components. In the case of the annexes component, roughly one third of the countries (32%, or 23 versus 11 countries) meeting the guidelines did it only partially, whereas for the four other components (integration of the three dimensions, leaving no one behind, structural issues, and means of implementation) that figure increased to about 40% of countries only partially meeting the guidelines.<sup>42</sup> Such differences may suggest that countries are not sufficiently focusing on these matters, or are not presenting enough detailed information.

### A CASE STUDY IN GOOD PRACTICE: Benin's VNR report structure

Benin presented its third VNR report in 2020. The report was well structured and followed the guidelines provided by the Secretary General, referencing all the elements indicated in the guidelines.

*Source: Excerpt adapted from Benin's VNR report.*

**VNR, with details that articulate how the drafting process occurred, timing, how stakeholders were engaged, and lessons learned. This will provide greater clarity on what was done, and how other member states can draw from the experience of different countries.**

- **Make use of the guidance provided by the Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews to better assess and report on integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in VNR reports.**
- **Report on the means of implementation as instructed in the guidelines, including domestic finance, resource allocation, budgeting, international public finance, trade, capacity development, technology and partnerships.**
- **Provide a detailed assessment of the forward-looking agenda, outlining where the country needs to go and the steps to get there, based on gaps and lessons learned to date. This should include next steps in terms of follow-up and review with concrete commitments to be fulfilled by states, strengthening the VNR process and clarifying what stakeholders can expect in the years following VNR reporting at HLPF.**
- **Report on data availability, including disaggregated data, with reference to global and national level indicators, in the statistical annex. This will provide a better picture of countries' overall capacity to monitor SDG implementation.**
- **For 2021 reporting, take all guidelines updates into consideration, including instructions focused on second or third time VNR presentations, and on building back together from COVID-19.**

## 5.4. Recommendations

- **Follow, as much as possible, the guidelines as proposed by the Secretary-General to ensure that all elements of SDG implementation are captured and facilitate comparison of shared challenges, good practices and lessons learned.**
- **Continue to include the methodology for the**

42. Integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development in 2020 VNR reports: 22 countries fully met the guidelines, 15 only partially. Leaving no one behind: 25 countries fully met the guidelines, 16 only partially. Structural issues: 24 countries fully met the guidelines, 17 only partially. Means of implementation: 26 countries met the guidelines in full, 19 only partially.





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## 6. CONCLUSION

As the global community moves forward with accelerating efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda in the Decade of Delivery and Action, VNRs continue to offer an opportunity to strengthen national level accountability and demonstrate accountability for 2030 Agenda implementation on the global stage. VNRs are much more than just reports. Countries continue to value the VNR process and use it as more than just a means to an end, recognizing the value of VNRs in generating national ownership and momentum to realize sustainable development. In 2020, countries were faced with the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, which profoundly impacted the world's population's health, countries' economy, and their shared progress towards sustainable development. Apart from providing more detailed information on their VNR processes – with some including specific sections outlining what had been learned from the VNR process – countries also included information on the impacts of the pandemic on 2030 Agenda implementation and the efforts being carried out to address such impacts. From 2020 onwards, countries still need to accelerate action, but now with the

additional challenge of just recovery.

As countries look to reporting in 2021, this report has identified good and best practice in 2030 Agenda implementation. The report highlights areas of emerging standard practice and progress, including with respect to more inclusion of non-state actors in lead councils or committees responsible for 2030 Agenda implementation, and more integration of the SDGs into national policies. Reporting on partnerships, including civil society, and recognizing the guiding principles of the 2030 Agenda appeared as positive traits in 2020 VNR reports. Nevertheless, the review raises questions on the extent to which member states are analyzing domestic and foreign policies to realize the SDGs globally, flagged more limited reporting on consultations to define national priorities, and highlighted limitations in reporting on follow-up and review processes at the national level, and on closing civic space.

Furthermore, this report has outlined lessons from the 2020 VNR process and, in addition to the reports covering 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, civil society has developed

detailed feedback and recommendations based on extensive engagement. As the review moves forward, it should include forums for meaningful participation by civil society and other stakeholders. This includes setting minimum standards for their institutionalized participation and efforts to strengthen major groups and other stakeholder engagement mechanisms.

Revisions to the Secretary-General's voluntary common reporting guidelines for reporting in 2021 have sought to further strengthen the value of VNR processes and reporting, making clearer references to how to prepare subsequent VNRs for second and third-time reporters, promoting a cycle report approach. The HLPF can be further strengthened by continuing to examine how VNR reporting can be improved, including by following the recommendations outlined in this report, given that the VNRs serve as an essential mechanism for the 2030 Agenda implementation accountability and are the cornerstone for SDGs follow-up and review at the regional and global levels. Presentations and discussions at the HLPF require more time, space, and opportunities for civil society to meaningfully participate and engage with governments on the content of VNR presentations. Considering the existing global framework, this year revisions to the Secretary-General's voluntary common reporting guidelines also call to reporting states to include information on how governments are linking COVID-19 recovery plans

with the 2030 Agenda implementation processes. The guidelines also beckon for a more assertive human-rights based approach in the 2030 Agenda national implementation analysis.

Opportunities for exchanging of views on independent assessments, including reports from civil society and expert analysis, would enable member states to benefit from a wider pool of knowledge. Action in these areas is essential if the original vision of the positive and constructive follow-up and review mechanisms outlined in the 2030 Agenda is to become a reality. In addition to strengthening the quality of discussions at the HLPF, regional forums should also be supported as critical opportunities for peer-to-peer learning among member states, focusing on trends and challenges in implementation.

This review highlights bright spots and worrisome trends in 2030 Agenda implementation, recognizing the critical need to accelerate action to leave no one behind. The good and best practices and recommendations presented throughout this report are meant to help guide countries and other stakeholders in their efforts at national and global levels. As countries move into the Decade of Action and Delivery and on the path to just, equitable and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, these recommendations can serve as the basis for accelerating action for a sustainable future.



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## 7. CONSOLIDATED BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHTS

### 7.1. GOVERNANCE, INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS AND ENGAGEMENT

#### 7.1.1. Leadership, governance and institutional arrangements

- Establish technical and/or substantive working groups or other specialized bodies for 2030 Agenda implementation. This shares responsibilities and enhances support towards implementation.
- Formally include non-state actors in governance arrangements. This contributes to inclusivity, and a whole-of-society approach in 2030 Agenda implementation and the promotion of partnership.
- Engage with peers to promote learning, establish collaborative initiatives to realize the 2030 Agenda and review progress on implementation.

#### 7.1.2. Stakeholder engagement in 2030 Agenda implementation

- Establish an enabling environment through the creation of appropriate legal, regulatory and policy frameworks that support non-state actors to contribute to sustainable development and set out how multi-stakeholder engagement and partnership will occur.
- Establish and report on formal mechanisms to ensure regular, inclusive multi-stakeholder engagement on 2030 Agenda implementation in line with good practice for ensuring effective and inclusive engagement.
- Support capacity development of civil society, including grassroots organizations representing marginalized communities, to participate in opportunities for stakeholder engagement and promote accountability for 2030 Agenda implementation.



- Ensure inclusivity and participation in the nationalization of the SDGs, including the creation of national targets and indicators, in line with the principles of the 2030 Agenda.
- Solicit verbal and written inputs from all stakeholders in the preparation of VNR reports and provide stakeholders with an opportunity to review and comment on the first draft through public consultation.
- Include non-state actors in institutional mechanisms responsible for the VNR and drafting the VNR report, and advocate for civil society reports to be given recognition and status in the United Nations' High-level Political Forum (HLPF) process.

## 7.2. POLICIES FOR 2030 AGENDA IMPLEMENTATION

### 7.2.1. Baseline or gap analysis

- Assess policies, data availability and baselines to inform prioritization and nationalization of the 2030 Agenda and ensure an evidence-based approach to implementation. When submitting a subsequent VNR report, indicate if and how relevant assessments have been updated.

### 7.2.2. Incorporation of the 2030 Agenda into national frameworks

- Integrate Agenda 2030 priorities into national policies and frameworks and develop a roadmap to accelerate implementation.
- Explicitly link the implementation of each SDG to relevant national and international human rights frameworks. Establish policies and institutions to ensure a human rights-based approach to sustainable development in 2030 Agenda implementation.

### 7.2.3. Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda

- Include all dimensions of sustainable development in the selection of national priorities.

### 7.2.4. Integration and policy coherence

- Provide a detailed assessment of all 17 SDGs, with appropriate linkages to all dimensions of sustainable development and reference to domestic and global efforts to realize the 2030 Agenda.
- Link the 2030 Agenda to relevant international agreements that support sustainable development to ensure coherency and synergies in implementation.
- Include information on global contributions to the SDGs alongside assessments of progress at national and subnational levels, recognizing the impacts of domestic and foreign policies.

## 7.3. IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### 7.3.1. Leaving no one behind

- Prepare a dedicated chapter on leaving no one behind in VNR reports and integrate information on efforts to leave no one behind in the goal-by-goal analysis.

### 7.3.2. Awareness-raising

- Develop a communication and engagement strategy to continue to raise awareness of and ownership over the 2030 Agenda with a wide range of stakeholders over the course of SDG implementation.

### 7.3.3. Partnerships to realize the SDGs

- Submit a *national* report for the VNR that systematically outlines the contributions made by a wide range of stakeholders, not just the national government.

### 7.3.4. Means of implementation

- Cost out SDG implementation and identify sources of finance. Assess budget allocations for SDG implementation at national and subnational levels and incorporate and clearly denote activities aimed at realizing the SDGs in budgets.

- Articulate specific capacity constraints to 2030 Agenda implementation and with respect to realizing specific SDGs in VNR reports. Indicate the type of support needed to address capacity constraints.
- Report on best practice, lessons learned to accelerate 2030 Agenda implementation, challenges and areas countries would like to learn from peers.
- Articulate clear and detailed challenges in 2030 Agenda implementation to inform how the country can best be supported by domestic and international communities.

### **7.3.5. Measurement and reporting**

- Provide an account of national level reporting and accountability processes for 2030 Agenda implementation in VNR reports.
- Provide an account of progress made between VNR reports with reference to trends for SDG targets and changes to policies, institutions and partnerships for 2030 Agenda implementation.
- Link accountability for progress on 2030 Agenda implementation to regular, planned parliamentary reviews.





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## 8. CONSOLIDATED RECOMMENDATIONS

### 8.1. GOVERNANCE, INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS AND ENGAGEMENT

#### 8.1.1. Leadership, governance and institutional arrangements

- Clearly establish leadership and governance structures to support 2030 Agenda implementation and lay out lines of accountability between various national stakeholders.
- Formalize non-state actor engagement in governance structures to realize the 2030 Agenda. This includes lead councils or committees and technical working groups.
- Identify opportunities to realize the 2030 Agenda domestically and globally through engaging more formally in regional level initiatives and with like-minded countries. Such engagement offers opportunities to share best practice with and learn lessons from peers.
- Support a positive public narrative around civil

society and its participation in policy-making and development processes.

#### 8.1.2. Stakeholder engagement in 2030 Agenda implementation

- Follow good practice in multi-stakeholder engagement by ensuring that approaches are timely, open and inclusive, transparent, informed and iterative.
- Support an enabling environment for multi-stakeholder engagement through the legislation, regulation and the creation of policies that set out how engagement will occur.
- Create and report on formal mechanisms to ensure regular and inclusive stakeholder engagement.
- Engage diverse stakeholders in the selection of national priorities and partner with non-state actors to reach the furthest behind.
- Develop a range of opportunities for multi-stakeholder engagement in VNRs including through

online and in-person public consultation, soliciting inputs to and feedback on draft reports, and inclusion of non-state actors as partners in carrying out the review and drafting the VNR report.

- Ensure that stakeholders continue to be engaged even in light of challenging situations (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic) by promoting resilience and finding alternative ways through which to secure participation.

## 8.2. POLICIES FOR 2030 AGENDA IMPLEMENTATION

### 8.2.1. Baseline or gap analysis

- Conduct an assessment that identifies gaps in existing policies and programs, examines data availability, and sets out baselines from which to measure progress and assess where additional efforts are needed.
- Articulate how the assessment was conducted and provide a summary of the gaps identified for each goal.
- For countries presenting a subsequent VNR report to the HLPF, identify where progress has been made since initial policy and data assessments and provide information on changes between reporting years at national and subnational levels and for the furthest behind.

### 8.2.2. Incorporation of the 2030 Agenda into national frameworks

- Fully integrate the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs into national and subnational plans and strategies based on an evaluation of existing policies, approaches and progress to identify gaps, adapt policies and target areas where further progress is needed especially for the furthest behind groups.
- Operationalize the principles of the 2030 Agenda in approaches to implementation recognizing the universal, human rights-based and interlinked nature of the agenda. VNR reports should demonstrate how approaches to sustainable development are transformative based on the principles of the 2030 Agenda and not just the SDGs.
- Ground plans and strategies in human rights, including by linking activities to international and national human rights commitments

and establishing appropriate institutions and mechanisms to support a human rights-based approach to sustainable development.

- Undertake actions with reference to and respect for planetary boundaries and responsibilities towards future generations, including avenues for intergenerational partnerships.

### 8.2.3. Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda

- Identify national sustainable development priorities that address all dimensions of sustainable development, recognizing the interlinkages between society, the economy, the environment and governance.
- Develop national targets and indicators through an inclusive and participatory process to complement global targets and indicators.
- In order to generate national ownership of the VNR process, present VNR reports for debate at the national level (e.g. in national parliaments and official multi-stakeholder sustainable development councils/commissions) before presenting at the international level (e.g. United Nations' High-level Political Forum).

### 8.2.4. Integration and policy coherence

- Assess all 17 goals in VNR reports, respecting the indivisible nature of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.
- Ensure all dimensions of sustainable development are addressed in SDG implementation and VNR reporting. Linkages and synergies between the different dimensions of sustainable development should be clearly stated in policies, supported through implementation and included in reporting - all to help ensure clear integration.
- Link implementation of the 2030 Agenda to relevant international agreements that support 2030 Agenda implementation, such as the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and global agreements on aid and international development effectiveness, including in VNR reporting.
- Given the importance of the COVID-19 pandemic to the global context, future VNRs should include reference to international and global commitments on COVID-19.

- Provide an assessment of domestic and global dimensions of sustainable development in the goal-by-goal analysis, demonstrating contributions to realizing the SDGs at home and abroad, and supporting policy coherence for sustainable development.

## 8.3. IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### 8.3.1. Leaving no one behind

- Ensure policies and programs are informed by and integrate efforts to leave no one behind, including by prioritizing those most in need to consistently reach marginalized communities.
- Include a specific chapter on leaving no one behind in VNR reporting and demonstrate how the principle of leaving no one behind is being translated into action in an overarching way.
- Provide information on the status of data collection or plans to improve data availability to inform efforts to leave no one behind. This includes information on gender disaggregated data. Ensuring no one is left behind means knowing who is being left behind, by how much, and in what areas.
- Highlight existing and planned efforts to leave no one behind, including how policies and program are being adapted, and in particular, new approaches to reach the people who are furthest behind first.
- Promote gender equality through international good practice such as gender budgeting, gender-based analysis and mainstreaming into policies and plans, and appropriate legal, policy and institutional frameworks.
- Report on the outcomes of efforts to leave no one behind, including by drawing on civil society expertise and citizen-generated data. Clearly present links between specific policies and actions with results, presenting progress for specific marginalized groups.
- Target domestic inequality in 2030 Agenda implementation, including in support of SDG 10 on reduced inequalities, and outline the current status of domestic inequality and how it is being addressed in VNR reports.
- Include major crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the efforts being made to ensure no one is left behind, outlining which groups are being covered and detailing what approaches are being taken.

### 8.3.2. Awareness-raising

- Develop a communication strategy to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda on an ongoing basis.
- Continue to promote innovative ways to raise awareness of the SDGs among the general public, including in partnership with civil society and other non-state actors.

### 8.3.3. Localization

- Include localization as part of 2030 Agenda implementation strategies, strengthen coordination with local governments and local institutional structures, capacities and resources.
- Support the translation of the SDGs into local plans, programs and monitoring efforts and ensure local priorities inform national plans.

### 8.3.4. Partnerships to realize the SDGs

- Support civil society to engage in 2030 Agenda implementation by creating a more enabling environment, including through institutionalized dialogue and consultation, inclusion in formal governance arrangements, finance, and capacity development.
- Integrate the 2030 Agenda into parliamentary work, recognizing the critical role parliamentarians play as citizens' representatives and in ensuring national level accountability for progress.
- Support and develop partnerships with a variety of non-state actors, including academia, the private sector, children and youth, volunteers, trade unions, and the media.
- Where relevant, clearly stipulate and provide details on priority areas for support from the international community, laying out the role development partners can best play to support the acceleration of 2030 Agenda implementation.
- Outline how multiple stakeholders can be involved to address crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

### 8.3.5. Means of implementation

- Clearly include best practices, lessons learned in

accelerating implementation, challenges going forward and where opportunities exist to learn from peers in VNR reports.

- Examine national and subnational budgets as an essential part of the implementation process and start integrating the SDGs into them to ensure that resources are allocated for implementation. In doing so, build on the good practice in costing out SDG implementation and identify sources of finance to implement the 2030 Agenda at country level.
- Report on all means of implementation, including clearly specifying capacity constraints. Such information is critical for assessing gaps, identifying where greater domestic and international efforts are needed and informing development cooperation frameworks.
- Bolster efforts to support development partners' capacity development priorities, including strengthening statistical systems and the capacities of local stakeholders to implement the 2030 Agenda.
- Scale up efforts to address systemic issues that impact SDG implementation, in particular international peace and security, illicit and other illegal activities, effects of climate change, and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In view of COVID-19, report on how it affected the means of implementation of the SDGs, highlighting actions taken to address the crisis and reduce its impact.

#### 8.3.6. Measurement and reporting

- Report on data availability, including disaggregated data, and country efforts to improve data availability – given the importance of data for SDG monitoring and accountability, as well as leaving no one behind.
- Link reviews of progress for 2030 Agenda implementation to parliamentary oversight mechanisms in order to ensure accountability at the national level. Supreme auditing institutions can be key players in national follow-up and review processes.
- Spell out plans to review progress at the national level and be accountable to citizens for progress on the 2030 Agenda beyond reporting to the HLPF. This should include consulting with non-state actors and articulating plans for future HLPF reporting. These elements are important for ensuring accountability for progress on the 2030 Agenda, identifying gaps in

implementation, allowing for course correction and ensuring transparency in reporting processes.

- Include an assessment of progress on 2030 Agenda implementation in VNR reports to the HLPF, particularly with reference to the status of implementation in previously submitted VNR reports.

### 8.4. REPORTING TO THE HLPF

- Follow, as much as possible, the guidelines as proposed by the Secretary-General to ensure that all elements of SDG implementation are captured and facilitate comparison of shared challenges, good practices and lessons learned.
- Continue to include the methodology for the VNR, with details that articulate how the drafting process occurred, timing, how stakeholders were engaged, and lessons learned. This will provide greater clarity on what was done, and how other member states can draw from the experience of different countries.
- Make use of the guidance provided by the Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews to better assess and report on integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in VNR reports.
- Report on the means of implementation as instructed in the guidelines, including domestic finance, resource allocation, budgeting, international public finance, trade, capacity development, technology and partnerships.
- Provide a detailed assessment of the forward-looking agenda, outlining where the country needs to go and the steps to get there, based on gaps and lessons learned to date. This should include next steps in terms of follow-up and review with concrete commitments to be fulfilled by states, strengthening the VNR process and clarifying what stakeholders can expect in the years following VNR reporting at HLPF.
- Report on data availability, including disaggregated data, with reference to global and national level indicators, in the statistical annex. This will provide a better picture of countries' overall capacity to monitor SDG implementation.
- For 2021 reporting, take all guidelines updates into consideration, including instructions focused on second or third time VNR presentations, and on building back together from COVID-19.

# ANNEXES

## ANNEX 1. VNR REPORTS REVIEWED

All 47 VNR reports are available through the United Nations Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform. Table A1 provides an overview of the countries reviewed. Of these countries, the majority (17) are

high-income, according to World Bank country classifications. Twelve countries are upper-middle-income, nine are high income, and nine are low-income. Sixteen countries from Africa (all from sub-Saharan Africa except for Libya and Morocco), nine from Asia, nine from Europe, nine from Latin America and the Caribbean, and four from Oceania reported, according to United Nations classifications.

**Table A1.** Countries reviewed in the analysis of 2020 VNR reports

Country	Region <sup>1</sup>	Sub-region <sup>2</sup>	Income level <sup>3</sup>
Argentina	Americas	South America	Upper-middle income country
Armenia	Asia	Western Asia	Upper-middle income country
Austria	Europe	Western Europe	High-income country
Bangladesh	Asia	Southern Asia	Lower-middle income country
Barbados	Americas	Caribbean	High income country
Benin	Africa	Western Africa	Lower-middle income country
Brunei Darussalam	Asia	South-eastern Asia	High-income country
Bulgaria	Europe	Eastern Europe	Upper-middle income country
Burundi	Africa	Eastern Africa	Low-income country
Comoros	Africa	Eastern Africa	Lower-middle income country
Costa Rica	Americas	Central America	Upper-middle income country
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Africa	Middle Africa	Low-income country
Ecuador	Americas	South America	Upper-middle income country
Estonia	Europe	Northern Europe	High-income country
Finland	Europe	Northern Europe	High-income country
Gambia	Africa	Western Africa	Low-income country

1. According to UN classifications.

2. According to UN classifications.

3. According to World Bank classifications for the 2021 fiscal year.



Country	Region <sup>1</sup>	Sub-region <sup>2</sup>	Income level <sup>3</sup>
Georgia	Asia	Western Asia	Upper-middle income country
Honduras	Americas	Central America	Lower-middle income country
India	Asia	Southern Asia	Lower-middle income country
Kenya	Africa	Eastern Africa	Lower-middle income country
Kyrgyz Republic	Asia	Central Asia	Lower-middle income country
Liberia	Africa	Western Africa	Low-income country
Libya	Africa	Northern Africa	Upper-middle income country
Malawi	Africa	Eastern Africa	Low-income country
Micronesia	Oceania	Micronesia	Lower-middle income country
Moldova	Europe	Eastern Europe	Lower-middle income country
Morocco	Africa	Northern Africa	Lower-middle income country
Mozambique	Africa	Eastern Africa	Low-income country
Nepal	Asia	Southern Asia	Lower-middle income country
Niger	Africa	Western Africa	Low-income country
Nigeria	Africa	Western Africa	Lower-middle income country
North Macedonia	Europe	Southern Europe	Upper-middle income country
Panama	Americas	Central America	High-income country
Papua New Guinea	Oceania	Melanesia	Lower-middle income country
Peru	Americas	South America	Upper-middle income country
Russian Federation	Europe	Eastern Europe	Upper-middle income country
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Americas	Caribbean	Upper-middle income country
Samoa	Oceania	Polynesia	Upper-middle income country
Seychelles	Africa	Eastern Africa	High-income country
Slovenia	Europe	Southern Europe	High-income country
Solomon Islands	Oceania	Melanesia	Lower-middle income country
Syria	Asia	Western Asia	Low-income country
Trinidad and Tobago	Americas	Caribbean	High-income country
Uganda	Africa	Eastern Africa	Low-income country
Ukraine	Europe	Eastern Europe	Lower-middle income country
Uzbekistan	Asia	Central Asia	Lower-middle income country
Zambia	Africa	Eastern Africa	Lower-middle income country

## ANNEX 2. METHODOLOGY

The review follows the assessment framework prepared for previous editions of the *Progressing National SDGs Implementation*<sup>4</sup> report. It examines countries in terms of 10 pillars of implementation. The framework complements the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs' [synthesis of VNR reports](#). The report by UN DESA provides greater detail on actions undertaken at the goal level but does not assess VNR reports in terms of good practices and where they could be improved. The 10 pillars of analysis are listed below.

1. Leadership, governance and institutional mechanisms
2. Baseline or gap analysis
3. Integration and policy coherence
4. Leave no one behind
5. Raising awareness and creating ownership of the 2030 Agenda
6. Stakeholder engagement
7. Implementing the 2030 Agenda
8. Partnership to realize the 2030 Agenda
9. Measurement and reporting

These 10 pillars of analysis are presented in the three sections in the report that focus on 1) governance, institutional mechanisms and engagement, 2) policies for 2030 Agenda implementation, and 3) implementing the 2030 Agenda. The assessment framework also gives special attention to the spirit of the 2030 Agenda through, for example, the examination of the principles of the 2030 Agenda. Some changes were made to the framework in 2020 to reflect the global COVID-19 pandemic however this was done with efforts to ensure ongoing comparability in the series. Details were

added to improve the overall analysis, particularly with regard to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and additional sub-components were added to obtain more granular data on leaving no one behind and to assess the extent to which VNR reports used unofficial data. These are indicated in the table below by a \*.

The framework was initially tested and revised for the 2017 edition of *Progressing National SDG Implementation*. For open-ended components of the analysis (instances in which researchers could not provide a set answer, such as yes or no), the text was drawn directly from the VNR reports ensuring the highest level of accuracy. In some cases, researchers paraphrased information when the text from VNR reports was more than 200 words. Information from available civil society reports was also included in the framework. For set answer components, relevant information was listed in a 'notes' section of the framework. For open-ended components, text from civil society reports is available directly following the text from VNR reports. For both set answer and open-ended components, researchers were asked to include any relevant information that also arose related to COVID-19, as outlined in the VNR report. All data sets were reviewed by one researcher to ensure the consistency of data collection.

In terms of data sources, the analysis presented in this review is based solely on official VNR reports and where available, civil society reports. Secondary literature was used in a limited number of instances to show consistency between the analysis in the review and those carried out by others. No additional research was conducted to verify the accuracy and confirm the validity of the information governments included in their reports. The lack of additional research is a clear limitation of the findings.

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4. The 2021 edition of the framework was revised to include information related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (new data collection components) but remains largely consistent with the framework used for the review of 2019 VNR reports. The 2017 edition built on the framework set out in Bond et al's 2016 assessment of the VNR reports. See Cutter, Amy. 2016. *Progressing national SDGs implementation: Experiences and recommendations from 2016*. London: Bond. The second edition built on the eight pillars of analysis by adding two more that focus on partnerships to realize Agenda 2030 and the means of implementation. In 2018, the framework was slightly revised to include greater details on leaving no one behind, environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda and additional information on budgeting under means of implementation.

**Table A2. Assessment framework**

Sub-component	Description	Options
Demographic information		
Country name	Provide country name	Short version, e.g. Ethiopia rather than the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.
Region	Based on United Nations Statistics Division <a href="#">classifications</a> .	The region as stipulated in the classification.
Sub-Region	Based on the United Nations Statistics Division <a href="#">classifications</a> .	The intermediate region as stipulated in the classification.
Income level	World Bank <a href="#">classification</a> for the 2021 fiscal year.	Low-income country.
		Lower-middle-income country.
		Upper-middle-income country.
		High-income country.
Incorporation of the SDGs into national frameworks and policies		
SDGs in national frameworks and policies	Refers to how governments are incorporating the SDGs into national frameworks and policies broadly.	SDGs incorporated into national development plans and related policies and frameworks.
		SDGs incorporated through a national SDG implementation strategy.
		SDGs incorporated into national development plans and related policies and frameworks and through the use of a national SDG implementation strategy.
		SDGs have not been incorporated through a national strategy or into national development plans and related policies and frameworks.
		Not articulated in VNR report.
Principles of Agenda 2030 – human rights-based approach	Whether the VNR report refers to the use of a human rights-based approach.	Yes; Indicate if the report refers specifically to the human rights-based approach or has a strong human rights focus. Include a description of the human rights-based approach if explained, otherwise indicate that it is referred to but not defined.
		No
Principles of Agenda 2030 – universality	Whether the VNR report refers to universality.	Yes
		No
Principles of Agenda 2030 – leave no one behind	Whether the VNR report refers to leaving no one behind.	Yes, Indicate if there is a dedicated chapter or if cross-cutting (or both).
		No
Principles of Agenda 2030 – planetary boundaries	Whether the VNR refers to planetary boundaries.	Yes; List if the nine planetary boundaries are specifically listed or if not the specific boundaries, what other planetary impacts are mentioned such as water, biodiversity, climate change, land use, etc., for the nine planetary boundaries see <a href="http://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries/planetary-boundaries/about-the-research/the-nine-planetary-boundaries.html">http://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries/planetary-boundaries/about-the-research/the-nine-planetary-boundaries.html</a> .
		No
Principles of Agenda 2030 – inter-generational responsibility	Whether the VNR refers to inter-generational responsibility.	Yes, Indicate if this concept is integrated throughout the report or a one-off mention.
		No

Sub-component	Description	Options
<b>Leadership, governance and institutional mechanisms</b>		
Governance arrangement for delivering the SDGs	Refers to the use of existing or new governance mechanisms to oversee SDG implementation and ensuring coordination.	Existing council or committee.
		Creation of new council or committee.
		No council or committee with implementation through government institutions.
		Council or committee established with implementation through the lead department.
		Existing council or committee with implementation through the lead department.
		Creation of specialized office.
		Council or committee established with implementation through government institutions.
		Other
		Unclear from the VNR report.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.
Leadership on SDG implementation	Refers to the key government actor responsible for leading on SDG implementation.	Head of government or state.
		Individual cabinet minister.
		Multiple cabinet ministers.
		Parliamentary committee.
		Specific SDG implementation body or committee outside parliament.
		Lead department.
		Other.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.
Non-state actor official engagement in governance arrangements	Refers to if and how non-state actors are included in official SDG implementation governing structures.	Provide direct text from the VNR report or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.
Regional coordination on the SDGs	The extent to which the country is engaged in coordinating efforts at the regional level. Must refer to specific SDG related activities.	Participates.
		Does not participate.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.
Activities at the regional level	Description of how regional coordination on the SDGs is occurring.	Provide direct text from the VNR report or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.
		VNR makes no mention of regional activities.
Engagement in special country groupings on the SDGs	Description of the grouping to which the country belongs (for example, landlocked, a small island, least developed, etc.) and the activities it is pursuing, as noted in the VNR report. Must refer to specific SDG related activities.	Provide direct text from the VNR report or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.
		VNR report makes no mention of participation in country groupings.

Sub-component	Description	Options
Baseline or gap analysis		
Gap analysis or baseline study carried out	Evidence that the country conducted a gap analysis or baseline study to assess existing policies concerning the SDGs.	An assessment carried out for all SDGs.
		An assessment carried out for some SDGs.
		Assessment planned.
		No assessment carried out.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.
Content of the gap analysis/ baseline study	Description of the key elements examined through the gap analysis or baseline study conducted.	Provide direct text from the VNR report or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary. Note whether they looked at policies, data or polices and data.
		No assessment carried out.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.
Gaps identified	Areas identified in the VNR report where additional progress is needed as a result of the gap/baseline analysis. This information is sometimes found in the description of individual goals (i.e. areas where more efforts needed).	Provide direct text from the VNR report or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.
		No assessment carried out.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.
Integration and policy coherence		
Overall SDG coverage by the VNR report	This refers to the composition of SDGs examined in the VNR report.	All SDGs examined.
		SDGs covered by the HLPF theme examined.
		A limited set of country-selected SDGs examined.
		SDGs not examined.
Specific SDGs examined by the VNR	This refers to the specific SDGs examined in the VNR report.	All 17 SDGs.
		List the specific SDGs examined.
		No specific goal-by-goal analysis but rather analysis based on people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.
		No specific goal-by-goal analysis but rather analysis based on country priorities.
Detailed analysis	This refers to the level of detail in which the VNR report examines the SDGs.	Detailed examination of all or most of the goals, targets and indicators mentioned in the report.
		Summary of examination of goals, targets and indicators provided with limited details.
		No detailed examination or summary of the goals, targets and indicators mentioned in the report.



Sub-component	Description	Options
Economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development	The extent to which the VNR report addresses all three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – in the report.	Equal attention to economic, social and environmental dimensions.
		All dimensions addressed but a greater focus on economic.
		All dimensions addressed but a greater focus on social.
		All dimensions addressed but a greater focus on environmental.
		All dimensions addressed but limited focus on social.
		All dimensions addressed but limited focus on economic.
		All dimensions addressed but limited focus on environmental.
		Only social dimensions addressed.
		Only economic dimensions addressed.
		Only environmental dimensions addressed.
Integration in SDG implementation	The extent to which the analysis of specific SDGs in the VNR report reflects the integrated nature of the agenda.	Reference to applicable linkages between economic, social and environmental dimensions in analysis of specific goals, targets and indicators.
		Limited reference to linkages between economic, social and environmental dimensions in analysis of goals, targets and indicators.
		No mention of linkages between economic, social and environmental dimensions in analysis of goals, targets and indicators.
		No detailed analysis of specific goals, targets and indicators.
Reference to policy coherence for sustainable development	Whether the report refers to policy coherence for sustainable development.	Yes.
		No
Assessment of domestic and foreign policies on SDG outcomes	Whether the report includes a systematic assessment of how domestic and foreign policies impact the realization of the SDGs in-country and globally.	Assessment of domestic and foreign policies on the realization of SDGs globally.
		Assessment of domestic policies on the realization of SDGs globally.
		Assessment of foreign policies on the realization of SDG globally.
		No assessment of domestic or foreign policies on the realization of SDGs globally.
The overall approach to policy coherence to sustainable development	Reviewer summary of how PCSD is understood. If PCSD is not mentioned, but the report covers related issues, indicate what they are.	Provide direct text from the VNR report or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.

Sub-component	Description	Options
Linkages to climate change and the Paris Agreement	Whether the report links SDG implementation to climate change and delivering on the Paris Agreement.	Climate change and the Paris Agreement explicitly linked to the SDGs.
		Climate change referenced but no mention of the Paris Agreement.
		No mention of climate change or the Paris Agreement.
Tackling climate change	How the report links climate change and the Paris Agreement to the SDGs.	Provide direct text from the VNR report or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.
Linkages to the Convention on Biological Diversity	Whether the report links SDG implementation to the Convention on Biological Diversity.	Yes.
		No.
Linkages to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction	Whether the report links SDG implementation to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.	Yes.
		No.
Linkages to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda	Whether the report links SDG implementation to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.	Yes.
		No.
Linkages to Aid Effectiveness and Development Effectiveness Agendas	Whether the report links to the Rome, Paris or Accra agreements on aid effectiveness or the Busan, Mexico and Nairobi agreements on development effectiveness.	Yes; Include which agreements are referenced in notes.
		No.
Linkages to COVID-19 commitments*	Whether the report refers to participation in or commitments to specific COVID-19 initiative such as ACT Alliance.	Yes; Include which agreements are referenced in notes.
		No.
Leave no one behind		
Data to leave no one behind	Availability of data and baselines to ensure no one is left behind.	Additional data required to leave no one behind.
		Efforts to leave no one behind informed by existing baselines/available data.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.
Gender disaggregated data to leave no one behind	The extent to which the report includes gender-disaggregated data where relevant. Use the notes section to provide context for selection and indicate if efforts are being made to improve the availability of gender disaggregated data.	Gender disaggregated data is not available or rarely available
		Gender disaggregated data is available most of the time
		Gender disaggregated data is consistently available throughout the VNR report
		The status of available gender-disaggregated data is unclear from the report
		Not articulated in the VNR report.

Sub-component	Description	Options
Targets of efforts to leave no one behind	Groups within society mentioned by the VNR report that will be targeted in efforts to leave no one behind.	<div>Provide list of groups mentioned by the VNR report (e.g. Indigenous Peoples, women, people with disabilities, etc.).</div> <div>Not articulated in the VNR report.</div>
Approaches to targeting those left behind	Type of programmes/approaches adopted to leave no one behind. List all that apply.	<div>Existing specialized programmes for specific groups.</div> <div>New specialized programmes for specific groups.</div> <div>Universal programmes such as social assistance.</div> <div>Not articulated in the VNR report.</div>
Efforts to leave no one behind	Indicate whether the country has adopted an overarching approach to translate the commitment into guidance for policy, targets, goals, etc.	<div>Two options for all sub-components:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide direct text from the VNR report or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.</li> <li>• Not articulated in VNR report.</li> </ul>
Efforts to reduce the impacts of COVID-19 on those at risk of being left behind*	Any special efforts noted in the report in relation to COVID-19.	
Efforts to leave no children behind	Efforts specifically targeted to this group as outlined in the VNR report.	
Efforts to leave no Indigenous Peoples behind	Efforts specifically targeted to this group as outlined in the VNR report.	
Efforts to leave no persons with disabilities behind	Efforts specifically targeted to this group as outlined in the VNR report.	
Efforts to leave no migrants/ refugees behind	Efforts specifically targeted to this group as outlined in the VNR report.	
Efforts to leave no people in poverty behind	Efforts specifically targeted to this group as outlined in the VNR report.	
Efforts to leave no ethnic group behind	Efforts specifically targeted to this group as outlined in the VNR report.	
Efforts to leave no one behind - other groups	Efforts specifically geared towards any other group not captured by the categories above, as outlined in the VNR report.	
Realizing gender equality	Efforts specifically geared towards realizing gender equality as outlined in the VNR report.	
Reducing domestic inequalities	Efforts specifically geared towards reducing domestic inequalities as outlined in the VNR report.	
Results of efforts to leave no one behind	The results of efforts to leave no one behind as outlined in the report.	

Sub-component	Description	Options
Raising awareness and creating ownership of SDGs		
Awareness-raising efforts carried out by the government	Whether the government took efforts, including working in partnership with others, to raise awareness about the SDGs at the country level.	Yes; Include what efforts were taken in the notes section.
		No.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.
Nationalization of the SDG agenda at country	Does the VNR report indicate that the country has identified national priorities within the context of the SDGs?	National priorities selected.
		No national priorities selected.
Preparation of national targets and indicators	Has the country defined its own national targets and indicators?	Yes; Indicate whether the report states that the national targets and indicators are aligned to the global targets and indicators and/or if the country has developed proxy indicators for the global indicators.
		No.
		National targets only; Indicate whether the report states that the national targets are aligned to the global targets.
		National indicators only; Indicate whether the report states that the national indicators are aligned to the global indicators and/or if the country has developed proxy indicators for the global indicators.
		Unclear from the VNR report.
National priorities under the SDGs	List the national priorities identified under the SDGs.	Provide direct text from the VNR report if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.
Localization of the SDG agenda at country level	The extent to which the VNR report outlines how the SDGs are being implemented at the local level.	Provide direct text from the VNR report or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.
Stakeholder engagement		
Process for stakeholder engagement	Whether a process for engagement has been set up and what it entails. This is beyond engagement in official governing mechanisms - e.g. youth councils, annual forum, online portal for partners, annual consultations, etc.	Provide direct text from the VNR or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.
		Not articulated in VNR report.
Consultation on SDG priorities	Articulation of how non-state actors were involved in the defining of national priorities under the SDGs.	Non-state actors engaged in identification of national priorities.
		Non-state actors were not engaged in the identification of national priorities.
		The VNR report does not set out national priorities.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.

Sub-component	Description	Options
Engagement in the development of VNR reports	Whether non-state actors were engaged in the development of the VNR report.	Yes; Indicate how (part of drafting team, provided a chapter, provided an annex, etc.).
		No.
		Unclear from the VNR report.
Civil society report	Does a civil society parallel report (report prepared for the HLPF or report prepared on the country's progress on the SDGs not linked to the HLPF) exist?	Yes; Indicate report author and provide a link.
		No.
COVID-19 impact on stakeholder engagement*	Does the VNR report indicate how COVID-19 has impacted stakeholder engagement in 2030 Agenda implementation broadly?	Provide direct text from the VNR report or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.
		Not articulated in VNR report.
Implementing the 2030 Agenda		
Best practices as identified by the country	The Secretary-General guidelines for the VNR report invite countries to outline 2-3 best practices.	Two options for all sub-components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide direct text from the VNR report or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.</li><li>• Not articulated in VNR report.</li></ul>
Lessons learned in accelerating implementation	The Secretary-General guidelines for the VNR report invite countries to outline 2-3 lessons learned in accelerating the implementation of the SDGs.	
Challenges in implementing Agenda 2030	The Secretary-General guidelines for the VNR report invite countries to outline 2-3 challenges they face in implementing the SDGs. Include special note of information related to COVID-19 beyond regular challenges.	
Learning from peers	Areas in which the country would like to learn from others, as identified in the VNR report.	
Technology	Whether the report refers to technology in the discussion of the means of implementation and/or goal analysis. Include a description of the country's efforts and gaps as well as support by development partners (or support given if examining a high-income country).	
Capacity development	Whether the report refers to capacity development in the discussion of the means of implementation and/or goal analysis. Include a description of the country's own efforts and gaps as well as support by development partners (or support given if examining a high-income country).	
Systemic issues	Whether the report refers to systemic issues. Include issues related to global macro-economic stability (e.g. impact of global crises on country), respect for policy space, and other systemic issues mentioned by the country (e.g. global peace and security concerns are sometimes listed as impacting overall sustainable development progress).	



Sub-component	Description	Options
Budgeting for Agenda 2030 at country level	Whether the VNR report indicates that the SDGs have been incorporated into the national budget.	Yes; Provide direct text from the VNR report.
		No.
		Not articulated in the VNR.
Budgeting for Agenda 2030 at country level	Whether the VNR report indicates that the SDGs have been incorporated into the national budget.	Yes; Provide direct text from the VNR report.
		No.
		Not articulated in the VNR.
Reference to financing Agenda 2030 at country level	Whether the report references, financing needs to realize the 2030 Agenda at the country level and how efforts will be funded. Include in notes section description of efforts (domestic resource mobilization, etc.)	Country-level implementation has been costed and the country has identified sources of finance.
		Country-level implementation has been costed but sources of finance are not identified.
		Costing for country-level implementation not mentioned but sources of finance identified.
		Costing for country-level implementation is planned and no sources of finance have been identified.
		Costing for country-level implementation is planned and sources of finance have been identified.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.
International public finance	Whether the report refers to international public finance (official development assistance, South-South and Triangular Cooperation) in the discussion of the means of implementation and/or goal analysis. Include a description of the country's own efforts as well as support by development partners (or support given if examining a high-income country). For SSC providers, this should include support they receive as well as the support they provide (or their views on these issues).	<p>Two options for all sub-components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide direct text from the VNR report or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.</li> <li>Not articulated in VNR report.</li> </ul>
Trade	Whether the report refers to trade in the discussion of the means of implementation and/or goal analysis. Include a description of the country's own efforts as well as support by development partners (or support given if examining a high-income country).	
COVID-19 response*	Whether the report refers to the overall approach to COVID-19 and recovery under the means of implementation and/or goal analysis. Include a description of the country's own efforts, expectations for international community, private sector, etc. and anything you deem relevant in terms of the narrative presented in the approach.	Provide direct text from the VNR report or if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.

Sub-component	Description	Options
<b>Partnership to realize the SDGs</b>		
Local non-state actor participation in the implementation.	Whether non-state actors are engaged in the implementation of the SDGs.	Yes; Indicate generic information on how broadly.
		No.
Parliamentarians	Articulation of <i>how and which</i> parliamentarians are involved in the implementation of the SDGs beyond participation in consultations, governance or institutional mechanisms. The report must articulate specific activities or actions.	<p>Two options for all sub-components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide direct text from the VNR report or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.</li> <li>• Not specifically mentioned regarding multi-stakeholder implementation efforts in the VNR report.</li> </ul>
Civil society	Articulation of <i>how and which</i> national civil society actors are involved in the implementation of the SDGs beyond participation in consultations, governance or institutional mechanisms. The report must articulate specific activities or actions.	
Private sector	Articulation of <i>how and which</i> national private sector actors are involved in the implementation of the SDGs beyond participation in consultations, governance or institutional mechanisms. The report must articulate specific activities or actions.	
Academia/experts	Articulation of <i>how and which</i> national academia or experts are involved in the implementation of the SDGs beyond participation in consultations, governance or institutional mechanisms. The report must articulate specific activities or actions.	
Multi-stakeholder implementation of the SDGs – children and youth*	Articulation of <i>how and which</i> children and youth are involved in the implementation of the SDGs beyond participation in consultations, governance or institutional mechanisms. The report must articulate specific activities or actions.	
Multi-stakeholder implementation of the SDGs – other	Articulation of how and which other national actors not belonging to the stakeholder groups of civil society, the private sector, parliament or academia/experts, are involved in the implementation of the SDGs beyond participation in consultations, governance or institutional mechanisms. The report must articulate specific activities or actions. E.g. volunteers, Indigenous Peoples, other actors.	<p>Provide direct text from the VNR report or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.</p> <p>Not articulated in the VNR report.</p> <p>If not applicable (high-income country), state Not applicable.</p>
Priority areas for development partner support	Key areas in which the government requires additional support to realize the SDGs. This should be the 'what' or 'priority goals' for help, whereas the role of development partners below looks at how – technical assistance, capacity development, etc.	

Sub-component	Description	Options
The role of development partners	Type of support required from development partners, as indicated in the VNR report. This refers to the 'how' of the support provided- i.e. what is being asked for (technical assistance, capacity development, etc.), whereas priority areas above are about the policy goals/areas for support.	Provide direct text from the VNR report or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.
		If not applicable (high-income country), state Not applicable.
Support provided to the government to carry out the VNR	Meant to provide some indication of country capacity to participate in the VNR process.	Provide direct text from the VNR report if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.
		If not applicable (high-income country), state Not applicable.
Measurement and reporting		
Data availability	Description of the percentage of SDG indicators for which data is available (existing indicators and proxy indicators combined), based on what is reported in the report.	0%
		1-10%
		11-20%
		21-30%
		31-40%
		41-50%
		51-60%
		61-70%
		71-80%
		81-90%
		91-100%
		Unclear from the VNR report.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.
Availability of disaggregated data	Description of the availability of disaggregated data.	Provide direct text from the VNR report or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.
Efforts to improve data availability	Description of how the government plans to improve the availability of good quality data for SDG monitoring.	Provide direct text from the VNR report or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.
Inclusion of unofficial data*	Did the report make use of citizen-generated data, big data, private sector data, or any other source of unofficial data.	Yes; Indicate which kind in notes.
		No.
National reporting on the SDGs	How the government plans to report on the SDGs. Includes national reporting systems, parliamentary engagement, how non-state actors are expected to be engaged, etc.	Provide direct text from the VNR report or, if longer than 200 words, provide a summary.
		Not articulated in the VNR report.

Sub-component	Description	Options
Presentation of progress since the last VNR report	Whether the country presented progress since a previous VNR report in some way.	Yes.
		No.
		Not applicable.
Approach to repeat VNR reporting	Description of how the country reported on progress (for example, use of traffic light system, through their statistical annex, description of progress made since last VNR, verification of completion of 'next steps' as identified in first VNR, etc.)	Provide direct text from the VNR as needed and include a summary description of the approach taken.
		Not applicable.
COVID-19 reporting *	How did the report include reporting on COVID-19?	Integrated throughout the VNR report.
		Standalone chapter.
		Addendum or included in HoSG statement.
		No significant reference to COVID-19 beyond casual mention.
Secretary General's voluntary common reporting guidelines		
Opening statement	An opening statement by the Head of State or Government, a Minister or other high-ranking Government official. It can highlight the current status of SDG progress and how the Government is responding to the transformative nature of the 2030 Agenda.	<p>Three options for all components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The report addresses this component, as instructed in the guidelines.</li><li>• The report addresses this component to some extent in this or another section of the report but does not fulfil the brief as laid out in the guidelines.</li><li>• The report does not address this component.</li></ul>
Highlights (previously Executive Summary)	One to two pages highlighting: review process, the status of SDG progress, how government is responding to the integrated nature of the SDGs and leave no one behind, examples of good practice, lessons learned, key challenges to learn from others, and where support needed.	
Introduction	The context and objectives of the review, relevant country context to the 2030 Agenda, national review cycle, and if existing national reports were used. Could outline policy architecture for 3 dimensions and policy tools for integration, as well as links to other policy frameworks.	
Methodology for review	This section may discuss the process of preparation for the national review and how the principles on follow-up and review from the 2030 Agenda were used. Should outline who was engaged and how.	
Creating ownership	Policy and Enabling Environment, Creating ownership of the SDGs. Refers to efforts made towards all stakeholders to inform them of and involve them in the SDGs.	
Incorporation in national frameworks	Policy and Enabling Environment, Incorporation of the SDGs in the national framework. Refers to critical initiatives that the country has undertaken to adapt the SDGs and targets to its national circumstances, and to advance their implementation. Encouraged to refer to legislation, policies, etc. and main challenges in implementing. It can also refer to local governments.	

Sub-component	Description	Options
Integration of three dimensions	Policy and Enabling Environment, Integration of the three dimensions. This refers to how the three dimensions of sustainable development are being integrated and how sustainable development policies are being designed and implemented to reflect such integration.	<p>Three options for all components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report addresses this component, as instructed in the guidelines.</li> <li>• The report addresses this component to some extent in this or another section of the report but does not fulfil the brief as laid out in the guidelines.</li> <li>• The report does not address this component.</li> </ul>
Leaving no one behind	Policy and Enabling Environment, Leaving no one behind. Provides assessment of how the principle of leave no one behind is mainstreamed in implementation, including identification of vulnerable groups, data issues, and policies and programmes. Special attention is paid to the efforts of women and girls.	
Institutional mechanisms	Policy and Enabling Environment, Institutional mechanisms. Refers to how the country has adapted its institutional framework to implement the 2030 Agenda. It can include information on institutions and non-state actors, coordination, review plans.	
Structural issues	Policy and Enabling Environment, Structural issues. Refers to relevant structural issues or barriers, including possible external consequences of domestic policies. It can highlight transformative approaches to address barriers.	
Goals and targets	Provides brief information on progress and the status of all SDGs, including critical issues and how they are being addressed and data provided in the statistical annex. Indicate whether a baseline has been defined. Encouraged to review all but some could be done in greater depth. Goal review could include gaps, challenges, successes, lessons learned, actions to be taken and can look at agreed global indicators and targets but also their national and regional ones. For those doing a second review, it is desirable to show progress since the first review.	
Means of implementation	Description of how means of implementation are mobilized, what difficulties this process faces, and what additional resources are needed based on the review of challenges and trends. It can indicate how financial systems and resource allocation are aligned with realizing the 2030 agenda and cover their technology and capacity development needs, including for data. Contributions of multi-stakeholder partnerships.	
Conclusion and next steps	Outline what steps are planned to enhance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It can also outline review plans for national and sub-national levels, including dissemination. It can highlight lessons learned from the review process, plans to apply them, and support needed for future reviews.	
Annexes	An annex with data, using the global SDG indicators as a starting point and adding priority national/regional indicators and identifying gaps. It can also use additional annexes to showcase best practice and comments from stakeholders on the report.	

## **ANNEX 3. COUNTRY PROFILES**

The review provides an aggregate analysis of the key findings for the 47 VNR reporting countries in 2020. The information presented in this annex summarizes key information from the VNR reports into two-to-three pages, following the pillars of analysis of the review. The country profiles necessarily provide only a summary of where countries stand vis-à-vis the pillars. The information presented is selective and used to illustrate, as much as possible, the overall state of 2030 Agenda implementation as outlined in the VNR reports, as well as best practice case studies. Where available, country profiles include civil society validity check statements, which have been used selectively to indicate instances where information diverges between government and civil society reports.





# ARGENTINA

*In 2020, Argentina submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The first was introduced in 2017.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

The National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies under the president's office, created in 2002 to lead the national Millennium Development Goal implementation, was appointed the leading institution for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation and localization at the national level. The VNR report does not describe how stakeholders are involved in the 2030 Agenda implementation governance mechanism though it notes the council receives inputs from non-state actors and joins local governments' implementation efforts, providing technical support and capacity building to local governments.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The VNR does not include information on stakeholder engagement beyond consultations organized by national ministries. Representatives of the private sector, civil society, academia, local governments and the United Nations system in the country were part of the consultative process. The report notes that non-state actors were engaged in the VNR. They contributed inputs to the process and sent texts that were included in the VNR report as boxes.

'significant information gaps' have arisen from the survey of available data.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

Argentina has no national development plan. The SDGs are aligned with the government priorities: end hunger and reducing inequalities. After the country's first VNR presentation, Argentina linked the SDGs and their indicators to government priorities and the public budgetary expenditure. The leave no one behind (LNOB) principle is incorporated as a cross-cutting reference across the text with a strong focus on human rights. While the VNR report does not mention planetary boundaries, it does consider a number of boundaries such as climate change, stratospheric ozone depletion, biodiversity loss, freshwater consumption and the global hydrological cycle, among others.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The 2020 VNR report shows a change in national priorities compared to the previous report. In 2017, the main emphasis was on fighting poverty. The second VNR report identifies ending hunger and reducing inequalities as government priorities. It also underlines that the COVID-19 pandemic has imposed new and urgent priorities linked to providing essential services to people in situations of social and economic vulnerability. According to the VNR report, national SDG targets and indicators have been set. National indicators are mainly 'proxy' in nature, aimed to complement the global ones or adapt them to the national context.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

A survey on the availability of SDGs indicators was carried out. Although significant information gaps have been found, no progress has yet been made in measuring the existing gaps. The report neither explains how gaps were identified nor includes information on how they affect the national capacities to monitoring SDGs progress. The VNR report mentions that

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The VNR report examines all 17 SDGs and addresses the three dimensions of sustainable development, emphasizing social elements. Linkages between social, economic and environmental dimensions are weak in the analysis of each goal and there is no reference to policy coherence. The VNR report explicitly references the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Convention

on Biological Diversity and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction as part of SDG implementation. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda is not mentioned nor does the VNR report refer to international commitments related to battling the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the VNR report included information on the impacts and challenges that result from the COVID-19 pandemic throughout.



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

LNOB is consistently considered across the report though the groups at risk of being left behind are not explicitly identified. Nevertheless, the VNR report mentions older people, unemployed, women and girls, women heads of households with children, persons with disabilities, LGBT people, migrants and indigenous peoples as vulnerable groups. The VNR report explicitly notes that the COVID-19 pandemic response requires immediate action, starting from the most vulnerable. Universal and focalized policies have been launched to support vulnerable groups, including conditional cash transfers.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

There are many references in the report to awareness-raising activities, including a series of audiovisual and didactic resources to bring the SDGs to schools and training workshops for local governments, universities and local non-governmental organizations. The National Council for Social Policies Coordination invited Argentinean's provinces to report progress in local SDGs implementation. In 2018, at the provincial governments' initiative, a Federal SDG Network was established to promote local authorities' peer learning. A manual for localizing the SDGs targeting municipalities was also published.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

Civil society organizations, the private sector, academia, local actors and the legislative and judiciary powers have

developed activities to implement the SDGs nationally. For example, the Global Compact Argentinean chapter carried out a work to identify contributions to the SDGs by companies. As a result, a catalog of the private sector good practices was published. The Library of National Congress incorporated the SDGs into its Quality Management System in 2019. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are considered as critical to reaching the SDGs. The approach to partnerships focuses on national stakeholders and does not refer to priority areas for external development partners' support.

### ***Means of implementation***

The report refers only to capacity development and public finance (nation and international) as a means of implementation. Some reference to technology can be found in the analysis of SDG 9 on industry, innovation, and infrastructure. Elements linked to systemic issues, such as external debt levels and world economic deterioration, are considered about the COVID-19 pandemic. Many specific measures taken to confront the spread of the virus are listed, such as increasing in the items for school and community eateries, granting of an extraordinary bonus for social plans beneficiaries, reinforcing unemployment insurance, setting maximum prices for basic food, paying an exceptional Emergency Family Income, providing soft loans to small and medium-sized enterprises, freezing rental fees, suspending evictions and financially supporting the national production of supplies, equipment and sanitary technology.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

Argentina has adopted 34 of 43 international targets. While disaggregated data is consistently found in the analysis of each SDG, the VNR report highlights efforts to increase its availability. To that end, the National Institute for Statistics and Censuses, with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank and the Financial Fund for the Development of the La Plata Basin Countries, adopted a 2017-2020 Work Program aimed at strengthening national statistical capacities. The VNR report does not mention any further reporting steps to be taken.



# ARMENIA

*In 2020, Armenia submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). Its first presentation was in 2018.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

The 2018 VNR report refers to the establishment of a National Council of Sustainable Development in 2002. It is led by the Prime Minister and includes representatives from both government and civil society. According to the 2020 VNR, another council was created in 2015 under the name of Council on the Sustainable Development Goals. This was established to ensure broad public participation in decision-making processes related to the national development programs and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and operates under the leadership of the Prime Minister. According to the 2018 VNR report, an SDG Innovation Lab had been established with support from the United Nations to accelerate SDGs implementation by testing innovations, including in partnership with the private sector. The 2020 VNR report also mentions such initiative and suggests an enhancement in the participation of non-state actors. In 2020, following the Prime Minister's approval of the new composition and rules of procedure of the new Council on the SDGs, several stakeholders, such as non-governmental and international organizations, representatives of trade unions and business associations, and scientific and educational institutions, can participate in the Council's activities.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

While the 2018 VNR report did not cover overarching processes for stakeholder engagement, the 2020 VNR report mentions that non-state actors were involved in the definition of the Mega Goals, under Armenia's Transformation Strategy 2020-2050. According to this second VNR report, Armenia's strategy towards transformation is unprecedented in terms of inclusivity, and has received approval from stakeholders that

included businesses and civil society. Apart from being engaged in the definition of national priorities, non-state actors were also engaged in the development of the VNR report itself. Due to the safety measures imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders were able to send proposals and success cases online to be included in the VNR report.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

According to the 2020 VNR report, Armenia did not conduct an overarching baseline study for the 5Ps (*People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, Partnerships*), but some gap analysis was done for specific SDGs. The 2018 VNR report had examined data availability, including disaggregated data, and had found that indicators were either missing, had an insufficient level of detail, or were not sufficiently aligned with relevant SDGs indicators. However, the 2020 VNR report does not inform about the level of data availability, including disaggregated data.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

Armenia was in the process of designing an overarching development strategy that would draw on the SDG framework, according to the 2018 VNR report. In turn, the 2020 VNR report shows that the SDGs have been incorporated into national development plans and related policies and frameworks. The VNR report also adds that a roadmap is currently in implementation stage, and that it comprises processes for reforms in areas relevant to the 2030 Agenda through a framework of SDG-aligned targets and indicators. In terms of the 2030 Agenda's principles, the VNR report refers only to the principle of universality, but it does not mention the principles of human rights-based approach, leaving

no one behind, inter-generational responsibilities or planetary boundaries.

### ***Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda***

Different from the 2018 VNR report, national SDG priorities have been selected for the 2020 VNR. This second report puts a focus on the People component of the 5Ps and on SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions). Such priorities include the development of policy and mechanisms for transfer of intellectual potential, knowledge and skills of Armenian diaspora – understood as important elements for the country's economic and social modernization –, reforms related to anti-corruption, judicial and legal issues, human rights protection strategies, among others.

### ***Integration and policy coherence***

The VNR report covers all 17 SDGs and mentions both targets and indicators. As in the 2018 VNR report, the 2020 one provides a detailed examination of the goals with equal attention to economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and provides linkages between the three dimensions as relevant. The VNR report does not refer to policy coherence for sustainable development nor to several international agreements, such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, for example. However, the VNR report does refer to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.



## **GOOD PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT**

Armenia's VNR report covers SDG 14 (Life below water), which is not a customary practice for landlocked countries. Although this SDG is not subject to nationalization, the VNR report highlights that Armenia pays special attention to the management of fish resources, the preservation of fish species, the combat against illegal fishing, and that the country had allocated budget to care for the resources of a lake and its basin.



## **IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA**

### ***Leave no one behind***

The 2020 VNR report does not include a chapter on leaving no one behind, although the goal-by-goal analysis suggests that children, women, people with disabilities, people in poverty, migrants and refugees are at the greatest risk of being left behind. The VNR report refers to universal programs such as social assistance and to new specialized programs aiming at specific groups. With regards to the impacts of COVID-19, Armenia launched a number of actions to provide assistance to people who lost their jobs, and to support workers and special groups, in particular those considered to be the most vulnerable ones.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The 2020 VNR report does not refer to awareness-raising efforts carried out by the government towards the creation of ownership of the SDGs. With regards to localization efforts, the VNR report is unclear on the role of local governments, as it was the case in the 2018 VNR report.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

While the 2018 VNR report did not provide details on specific actions being undertaken by public and private actors, the 2020 VNR report mentions multi-stakeholder implementation of the SDGs. Civil society, businesses, academics, children and youth are referred to as carrying out specific programs and actions to realize the SDGs. For example, one state university has established an education and science center dedicated to sustainable development, and adolescent girls and boys and communities have been taking action on climate change through initiatives in line with the SDGs.

### ***Means of implementation***

According to the VNR report, the key challenges facing the country for SDGs implementation include judicial reforms, anti-discrimination legislative mechanisms, processes aimed at climate change mitigation, and the socio-economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, practices of SDGs implementation are mentioned, particularly in terms of technology, capacity development, and trade. In terms of budget, the VNR report refers to an increase in social spending and allocations for human capital

development, but does not mention costing for country level implementation of the SDGs. With regards to international public finance, the VNR report states that the foreign direct investment (FDI) rate is important for the country to overcome poverty, create jobs, and ensure sustainable economic growth.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The VNR report indicates that data collection is one of the most difficult aspects of conducting the VNR process. In order to improve data availability, data from different sources – such as data from the business community, civil society and other non-government stakeholders – have been collected and analyzed. In

spite of the awareness of lack of data, the VNR report does not specify actions being carried out to improve data availability. In terms of national reporting on the SDGs, Armenia's Statistical Committee launched a tool called National Reporting Platform (NRP) for SDGs indicators, which aims to disseminate and communicate national statistics and related information to the global SDGs indicators and progress. Although this action is carried out by the government, there is no specific mention to parliament or to non-state actors. In relation to the 2018 VNR report, the 2020 one compares current data and data from previous years, including targets and indicators, and highlights progress being made.



*In 2020, Austria submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

The Austrian Council of Ministers established an Inter-Ministerial Task Force, under the joint chairmanship of the Federal Chancellery and the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, as the leader body in SDGs implementation and follow-up. Non-state actors' engagement takes place on a ministry by ministry basis, opening to each ministry the decision to work with stakeholders. The VNR shows that the dialogue between state and non-state actors such as civil society, the private sector, academia, local governments, and the parliament is permanent.

Austria's participation in the European Union activities to support the 2030 Agenda implementation is repeatedly highlighted across the VNR.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

An Inter-Ministerial Working Group on the 2030 Agenda focuses on general coordination and dialogue between the government and relevant stakeholders. Regarding the VNR building process, Austria opted for a broad multi-stakeholder approach: over 40 organizations were involved from the beginning in all phases of the review compilation, contributing to set the process design, timelines, and review structure. The VNR draft underwent four consultation rounds, in which 320 responses were collected, playing "a key role in strengthening dialogue, networking and cooperation between state and non-state actors for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda." (p. 13).

indicates that the last year in which data is available in this VNR constitutes a measurement baseline. Two main gaps are underlined, namely the gender pay gap and the income gap between the national population by quartiles. References to existing data gaps are part of the report, even when they are not explicitly stated.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

The government reported that the SDGs are currently anchored in nationwide strategy documents, such as the Climate and Energy Strategy #mission2030, the Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2019-2021, the Austrian Federal Guidelines for Building Culture. The Austrian Youth Strategy incorporates the SDGs via the European Youth Goals.

The VNR report refers to the principle of leaving no one behind. While it includes a strong focus on human rights, it does not refer to a human rights-based approach. Universality, Inter-generational responsibility, and planetary boundaries are not mentioned, though the report pays attention to environmental challenges, particularly climate change.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The country has established three national priorities for the SDGs: Promote digitalization; women, youth, and 'leaving no one behind,' and climate action and adaptation to climate change. National targets were set, such as reaching a tertiary rate for at least 38% of 30- to 34-year-old. Since 2017, Statistics Austria has produced national indicator tables every year, closely aligned with the UN framework for monitoring the SDGs, complemented by national and regional indicators. The Austrian Federal States also refer to the SDGs in their strategy documents like the 'Climate and Energy Strategy Salzburg 2050' and the 'Smart City Wien Framework Strategy 2019-2050.'



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

Even when the report does not articulate a gap analysis or baseline study while analyzing targets, it explicitly

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The report examines all 17 SDGs, providing summary



information on its targets and indicators, and addressing the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner, even if linkages between them in the analysis of each goal is weak.

Policy coherence is addressed regarding internal policies, stakeholder engagement, and international cooperation provided by the country. However, the report is limited in terms of linking the SDGs to other connected international frameworks and agreements, referring only to the Paris Agreement. Similarly, links between the SDGs and the post-pandemic recovery are not explicitly considered.

## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

LNOB is a VNR cross-cutting issue, integrated into education, women empowerment, health, and access to technology policies and frameworks, among others. The Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care, and Consumer Protection has created a 'Leaving no one behind' dialogue forum.

Persons with disabilities, older persons, young people and children, single-parent families, the long-term unemployed, and people from migrant backgrounds are identified as vulnerable groups requiring focused support. Efforts to leave no women, children, persons with disabilities, refugees, people in poverty, and youth behind, channeled through existing and new specialized programs for those groups and universal social assistance are informed.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The report identifies awareness-raising actions at different territorial levels: The Inter-Ministerial Task Force website ([www.sdg.gv.at](http://www.sdg.gv.at)) is considered the central platform for the Federal Government's information activities related to the 2030 Agenda. The Lower Austrian project '17&wir' (17&we) increases awareness of the SDGs in that Federal State and awarded with the Austrian SDG prize by the independent business organization Senat der Wirtschaft. For Upper Austrian municipalities, 'GemeindeNavi Agenda 2030' raises awareness about the 2030 Agenda in cities and regions. Awareness-raising is also anchored in the education curriculum. Several SDG-related events are described, including creating the Austrian Sustainability Reporting

Award (ASRA), given annually to honor Austrian companies' top sustainability reports.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR shows broad participation of non-state actors, such as civil society organizations, the private sector, academia, local actors, and the legislative and judiciary powers at all levels.

The Austrian Parliament is committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda nationally and internationally, promoting a Parliamentary North-South Dialogue. Civil Society is deeply involved in SDGs implementation, and the platform 'SDG Watch Austria' is one of the largest in Europe. The private sector participates mainly through corporate social responsibility actions. The national chapter of the Global Compact was established an award to companies that display special dedication in their commitment to the SDGs. Moreover, as a leading platform for responsible business practices, the Austrian Business Council for Sustainable Development shares SDGs' knowledge with its member companies. UniNEtZ, an inter-university cooperation project in which 16 Austrian universities participate, strengthens cooperation among universities and establishes sustainability topics in research, teaching, student initiatives, management, and public administration. This project is based on an SDG mapping study done in 2017-2018 identifying university publications, courses, research papers, and projects relevant to the SDGs.

Finally, a musical entitled 'Solve It!' was created by 20 youth ambassadors. The musical acquainted about 5,000 young people with all the SDGs creatively, making an essential contribution to raising youth awareness of sustainability.

### ***Means of implementation***

The report refers to technology, focusing on digitalization development, capacity development, systemic issues, trade, and national and international 2030 Agenda financing. The VNR report highlights that the SDGs are already used for some of the budget decisions at the federal and state levels, and existing measures such as gender budgeting offer important SDG budgeting links. However, the report does not refer to national SDGs implementation costing. The report underlines the Federal State of Lower Austria initiative in subjecting its subsidies to a sustainability check to develop further

state subsidies aligned with the SDGs. The national COVID-19 response measures are not linked to the SDGs' implementation.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

Austria developed a set of around 200 national indicators for the 2030 Agenda, to be further optimized with particular attention to areas requiring improvement. National data is available for 83 % of the specified UN indicators. The report does not incorporate unofficial

data. Instead, the almost unique data source is the Annual National Indicator Report of Statistics Austria.

Regarding national reporting, the VNR informs that the Federal Government will regularly inform parliament about the progress being made in implementing the SDGs. Improvement in SDGs implementation will continue to be assessed periodically at the national and EU levels based on indicators.



# BANGLADESH

*In 2020, Bangladesh submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). Its first presentation was in 2017.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

Both the 2017 VNR report and the 2020 one refer to the establishment of an Inter-ministerial SDGs Implementation and Monitoring Committee under the leadership of a Principal Coordinator (SDG Affairs), a high-level position created at the Prime Minister's Office. While Bangladesh's first VNR report made no mention of formal inclusion of non-state actors in the committee, the country's second report mentions that an SDGs Working Team has been formed under the leadership of the Director-General, Governance Innovation Unit of the Prime Minister's Office. Such working team counts with members from the government, academia, civil society organizations (CSOs) and private sector representatives. The team provides recommendations to the SDGs Implementation and Review Committee.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

Apart from the engagement of several stakeholders in governance mechanisms and institutions, the 2020 VNR report does not refer to overarching processes of engagement. However, it does refer to a 'whole of society' approach for implementation and attainment of the SDGs, although it does not detail how such approach is carried out in practical terms. On the other hand, consultations on the SDGs implementation have been held with representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), businesses, development partners, ethnic minorities, women's networks, among others. The VNR report is not clear as to if national stakeholders have been involved in defining national priorities on the SDGs. For the VNR process, the VNR report notes that meetings and workshops were carried out with different stakeholders, who submitted goal-wise progress reports. Moreover,

the members of the 'SDGs Working Team', represented by government officials and non-government think tanks and academia, prepared Bangladesh's initial draft of the national VNR report.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The VNR report indicates that an assessment was carried out for all SDGs. This SDGs data gap analysis revealed that 155 indicators data are currently available. In addition, in the goal-by-goal analysis, each one of the SDGs analysis is followed by a section on challenges and one on the way forward. Such sections also bring information on specific gaps.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

As stated in the 2017 VNR report, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) priorities are reflected in the country's medium-term development plan, the Seventh Five Year Plan (2016-2020). Adding to this information, the 2020 VNR report includes that Bangladesh's ministries and divisions – in collaboration with United Nations agencies working in the country – have prepared and SDGs Action Plan, which highlights new projects to be implemented to achieve SDGs targets. In addition, the government has adopted Vision 2041, a continuation of Vision 2021, which seeks to take Bangladesh into the path of development. Such actions show that the country has both incorporated the SDGs into national development plans and related policies and frameworks and has made use of a national SDG implementation strategy. On the other hand, only two of the 2030 Agenda's principles – leave no one behind and inter-generational responsibility – have been included in the VNR report.

### ***Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda***

National priorities have been selected, and national targets and indicators have been prepared in accordance with the 17 SDGs. The priorities and indicators have been defined as “39+1”, in which one additional priority indicator (the “+1”) refers to achieving the leaving no one behind principle in accordance with local/district-specific circumstances.

### ***Integration and policy coherence***

The VNR report examines all 17 SDGs, with equal attention to economic, social and environmental dimensions, and making references to applicable linkages between dimensions in the goal-by-goal analysis. Different from the 2017 VNR report, the 2020 one refers to policy coherence, which is included in a sub-chapter. It states that the government has created committees to ensure internal coordination in different levels and to create synergies in policy making across economic, social and environmental aspects. Although the VNR report makes reference to climate change, there is no mention of the Paris Agreement. On the other hand, there are linkages to the Convention on Biological Diversity and to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.



## **GOOD PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT**

Bangladesh has identified an extensive array of persons as at risk of being left behind. Marginalized groups and vulnerable populations include transgender persons, persons with specific professions (e.g. tea gardeners, cleaners, domestic aides), Bede (gypsies), beggars and street children, people living in specific areas (e.g. char areas, people living in hilly regions), special needs children, neonate, adolescent girls and boys, HIV/AIDS affected people, people suffering from infectious diseases, people suffering from mental disorders, drug-addicted youths, people injured by road traffic accidents, persons with disabilities, children who have been dropped out from schools, youth not in education, employment or training, female students prone to violence, ethnic communities, and any other marginalized persons and communities.

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## **IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA**

### ***Leave no one behind***

Different from Bangladesh's first VNR report, in the 2020 one efforts to leave no one behind (LNOB) have been informed by existing baselines and available data. The VNR report recognizes the importance of the voice of vulnerable groups to be heard and of their specific needs to be addressed in targeted policies and programs. Indeed, efforts to LNOB regard universal programs such as social assistance, new and existing specialized programs for specific groups. Among Bangladesh's progresses to LNOB, the VNR report includes the decrease of the population living below the national poverty line, the improvement in access to education for boys and girls, and a dominant leadership of women in both parliament and government.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

According to the VNR report, the government has been engaging the media into SDGs implementation in Bangladesh, which has been translated into awareness creation campaigns through electronic and print media. Moreover, a policy decision has been made to include the SDGs in schools' curricula. As for localization efforts, Members of Parliament have been transmitting the core messages of the SDGs to the local level so that the goals are integrated in local development initiatives. As stated by the VNR report, awareness programs have been carried out through workshops at the divisions and district levels. According to the VNR report, there is an expectation that the local level will tailor targets and action plans to implement the SDGs in their own contexts.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

Bangladesh highlights different initiatives held by diverse stakeholders on SDGs implementation. Apart from actions carried out by the parliament towards localization, civil society, the private sector, academia and development partners have also contributed to

joint efforts. These include actions towards mapping activities and designing implementation plans, improving education, and promoting inclusivity. The VNR report does not mention actions being carried out by children and youth when it comes to multi-stakeholder implementation of the SDGs.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report outlines good practices/good cases, innovative cases, business cases and collaborative cases to achieve specific SDGs. Such cases have been presented by different stakeholders and included in the VNR report. The VNR report brings “challenges” sections under each one of the SDGs in the goal-by-goal analysis. In terms of peer learning, Bangladesh outlines areas in which knowledge sharing from other countries might be useful to solve internal challenges that include sustainability in rapidly growing urban areas, agricultural productivity, affordable quality education, and mitigation of climate change effects. With regards to budgeting, the annual average cost of SDGs would

be US\$ 66.32 billion (at constant prices) between the 2017 and 2030 fiscal years. The country has identified public and private sources of finance and partnerships, external funding, and sources from non-governmental organizations. Moreover, the VNR report mentions South-South and Triangular Cooperation as playing an important role in development.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

After the results of the SDGs data gap analysis, the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics was bestowed with providing data for 105 out of the 155 indicators of the SDGs. The VNRs report notes an improvement in the availability of metadata against SDGs indicators. Although the 2017 VNR report made no mention of plans for national reporting, since 2018, a monitoring and evaluation framework has been put in place and is constantly revised to set targets and indicators of SDGs from the current moment (benchmark) to the envisioned objective in 2030. The VNR report has a standalone chapter on COVID-19 reporting.



# BARBADOS

*In 2020, Barbados submitted only main messages to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). This was the country's first report the HLPF.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

Barbados did not include information on national governance arrangements for 2030 Agenda implementation in the main messages.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The main messages did not include information on stakeholder engagement.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

There are no references to baselines or gaps affecting the national progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) achievement in the main messages.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

In 2018, the government began implementing the Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation Plan to restore macroeconomic stability and place the economy on a path of sustainable and inclusive growth while safeguarding the financial and social sectors. According to the main messages, the plan reflects the government's alignment of its anti-poverty and sectoral strategies with the SDGs, particularly in fiscal policy.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The main messages point to nine national goals including:

1. Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all and increase access to economic resources and basic services and reduce vulnerability to disaster and climate crisis (SDG 1. No poverty);
2. Reduce mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment Improve health

coverage (SDG 3. Good Health and well-being);

3. Increase youth and adult access to technical skills for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship (SDG 4. Quality Education);
4. Increase water-use efficiency and reduce water scarcity (SDG 6. Clean water and sanitation);
5. Increase the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix (SDG 7. Affordable and clean energy);
6. Promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products (SDG 8. Decent work and economic growth);
7. Adopt fiscal, wage and social protection policies that progressively achieve greater equality (SDG 10. Reduced inequalities);
8. Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters (SDG 13. Climate action); and
9. Global coordination to partner with developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through debt financing, debt relief and debt restructuring, as appropriate, and address the external debt of highly indebted developing countries to reduce debt distress (SDG 17. Partnerships for the goals).

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The main messages do not include information on progress regarding each goal.



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### **Leave no one behind**

The main messages do not provide an overview of specific vulnerable groups though notes Barbados' vulnerability as a country. It highlights that small, vulnerable, highly indebted, tourism-dependent states like Barbados are among the hardest hit by the pandemic, given that for tourism-dependent Caribbean



islands over 45% contribution of their GDP comes from tourism on average. Tourism also accounts for a similar proportion of employment. Barbados' National Insurance Scheme, a national social security program, received over 35,000 unemployment applications as of May 2020, representing a quarter of the national workforce. A fiscal adjustment and structural reform program design in partnership with the International Monetary Fund considered the most vulnerable groups' risks during the reform process though no details are provided on how in the main messages.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The main messages make no mention of awareness-raising or SDGs localization efforts carried by the country.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

Barbados highlights in its document that Goal 17 (Partnership for the goals) is now more relevant than ever, as the world battles a global pandemic, with countries' having varying levels of access to the critical resources needed in this fight.

### ***Means of implementation***

Based on the Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation Plan, the country signed an Extended Fund Facility with the International Monetary Fund in October 2018. Together, these two documents lay out fiscal adjustment and structural reform measures, pursued to shift the burden of structural adjustment away from labor and the most vulnerable towards capital and the visitor economy. A thriving domestic and external debt restructuring allowed the Barbados government to increase national expenditures in health, education and social protection, leading to improvements in key social and economic indicators. The main messages do not provide data on these improvements. However, they do point to challenges in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and note that the COVID-19 pandemic calls on the global community to reprioritize and reorganize expenditure, global supply chains and economic structures. In Barbados, responding to the COVID-19 challenge is affecting SDGs implementation.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

There are no references to measurement and reporting in the main messages.



*In 2020, Benin submitted its third voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Its previous presentations took place in 2017 and 2018.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

The coordination and monitoring-evaluation mechanism was established in 2017, composed of five bodies:

1) the steering committee headed by the Minister of State in charge of Planning and Development; 2) the technical steering committee; 3) the joint government-municipality coordination framework on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); 4) the consultation framework for civil society organizations (CSOs) on the SDGs; and 5) the Research and Study Group on Sustainable Development.

The Steering Committee is mandated to examine SDG implementation at the national level and at the level of sectoral ministries, lobby for resource mobilization, instruct the Technical Steering Committee to take into account the SDGs in sectoral strategies and policies and to report periodically on their implementation. It is composed of members of the government as well as technical and financial partners and representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the National Employers' Council, the Council of Private Investors of Benin, civil society, trade union, the National Association of Municipalities of Benin, the Women's Federations, the Associations of Persons with Disabilities, and the Youth Parliament. The Technical Steering Committee is composed of all technical and operational executives representing the administration/government as well as Technical and Financial Partners, civil society and private sector organizations including chambers and business representatives.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

Regarding stakeholder engagement, the VNR report highlighted measures including the law on public-private partnership, CSO consultation framework and

round tables and forums organized to engage other stakeholders such as private sectors and philanthropic foundations. The framework for consultation of civil society organizations is structured around four thematic groups (social, economy, environment and governance) and promote the participation of civil society in the implementation of the SDGs, especially at the community level. The framework constitutes a space for multi-stakeholder dialogue to inform and share lessons learned in the operationalization and monitoring-evaluation of the SDGs. In addition, as part of efforts to ensure wide ownership over the SDGs, the Ministry of Planning and Development will organize, every six months, reviews on the implementation of the priority SDG targets for Benin. These reviews will serve as an opportunity for all stakeholders to outline their flagship actions carried out, the difficulties encountered and the prospects for achieving the country's priority targets by 2030.

According to the VNR report, COVID-19 did not significantly impact processes for stakeholder engagement in the VNR drafting process, as measures were taken to move discussions online or in small groups respecting safety measures. The VNR report notes that four hundred different actors were involved in the VNR process through the launch of a methodological workshop and then through more than fifty working sessions. These actors included ministers, presidents of institutions, deputies, representatives of United Nations agencies, technical and financial partners, the National Association of Municipalities of Benin, Employers, civil society actors, trade union centers, religious groups and youth organizations.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The VNR report includes a discussion of evolutions and trends since Benin's last report in 2018 for all SDGs.

It also outlines measures taken by the government to reverse negative trends. In terms of gaps and trends, the average trend of the indicators for most SDGs is stagnant. The percentage of people accessing social services did not increase since last reporting 24.3% in 2018 against 25.4% in 2014. Malnutrition in children under five years of age is stagnating. SDG 13 however, saw moderately improved trends. The VNR report includes a useful mapping that allows for easy visualization of the gaps identified and progress towards the achievement of targets according to particular indicators.

### ***Incorporating the SDGs***

The SDGs have been integrated into the 2018-2025 National Development Plan and its first operationalization tool, the Growth Programme for Sustainable Development. The VNR report refers to the principles of universality and leaving no one behind as part of the 2030 Agenda.

### ***Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda***

National priorities are identified, among others, in the following areas: economy, environment, governance, means of implementation, health and social outcomes, reducing inequalities and access to water and energy. Benin's approach to nationalizing the 2030 Agenda led to the selection of 164 indicators (based on 80 global indicators defined by the United Nations) to monitor Benin's package of 49 priority targets.

### ***Integration and policy coherence***

The VNR report provides equal attention to economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Policy coherence is specifically put forward as part of the country's approach to leave no one behind (LNOB) through a special funding initiative called "Ne laisser personne de côté." This initiative takes into account, among the 49 priority targets, those whose implementation will have the greatest impact on the population to LNOB. This initiative also represents an instrument for framing SDGs implementation policies over the next 10 years. To foster the incorporation of the SDGs in national planning frameworks, the government plans to draw up a guide to facilitate the integration and/or alignment of development policies and programs at national, sectoral and communal levels with the United Nations 2030 and African Union 2063 agendas. Using a scoring method, planning documents will be assessed in

terms of the degree to which the priority targets of the two agendas have been considered. The VNR report does not mention major international agreements, however efforts are taken towards mitigating the impact of climate change through the adoption of legal and policy instruments at the national and local level.



## **IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA**

### ***Leave no one behind***

Benin identifies women and girls, children, people in poverty and people with disabilities as those that are at risk of being left behind. In addition to the special funding initiative noted above, efforts to LNOB include an insurance package for strengthening human capital adopted in 2018 that offers beneficiaries an integrated package of health insurance, credit, training for actors in the informal sector and pension insurance for actors in the uncovered informal sector. Other efforts aim to accelerate the demographic dividend through the empowerment of women. The VNR report also highlights initiatives to improve access to water and energy. Efforts to LNOB are informed by existing official and unofficial data.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

With regards to local implementation, the VNR report highlights a participatory and inclusive approach to apply the country's prioritized targets in its 77 communes. This exercise led to the identification of ten priority targets for each of the country's communes accompanied by standards for action derived from national level efforts. The government-municipality coordination is composed of the Mayors of the 77 municipalities in the country and members of the government. Through this coordination framework, a technical commission has been set up within the National Association of Municipalities of Benin. This commission meets quarterly and provides a place for exchange where the mayors and the National Coordination of SDGs study the SDG process in the municipalities and assess communal dynamics. No specific activities were mentioned in this report on raising awareness, although, the government plans to raise awareness through reporting processes including reviews of SDG targets and through the consultation framework with CSOs.



## GOOD PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Benin's localization efforts led to specification of ten priority targets accompanied by standards for action in its 77 communes. This mapping enables the translation of international commitments such as the SDGs into local contexts and supports policy coherence between different international, national and local levels. Moreover, to stimulate the development of good practices at the local level (communes), Benin established an initiative called "Local Agenda 2030 Competition", which rewards the best local projects that constitute good practices for integrating the SDGs.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report refers to the role of non-state actors in implementation, notably through the processes of stakeholder engagement outlined above. In addition, the VNR report notes that youth are mainly involved in the implementation of the SDGs through volunteer programmes. With the support of the United Nations Volunteers Programme and the United Nations Development Programme, the country has set up the National Corps of Young Volunteers for Development. Volunteers have been deployed across vital sectors including education, health, community development and support to local communities.

### ***Means of implementation***

Benin has included the SDGs as part of budgeting processes through a program approach that supports the preparation of the state budget. This approach allows for a better understanding of the budgetary resources

mobilized for sectoral interventions. The VNR report highlights innovative financing as a means to address challenges related the financing of priority action targets selected during the localization exercise and support the country's special SDG funding initiative on LNOB. The report also highlights technology (information and communication technology as well as digitization) as a key driver for SDG implementation and to LNOB. Implementation challenges include ensuring synergy in the actions of all actors, monitoring and evaluation system capacities and the mobilization of financial, technical, and human resources.

To mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, a support initiative for the productive sector is being put in place evaluated at 74.12 billion FCFA. It includes measures in favour of formal enterprises, artisans and small-scale service in the informal sector and for vulnerable people. The government plans to establish a program to subsidize the poor and extreme poor once they have been identified.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

Data disaggregation is consistently available throughout the VNR report and a new strategy was adopted in April 2020 to improve, among other, the level of data disaggregation. The strategy is supported by a task force dedicated to improving national and sectoral statistical approaches and mechanisms to produce quality, disaggregated data. The data used for the VNR report comes largely from an extensive literature review, supplemented by data collected from SDGs focal points ministries, civil society organizations and local authorities.

The General Directorate for Coordination and Monitoring of the SDGs reports to the country's Steering Committee. At the end of each year, it prepares a report that assesses the implementation of the priority SDG targets in Benin. As noted above, the government is also organizing regular multi-stakeholder reviews of progress to ensure wide national ownership.



# BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

*In 2020, Brunei Darussalam submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

Since 2016, Brunei Darussalam has been using a multi-stakeholder Special Committee for the Implementation of the SDGs. According to the VNR report, the committee aims to facilitate the inclusion of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicators in the country's development plans, ensure and monitor SDGs implementation in tandem with national priorities. Multiple cabinet ministers oversee the country's progress towards the achievement of the SDGs, and the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), researchers and academia are mentioned as part of the committee for SDGs implementation.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

Apart from the inclusion of non-state actors in the government-led coordination mechanism for the implementation of the SDGs, the VNR report does not indicate that a broader mechanism for stakeholder engagement has been established. In the preparation of the VNR, the government conducted direct consultations with different stakeholders, including NGOs and academia, and organized a VNR workshop to provide opportunity for meaningful participation in the preparation of the VNR report.

approach, it makes reference to human rights principles. Universality and planetary boundaries are not explicitly referenced. On the other hand, the VNR report does not contain a dedicated section on leave no one behind (LNOB), but mentions the principle throughout.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

According to the VNR report, Brunei Darussalam's national plan aims for the country to have high levels of education and a dynamic and sustainable economy by 2035. However, these national priorities are not related in detail to the SDGs, and the establishment of national targets and indicators is unclear in the VNR report.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The VNR report covers all the SDGs and mentions targets and indicators. All the three dimensions of sustainable development are addressed, though with a greater focus on economic, and there is no mention of linkages between economic, social and environmental dimensions. The VNR report makes no reference to policy coherence for sustainable development approaches and does not mention some international agreements, including the ones related to COVID-19. However, it does refer to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.



## POLICIES

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

According to the VNR report, the SDGs have been incorporated into national development plans and related policies and frameworks through Wawasan Brunei 2035, the vision that guides Brunei Darussalam's development strategies and policies. While the VNR report does not mention the human rights-based



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### **Leave no one behind**

Although there is no dedicated chapter to leave no one behind (LNOB), the VNR report suggests that children, persons with disabilities, elderly, women, ethnic groups, migrants, refugees, the poor and the needy are considered more at risk of being left behind. Approaches to targeting such main vulnerable groups refer mainly to

universal programs such as social assistance. The VNR report mentions the important role played by volunteers during the COVID-19 pandemic and the month of Ramadhan into assisting the public and frontliners, and into helping to distribute food rations to families in need.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

In the goal-by-goal analysis, the VNR report brings some examples of awareness raising efforts that relate to specific SDGs – for example, the promotion of Braille and sign language courses while raising awareness on the challenges faced by persons with disabilities is mentioned under SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities). In addition, an awareness campaign named MyActionForSDGs was carried out to inspire individuals, organizations and the local community to take action towards the achievement of the SDGs. This action was supported by United Nations agencies and aimed to, among others, raise awareness and localize community action supporting the SDGs. Although the VNR report mentions local non-state actors such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), entrepreneurs, businesses and communities, it is less clear about the role played by local governments in performing activities around the SDGs.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report mentions local non-state actor participation in SDG implementation. Parliamentarians, civil society, the private sector, academia, children and youth are referred to as being carrying out specific actions. Some examples also include the engagement between civil society organizations and youth, between the private sector and universities. Initiatives include youth-produced development projects, sustainable development-focused training for university students

and staff, and the development of an online portal to provide e-learning opportunities for women.

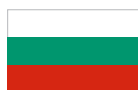
### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report highlights the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as a challenge to the progress of SDG implementation. It also identifies areas for learning from other countries' experiences in their implementation of the SDGs, mentioning that the government welcomes continued collaboration, including technical assistance and capacity building programs to strengthen the country's human resources and infrastructures. Technology and trade are aspects mentioned in the VNR report when it comes to means of implementation. With regards to actions taken to tackle COVID-19, the VNR report includes measures carried out under SDG 3 (Good health and well-being) and SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth). On the other hand, there is no reference to budgeting or financing for the 2030 Agenda at the country level.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The VNR report does not inform how the SDGs process has been reported at the national level. Moreover, there is no explicit reference to data availability or disaggregated data. Although the VNR report refers to the intention to further identify gaps in and availability of its SDGs data, as well as to strengthen the country's monitoring and reporting progress mechanisms, no current efforts are clearly mentioned towards this objective. Although the VNR report does not explicitly mention the use of unofficial data, some numbers have been informed by non-state actors, such as, for example, the number of food and education packs collected by different NGOs to be sent to specific groups and countries.





# BULGARIA

*In 2020, Bulgaria submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

In 2016, shortly after the 2030 Agenda adoption, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs mapped the public institutions' responsibilities for the respective SDGs, targets, and indicators related to them. As a result, a detailed indicative table on ministries and institutions' responsibilities for meeting the SDGs in Bulgaria has been developed, and each responsible ministry outlined sectoral policies and related strategies, concepts, plans, and reports to implement the goals at the national level. The leadership of this process was set under the Ministry of Finance. Non-state actors are not included in official SDG implementation governing structures, and each ministry decides how to work with stakeholders in its area.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

Even when the VNR includes a chapter entitled "Stakeholder engagement," no explanation of its engagement mechanisms is provided, and no reference to consultation with national stakeholders on SDG priorities is part of the report.

Conversely, precise information is provided on stakeholders' engagement in the VNR building process. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has taken action to collect relevant information from stakeholders on policies and activities related to the SDGs implementation: a wide range of stakeholders was consulted through an online survey of non-governmental organizations, and trade union representatives were interviewed. The review also includes the results of an online survey of Bulgarian Youth Delegates to the UN on young people's priorities.

baseline study. Still, the report includes identifying gaps and areas where further efforts are needed to achieve the SDGs among the 'Next Steps' to be taken. Nevertheless, the VNR includes mentions of gender equity gaps, specifically to the gender pay gap, as critical problems faced by the country.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

The report notes that the SDGs have been integrated into the National Development Program Bulgaria 2030, a strategic framework document establishing the vision and the overall goals of development policies in all state governance sectors, including their territorial dimensions. Moreover, policies and principles laid down in the 2017-2021 Government's Programme for the Republic of Bulgaria are in line with the 2030 Agenda.

A complete VNR chapter analyzes efforts made by the country to LNOB, which is also considered all along with the report. Although the VNR lacks a human rights-based approach, references to Human Rights could be repeatedly found as part of the document. Nevertheless, the report does not consider universality, inter-generational responsibilities, nor planetary environmental boundaries.

Bulgaria's participation in the European Union effort towards the SDGs achievement is a report cross-cutting issue.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The country has established three national priorities for the SDGs: Promote digitalization; women, youth, and 'leaving no one behind,' and climate action and adaptation to climate change. National targets were set, such as reaching a tertiary rate for at least 38% of 30- to 34-year-old. Since 2017, Statistics Austria has produced national indicator tables every year, closely aligned with the UN framework for monitoring the SDGs, complemented by national and regional indicators. The Austrian Federal States also refer to the SDGs in



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The government did not carry out a gap analysis or

their strategy documents like the 'Climate and Energy Strategy Salzburg 2050' and the 'Smart City Wien Framework Strategy 2019-2050.'

### ***Integration and policy coherence***

The report examines all 17 SDGs, providing detailed information of all of them without including linkages between economic, social, and environmental dimensions as part of each goal analysis. However, the link between the Sustainable Development dimensions is considered in a general way in other sections of the report, supported by an analysis of the interconnections of policies in the economic, social, and environmental aspects of development carried out after Bulgaria acceded to the EU.

In the same line, policy coherence issues are explicitly integrated into the VNR, though only referring to internal policies, stating that 'Policy-making respects the principles of coherence in identifying priorities, objectives, contractors and target groups.'

Nevertheless, the report is consistent in linking SDGs and relevant international documents such as the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Declaration, and the Busan Declaration on Development Effectiveness. Efforts towards the 2030 Agenda implementation are also partially linked to COVID-19 national commitments.

## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The report identifies people with disabilities and chronic diseases, vulnerable citizens, Roma people, young people, people from high mountain areas, the elderly, disadvantaged children, women and girls, drug users, prostitutes, prisoners, migrants and asylum seekers, and people living under the poverty as the key groups in risk of being left behind.

More data is needed for Bulgaria to leave no one behind. Gender disaggregated data is available, but there are data gaps regarding other vulnerable groups. Even when prostitutes are mentioned as a vulnerable group, no reference to policies or programs to support them is reflected in the VNR.

Efforts to leave no one behind are guided by new and existing focused programs, mainly under national strategy frameworks such as the National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities 2016-2020, for Long-Term Care, and the National Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan (2014-2020), among others. Regarding gender equality, a National Council on Equality between Women and Men operates at the Council of Ministers.

Bulgaria also underwent a process of reassessing and redirecting available financial resources to respond to and assist the most vulnerable as part of the EU COVID-19 global humanitarian response.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The report highlights that 'After the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, Bulgaria has initiated a series of initiatives to raise awareness among citizens, businesses, institutions at all decision-making levels, students, teachers and trainers, media representatives, etc.' (p.12). It also underlines the key role of both the Government and the stakeholders in consistently raise public and Government agencies aware of the 2030 Agenda. However, no details on awareness-raising actions are provided.

The Bulgarian National Association of the Municipalities, which includes all 265 cities, assists in directing public financing to fulfill the SDGs and is represented in multiple Council of Minister's advisory bodies, including the National Council on Social Inclusion, which works toward achieving the principle of leaving no one behind.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The report shows a high engagement in the non-governmental sector in the SDGs implementation. The most relevant coalitions of non-governmental organizations are the Bulgarian Platform for International Development that brings together 15 organizations-, and the Citizen Participation Forum, -a network of civil society organizations working to increase citizen and NGO involvement in policy formulation and decision making-. Besides, two organizations -Coalition For The Nature, and Bulgaria Climate Coalition- stand out as environmental SDGs implementers.

The primary channel for private sector engagement is the Bulgarian Network of the UN Global Compact, which presented its *Strategic Plan 2015+* prioritizing eight of the SDGs, namely good health and well-being; quality

education; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation, and infrastructure; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production; peace, justice and strong institutions; and partnerships for the Goals. In 2020, the progress will be reviewed, and the document will be updated.

Some of the leading Bulgarian Universities and the Institutes at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences contribute to the 2030 Agenda implementation through scientific discussions and research projects. Youth participates through a National Youth Forum, gathering 50 international, national, local, and political youth organizations with the motto "It's time for the youth to take the floor!". Trade Unions also contribute to the 2030 Agenda implementation. Among them, the Federation of Transport Trade Unions is particularly active. Parliamentarians' engagement is not included in the VNR.

### ***Means of implementation***

Capacity development, national and international public finance, systemic issues, and technology are considered among the 2030 active means of implementation. The last two are linked to the effort to confront the COVID-19 pandemic impact at the national and international levels, supporting the UN Secretary-General initiative of Build Back Better. Actions to face COVID-19 are considered in a report annex that links sets of measures to meet the pandemics with specific SDGs.

In the field of technology, the priorities are improving energy efficiency, creating ICT development clusters, and Space Research. Regarding Public financing, the public investment increased by nearly 60% in 2018, and the capital expenditure for set out in the 2020-2022 Midterm Budgetary Forecast will increase by 46% compared to the 2016-2018 period. Following a financial decentralization process launched in 2003, the local governments contribute to public services funding. However, budgeting for Agenda 2030 is not articulated in the VNR. Private capital contribution is considered critical. A Law on Public-Private Partnership was updated in 2017, upholding private investment in infrastructure.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

Data and disaggregated data needs are not presented in the report, which uses official national data, complemented by other sources, mainly the Eurostat database but also the European Patent Office, the OCDE, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat. The data arising from a situational analysis of UNICEF published in 2017 on the state of child protection in Bulgaria is also taken into account in the VNR.

The report makes no mention of national reporting tools or plans.



# BURUNDI

*In 2020, Burundi submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

A National Steering and Coordination Committee chaired by the Minister of Finance, Budget and Development Cooperation was established for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs. A multi-sectoral technical committee composed by the different sectoral ministries, United Nations agencies, civil society and local elected officials was created in March 2020 and was in charge of the preparation of the VNR.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The VNR report does not refer to long-term mechanisms of stakeholder engagement. However, with respect to consultations on national priorities, it notes that the process of prioritization of targets saw the participation of all the stakeholders to ensure effective ownership of the SDGs. The VNR process brought together all of Burundi's development actors, namely the Presidency of the Republic, ministries, the National Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, technical and financial partners, communes, private sector associations and civil society organizations (CSOs) including people living with disabilities, young people, academics and religious groups. The VNR included national workshops and regional (local) workshops to ensure that regional dimensions were taken into account to leave no one behind (LNOB). A workshop for the review of the VNR report by specific groups, such as CSOs, academia and the private sector, as well as a national validation workshop on a draft version of the VNR report were held.

available data, policies and programs. The VNR report includes gaps identified across SDGs. For example, on SDG 1 (ending poverty) nearly 2 out of 3 Burundians are unable to meet their basic food and non-food needs on a daily basis. In terms of drinking water coverage (SDG 6), in 2019, the rate of access to drinking water was 83% in urban areas against 60% in rural areas. Overall, the VNR report provides specific information on gaps and progress for all SDGs in the goal-by-goal analysis.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

SDGs are incorporated through the National Development Plan (2018-2027), in sectoral strategies and in Community Development Plans. The VNR report makes reference to two principles of the 2030 Agenda implementation, including universality and LNOB. It does not refer to intergenerational responsibility or planetary boundaries.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The ongoing process of national prioritization has gone through three main stages: 1) the prioritization of SDG targets; 2) the mapping of indicators for priority targets; and 3) the harmonious integration of these SDGs into the National Development Plan (2018-2027), the sectoral strategic plans and the Community Development Plans. Given the country's significant youth bulge, the government identified education, child and maternal health, nutrition, social protection, water, hygiene and sanitation and participation as key elements of its long-term development strategy.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

All the three dimensions of sustainable development are addressed in the VNR report through its review of all 17 SDGs however there is a greater focus on the social dimension. Indeed, there is a significant focus on the improvement of the social conditions of children. According to the VNR report, policy coherence is ensured through the National Development Plan, integration of the SDGs in sectoral strategies and efforts to ensure consistency with national priorities (key to national ownership of the SDGs). One institutional mechanism



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

A gap analysis assessment was carried out for all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It focused on trends, challenges and opportunities as presented in the VNR report. The assessment considered both

to ensure policy coherence is the Child Poverty Working Group mandated to ensure that development policies, budgets, legislation, programs, and projects efficiently address children's needs.

The VNR report does not include linkages to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. It tends to focus more on the environment than climate change per se with reference to reforestation programs (SDG 15), the use of waters (SDG 6), the role of education and awareness raising on climate change (SDG 4), and the sustainable use of natural resources and promotion of renewable energies (SDG 12). In terms of other international agreements, the government plans to pursue continued advocacy for a strong commitment by all stakeholders to the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

## 2030 IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The VNR report identifies children, women, pregnant women, people with disabilities and older people as at risk of being left behind. Efforts to LNOB include access to health care for the population, especially the most vulnerable, as a priority, in addition to attention to children. On the latter, Burundi mentions that success on the SDGs can only be achieved through investing in policies and programs that target this population. Implementation of the National Health Policy includes a vision to ensure that 90% of the population will be living less than 5 km from a health centre. The country has achieved free access to medical care for pregnant women and children aged 0-5 years and attention on school-aged children has resulted in near parity at the basic school level and a gross enrolment rate of 111% in 2019. The VNR report also outlines specific provisions for people with disabilities and people living in poverty through specific law and policies aimed at protecting and promote their rights, as well as project such as the Merankabandi social safety net support, which aims to provide cash transfers to support poor households.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The process of prioritization of targets saw the participation of all the stakeholders to ensures effective ownership of the SDGs. No specific activities were mentioned on awareness raising for the overall 2030 Agenda. However, some awareness-raising efforts specific to SDGs were mentioned such as awareness

on the importance of sending children to school and on women's rights. On localization, the government has organized technical workshops to support four pilot municipalities in integrating the SDGs into the Community Development Plans.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report provides little information on the role of non-state actors outside governance and consultations. Nevertheless, it notes that priority areas for development partner support include resource mobilization to implement policies targeted for children and support towards the implementation of a COVID-19 response plan. The country requires support more generally to reach its priority targets by 2030. Support to carry out the VNR was provided by civil society, technical and financial partners, in particular the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund.

### ***Means of implementation***

Burundi plans to cost implementation of the 2030 Agenda with expectations that sources of finance will include South-South cooperation and bilateral and multilateral cooperation in addition to domestic resources. Remittances constitute one of the sources of innovative financing for economic development. Trade is also mentioned as a specific measure for financing the SDGs.

To respond to COVID-19, Burundi developed a national contingency plan to prepare and respond to the pandemic in the health sector, estimated to cost over US\$ 58 million. Other actions planned include the provision of financial assistance to businesses and assistance to improve financial stability through the construction of a strong financial safety net as well as the preservation of social spending for the most vulnerable. The country expects to extend social protection programs and achieve a gender-sensitive COVID-19 response by ensuring that the risks and needs of girls and women are taken into account in interventions.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The VNR report presents the state of implementation of the SDGs at the end of 2019, which corresponds to almost two years of implementation of the country's National Development Plan for 2018-2027. Data availability is not mentioned overall though data disaggregation is a challenge to LNOB (though some data disaggregation is available in the VNR report). The need to strengthen national statistical capacity is mentioned to increase timely and disaggregated data to better inform decision making processes.



# COMOROS

*In 2020, Comoros submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

A national council, chaired by the Secretary General of Government, is responsible for overseeing, coordinating and validating all 2030 Agenda activities and for resource mobilization. A technical committee, under the direct authority of the Planning Commissioner, is responsible for the monitoring and technical coordination of the VNR. Non-state actors are included in governance arrangements via the national committee. These include five representatives of civil society and five representatives from the private sector.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

In terms of ongoing stakeholder engagement, the steering, monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the country's national development plan, "Le Plan Comoros Émergent," includes the "Major Themes of Dialogue." The dialogue is composed of technical officers from ministries, representatives of technical and financial partners, civil society organizations and the private sector.

Non-state actors were engaged in identification of national priorities. The process included the participation of all the ministers, technical and financial partners, United Nations agencies, parliamentarians, civil society and the private sector. A conference for development partners was organized in December 2019, in Paris, to mobilize the essential resources to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the country and to present "Le Plan Comoros Émergent" to partners.

The COVID-19 pandemic required the coordination team to adjust the engagement process for the VNR, particularly in terms of data collection, stakeholder consultation and validation of reports. Despite this, Comoros managed to conduct consultation via online

conferences, webinars and emails. However, limited access to Internet or quality connection was a challenge for this process.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The report includes an analysis of trends for all the SDGs as well as prospects for progress on prioritized targets. The country benefited from United Nations support for the alignment of SDGs with national and sectoral strategies in the framework of the Mainstreaming, Accelerating and Policy Support program. This was preceded by a Rapid Integrated Assessment, alignment of national planning including the Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development and thirteen sector plans and strategies relevant to the SDG targets. The VNR report indicates that the level of alignment of SDGs to the national planning document is calculated at 73.3%.

In addition, the results of the analysis conducted by the Overseas Development Institute, provides scores on the level of progression for the SDGs at country level. This analysis shows trend regression for many SDGs: 1, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 while progress is expected for SDG 7, 3, 8. For the targets of the SDG 4, 6 and 12 the trend would remain unchanged. In terms of gaps in progress, a significant proportion of the population still lives below the national poverty line. A large part of the population suffers from a lack of access to basic needs such as water, electricity, health care and an efficient justice system. Food insecurity affects 35% of the population.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

The SDGs are incorporated into the country's national development plan, "Le Plan Comoros Émergent." Adopted in 2019, the plan represents the reference document for national planning for the 2030 Agenda and the African Union's Agenda 2063. The VNR report references the



principle of leave no one behind (LNOB), with a dedicated chapter but does not refer to the human rights-based approach though there is a strong reference to human rights.

### ***Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda***

With the support of the United Nations Development Programme, the country prioritized SDG targets together with public institutions, civil society, the private sector and development partners. National priorities include blue economy, tourism, food security and craftsmanship. The country has developed a system of indicators adapted to national priorities and statistical production capacities for monitoring the implementation of the SDGs. This system integrates indicators proposed by the United Nations and selected at the national level, as well as national indicators that can inform the prioritized targets.

### ***Integration and policy coherence***

The VNR report addresses all dimensions of sustainable development but with a greater focus on social aspects. It covers all 17 SDGs and notes that actions on SDG 14 and the blue economy can boost economic and social development that conserves marine and coastal biodiversity. Comoros is a signatory of the Paris agreement and submitted its first national determined contribution in September 2015. A revised version is being submitted in 2020. The report also refers to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and to a draft law being prepared in view of adopting the Nagoya Protocol of the Convention on Biological Diversity. On policy coherence, the report mentions the alignment of the National Development Plan and the sectoral strategies, plans and programs with the SDGs, as well as the implementation of an inclusive monitoring and evaluation system in order to systematically strengthen the coherence of sustainable development policies.

comprehensive and inclusive social protection” through the development of social safety nets, improving access to basic social services, promoting innovative risk management strategies and strengthening the framework for coordination, management and monitoring-evaluation of social protection. A decree to set up a single social register is in the process of being signed to ensure the enrolment of any household living in precarious conditions. Several legal texts aimed at promoting, enforcing and monitoring the application of the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination based on sex are adopted. A poverty survey is currently ongoing allowing the country to have better data, necessary for the effective implementation of SDGs.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

According to the VNR report, the government undertook an intensive process of sensitization and nationalization of the SDGs. An official launch of the implementation of the SDGs was carried out by the national authorities. Information meetings and awareness-raising sessions were organized at the National Assembly and in the communes.

At the local level, the SDGs are being localized through the local development monitoring system. For each island, a Development Steering and Monitoring and Evaluation Committee has been set up under the supervision of the governor who presides over the committee. This process ensures that no one is left behind and promotes the integration of SDGs in future municipal development plans, as well as in the projects of non-governmental organizations and local development associations. The VNR report also highlights the role of village communities in local development. They are at the forefront of many initiatives to facilitate access to water and energy and key actors in the reduction of pressures on ecosystems and natural resources. Village communities participate both materially and financially in interventions to make various services accessible to the population and provide important support to reduce the vulnerabilities of people left behind.

## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

Comoros identifies women, children and persons with disabilities at risk of being left behind. Since 2014 the country implemented a national policy for inclusive social protection with the objective of making Comoros a nation “where every citizen has sustainable access to the satisfaction of its basic needs through

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

Non-state actors and civil society more specifically, take an active part in the implementation of several SDG projects and programmes targeting vulnerable groups and in mobilizing communities, particularly young people, in favour of social and environmental causes, such as the fight against violence on women,

social equity, actions against the destruction of forests, protection of watercourse sources, etc. They provide an interface between the most marginal groups and the public programs that are designed to respond to their needs. Most projects carried out by non-governmental organizations and local communities contribute to the achievement of the SDGs targets. Additionally, the mechanisms for implementing the national plan allow all Comorian citizens to make their contributions, individually or collectively, through the different possible levels of intervention: governmental, insular, municipal and non-governmental organizations.

### ***Means of implementation***

Capacity development is mentioned as a means of implementation especially in the following areas: improving national statistics, programming and budgeting, capacity building in information technology, adaptive capacity, and resilience to climate change in the agriculture sector. The VNR report mentions South-South cooperation, particularly with the countries of the subregion, as a mean to encourage the sharing of experience and good practices in innovation and sustainable development interventions, as well as in economic exchanges and human capital development. Climate change and its impacts are particularly

mentioned as a big threat for a Small Island Developing State. The country is highly exposed to weather and climate hazards, including floods, cyclones, rising waters and volcanic eruptions. Every year huge economic losses are inflicted on the country. The COVID-19 pandemic will impact a number of economic sectors (tourism, remittances, imports, etc.). It has somewhat disrupted momentum for mobilizing the resources promised during the Development Partner Conference.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

Despite data availability for some indicators, it is mentioned that there are gaps in statistical production in terms of quantity, quality, coverage, analysis and diffusion. Efforts to reduce data gaps include the adoption of a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics, implemented with the support of development partners. Thanks to this, the country has been able to carry out major statistical operations, such as the household surveys on poverty, and set up important databases on socio-economic data or a database for development assistance. The authorities are working to set up a data centre. The VNR report does not mention the role of parliament in national follow-up and review processes.



# COSTA RICA

*In 2020, Costa Rica submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The first was introduced in 2017.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

Costa Rica's governance mechanism to implement the 2030 Agenda was introduced in its previous VNR report. A High-Level Council for the 2030 Agenda, headed by the President, is the main institution responsible for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation. It is supported by an SDGs Consultative Committee that brings together state and non-state actors that have signed the 2016 National Pact for the SDGs Advancement - a framework to promote the 2030 Agenda implementation in Costa Rica. The Ministry of Human Development and Social Inclusion was incorporated as a member of the consultative committee in 2019.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The VNR report does not provide information on stakeholder engagement in SDGs implementation activities led by the government beyond governance. Based on the previous VNR report, the Consultative Committee is still the government's primary channel for the stakeholder-government dialogue. Nevertheless, to ensure that interested stakeholders could express their perspectives on Costa Rica's progress towards the SDGs, a draft version of the VNR report was publicly shared, and a series of meetings were organized to discuss inputs. Due to COVID-19, meetings were held virtually.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

An assessment for the 17 SDGs was presented in the previous VNR report. The issue was not addressed in the 2020 report. However, the 2020 VNR report repeatedly mentions information and financial gaps as the main obstacles to advance national SDGs implementation.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

The National Development and Public Investment Plan of Costa Rica incorporates the SDGs as an axis of its design and implementation. The same is true for the country's National Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement and the National Decarbonization Plan, among other national policies. The VNR report considers recovery from COVID-19 as a challenge and an opportunity to reinforce the national path towards the SDGs achievement. Accordingly, the VNR considers cross-cutting principles of the 2030 Agenda, including leave no one behind (LNOB) and universality. It also notes a human rights approach though does not reference intergenerational responsibility or planetary boundaries (though the VNR report does cover issues like loss of biosphere integrity, ozone layer depletion, oceans acidification, etc.).

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

Costa Rica's national priorities and its national indicators were introduced in the 2017 VNR report. They are not analyzed in the 2020 VNR report. Rather, the report emphasizes solving the COVID-19 emergency and providing health care for patients as the country's current main priorities.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The VNR report addresses all three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner. However, it only provides a short analysis of each of the 17 SDGs that barely includes references to linkages between economic, social and environmental issues. No reference to policy coherence is integrated into the VNR report though the document does refer to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The VNR report presents information on the impacts and challenges that result from the COVID-19 pandemic in a stand-alone chapter and across the report.



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The VNR report includes efforts to LNOB that appear to be informed by available data for specific groups, namely women, children and youth, elderly, indigenous and afro descendants, people with disabilities and migrants.

To support those groups at risk, Costa Rica combines universal and focused programs. The basis for these efforts lies in binding protection norms adopted by the Parliament, like the National Action Plan adopted in 2020 that focuses on prevention and eradication of violence against children and youth strategy. Given the COVID-19 impacts in society, the Government also kickstarted specific policies to support the most affected groups, such as the launch of a 'Protect Bonus,' a direct transfer to individuals who have had their working hours reduced or suspended, or have lost their jobs.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

According to the VNR report, the Government of Costa Rica carried out activities to raise awareness, including in partnership with academia, to disseminate knowledge on the 2030 Agenda. It also worked with the private sector to develop SDGs sensitization media campaigns. Nevertheless, awareness-raising is included as part of the main national challenges.

In terms of localization, the VNR report highlights the creation of an alliance between the country's local governments and the United Cities and Local Governments Organization to strengthen SDG implementation at the local level. The first product of this alliance was the publication in 2020 of a report about locating the SDGs in Costa Rica's local governments. The coalition continues working though future steps are still to be decided.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report stresses local governments, the parliament, the judiciary branch and academic engagement in SDGs implementation efforts. These include examples such as the adoption of a decision by the Superior Council of the Supreme Court of Justice of Costa Rica calling all judicial bodies to consider in their budgets actions to promote the SDGs, attune the task of administering justice with the 2030 Agenda and harmonize the jurisprudence of the Supreme Court and the international instruments of public international law

ratified by Costa Rica with the SDGs. The private sector, civil society and development partners are mentioned in the report only in reference to the COVID-19 national response, a critical issue considering that the VNR report identifies substantial negative impacts of the pandemic on the national progress towards the SDGs in the last five years.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report briefly introduced references to good practices across its text, such as the National Policy for the care and prevention of violence against women of all ages (2017-2032). It notes that it is necessary to strengthen cooperation between the government and the United Nations system to address the challenge of accelerating the 2030 Agenda effective implementation. Technology, capacity development and public finance are mentioned as means of implementation. Regarding public finance, an entire subchapter analyses the relevance of the Official Development Assistant new measurement system under development by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, namely the Total Official Support to Sustainable Development (TOSSD), which is considered as a right step towards an improved international cooperation measurement system. The VNR report also mentions that national public investment is the primary tool to fund actions to face the COVID-19 impacts in Costa Rica.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

According to the VNR report, as of 2019, Costa Rica national has enough available data to measure 136 out of 244 indicators. This means 55.74% data availability. Lack of sufficient data disaggregation is a challenge. An Action Plan for updating, calculating and defining methodologies for the SDG indicators was included as part of the National Development Plan. With respect to the country's first VNR report, the 2020 VNR report provides a narrative of progress for each SDG, noting if it has advanced, stagnated, or regressed since 2017. No specific tool is used to mark progress beyond brief descriptions of the direction of progress. Finally, to disseminate the VNR report, a process to update the national SDGs monitoring website will be carried out, and a non-identified set of the VNR complementary materials will be published and publicly shared. The VNR report does not mention a possible third national report presentation timeframe.



# DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

*In 2020, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### ***Leadership, governance and institutions***

The Prime Minister is responsible for implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the DRC. Through the Ministry of Planning, the Congo's Observatory for Sustainable Development was established to monitor and evaluate the impact of the implementation of the National Strategic Development Plan and monitor the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the DRC's commitments in relation to the grouping of fragile states (g7+) and the New Deal. An SDG Acceleration Framework under the observatory is envisaged that will include all stakeholders and aim to ensure the achievement of the results of the 2030 Agenda. However, the framework is hindered by the major challenge of resource mobilization.

### ***Stakeholder engagement***

The VNR report does not outline ongoing mechanisms for stakeholder engagement outside consultations. Non-state actors including, civil society and technical and financial partners, were involved in the identification of national priorities and in the VNR. This included thematic group workshops, debates and a "Café diplomatique." The latter aimed to involve mainly technical and financial partners. COVID-19 impacted the process for stakeholder engagement and data collection during the VNR although alternative solutions were found to ensure a participatory approach via specialized virtual platforms.

covered by statistical data for an overall coverage rate of 81.2%. These statistical data come from various sources, both national and international. From the assessment carried out for all the SDGs, the VNR report presents information on gaps and regressions in progress across the SDGs examined.

### ***Incorporating the SDGs***

The SDGs are incorporated in the National Strategic Development Plan adopted in 2019 by the government, as well as the national and provincial sectoral strategies. In terms of principles for 2030 Agenda implementation, the VNR report refers to the human rights-based approach and leaving no one behind, with a dedicated chapter. It does not refer to planetary boundaries, universality, or intergenerational responsibility, although a light reference to the latter is mentioned with regards to the sustainable management of forest resources to benefit future generations.

### ***Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda***

DRC has identified national priorities for 2030 Agenda implementation. The VNR report lists 19 priorities that cover areas related to peace and stabilization, governance, justice and human rights, economic growth, social outcomes, technology, culture, art, youth and sport, gender equality and the environment and sustainable development. National level targets and indicators to support these priorities have been identified and are aligned to the to the global targets and indicators.

### ***Integration and policy coherence***

The VNR report provides an examination of all 17 SDGs with a focus on all three dimensions of sustainable development, though less attention to economic dimensions overall. The country ratified the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and committed to reduce by 17% its greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The VNR report does not mention other major international agreements related to the 2030 Agenda. In terms of



## POLICIES

### ***Baseline or gap analysis***

The mapping of SDG indicators made it possible to determine a reference level of indicators covered by statistical data. Of the 133 indicators prioritized, 108 are

policy coherence for sustainable development the report indicates the need to further collaborate among sectors to plan and execute different activities, as well as the need to discontinue the sectoral approach that has underpinned national policies.

## 2030 IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The DRC identifies women, children, indigenous people, and persons with disabilities as at risk of being left behind. According to the VNR report, efforts to leave no one behind (LNOB) include free basic education and setting up the process for the universal health coverage. A ministry in charge of people with disabilities has also been established as well as a project for the integration and support of indigenous people. Realising gender equality is a priority for the government with the VNR report pointing to legal reforms and increases in women in the legislature.

On reducing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government, via the Ministry of Planning, developed a health and socio-economic impact assessment and a multisectoral emergency mitigation program. Estimated at USD 2.3 billion, the program is based on three pillars: 1) response to the COVID-19, surveillance and strengthening of the health system, 2) support for macroeconomic stability and recovery, and 3) risk mitigation and population support.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The VNR report points to different awareness raising activities such as radio and tv broadcast, conferences, debates, surveys, workshops and meetings with the public. At the provincial level, with the support of both the central government and technical and financial partners, awareness-raising and popularization campaigns have been organized in provincial capitals. The “Sustainable Development Perception Index” measures the effectiveness of public policies implemented to achieve the SDG targets in terms of the perception of the population. It also provides the population with an insight into the state of the SDGs, particularly with regard to development priorities, while also being an opportunity to understand the population’s awareness of 2030 Agenda.

Localization efforts are underway at the subnational level through the Provincial Development Plan. The government

developed a tool that enables the diagnosis of development in rural areas to define priorities that should lead to the elaboration of local development plans. This tool also encourages the structuring of communities into Local Development Committees that involve the rural population more in the implementation of SDGs.



## GOOD PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

The “Sustainable Development Perception Index” is an innovative way of engaging and reaching out to the population. It measures the effectiveness of public policies implemented to achieve the SDG targets in terms of the perception of the population. It also provides the population with an insight into the state of SDGs, particularly with regard to development priorities, while also being an opportunity to understand the population’s awareness of the 2030 Agenda.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report recognizes the roles of non-state actors in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Civil society plays a big role with regards to SDGs implementation, bringing field experience and mobilizing resources and attention around priority targets such as free education. Civil society organizations also produced a study on innovative financing on SDG 4 on education for all. Caritas Congo also conducted a study to measure the degree of alignment of the national budget to the SDGs. While the VNR report highlights a significant role by civil society with regards to implementation, it also mentions other actors including the Congo’s business federation, religious groups and technical and financial partners.

### ***Means of implementation***

According to the VNR report, country level implementation has been costed and the country has identified sources of finance. The government estimates an average annual minimum cost of USD 31.63 billion for implementation with USD 13.25 billion for the private sector and USD 18.4 billion for the public sector. The



International Monetary Fund estimates the DRC's average annual expenditure requirement as \$10.1 billion from 2016 to 2030, or a total of \$152 billion over the period. However, this cost does not cover all the SDGs. The VNR report notes the need for a detailed analysis on the means of implementation to define a coherent financing framework. The VNR report points to official development assistance and South-South and triangular cooperation as means of implementation. Investing in technologies, and especially information and communication technologies, is also recognized as a means to increase economic growth and reduce poverty and social exclusion. There is also a need to increase the capacities of actors to implement the 2030 Agenda more broadly.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

Notwithstanding the critical situation of the national statistical system, the DRC has relative statistical coverage for the monitoring-evaluation of the implementation of the SDGs with data gaps existing

for only 19% of prioritized indicators (corresponding to 25 indicators). Major challenges for monitoring and reporting include: improving the quality of statistical data, increasing funding for the statistical system, improving human capital and disseminating statistical data. Efforts to address these challenges include the use of non-national sources to fill the information gap for indicators that are not supported by the national statistical system, the development of a multi-year program of statistical data collection through a household survey, better engagement with administrative data producers, and significantly increased budgetary resources for the national statistical system.

In terms of VNR reporting, the report was transmitted to the government for political validation following technical validation. For this 2020 VNR report, after the Council of Ministers was held in June 2020, the government adopted and validated the report, subject to consideration of the amendments and recommendations made.



# ECUADOR

*In 2020, Ecuador submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The first was introduced in 2018.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

The national Technical Planning Secretariat 'Planifica Ecuador' and the Republic of Ecuador's Vice Presidency coordinate 2030 Agenda implementation. The governance mechanism outlined in the 2020 report differs from what was presented in 2018. According to the VNR report, civil society, academia, the private sector, parliamentarians and local government participate in technical committees that support 2030 Agenda implementation, however they do not have decision-making capacity.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

Planifica Ecuador led a dialogue with academia, civil society, private companies, cooperation organizations and local governments to promote coordination in the process of building the VNR. However, the report does not provide information on how stakeholder engagement was carried out or on specific outputs. The report does not refer to ongoing processes of stakeholder engagement beyond the provisions outlined above with respect to governance.

2021, called 'All a Life,' contribute to the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The plan is complemented by a National Territorial Strategy, which allows for implementation of the national policy at the local level. The 2030 Agenda principles of leaving no one behind and inter-generational responsibility are integrated across the VNR report. It also references human rights but without assuming a concrete human rights-based approach. According to the VNR report, the country is integrating COVID-19 impacts into a future National Development Plan. It also calls on the world to rethink the 2030 Agenda considering the effects that the pandemic will have on it.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The National Development Plan priorities are directly aligned with the SDGs. As outlined in the 2018 VNR report, these include eight priorities pertaining to equal opportunity, interculturality and plurinationality, environmental outcomes, including the rights of nature, sustainable, equitable economic growth, food sovereignty, participation, transparency and co-responsibility and sovereignty and peace. Though the country has not established national SDG indicators, its 2020 VNR report annex includes information on indicators pertaining to Ecuador's National Development Plan goals, identifying its alignment with one or more SDGs.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The VNR report does not include information on baselines or a gap analysis, as was the case in the 2018 VNR report. It does, however, make references to territorial and gender gaps as well as financial and urban-rural gaps (though with limited information on these).

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

The country adopted the 2030 Agenda as a State policy. According to the VNR report, the national priorities established in the National Development Plan 2017-

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The VNR report covers all the 17 SDGs, paying equal attention to the three dimensions of sustainable development though it only provides limited references to linkages between them while analyzing each goal and target. Without making references to policy coherence for development, the VNR report specifically links the SDGs to climate change and the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda is not mentioned, and no specific linkages between SDGs implementation and commitments to global COVID-19 response measures

are set. Nevertheless, the VNR report includes information on the impacts and challenges that result from the COVID-19 pandemic in a stand-alone chapter.

## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The VNR report does not provide information on data to leave no one behind (LNOB). Even though it is possible to find many references to ‘vulnerable groups’ in the text, they are not specifically identified. The VNR report mentions women, children and youth, elderly, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, homeless, poor people and unemployed as groups as vulnerable and presumably as then at risk of been left behind. The primary approach to assist them are universal social policies, such as the Initiative ‘House for All’ to facilitate access to safe, adequate and dignified housing. Some universal policies include specific references to vulnerable groups. The Organic Law of Intercultural Education guarantees access to education for all children, indicating that people in vulnerable situations should have preferential treatment. Specific measures to attend the neediest in the pandemic context are reported. For example, support domestic and gender violence victims during the quarantine, the National Government implemented a massive information strategy.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The VNR report does not introduce awareness-raising efforts carried out by the government as was the case in 2018. Regarding localization, a National Territorial Strategy is pointed out as the primary tool to translate national objectives to regional and locally specific contexts and decentralize public action in a coordinated and synergistic way. The VNR report does not provide a full overview of the current status of localization in terms of engagement with local governments beyond policies, capacities, specific implementation programs and partnerships.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report provides examples of activities carried out by civil society, the private sector, academia, the

parliament. It also includes a general mention of activities carried out by ‘the citizenship.’ Some examples include a project to improve admission to the higher education system of Ecuador for vulnerable groups members and “Call to action for water” initiative launched by the Business Council for Sustainable Development of Ecuador, aimed to promote production systems reducing water footprint.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report briefly introduces good practices across its text, mainly linked to environmental protection and clean energy promotion. Capacity building, technology, international public finance and systemic issues are considered 2030 Agenda means of implementation. The VNR report notes that it is necessary to introduce new technologies to achieve goals in food production and education, strengthening public-private partnerships to achieve a more efficient public finance system and support human talent capacity development. It is also required to articulate global actions to face global challenges, such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. The VNR report does not include references to costing nor budgeting for SDGs implementation.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

Ecuador adopted a Statistical Development Plan and is working on the formulation of a diagnosis of its National Statistical System capabilities. According to the VNR report, 72% of the indicators that make up the Statistical Development Plan correspond to Tier I and II categories for global SDG indicators. Nevertheless, the VNR report states that generating higher levels of data disaggregation is a critical issue. The VNR report does not show clearly the progress made in SDGs implementation since the 2018 one. In trying to explain the relationship between the two reports, the 2020 VNR report only makes very general statements such as noting the 2020 VNR report “incorporates several innovations compared to what was reported in 2018” (p.12). The VNR report did not include information on a national SDGs reporting strategy.



# ESTONIA

*In 2020, Estonia submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The first was submitted in 2016.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

An Estonian Coordination Mechanism for Sustainable Development was established, including both ministries and non-governmental organizations. The main governmental body responsible for the SDGs implementation heading that mechanism is the Government Office Strategy Unit.

Almost 20 years before the 2030 Agenda adoption, an Estonian Commission for Sustainable Development was established in 1996 as a Government advisory body, bringing together NGOs' umbrella organizations. The Commission meets 4-5 times a year, organizes thematic discussions on issues raised by its members, and makes policy recommendations.

This scheme is completed by an inter-ministerial working group on sustainable development -integrated by representatives of ministries and Statistics Estonia, and a Coalition for Sustainable Development formed in 2018, an informal cooperation mechanism uniting representatives from NGOs, companies, the Government Office, and some ministries.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The report informs that a wide range of non-governmental partners provided information to the VNR through the Commission for Sustainable Development and a questionnaire to determine the contribution of stakeholders. However, no stakeholder engagement process is presented, and no reference to consultation with national stakeholders on SDG priorities is made.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The first VNR of Estonia, in 2016, stated that a preliminary gap analysis of governments' policies and SDGs was initiated in spring 2016. Nevertheless, its results are not articulated in the second VNR, making no reference to baselines or gaps studies. The only gap clearly identified in the 2020 exercise is the gender gap and, more specifically, the gender pay gap.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

There is broad evidence of change towards the 2030 Agenda achievement: an SDG strategy adoption; definition of national indicators, targets, and goals; multi-stakeholder engagement in implementation actions; and efforts to increase data availability.

The Regulation of the Government of Estonia on the preparation of strategic development plans stipulates that they must be based on global SDGs. This year's milestone is the completion of Estonia's long-term strategy Estonia 2035, which prides a strong basis for a systematic reflection on SDGs integration in sectoral processes. The SDGs are covered by strategic documents at various levels, including horizontal strategies, like the Estonian competitiveness strategy 'Estonia 2020,' the Government Action Plan 2019–2023, and the Estonian sustainable development strategy 'Sustainable Estonia 21'.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The report notes four SDGs priorities: Reducing poverty and dealing with related problems, waste prevention and restoration of terrestrial ecosystems, improving public health, and fight against terrorism and violent extremism. In a very innovative approach, an 'SDG 18. Viability of the Estonian cultural space' was established and prioritized nationally:

Also, national targets and indicators were set. In 2018, a report of Estonian Sustainable Development Indicators was completed.

### ***Integration and policy coherence***

The report covers all the SDGs, plus the national 'SDG 18. Viability of the Estonian cultural space'. Each goal is detailly examined, including statistical information, activities carried out at the central government level, and non-governmental stakeholders. In some cases, Estonia's international cooperation is also addressed as part of the analysis.

Although links between sustainable development dimensions are not consistently included as part of the goal-by-goal analysis, tending to appear more strongly in SDG 1. No Poverty, and the three "environmental" SDGs, the report has a balanced integration of social, economic, and environmental sustainability.

Domestic and foreign policies on SDGs impacts are assessed in areas such as ICT, green technology, and migration.

It explicitly links the SDGs to the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Nevertheless, the report does not present an articulated approach to policy coherence.

Strangely, there is no reference to COVID-19 in the entire VNR.

## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The 2020 Estonian VNR does not consider the LNOB in a separate chapter, and it is not a theme constantly present across the report. As a result, it does not articulate issues like data to LNOB, and Gender disaggregated data is rarely available. Regarding the report as a whole, people in poverty, children, women, elderly and persons with disabilities could be seen as groups receiving particular attention in government efforts, such as universal child allowance and the provision of a lump sum benefit to the elderly to reduce its risk of falling into poverty. Women are the group receiving more attention in the VNR. An applied study will be carried out in 2019-2021 to develop and test nudging methods to increase girls' and women's share in ICT specialties in education and the labor market, aimed at reducing gender stereotypical attitudes and

segregation.

A Diverse Workplace label was created in 2016 to reduce inequalities in a broad perspective. Companies that have joined the label aim to promote diversity in their organization in a targeted and thoughtful way.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

Estonia's Government is conducting SDGs raising-awareness actions. As part of the European Sustainable Development Week, Estonia's annual Opinion Festival draws attention to the SDGs. The Government also intends to create a multi-stakeholder platform for sustainable development to share information on sustainable development issues and increase the citizenship sense of responsibility for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

The report includes extensive information on the SDGs' localization. On the one hand, local governments have representatives at the Estonian Commission for Sustainable Development. On the other hand, the Government adopted an impact assessment methodology upon the preparation of legislation, creating a development plan, and approving the Government's position in the EU affairs, requiring to consider its impacts on the local level, among other areas.

The national authorities also cooperate with local Governments in projects like the construction of a water and sewerage system for Estonian households in low-density areas.

Finally, the report informs that an administrative reform was implemented in 2017. As a result, the number of local governments was reduced from 213 to 79, assuming that larger local governments provide higher quality services to citizens and contribute to a more balanced regional development. After the administrative reform, all merged and non-merged local governments are preparing new strategic development documents for directing spatial development on the local Government's territory to make it more sustainable.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The report does not consider partnerships to implement the SDGs systematically. Civil society, the private sector, academia, and youth actions are included in the VNR, showing that they are doing a broad 2030 Agenda implementation work. The civil society 'Estonian Association of Big Families', for example,

provides food, clothing, and household items to families in need. Private and public enterprises working on intelligent transport have been brought together into a single 'ITS Estonia network' to increase the efficiency, environmental sustainability, and safety of the transportation and logistics sector. At Tallinn University's initiative, the 'Proovikivi platform' (Touchstone platform) was established, bringing together young people and community partners to face common challenges. The Estonian National Youth Council, an umbrella organization, promotes young people's social change engagement, running the UN Young Delegate Programme, introducing young people to the UN institutions, and the SDGs in formal education represent Estonian youth in UN institutions.

No specific activities to implement the SDGs carried out by parliamentarians are considered out of law adoption.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR considers a wide range of the 2030 Agenda means of implementation. It points out that 'the development of digital technology and e-governance in Estonia has contributed to economic development, good governance, transparency, resource efficiency, and human development' (p.104). Regarding capacity building, initiatives to improve workers' skills are in place. Systemic issues to reduce the root causes of migration and bring the Central Mediterranean migration route under control are informed. Trade and national and international 2030 Agenda financing initiatives are also integrated into the report.

Even if no SDGs' country-level implementation costing exercise is reported, national and international funding is considered critical. EU funds are mentioned in specific cases as SDGs related programs funding sources.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The report does not provide information on data availability, including disaggregated data. It includes unofficial data, informing that data collection among non-governmental organizations and companies, among others, have been used as the basis for the review. A study will be conducted in 2019–2021 under Tallinn University's leadership to analyze the unexplained part of the country's gender pay gap.

The report also notes efforts in developing new data-based technologies, stating that 'More and more research and development projects related to remote monitoring and the introduction of satellite data are being implemented in Estonia.'

In 2019, a measuring instrument of Estonia's SDGs indicators, the 'Tree of Truth,' was completed. It is available on the web (<https://tamm.stat.ee/>), providing an overview of the goal by goal state of implementation by all government areas.

This year VNR uses tables to reflect the current indicators situation compared to the data reported in 2016, making no mention of how the national reporting will continue in the future.





# FINLAND

*In 2020, Finland submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The country's first presentation was in 2016.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

The Prime Minister is responsible for implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Finland. According to the VNR report, two institutions – the National Commission on Sustainable Development (which has been led by Prime Ministers since 1993) and the Development Policy Committee – work in tandem to ensure coherence in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) both at the national level and with regards to international cooperation. The Secretaries General of both bodies participate in each other's Commission/Committee as permanent experts. Moreover, both institutions count with non-state actors' participation, as civil society and other stakeholders are officially engaged in both mechanisms to contribute to sustainable development in Finland. In terms of regional coordination on the SDGs, the VNR report mentions that the country's work on sustainability is complemented by Finland's engagement in Generation 2030, a joint work on the 2030 Agenda being carried out in the framework of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The VNR report mentions that one of Finland's key instruments for implementing the 2030 Agenda is called Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development. This multi-stakeholder engagement mechanism is a long-term strategy that provides an implementation tool for any sector, organization or individual who wishes to participate in the 2030 Agenda implementation by carrying out concrete actions. With regards to the VNR process, multiple stakeholders were engaged, including civil society organizations (CSOs), trade unions, and United Nations associations. The VNR report does not mention impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on stakeholder engagement, as the mechanisms in place can fully operate in a virtual environment.



## GOOD PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

In Finland, civil society participates in the analysis of the country's progress in each one of the SDGs. In the goal-by-goal analysis of the VNR report, one page is dedicated to the government's assessment and another contains other stakeholders' assessment. Under each one of the 17 SDGs, while the government describes successes and key policy initiatives, the pages written by civil society point out challenges and propose recommendations. This good practice of a joint analysis corroborates a whole-of-society approach and presents a more holistic view of the country's progress around the SDGs.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The mapping of SDG indicators made it possible for Finland to build a database containing national data for 161 global indicators of the total set of 244 internationally agreed indicators, which represents 66% of indicators. Data come from both national and international sources and are presented in a detailed annex that contains targets and indicators for all the SDGs. From the assessment carried out, the VNR report presents information on gaps and regressions in progress across the SDGs examined.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

The SDGs are incorporated into national development plans and related policies and frameworks and through the use of a national SDG implementation strategy. According to the VNR report, it is current practice

for Finland's governments to submit 2030 Agenda implementation plans to the country's parliament as government reports. This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the report had to be postponed from April 2020 to autumn 2020. The VNR report mentions that this year's government's report will bring, apart from the commitment to the 2030 Agenda and the implementation plan itself, the government's measures for each one of the SDGs. In terms of principles for 2030 Agenda implementation, the VNR report refers to all the five principles, namely the human rights-based approach, leaving no one behind (with a dedicated chapter and mentions throughout the VNR report), planetary boundaries, universality, and inter-generational responsibility.

### ***Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda***

Finland has identified national priorities for 2030 Agenda implementation. The VNR report lists four priority areas that relate to gender equality (women and girls), economy (sustainable economies and decent jobs), education and democracy (education and democratic societies), and environment (climate resilience and natural resources). Targets and indicators to support these priorities have been identified at the national level and are aligned to the global targets and indicators.

### ***Integration and policy coherence***

The VNR report provides an examination of all 17 SDGs with an equal focus on all three dimensions of sustainable development. It also refers to applicable linkages between economic, social and environmental dimensions in the analysis of specific goals, targets and indicators. Finland has mechanisms to approach policy coherence to sustainable development, and has assessed domestic and foreign policies on the realization of SDGs globally. For example, the VNR report mentions Finland's global responsibility in contributing to international crisis management and supporting developing countries by, for instance, facilitating the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons and contributing to recover arable land to lower tensions. In terms of international agreements, the VNR report refers to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. There are no references to Aid Effectiveness and Development Effectiveness Agendas or to COVID-19 commitments.



## **IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA**

### ***Leave no one behind***

In terms of those at risk of being left behind, Finland identifies women, girls, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples (Sámi), ethnic groups, visible minorities, poor people, those living alone (who are more in risk of poverty), the underemployed, single parents, immigrants, people with long-term illnesses, imprisoned inmates, and young people with only a basic qualification. According to the VNR report, efforts to leave no one behind (LNOB) include universal programs. There is reference to social and employment policies, and human rights considerations both at the domestic and international levels. On reducing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the VNR report refers to changes in the short-term economic policy agenda, which include investment in employment actions, social- and healthcare reformation, and increase in productivity. According to the VNR report, universal social security and service systems, added to equal educational opportunities, have prevented exclusion and provided an environment of open governance and peaceful and democratic societies.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The VNR report notes that different awareness raising activities have been carried out since 2016 in cooperation between the government, civil society and the private sector. According to the VNR report, a recent poll showed that 47% of the Finnish population is aware of the 2030 Agenda. In terms of localization efforts, work has been carried out at the local government level since Finland's first VNR in 2016 revealed that cities had insufficient knowledge of the 2030 Agenda.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report recognizes the roles of non-state actors in implementing the 2030 Agenda. It highlights examples of actions being carried out by parliamentarians, civil society, the private sector, academics and experts, children and youth, and other stakeholders such as the media and marketing industries. Activities towards implementation include awareness raising actions within the government, integration of the SDGs into business strategies, research and knowledge exchange around sustainability issues, climate work, and work towards literacy and skills, including digital. One of

Finland's key instruments for partnership and civil society engagement lies on Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development, through which actors take part in the promotion of one or more SDGs, both in Finland and globally. According to the VNR report, over 1,000 organizations and almost 1,500 private citizens have already made concrete commitments to sustainable development.



## GOOD PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

According to the VNR report, Finland's cities conduct extensive work around sustainable development. For example, the region of Åland has integrated the SDGs into core strategies, and many cities and municipalities are developing plans to promote the SDGs. A good practice arising in terms of localization is the presentation of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). For example, the cities of Helsinki, Espoo, and Turku have prepared such reports in 2019 and 2020, and should be followed by other cities in the future.

### ***Means of implementation***

According to the VNR report, sustainable development has been included in Finland's budget. Moreover, country level implementation has been costed and the country has identified sources of finance. The government estimates the total 2020 budget amounts to about 57.7 billion euros, and refers to funding from

the European Union Framework Programme to finance research, development and innovation (RDI) activities focusing on solving challenges related to sustainability. Moreover, the VNR report mentions that Finland has emphasised mainstreaming the SDGs for the 2021-2017 financial period programming. Technology and capacity development are recognized as means of overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In terms of international public finance, the VNR report refers to Finland's contributions to official development assistance (ODA), and lists international financing, trade and partnerships as effective means of implementation for both developing and developed countries.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

Statistics Finland aims to continuously improve data collection. Moreover, new data sources and proxy indicators, as well as data produced by international development work, will continue to be explored as supplementary data, according to the VNR report, which also identifies future challenges regarding further disaggregation of the data. According to the VNR report, an assessment conducted by the National Audit Office concluded that the Government Annual Reports on the 2030 Agenda implementation have both provided a comprehensive summary of the policies and measures taken every year, and acted as publicly available information sources on the achievements around sustainable development. In terms of VNR reporting, the VNR report mentions that Finland is committed to reporting to the United Nations every four to five years. For this 2020 VNR report, in addition to existing mechanisms for stakeholder participation, including consultation, stakeholders were invited to independently write parts of the VNR report.

*In 2020, The Gambia submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

A Ministerial Steering Committee and technical sector working groups are responsible for 2030 Agenda implementation. Leadership resides with multiple cabinet ministers in this regard. According to the VNR report, the government will retain the VNR Coordinating Committee that oversaw the VNR, transforming it into a technical SDG coordination mechanism, which will add to other already existing technical Sector Working Groups. The VNR report also provides information regarding the inclusion of non-state actors in governance structures, pointing to a “robust institutional framework” to enable stakeholder participation and accountability and mentioning that the National SDGs Steering Committee and the Sector Working Groups include representatives from the UN System, the private sector, civil society, women and youth organizations, among others.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The VNR report indicated that civil society, the private sector and youth were engaged in the VNR process, including through workshops. It also noted plans to disseminate the VNR report in partnership with other stakeholders and to use this process to update the government’s SDG Road Map, incorporating the views solicited through the VNR. In terms of mechanisms for ongoing stakeholder engagement, the VNR report notes that the Coordination Unit at the Department of Strategic Policy and Delivery of the office of the President provides high level coordination mechanisms to facilitate coordination between diverse stakeholders (government institutions, members of the legislature, civil society, private sector, local government representatives, youth, women, development partners, persons with disabilities and academia). According to the VNR report, one of the aims of such mechanisms is to address any gaps and challenges regarding collaboration among stakeholders.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

According to the VNR report, the Gambia plans to assess data availability to better understand data needs, sources and data collection methodologies. Lack of available data was highlighted as a challenge through the VNR process. Niger examined all SDGs except SDG 14, life below water, as Niger is a landlocked country.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

The Gambia mainstreamed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the National Development Plan (2018 – 2021). This process enabled alignment of development priorities with SDG targets and indicators. The VNR report also notes the existence of an SDG Road Map, which the government plans to update based on inputs from the VNR as noted above. In terms of 2030 Agenda principles, the VNR report mentions leaving no one behind and refers to preserving the environment for future generations.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The National Development Plan includes eight priorities and seven critical enablers aligned with the SDGs. The strategic priorities focus on issues related to 1) governance, 2) economic growth, 3) agriculture and natural resources, 4) social services, 5) infrastructure, 6) tourism, 7) youth and 8) private sector development. Environmental sustainability is noted as one of the seven critical enablers. The VNR report does not indicate that national level targets and indicators have been selected.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The VNR report provides a summary overview of all 17 SDGs, though has a more limited focus on environmental dimensions. The goal-by-goal analysis makes limited references to the linkages between economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. While the report does not explicitly refer to policy coherence for sustainable development, it does refer to a number of relevant international agreements for 2030 Agenda implementation. These include the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Paris Agreement on Climate

Change, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Samoa Pathway and Istanbul and Vienna Programmes of Action. In relation to COVID-19, the VNR report includes information on the impacts of the pandemic throughout, as well as in a dedicated annex.

## 2030 IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The VNR report identifies women, children, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, rural dwellers and the elderly as at risk of being left behind. Efforts appear to be informed by existing data, and gender disaggregated data is mostly available in the VNR report. According to the VNR report, the government has focused on creating an enabling policy environment to ensure the provision of basic services through social protection mechanisms. A new initiative, the Programme for Accelerated Community Development, is presented in the VNR report as a way to LNOB and promote greater equity and social justice. The VNR report also outlines specific legislation to benefit groups at risk of being left behind. With respect to the impacts of COVID-19, the VNR report outlines measures to ensure continued education as well as food support for 84% of households in the country.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The VNR report indicates that awareness-raising activities have been carried out with parliament and the public more generally. A workshop on Parliamentary action to implement and monitor the SDGs was held and the VNR process was used to further raise awareness of the SDGs, including through workshops with the private sector and civil society. The government plans to continue to roll out awareness-raising activities on an ongoing basis incorporating media, traditional communicators and publicity materials in local languages. The VNR report also notes plans to incorporate the SDGs into school curriculum. With respect to localization, the VNR report notes efforts to mainstream the SDGs into national, sectoral and sub-national levels. Local authorities will be engaged through regional development plans (including support to develop these plans) and initiative such as Voluntary Local Reviews as a means to track progress at all levels.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report references the importance of multi-stakeholder action to accelerate SDGs implementation.

While it recognizes the need to deepen private sector participation, the VNR report does not mention specific activities by the private sector to support 2030 Agenda implementation. It does however note the identification of SDG Champions in the National Assembly to promote the 2030 Agenda as well as specific projects implemented by civil society organizations to implement the SDGs. Similar to the private sector, the VNR report notes the importance of further strengthening coordination with civil society to leverage their contributions to the 2030 Agenda. The VNR report points to a number of capacity gaps, particularly for government actors at national and local levels, for which assistance from development partners would be welcome.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report highlights lessons learned as well as challenges. The need to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda is noted, in addition to efforts to strengthen the national statistical system to support follow-up and review. In terms of challenges, The Gambia is hindered by debt sustainability and the need to strengthen the management of aid resources as well as overall revenue administrative processes. The government has invested efforts into improving financial management systems and tracking the use of public resources as important means to implement the SDGs. The VNR report notes a strong interest on the part of the government in increasing financial flows overall. The government has identified domestic resources, foreign direct investment, public-private partnerships, remittance and foreign assistance as sources of finance. With the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the VNR report notes an increasing alliance on domestic resource mobilization to reduce dependence on volatile aid flows.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

According to the VNR report, the Gambia has data for 33.9% of SDG indicators. To improve available data and track progress, the government plans to establish a coordination unit in the national statistical office to support disaggregated data collection, ensure quality and analyze SDG indicators at national and sub-national levels.

The Directorate of Development Planning coordinates a national monitoring and evaluation platform, supported by the national statistical office. The platform supports monitoring of the National Development Plan and the SDGs. According to the VNR report, non-state actors will be included in the platform. The VNR report refers to the creation of SDG reports and future VNR reports but does not provide information regarding when these reports will be produced.



# GEORGIA

*In 2020, Georgia submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). Its first presentation was in 2016.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

Georgia's VNR report mentions that the country's administration of government has been leading nationalization and coordination processes of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) since 2015. The key coordination body for implementing the national SDGs targets is the Sustainable Development Goals Inter-Agency Council (SDG Council), which is chaired by the head of the administration of the government of Georgia. Such council comprises working groups that engage stakeholders from the public, civil, international, academic and private sectors, according to the VNR report.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The VNR report states that non-state actors have been included in the VNR process. The draft was circulated among four thematic working groups that compose the institutional framework around the SDGs and consist of civil society organizations (CSOs), international organizations, think tanks, academia, development partners and private sector. Moreover, in order to encourage public debate and opinion and to provide space for participatory and collaborative consultations, the draft VNR report was also made available on a dedicated website on the SDGs. Apart from such engagement in the VNR process and the inclusion of non-state actors in governance structures for the implementation of the SDGs (the SDG Council), the VNR report does not indicate that a broader mechanism for stakeholder engagement has been established.

of Georgia (SAOG) conducted an assessment on the national preparedness for implementation of the SDGs. The audit helped to identify shortcomings that include ensuring linkages between the SDGs and Georgia's instruments for budget planning, and localization of the SDGs. Furthermore, in 2019, the United Nations Development Programme in Georgia supported a MAPS (Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support for the 2030 Agenda) study to identify the state of play of the SDGs in the country. Some of the gaps identified as a result of the gap analysis refer to targets missing for SDGs 5 (Gender equality), 10 (Reduced inequalities), 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) and 17 (Partnerships for the goals).

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

According to the VNR report, Georgia's government acknowledges the importance of a whole-of-government approach to advance the country's policies towards development. In addition, it has aligned the SDGs to the national policy process and has adopted a "National Document for the Sustainable Development Goals". In terms of the 2030 Agenda principles, the VNR report refers to a human rights-based approach, and the principle of leaving no one behind has been designated as a cross-cutting priority covering all 5Ps (*People*, *Planet*, *Prosperity*, *Peace*, and *Partnerships*) areas. The universality of the Agenda, planetary boundaries and inter-generational responsibility are not covered by the VNR report.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

Georgia has prepared national targets and indicators, and the VNR report states those are aligned to the global targets and indicators. A European Union-Georgia Association Agreement has incorporated 63% of the country's nationalized SDG targets, including targets missing from other national strategies. When added to this agreement, Georgia's 36 national strategies jointly incorporate 96% of the country's nationalized SDG



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

According to the VNR report, the State Audit Office



targets. In terms of national priorities, the VNR report mentions three priority areas covering almost all the SDGs, namely: human capital development and social welfare (SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10), economic growth (SDGs 7, 8, 9, 10, 12), and democratic governance (SDGs 5, 10, 16).

### ***Integration and policy coherence***

The VNR report does not cover six SDGs, namely SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation), 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), 13 (Climate action), 14 (Life below water), 15 (Life on land), and 17 (Partnerships for the goals). All the three dimensions have been addressed by the VNR report, but with a limited focus on environmental. There is also limited reference to linkages between economic, social and environmental dimensions in the analysis of goals, targets and indicators. According to the VNR report, Georgia's main focus is on "people," with "prosperity" coming second, "peace" third, "planet" fourth and "partnership" last, following the 5Ps framework. It also notes the lack of sufficient cross-cutting elements and coordination. Although the VNR report refers to climate change, it does not mention the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. It does not mention other international agreements either, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Aid Effectiveness and Development Effectiveness Agendas, or COVID-19-related commitments.

among children under 5 years old, the increase in the number of students (including students with disabilities) financed by state's programs, and the increase in the percentage of prisoners (especially female) involved in education and vocational training programs.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The VNR report does not refer to awareness-raising campaigns being carried out around the SDGs, although it does refer to specific campaigns that relate to the SDGs. For example, there have been efforts to raise awareness about road safety, which relates to SDG 3 (Health and well-being), or to gender pay gap, which relates to SDG 5 (Gender equality). The VNR report recognizes that the SDGs implementation at the local level is slightly falling behind. To address this issue, the secretariat of the SDGs elaborated an action plan in line with the government's decentralization strategy (adopted in 2019) so that the localization of the SDGs can be more effective. Furthermore, the country's updated version of the statute of the SDGs Council has ensured that mayors and deputy mayors of municipalities are included in the council's membership.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

Although the VNR report provides some examples of non-state actor participation in the SDGs implementation, it is vague on the precise extent of such participation. In terms of the private sector, for example, the VNR report refers to government actions to engage that sector, but does not detail initiatives beyond public-private partnerships. Parliamentarians and academia are carrying out activities towards the achievement of some goals (targeting, for example, health, gender equality, and education), but actions developed by other stakeholders such as civil society and children and youth are not mentioned.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report identifies challenges for the SDGs implementation. These include an uneven degree of horizontal cooperation, the lagging of implementation at the local level, and the intensification of conflicts. With regards to the later, the VNR report highlights the Russian occupation of two regions of Georgia as a challenge to human rights and freedoms and the progress of the SDGs. Partnerships and support are identified as important factors to tackle this situation. The VNR report also notes that elements such as peer

## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

Georgia's need to generate and gather better quality data to leave no one behind (LNOB) has been identified in the VNR report. However, the LNOB principle has been designated as a cross-cutting priority for the country, particularly considering the health, social and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The targets of efforts to LNOB include poor people, people with disabilities, migrants and refugees, ethnic minorities, women, children, LGBTQI+ community, prisoners, and youth. The VNR report highlights some results of the country's approaches, which are carried out through universal programs such as social assistance, and both existing and new specialized programs for specific groups. Such results include the reduction of prevalence of stunting

learning, technology, capacity development and trade are constituent parts of the process of implementing the SDGs. In terms of budgeting, the VNR report recognizes that some SDGs (namely SDGs 1, 3, 4, 9, 10 and 16) have received the largest shares of the country's budget, whereas others (namely SDGs 5, 6, 12, 13, 14 and 15) have been set to account for only 3% of the total programed budget. There is no reference to financing Agenda 2030 at the country level, or to international public finance.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The VNR report does not articulate the percentage of SDG indicators for which data is available. On the other

hand, it mentions the implementation of a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) in order to fill the existing data gap for the SDGs framework. The MICS included over 180 indicators and provided regionally representative data that can be disaggregated and that provided baseline values for many indicators of the nationalized SDGs. The VNR report describes progress being made since the first VNR, presented in 2016, by referring to the integration of the SDGs into national planning and the achievement of the objectives the country had set in the process of working towards the SDGs. However, apart from the VNR processes themselves, other mechanisms of national reporting on the SDGs are not articulated in the VNR report.

*In 2020, Honduras submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The first was introduced in 2017.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

According to the 2020 VNR report, the national governance structure for 2030 Agenda implementation has changed since the country's first report in 2017. Since December 2019, the 2030 Agenda implementation is led by a multistakeholder Sustainable Development National Commission led by the General Government Coordination Secretariat and composed of representatives from the government, the Council of Higher Education, the Honduran Council of Private Enterprise, workers and peasant organizations, civil society and local governments. Permanent guests representing the National Institute of Statistics, The Honduras National Institute for Women and international cooperation partners, among others, participate in its debates. To carry out its functions, the Commission receives operational assistance from a Technical Secretary, Associations of Municipalities, open Thematic Work Tables and a Technical Committee for Sustainable Development. The last is composed of high-level technicians from each Commission member institution, the National Institute of Statistics and international cooperation partners.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

Besides stakeholders' participation in the Sustainable Development National Commission, the VNR report presents no mechanism or process for broader stakeholder engagement. However, there with respect to the second VNR, the VNR report notes that the process was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in terms of "the discussion and validation of the report with stakeholders in workshops at the national and regional levels" (p.12). Nevertheless, the VNR report does not fully lay out details on the VNR consultation process.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

Nor the 2020 VNR neither the previous one presented in 2017 refer to gap analysis or baseline studies. Although the second report recognized significant national structural gaps in social, economic and environmental issues that "should be considered [as part of] the background of the National SDG Agenda goals and indicators baseline" (p.25). The National SDGs Agenda established the data for the year 2015 or the nearest year from which measurements will begin as national baselines, but this is not mentioned in the VNR report.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were incorporated through a National SDGs Agenda adopted in 2019 as the national strategy for 2030 Agenda implementation. It is expected that the National SDGs Agenda will be included as part of the 2022-2034 National Development Plan. Sectoral policies were also aligned with the SDGs. The VNR report only makes reference to the 2030 Agenda principle to leave no one behind (LNOB).

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The report repeatedly refers to the national priorities adopted as part of the National SDGs Agenda but never identifies them. Moreover, the National SDGs Agenda text does not set national priorities, stating that the country does not have priority goals. Instead, that Agenda prioritizes 69 targets and 99 indicators resulting from a series of Honduran development planning documents, namely the Country Vision to 2038, the National Plan 2022 and the Strategic Government Plan 2018-2022. However, this information is not presented in the actual VNR report.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The VNR report examines all 17 SDGs briefly, providing

limited details. While it addresses the three sustainable development dimensions, emphasizing environmental elements, links between the dimensions are barely included under the analysis of each goal. There are no references to policy coherence for sustainable development, and none of the main international agreements linked with the 2030 Agenda are explicitly mentioned such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The 2020 VNR report includes information on the impacts and challenges that result from the COVID-19 pandemic in a stand-alone chapter.

## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

Throughout the VNR report, the following groups are mentioned as vulnerable: the elderly, people with disabilities, indigenous and afro-descendants peoples, households in extreme poverty, women and girls. Disaggregated data for these groups, and women, are rarely available. Nevertheless, the VNR report includes information on universal and specialized programs focused on vulnerable groups such as the National Program for Employment Generation and Economic Growth that assists the private sector in creating employment opportunities and the Poverty Reduction Program oriented to provide health and food self-production support to families living under the poverty line. When analyzing the impacts of COVID-19, the VNR report does not include specific measures to protect the most vulnerable groups from the impacts identified.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The VNR report does not provide information on government efforts to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda. Regarding localization, the VNR report states that efforts have been made in partnership with local governments to implement the National SDGs Agenda but does not identify them.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report's text refers to the relevance of establishing partnerships to reach the SDGs, but no specific description of non-state actors' contributions to that end is made. Mentions of stakeholders are vague, noting the importance of non-state actors but not providing concrete examples. The only concrete work with partners outlined in the text is the support provided by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the United Nations System in Honduras to carry out the VNR.

### ***Means of implementation***

Capacity development, technology, and international public finance are referred to as SDGs' means of implementation. National public expenditure is highlighted as the primary source of finance for SDG implementation. Systemic issues are also included, namely the impacts of the increase in external debt, the recessive effects of COVID-19 on the global economy and the foreseeable difficulty in accessing external financial resources. The implications of COVID-19 are considered a threat to Honduras' progress since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. The report notes concerns over progress regarding a wide range of SDGs relates issues, from poverty increase and job loss to increased inequality and a reduction in tax revenue.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

Honduras' National Statistical System provides less than 30% of the data required to follow up on the global indicators at the country level. The VNR report does not include information on plans to improve data availability and disaggregated data is rarely available across the VNR report. No reference is made to national reporting plans. Moreover, the linkage between the 2017 and the 2020 VNR reports is weak. While the second report includes descriptions of advancements made since the first one, it makes use of data from 2015, resulting in an overlap of content between the two reports with no real narrative of changes in trends.



*In 2020, India submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). Its first presentation was in 2017.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

India's 2017 VNR report mentioned the National Institution for Transforming India as the think tank providing coordination and leadership for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation. The 2020 VNR report still refers to that institution (referred to as NITI Aayog) as the nodal body mandated to oversee the progress of the 2030 Agenda. It is headed by the Prime Minister of India. While the 2017 VNR report made no mention of how non-state actors were involved in governance and institutional mechanism for SDGs implementation, the 2020 VNR report explains that NITI Aayog coordinates and monitors the SDGs in the country in close collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, which works alongside state and non-state actors (such as the United Nations system, think tanks and civil society organizations) in conducting the adoption, implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda. In terms of regional coordination on the SDGs, the Indian Parliament organized a conference on 'Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Resources for the SDGs' during the South Asian Speakers' Summit on Achieving the SDGs.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

According to the VNR report, India has adopted a paradigm shift from a 'whole of government' to 'a whole of society' approach, which engages several stakeholders, such as subnational and local governments, civil society organizations (CSOs), volunteers, local communities and the private sector. The process of engagement is inclusive and collaborative and focuses on the adoption, implementation and evaluation of the SDGs agenda. Moreover, the VNR process itself is understood as a testament to this whole-of-society paradigm as it included contributions

from multi-level governments and civil society. The VNR report mentions that consultations including local governments, CSOs, academia, think tanks, and international organizations were carried out at both the national and subnational levels on the SDGs and their implementation strategies. However, the VNR report is not clear with regards to consultations with non-state actors to define national priorities. One civil society report was prepared by Wada Na Todo Abhiyan in relation to the VNR.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The VNR report mentions that a National Indicator Framework (NIF) baseline report was released in 2019, followed by its first progress report, released in 2020. According to these two reports, each of the 297 indicators were mapped in terms of periodicity of data availability, baseline reference period and data sources. While the 2017 VNR report did not set out gaps based on the assessments conducted, the 2020 VNR report mentions data gaps and lists challenges and specific efforts being carried out in the way forward in the goal-by-goal analysis.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

According to the VNR report, NITI Aayog has devised a strategy for SDGs implementation. In addition, it has developed a national strategy document named 'Strategy for New India@75' that relates to the SDGs and their related targets throughout the strategic domains. The strategy document outlines sectors which have been mapped to meet relevant SDGs and where transformation is targeted. Moreover, the VNR report mentions that NITI Aayog has modified its earlier mapping of the 17 SDGs in order to ensure that the governments' programs and initiatives are interconnected with the SDGs and their targets.

### ***Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda***

The VNR report outlines five pillars that are understood as national priorities for India. Such sectors have been grouped into four clusters: drivers, infrastructure, inclusion and governance. While both the pillars and the clusters can be related to the SDGs (for example in the sense of strengthening human capital, or incrementing the country's economy), the VNR report does not explicitly detail which SDGs are linked to each one of the national priorities.

### ***Integration and policy coherence***

India's VNR report provides a detailed examination of all 17 SDGs and mentions both targets and indicators. As it was the case in the country's 2017 VNR report, the 2020 one provides equal attention to economic, social and environmental dimensions. Although the linkages between the three dimensions are mentioned in the 2020 VNR report and seen as an important aspect to be taken into consideration, there are no detailed examples of such connections through targets and indicators. Different from the first VNR report, the second one refers to policy coherence and understands that for it to be effective knowledge, awareness, and multi-stakeholder engagement are necessary. With regards to international agreements, the VNR report provides linkages with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. There is no reference to Aid Effectiveness and Development Effectiveness Agendas or to COVID-19 commitments.

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## **IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA**

### ***Leave no one behind***

The VNR report has a dedicated chapter to leaving no one behind (LNOB), which mentions that several consultations were conducted with an array of groups and communities identified as vulnerable or at risk of being left behind. In terms of data for LNOB, the VNR report recognizes the need for more data, for example with regards to persons with disabilities. A number of programs that target vulnerable groups are mentioned, including social assistance and new and existing programs targeting specific groups, such as women, children, migrants, people living in poverty, people living with HIV/AIDS, the LGBTQIA+ community, scheduled tribes and castes.



### **GOOD PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT**

India's civil society held a series of national consultations with vulnerable communities around the SDGs. The process was headed by Wada Na Todo Abhiyan, which coordinated the action with both the government (through NITI Aayog) and the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO). According to the civil society report, over a thousand organizations participated in the consultation process, and more than half of them also engaged in the national consultations carried out by the government. Wada Na Todo Abhiyan's civil society report focuses each one of its chapters on a specific group likely to be left behind, and each chapter includes challenges and recommendations to address them. Moreover, the inputs from the civil society consultations were used by NITI Aayog while drafting the VNR report's standalone chapter on LNOB.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The VNR report mentions some government initiatives on sensitization and awareness building measures on the SDGs and their implementation strategies. Such efforts involved central and local governments, civil society organizations, academia, among other stakeholders. With regards to localization efforts, the VNR report mentions a new program for rapid transformation of India's districts performing below expectations in terms of areas that include health, education, water resources, and basic infrastructure. Furthermore, a conclave was held for the states of India's North Eastern Region on the topic of sustainable development strategies for the region, under the framework of SDGs. It involved several stakeholders and produced a range of recommendations that are being pursued by local and central governments alike, according to the VNR report.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

As in the 2017 VNR report, the 2020 one mentions actions being carried out by different stakeholders



towards the achievement of the SDGs. Parliamentarians, civil society, and the private sector are currently acting as partners in this sense. However, the VNR report does not mention specific actions being conducted by academia or children and youth. On the other hand, it highlights one initiative developed by one Police Department towards education. The action gathers teachers of government schools, elders, social workers and volunteers to teach students who are either in dropout situations or whose performance in school is below the expected.

### **Means of implementation**

While the 2017 VNR report did not lay out best practices, lessons learned or challenges for India, the 2020 VNR report outlines all of those aspects. Moreover, it notes the importance of peer learning, technology, capacity development and trade as means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda.



### **GOOD PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT**

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, India leveraged digital and information capacity to develop an information exchange platform to be used by the eight countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). In addition to this platform, named 'SAARC COVID-19 Information Exchange Platform (COINEX)', India put a digital network in place to deliver medical expertise content to be used for training purposes of healthcare personnel in neighbouring countries.

### **Measurement and reporting**

The VNR report does not outline data availability for SDG implementation and points out to a gap in the availability of disaggregated data. However, disaggregated indicators are mentioned in the goal-by-goal analysis. India's 2020 VNR report describes both challenges and progresses in relation to the country's first VNR. In terms of monitoring implementation, state-level committees have put mechanisms in place to ensure coordinated action on the SDGs. Moreover, the VNR report mentions monitoring and evaluation systems established in some of the country's states to track progress against the SDGs' targets and indicators. Technological tools are mentioned, such as dashboards, citizen feedback loops and sensors for real-time monitoring. Furthermore, according to the VNR report, India's government developed and updated the SDG India Index. This monitoring instrument is based on data related to the SDGs, includes indicators from the National Indicator Framework (NIF), and is comprehensive to be used by stakeholders such as policymakers, the private sector and civil society.

### **Civil society validity check**

India's country profile has been reviewed by a representative of Wada Na Todo Abhiyan.



# KENYA

*In 2020, Kenya submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). Its first presentation was in 2017.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

An SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) Coordination Directorate sits with the State Department of Planning. Responsible for 2030 Agenda implementation, the Directorate is supported by a multi-stakeholder Inter-Agency Technical Working Committee. The committee includes representatives from government institutions, the Council of Governors, the private sector, civil society, the parliamentary SDGs Caucus, United Nations Country Teams, the National Youth Council and academia.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

According to the VNR report, the government has sought to strengthen engagements, institutional and coordination mechanisms through a Multi-Stakeholder Engagement Framework. For the VNR, the multi-stakeholder Inter-Agency Technical Committee Working Group was used to prepare guidelines. Umbrella associations consulted with their members through workshops and online platforms, and prepared reports that were submitted to the SDGs coordination Directorate for inclusion in the draft VNR report. As a result of COVID-19, the VNR report validation process occurred online and the collection of disaggregated data, good practices and grassroots inputs was restricted.

transport, security, energy and inclusive and sustainable cities.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

The SDGs have been mainstreamed into government policy, planning and budgeting processes. The country's Third Medium Term Plan (2018-2022) is also aligned with the SDGs. The VNR report makes reference to the human rights-based nature of the 2030 Agenda and efforts to leave no one behind (LNOB). While it does not refer specifically to inter-generational equity or responsibility, it does note that the government is required to borrow responsibly to protect the interests of future generations.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The government has developed the "Big 4 Agenda" that outlines national priorities pertaining to food and nutrition security, universal health coverage, manufacturing and affordable housing. According to the VNR report, the government has prepared national complementary indicators based on the Third Medium Term plan to complement SDG monitoring. National level targets have also been established, aligned with the SDGs (132 out of 138 relevant SDG targets).

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The VNR report provides a detailed examination of all 17 SDGs though it tends to have a greater focus on social dimensions of sustainable development. The goal-by-goal analysis only makes limited references of the linkages between dimension of sustainable development. The VNR report refers to policy coherence for sustainable development, understood in terms of coherence against five key performance areas related to good governance, resourcing for decentralized functions and inter-governmental relations, among others. The VNR report mentions the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The VNR report highlights a detailed analysis of sectoral policy alignment with and contributions to SDG targets. The study found overall relatively good alignment with sectoral policies contributing partially or fully to 92 of 138 relevant SDGs targets (67%). The VNR report notes gaps with respect to gender, youth, poverty reduction,



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The VNR report identifies the following groups as at risk of being left behind: intersex persons, albinism, refugees, the stateless, homeless families, outdoor sleepers and persons with disabilities, orphans and vulnerable children and older persons. Efforts appear to be informed by existing baselines and available data, and the VNR report consistently presents gender disaggregated data. According to the VNR report, LNOB is “at the heart” of Kenya’s approach to 2030 Agenda implementation as noted in various policy documents. Social protection is a key part of Kenya’s approach to LNOB with the government establishing a National Social Protection Policy that includes interventions in the areas of social assistance, social security and health insurance. The VNR report also lists specific efforts to LNOB in the analysis of most goals.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The VNR report outlines awareness raising activities directed at local and national levels of government, civil society, academia, schools, marginalized groups and the public. In particular, it notes focus group discussions, sensitization fora, workshops, discussion panels and social media communication. With respect to localization, the VNR report notes ongoing efforts to strengthen capacities of sub-national (and national) level governments to mainstream the 2030 Agenda into policies, planning, budgeting, implementation and review. It notes the creation of an SDGs curriculum to this effect.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report has a strong emphasis on partnership with diverse stakeholders, recognizing the roles of governments, citizens, the private sector, media, academia and development partners. It highlights the SDGs Kenya Forum that provides an opportunity for citizen engagement. With respect to parliament, a Kenya Parliamentary Caucus on SDGs and Business was formed in 2017. Civil society organizations are noted for their efforts in project implementation, consultation, capacity development, advocacy and awareness-raising. Private sector stakeholders have indicated their priorities for SDG implementation and are increasingly engaged in multi-stakeholder collaborations.

Academic and research institutions are supporting SDG implementation through research programs and SDG clubs have been introduced in schools. Finally, the VNR report also highlights the role of volunteers to support implementation of most goals.



## GOOD PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

The parliament in Kenya is involved in 2030 Agenda implementation. Its Parliamentary Caucus on SDGs and Business was formed in 2017, mandated to promote sustainable development and socially responsible business. It meets this mandate through activities related to legislation, resource mobilization, oversight and partnerships. The Caucus has invested in capacity development and includes eight Parliamentary Committees. An SDGs Open Day in Parliament was held in 2019 and the Caucus launched a 2019-2023 strategic plan. Parliament has also been engaged in the preparation of the 2019 SDG progress report and the 2019 HLPF.

### ***Means of implementation***

The SDGs are included in budgeting processes according to the VNR report. Sectoral policies are also submitted for consideration and financing, aligned with the SDGs. The government recognizes that resource mobilization and effective use of domestic resources are critical aspects of successful 2030 Agenda implementation, noting the need to improve domestic tax administration structures. Kenya is challenged by its re-classification as a lower middle-income country in 2014 in terms of access to concessional international public finance. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kenya established an emergency response fund to mobilize financial resources to support its efforts. It has also been supported by international multilateral partners to put together a costed contingency plan (funded mainly by the World Bank) focused largely on the healthcare response. The VNR report highlights best practices for specific SDGs, such as efforts to scale up basic sanitation for the urban poor. A lesson shared from Kenya’s experience includes ensuring that the VNR process begins early

enough and with appropriate resources to ensure participation and effective implementation.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

According to the VNR report, Kenya is well positioned to report on the indicators it has prioritized with data available for 85% of 131 indicators (though this represents only 56% of the 232 global indicators). Monitoring and reporting on the SDGs occurs through biennial progress reports prepared by government institutions. While these reports suffer from a lack of

timely and disaggregated data, the national statistics office has been carrying out surveys to address data gaps, including to enhance data disaggregation. Local level governments have also been engaged to improve the availability of good quality data through the use of a technology platform to open data and provide opportunity for citizen feedback and engagement. Parliament is involved in follow-up and review as noted above. Kenya's second VNR report assessed progress made since the 2017 VNR report, including challenges and best practices.



# KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

*In 2020, the Kyrgyz Republic submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

The Kyrgyz Republic uses a 'whole-of-government' approach to adapt, implement and monitor progress towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In December 2015, the government established the SDG Coordination Committee chaired by the Prime Minister. The Committee involves relevant ministries and agencies, the Parliament, the Office of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, the Supreme Court of the Kyrgyz Republic, the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic and the National Institute for Strategic Research of the Kyrgyz Republic, with additional representatives from the United Nations Country Team, civil society and the private sector.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The report states that non-state actors were included in the government-led coordination mechanism for the implementation of the SDGs and the preparation of the draft VNR through a multi-stakeholder consultative process but does not indicate that a broader mechanism for stakeholder engagement has been established. Civil society organizations formed their own working groups to provide complementary input during follow-up and review processes.

that can benefit from accelerated actions. Gaps identified include a lack of sufficiently disaggregated statistical data, persistent urban-rural discrepancies, continued social and gender inequalities, insufficient capacities among central and local authorities and limited financial and human resources to work on multiple priorities simultaneously. The Rapid Integrated Assessment of 36 strategic documents found 82% alignment of the national strategic development planning with the SDGs, with full alignment observed with SDGs 1 (No poverty), 2 (Zero hunger), 3 (Good health and well-being), 5 (Gender equality), 7 (Affordable and clean energy) and 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure).

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

The SDGs are incorporated into national development plans and related policies and frameworks through the 2040 National Development Strategy of the Kyrgyz Republic, the 2018-2022 'Unity, Trust, Creation' Program of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic and other programs and strategies. While the VNR report does not mention the human rights-based approach, it has a strong focus on human rights principles. Universality and planetary boundaries are not explicitly referenced. The report contains a dedicated section on the leave no one behind (LNOB) approach, which underpins the entire review.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

Based on the 2030 Agenda context assessment, the working groups tasked with the VNR preparation identified SDG priority goals and targets relevant to the Kyrgyz Republic through a multi-stakeholder consultative process. Out of the 232 global indicators, 206 were considered applicable to the national context. National priorities cover all SDG areas with varying degrees of alignment with specific goals and targets. Top priority targets include resilience of the poor, agricultural productivity, knowledge and skills for sustainable development, resilience and adaptive capacity, rule of law and non-discriminatory laws and policies.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The Kyrgyz Republic undertook a gap analysis using the United Nations Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support methodology, Complexity Analysis of the SDGs Interlinkages and Rapid Integrated Assessment tools. The assessment helped identify the level of alignment between national priorities and SDG implementation and attainment on the subnational level, as well as areas

### ***Integration and policy coherence***

The VNR report covers all the SDGs except SDG 14 as the Kyrgyz Republic is landlocked. It provides a summary examination of goals, targets and indicators with limited details but does identify implementation challenges and next steps for each of the SDGs considered. The report gives equal attention to economic, social and environmental dimensions, but makes limited reference to linkages between the three dimensions. The VNR report approaches the concept of policy coherence for sustainable development as policy coherence within the country, in the context of 'whole-of-government' and 'whole-of-society' approaches. It also includes an assessment of impacts of domestic policies on eliminating statelessness on the realization of the SDGs globally. The VNR report refers to the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Climate change efforts highlighted include the preparation of Nationally Determined Contributions, the Coordination Commission on Climate Change with a focus on green economy and finance mobilization through the Climate Finance Center. The VNR report does not mention the Addis Ababa Action Agenda or the Aid Effectiveness and Development Effectiveness Agendas, nor does it mention any COVID-19-related commitments.

## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The Kyrgyz Republic's LNOB efforts underpin the country's "people-centered strategic policy framework," which outlines the sustainable development discourse for current and future generations, prioritizing the most vulnerable groups including: disadvantaged children and families; people living with HIV/AIDS, drug addiction and mental illness; victims of violence and human trafficking; persons with disabilities; families and children returning from war and conflict zones; refugees and internally displaced persons; migrants and migrant families; convicted persons and those released from places of detention; the elderly; and women and youth living in remote rural areas. Efforts are implemented through the 2040 National Development Strategy as well as new specialized programs for specific groups, including Inclusive Education Concept and Program

2019-2023 targeting children with disabilities and 'Cash+' program to assist low-income families. The VNR report highlights that the country has eliminated statelessness and "virtually eliminated" extreme poverty (between 2013 and 2018, the level of extreme poverty fell from 2.8% to 0.6%).

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The government has been implementing the SDG Youth Ambassadors Program, which engages in awareness-raising efforts among youth. Youth SDG forums have also helped raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda. The National Statistical Committee is implementing a communication strategy for SDG statistics. At the local level, subnational authorities played a consultative role in initial target prioritization and participated in the VNR. Workshops for local administrations during the VNR preparation process promoted the exchange of knowledge and information on SDG progress, raised awareness on the 2020 theme of the HLPF and lay the ground for additional training and capacity-building activities in sub-national administrative divisions. The government, in cooperation with donor organizations, has initiated pilot projects to integrate identified priority SDGs into local actions.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report is vague on the precise extent of local non-state actor participation in SDG implementation. It recognizes having an inclusive and participatory VNR process as "an important lesson for the Kyrgyz Republic on how increased ownership over changes among stakeholders can result in a wider acceptance of decisions on the implementation of solutions." It mentions engagement of civil society working groups and the business community in the follow-up and review processes, and involvement of business and academia in the development and drafting of public policies through the Committee for Industry and Entrepreneurship Development under the National Council for Sustainable Development, among other initiatives.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report highlights the lack of disaggregated statistical data as challenge to the 2030 Agenda implementation. It also identifies challenges for each SDG. The VNR report stresses the need for further financial, human and technical support to accelerate progress. It notes the government's plans to include key



priority SDGs and targets in national budget planning and resource mobilization strategies through investment incentives, public-private partnerships and development cooperation, among other tools.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

A statistical capacity assessment revealed that the Kyrgyz Republic is ready to report on 102 indicators, or 50% of all applicable global SDG indicators. The report recognizes the national SDG reporting platform as “an essential element of building an effective system for

monitoring achievements of the SDGs.” To improve data availability, the 2020-2024 program for the development of statistics provides for measures to modernize the statistical system of the Kyrgyz Republic through the digitalization and automation of the process of collecting and processing data and by developing statistics for SDG monitoring. The VNR report notes that the government plans to improve disaggregated data availability. The VNR report does not specify government plans regarding future national reporting.

*In 2020, Liberia submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

Liberia has a National Steering Committee, chaired by the President, that is responsible for high-level coordination and decision-making body. It is responsible for management of the country's Pro-poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development, and therefore implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Africa Agenda 2063. According to the VNR report, the government has established 12 Technical Working Groups comprised experts and specialists from government institutions and mandated to ensure participation of non-state actors in public planning. Civil society, development partners, County Development Committee Representatives and private sector stakeholders are not formally included in the working groups but play an advisory role.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

In terms of mechanisms for ongoing stakeholder engagement, the government plans to establish a Citizens Feedback Mechanism according to the VNR report. The mechanism aims to increase involvement by citizens in overall monitoring of development projects and programs through a mechanism that will allow citizens, civil society and the media to raise feedback on the delivery of services through a systematic and technological approach. The mechanism will be available on mobile devices and the web.

In terms of consultations, the VNR report notes that significant national and sub-national consultations were planned for the VNR but that they had to be postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, it notes that consultations occurred later in the VNR process. In addition, the VNR report outlines briefly consultations around the country's national development plan.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The VNR report refers to plans by the government to carry out a gap analysis or baseline study to assess existing policies in relation to global and regional commitments. Through this process, the government will identify where additional progress is needed.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

The Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (2018-2023 national development plan) supports the country's Vision 2030 framework, developed in 2012. The national vision is aligned with the 2030 Agenda, and addresses social, economic, political, environmental, cultural and technological aspects of sustainable development. The national development plan connects the SDGs to 16 development outcomes. In terms of the transformative principles of the 2030 Agenda, the report mentions only efforts to leave no one behind (LNOB) and does not refer to universality, planetary boundaries or inter-generational responsibility or equity. While the human rights-based nature of the agenda is not explicitly stated, the VNR report does point to efforts by the government to protect human rights.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

As noted, the national development plan includes 16 development outcomes that pertain to the areas of social outcomes, economy, peace and governance. The Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development includes 140 national targets and 140 national indicators, linked to the 2030 Agenda (and Africa Agenda 2063).

### **Integration and policy coherence**

Liberia's VNR report includes a detailed examination of all 17 SDGs with references to the applicable linkages between economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Overall however, this is a greater focus on social dimensions. Policy coherence

for sustainable development is not mentioned though the report does refer to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and relevant international frameworks related to aid and development effectiveness, notably the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation.

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## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The VNR report identifies poor people, children, youth, elders, women, girls, people with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities, people living with HIV, Ebola virus disease survivors and LGBTI individuals as at risk of being left behind. Under the country's national development plan, efforts to LNOB focus on ensuring that development gains are shared equitably. This includes through decentralized government services, land reforms, involvement of local communities and "addressing peace and reconciliation needs of those who feel alienated from the development pathway" (p. 3). The VNR report highlights universal programs such as social protection investments. It also refers to specific initiatives for children and religious and ethnic groups though information is not presented for all groups identified as at risk of being left behind. In terms of gender equality, the VNR report refers to provisions in the national development plan and efforts to empower women.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

Awareness-raising activities were carried out at national and sub-national levels with SDGs teams deployed across the country. Teams were responsible for organizing radio talk shows geared at reaching audiences in major cities and rural areas. Information was made available in English but also in local dialects. Town hall meetings were also conducted to reach diverse stakeholders. In terms of engagement by local government, the VNR process anticipated a role of County Development Steering Committees to support consultations (though these were cancelled in light of the COVID-19 pandemic). According to the VNR report, the government recognizes the need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of service delivery at the local level and increase local community participation in decision-making and implementation of the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (and by extension, the 2030 Agenda).

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report tends to highlight how the government plans to involve non-state actors rather than actual activities carried out by them. It notes feedback mechanisms for civil society organizations and others and emphasizes the potential of public-private partnerships. However, it does not provide significant examples of actions carried out by these stakeholders to specifically implement the 2030 Agenda.

### ***Means of implementation***

Information on good practice and lessons learned is provided in the VNR report. With respect to the latter, it notes the importance of targeted efforts to address inequality and ensuring that new policies do not recreate past economic and political structures that contribute to marginalization. However, the government faces capacity challenges in terms of limited fiscal space, low ability to organize information on service delivery to inform decision-making, and weak institutional knowledge and knowledge retention. The VNR report notes efforts related to balancing budgets and aligning spending with available revenue and explicitly states the cost of the current national plan, which is directly connected to the SDGs. The government has developed a strategy for domestic resource mobilization and also notes past reliance on donor assistance and borrowing to address financing gaps. The country is currently facing donor fatigue (particularly since efforts to fight the Ebola pandemic) and aid flows have declined. The VNR report recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic as a major challenge that will further exacerbate existing issues related to poverty and inequality, among other areas of sustainable development. It notes the need to reassess the impacts of the crisis on the country's Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (2018-2023).

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The VNR report does not provide information on overall data availability or the status of disaggregated data. It does however point to efforts to improve data availability, namely investments in statistical institutions' technical capacities and infrastructure to support data collection at national and sub-national levels. The VNR report notes that a draft "year one" report was prepared on 2030 Agenda implementation. While the VNR report does not indicate reporting timelines, it notes that cabinet is responsible for monitoring progress on goals through periodic assessments of the country's national development plan.



# LIBYA

*In 2020, Libya submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

The Government set up a National Commission for Sustainable Development chaired by the Director General of the Ministry for Planning. The commission includes experts and specialists in different fields of development, and a working group for each SDG was put in place. Each working group includes experts with the task of preparing annual reports on the implementation of the SDGs. The commission consists of members from the national statistical bureau. There is a plan to make this commission an inter-ministerial commission chaired by the prime minister in the near future. The VNR report also mentions consultative bodies that include representatives from civil society organizations, the private sector, academia, people with disabilities, women and youth.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The VNR report mentions that a roadmap for VNR preparation was put in place, which included the organization of a series of meetings and workshops about Libya's national priorities. These discussions led to the selection of 10 SDGs to be covered in the 2020 VNR, and a working group was established for each SDG. The different working groups interact within the frame of the Forum for Sustainable Development, which is a process for ongoing stakeholder engagement. It intends to provide a platform for dialogue, consultation, exchange of experiences, coordination of efforts, and enhanced cooperation between the public sector, the private sector and civil society.

survey was conducted on the SDGs. However, the report provides data on different indicators in comparison to different baselines by using sources from different governmental bureaus.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

As stated in the VNR report, Libya considers that achieving sustainable development goals requires their incorporation into public policies. For this reason, the Ministry of Planning, within the framework of achieving the 2030 Agenda, adopted a three-year development plan for all sectors of the state for the 2020-2022 period. The plan highlights the need to integrate the SDGs into the sectoral strategies in the Libyan state.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The VNR report assesses the progress on a limited set of country-selected SDGs examined; specifically, SDG 3 (Good health and well-being), SDG 4 (Quality education), SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), SDG 13 (Climate action), SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals). The VNR report includes a detailed examination of those goals, mentions targets and indicators, and adopts a balanced multi-sectoral approach, taking the social, economic and environmental dimensions into account. Moreover, the VNR report mentions that COVID-19 will have huge implications on Libya's economy and thus will cause additional challenges to the SDGs implementation. However, the report does not provide mitigation strategies, nor it describes efforts to reduce the impacts of COVID-19 on those at risk of being left behind.

The VNR report mentions that Libya's current efforts in terms of ensuring policy coherence will not lead to a national vision on the SDGs due to a lack of binding measures that oblige the different ministries to consider the 2030 Agenda as a framework. Moreover, there are challenges related to lack of data and statistics.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

According to the VNR report, no baseline or gap analysis



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The VNR report mentions that the main principle of the 2030 Agenda is “Leave no one behind” and thus considers that development efforts should be inclusive and focus on women, people with disabilities, and people leaving in marginalized areas.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The VNR report refers to the establishment of the Libyan Forum for Sustainable Development, which counts with the involvement of civilians of varying backgrounds and capabilities. The Forum has pledged to continue using awareness campaigns on different media platforms and to conduct workshops to further involve the community.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report considers that one of the major challenges for development in Libya is the weak private sector and the absence of a legal and legislative framework that enables an effective and efficient role for business in development. The VNR report mentions that Libya needs to develop partnerships at national, regional and global levels in order to ensure coherence and join efforts with other development partners to address global challenges.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

According to the VNR report, there is a need to further develop the organizational capacity of the national statistical system.



# MALAWI

*In 2020, Malawi submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

Leadership for 2030 Agenda implementation resides a National Planning Commission, working in close collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. In terms of institutional mechanisms, the VNR report points to the establishment of 16 Sector Working Groups, composed of specific Technical Working Groups that develop reports after examining specific expert areas. In addition, a National Civil Society Taskforce on SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) exists and includes 530 members. This group engages with government mechanisms and influences policy decisions through research, service delivery and advocacy.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The VNR report notes the need for a specific process and approach to improve stakeholder engagement in 2030 Agenda implementation. Nevertheless, consultations occurred with respect to the selection of national priorities and on the VNR according to the report. A National Steering Committee and a Core Technical Committee were established to oversee the VNR. The National Steering Committee included representatives from government institutions, development partners and civil society organizations. The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted consultation and engagement though some face-to-face meetings occurred before preventative measures set in. VNR report validation was carried out virtually.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

According to the VNR report, Malawi is implementing the 2030 Agenda through its medium-term national development strategy called the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy III. The VNR report includes specific mention of the universal, human rights-based nature of the 2030 Agenda. There is a dedicated chapter on efforts to leave no one behind (LNOB).

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

Malawi has identified national priorities for 2030 Agenda implementation. These include environment, education, economy, health, and inequality. Moreover, the VNR report refers to the existence of national targets and indicators. The latter have been included as localized proxy indicators and reflect Malawi's efforts to contribute to global targets through national indicators.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The VNR report includes a detailed assessment of all 17 SDGs. While it covers all dimensions of sustainable development and makes linkages between them in the analysis of specific goals, overall it has a stronger focus on social dimensions. The VNR report mentions the importance of policy and institutional coherence, noting plans to use a Macroeconomic Dashboard to promote policy coherence and coordination. The VNR report refers to climate change but not the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. It does, however, mention the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the monitoring framework for aid and development effectiveness established in Busan in 2011.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The 2020 VNR report is built on an assessment conducted in 2016 meant to develop baselines and the country's first national progress reporting in 2018. The VNR report does not provide specific details on these assessments, and does not show gaps that exist in the goal-by-goal analysis presented.



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### **Leave no one behind**

According to the VNR report, women, the youth, the elderly, persons leaving with disabilities and vulnerable children are groups at risk of being left behind and therefore "at the heart" of 2030 Agenda implementation efforts. Efforts appear to be informed by existing data, however



the status of gender disaggregated data is unclear from the VNR report as information is not consistently presented. In terms of efforts to leave no one behind (LNOB), the VNR report includes specific commitments, laws and policies, but not an overarching approach to translate the LNOB commitment into guidance for policies, goals, targets, etc. It should also be noted that the VNR report refers to collaboration with non-state actors to develop a Human Rights Action Plan that will include reviews of existing laws on same sex relationships and provisions to support LGBTI health care services.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

To raise awareness of the SDGs, the government carried out workshops, training programmes, institutional capacity building and integration into the tertiary curriculum and decision-making processes. The role of non-state actors in raising awareness is also noted. In terms of localization, the VNR report notes that the SDGs have been integrated into planning systems and processes at national, regional and local levels. Moreover, they were translated into three Malawian local languages with information provided to local councils and the Area and Village Development Committees. The VNR report also lays out numerous efforts related to rural development and decentralization in support of the national development plan and the SDGs. The VNR report includes a specific sub-chapter on localization.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report highlights the role of the National Civil Society Taskforce on the SDGs, noting the role of its members in 2030 Agenda implementation. The Taskforce includes civil society, trade unions, youth organizations, disability groups, development partners (ex-officio member) and international organizations (ex-officio members). These organizations are supporting implementation through research, service delivery, advocacy and citizen engagement to promote accountability. While the VNR report does not provide detailed information on a range of activities for the private sector and academia, it does note that they are involved in annual SDGs progress reporting. The VNR report also mentions the role of parliament (discussed below) and the vital role of volunteers in active 2030 Agenda implementation, often acting as a bridge between formal and informal provision of public services.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The VNR report provides information on lessons learned and challenges in 2030 Agenda implementation. With respect to lessons learned, it outlines experiences related to improving the VNR process, stakeholder engagement

and ensuring available data. Challenges for Malawi include the need to improve inclusion of the SDGs in national budgets, transparency and effective use of resources, corruption, awareness raising, localization, weak monitoring, evaluation and data systems and limited private sector activities. The VNR report also notes illicit financial flows as a challenge. In terms of financing implementation, the government worked with the United Nations Development Programme to undertake a Development Finance Assessment that identified opportunities from public, private and development cooperation financing. The VNR report recognizes that there is now an additional need to raise financial resources to respond to COVID-19 as well as accelerate progress on the SDGs.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

As of May 2020, Malawi makes use of 212 indicators to track and report on SDG progress. The VNR report has some level of data disaggregation but it is recognized that there is a lack of disaggregated data for most of the indicators. The National Statistical Office has developed a plan to improve disaggregated data and information collection at national and local levels. In terms of reporting, the national statistics office supports production of annual SDG Progress Reports. According to the VNR report, non-state actors are engaged in the reporting process. Moreover, parliament is highlighted for promoting transparency in the SDGs implementation process and advocating for constant tracking of the progress. Finally, the National Audit office undertook an audit to assess the government's capacity to implement the 2030 Agenda.



## **GOOD PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT**

Malawi's VNR report outlined efforts towards annual national reporting on the 2030 Agenda as well as the role of parliament and the national auditing institution in follow-up and review.

### ***Civil society validity check***

Malawi's country profile has been reviewed by a representative of the Council for Non-Governmental Organizations in Malawi (CONGOMA).



# MICRONESIA

*In 2020, the Federated States of Micronesia (Micronesia) submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

According to the VNR report, an SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) Working Group was established in 2016, responsible for internal coordination. The Working Group includes government institutions, which are responsible for obtaining inputs from civil society and the private sector. State Focal Points were established as part of the Working Group.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The VNR report points to stakeholder engagement in the prioritization of SDG indicators as well as specific forums held to consult stakeholders on the education and health sectors. With respect to the VNR report, representatives from government institutions, the private sector, civil society and other development partners assisted in the drafting of specific sections. Consultations were also held in January and February of 2020, though the COVID-19 pandemic impacted planned consultations for March to July 2020. The VNR report includes an annex of institutions and organizations that contributed to the VNR.

selection of 89 SDG targets, with an accompanying 90 SDG indicators. The VNR report also points to alignment between specific national strategy and the SDGs such as those relating to infrastructure, health, education and statistics. The VNR report refers to the principle of leaving no one behind and recognizes the need to protect the Micronesian way of life for future generations.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The VNR report mentions priority targets under each SDG. Nevertheless, the national strategy prioritizes sustainable development through health, education, agriculture, fisheries, private sector development, transportation, communication and energy. National targets and indicators have been identified with the country's SDG Dashboard showcasing 90 targets and 89 indicators.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The VNR report provides a detailed examination of all SDGs. While all dimensions of sustainable development are examined, the report has a greater focus on the social and makes limited references to the linkages between dimensions in the goal-by-goal analysis. The VNR report makes reference to environment-related international agreements as well as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

In 2017, the government carried out a review of data availability and use in relation to the SDGs. The VNR report also includes an annex with a baseline assessment for SDGs 1 through 5.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

Micronesia's Strategic Development Plan (2004-2023) serves as the national strategy for sustainable economic growth and self-reliance. To incorporate the SDGs into this strategy, the VNR report notes the



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### **Leave no one behind**

The VNR report does not provide information on the status of disaggregated data to leave no one behind (LNOB) and gender disaggregated data is not widely available in the report. Nevertheless, poor households, children, adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and the elderly are identified as at risk of being left behind. The VNR report emphasizes holistic and

integrated approaches to tackling challenges across national priority but does not provide significant details on how LNOB is integrated into national approaches overall. Nevertheless, the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance Program is highlighted as an example of how the government works to support vulnerable populations when they experience shocks. The VNR report provides specific examples of efforts to support vulnerable populations in the goal-by-goal analysis.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

According to the VNR report, the government held an SDG consultation and localization workshop to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda, prior to the VNR. This workshop was also meant to support localization through a review of the relevancy of specific SDGs to local contexts. The VNR report notes a commitment to integrate the SDGs into state level plans. Efforts by regional governments are also highlighted in the VNR report, notably in terms of promoting workforce participation.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report provides examples of specific multi-stakeholder partnerships involving civil society and the private sector. It also showcased the 2019 independent audit of Micronesia's preparedness to implement the SDGs. In terms of support from development partners, the VNR report points to more support in the areas of social protection and preparedness and recovery

particularly with respect to health, sanitation, waste management, education, gender and water and food security.

### ***Means of implementation***

Challenges related to 2030 Agenda implementation are listed under specific SDGs. In addition, the VNR report noted systemic issues that serve as significant challenges – climate change, overfishing, vulnerability to natural disasters and sudden shocks, notably COVID-19. Data challenges are also listed, including the need to improve capacities in this area. Micronesia recognizes the need to strengthen resource mobilization and integrate the SDGs into the annual budget process. Sources of finance include domestic resources, official development assistance, technical assistance and capacity building, technology transfer, taxes and remittances. The VNR report also points to specific projects and support in the context of South-South cooperation.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

While the VNR report mentions challenges in relation to data availability, it does not provide an overview of the current status of available indicators. Nevertheless, it notes challenges related to data use, coordination and quality. In addition the SDG Dashboard noted above, the VNR report notes that the government has committed to include the economy related SDG indicators in its annual economic and fiscal update.



# MOLDOVA

*In 2020, Moldova submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

In the first part of 2016, to create an appropriate institutional framework and ensure a participatory and transparent process to adapt the SDGs and implement them at the national level, the Government of Moldova established a National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development, headed by the country President, and including representatives of governmental bodies, the Academia, the National Confederation of Employees, and trade unions. The Council's work is supported by an Inter-Ministerial Committee for Strategic Planning, the State Chancellery, and five multi-stakeholder working groups aligning their work with one of the 2030 Agenda 5Ps.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The process of engaging stakeholders is not presented in the VNR. However, to ensure a participatory and inclusive VNR drafting, a Joint Steering Committee was established, including representatives from the Presidency, Parliament, Government, central and local public authorities, civil society, the private sector, press, and academia. Given COVID-19 impacts, their meeting, and a public consultation session of the draft Report with all development partners went virtual.

Similarly, a general explanation of stakeholders' involvement in national priorities definition explains that those were set throughout a multi-stakeholder process, including national and local public authorities, the private sector, civil society, academia, and development partners.

Besides, the National Youth Council of Moldova prepared a 'Complementary Report' presenting youth perspectives on the SDGs implementation.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The Republic of Moldova conducted a Rapid Integrated Assessment of its national policy documents to identify gaps and weaknesses within the national policy framework regarding the SDGs. The exercise analyzed 169 SDG targets, putting particular focus on 126 quantitative targets.

The results demonstrated that the national policy agenda is only partially aligned to the SDGs. Only 11% of the targets were aligned to the national policy papers. In comparison, 57% of the targets are partially aligned to the Republic of Moldova's policy papers, and national policy papers do not reflect about one-third of the SDG targets at all.

Also, many gaps were identified in areas such as access to health services, education, gender wages, access to ICT, street infrastructure, inter-urban public transport, housing, shortage of institutional environmental capacities, and funding. Even when the impact of COVID-19 has not been estimated, the VNR announces that it will be negative and could lead to increased inequalities.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

In September 2017, the Republic of Moldova's Government initiated the development of a new long-term national strategy by 2030: the National Development Strategy 'Moldova 2030', which is currently in the process of being approved. This new national development strategy was built, to a great extent, around the 2030 Agenda targets and goals. Once adopted, 'Moldova 2030' will be translated into sectoral strategies to be better implemented, monitored, and evaluated.

The human rights-based approach is not considered in Moldova's VNR, but it has a strong human rights focus, including a sub-chapter on human rights and access to

justice. The report does not cover planetary boundaries nor inter-generational responsibility. Universality and Leave no one behind are explicitly mentioned. A special chapter is dedicated to the last, highlighting that assessing the impact of the COVID-19 crisis is critical for informing and tailoring governments and partners' responses to recover while no one is left behind.

### ***Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda***

The report indicates that Moldova's National Development Plan includes four priorities: sustainable and inclusive economy, strong human and social capital, honest and efficient institutions, and a healthy environment. The *National Development Strategy 'Moldova 2030'* complements them establishing focus areas: well-being and human rights, education and health, promoting a circular economy, environmental protection, and building an inclusive society. The SDGs targets and indicators were adjusted to the Moldova specifics in a multi-stakeholder process involving national and local public authorities, the private sector, civil society, academia, and development partners.

Moldova was one of the first countries to nationalize (in 2016) and then revise (in 2019) a national set of indicators. After the revision, 213 of the 232 individual global indicators were considered relevant for the country and were adjusted, broken down, and complemented with national proxies. As a result, 338 relevant indicators were obtained, 121 of which are global indicators, 53 are adjusted global indicators, 77 are global broken-down indicators, and 87 are national proxies.

### ***Integration and policy coherence***

The report is structured around the '5Ps', providing a detailed analysis of each of them that 'replicates' the SDGs. The chapter 'People' considers no poverty, health and well-being, quality education, and gender equality. The chapter 'Prosperity' deals with clean and affordable energy, decent jobs and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequality, sustainable cities and communities. The chapter 'Planet' addresses clean water and hygiene, responsible consumption and production, and climate action. The chapter 'Peace' refers to security, the rule of law, human rights, access to justice, good governance, and citizen participation. Finally, the chapter 'Partnerships' covers finances, technologies, capacity building, trade, systemic

problems and institutional coherence, multilateral partnerships, and data monitoring.

The VNR provides equal attention to the three sustainable development dimensions. Policy coherence is considered only within the country. The only international document related to the 2030 Agenda explicitly mentioned are those linked to the Developmental Effectiveness Agenda: the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action, the Busan Commitments, and the Mexico Communiqué.



## **IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA**

### ***Leave no one behind***

The VNR identifies the rural population, children and youth, women, people with disabilities, Roma people, migrants, and the elderly as groups at risk of being left behind. The status of data disaggregation availability should be reinforced to support those groups effectively. The report includes the Government's commitment to increasing investment in developing a national system for production, collection, and qualitative data disaggregation.

Moldova uses new and existing specialized and universal programs to support vulnerable populations, including multifunctional social service networks helping to improve disadvantaged groups' access to needs-based services and cash transfer programs to fight poverty, among others. Gender equality-oriented actions are extensively described, and gender-disaggregated data is available most of the time. Government actions in response to the COVID-19 pandemics are explicitly linked to the most vulnerable protection. The VNR identifies inequalities in areas such as education, health, and income. However, efforts to reduce domestic inequalities are not clearly articulated in the report.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The report does not provide information on awareness-raising efforts. Still, it shows that an SDGs localization process is advancing through policies supporting local public administration of Moldova in implementing the National Development Strategy for 2016-2020 through an integrated and sustainable urban development for 2017-2019 project. Besides, the VNR reports the creation

of 32 local action groups representing 263 first-level administrative and territorial units, focused on local development cooperation.

In April 2020, central and local authorities met to discuss measures to be taken at the local level to prevent COVID-19 from spreading.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

Civil society, the private sector, academia, trade unions, and youth are engaged in SDGs national implementation activities. The VNR underlines the relevance of youth's role play, helping to envision a path to the future development of Moldova. The parliament was also involved in 38 South-South and Triangular Cooperation activities in 2016, including actions to reinforce parliamentary publication and dissemination of information through websites and the creation of cooperation networks and opportunities.

The report also considers partnerships with the so-called 'development partners,' asking them 'to increase as much as possible the predictability of assistance and the availability of development partners to support the Republic of Moldova's national development agenda and implementation of the SDGs.' [p. 151].

Finally, United Nations agencies in the country provided analytical and informational support to the VNR building process.

### ***Means of implementation***

The report refers to technology, capacity development, systemic issues, trade, and national and international financing as a means of national SDGs implementation.

However, there is no cost estimation of the 2030 Agenda implementation. It is specified that the policies oriented to advancing the national development, including the SDGs, will be implemented within budgetary allocations. Considering such restriction is important to highlight that Moldova's Government improved its mechanism for coordinating foreign aid by implementing the regulation on the institutional framework mechanism for coordinating and managing foreign aid, and establishing sectoral councils in the field of external assistance.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The Government led a multi-stakeholder process in 2018 with the overall objective of assessing data availability and institutional modernization capacity needs to implement the 2030 Development Agenda. As a result, a set of recommendations to achieve data revolution was set, including increasing the number of official statistics data producers and providing education and data literacy.

The VNR notes that, at present, data are at least partially produced for 77% of the national indicators: 46.4% are fully available. In comparison, 30.8% are partially functional, with the possibility to quickly estimate the missing elements. The VNR also notes a shortage of disaggregated data compromising the SDG implementation monitoring and evaluation system for over 30% of the indicators.

Non-traditional data sources are used across the report: when analyzing air pollution, the Copernicus Sentinel-satellite data is used. Besides, the VNR takes data from the World Bank poverty & equity data portal, the UNDP, UNSTATS, and the OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index.





# MOROCCO

*In 2020, Morocco submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). The first VNR report was introduced in 2016.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

The government set up a National Commission for Sustainable Development chaired by the Head of Government in July 2019. The High Commission for Planning, which is an independent national institution in charge of statistics, has been tasked with preparing annual reports on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Commission includes representatives of the government, Parliament, the Court of Auditors, public institutions, the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, local governments, academia, media and civil society.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

In June 2019, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the High Commission for Planning organized a national consultation to take stock of the progress of the SDGs and prepare Morocco's participation in the HLPF with support from the United Nations system in Morocco. The consultations included diverse stakeholders and was an opportunity for discussion of achievements by stakeholders and reflections on the progress of SDGs implementation. Along with their participation in national, regional and thematic consultations, stakeholders contributed to the VNR through their own implementation efforts that further strengthened the process of mobilization and collective ownership of the 2030 Agenda.

global indicators. It provides data on SDG indicators in comparison to a baseline. For example, the progress on poverty is compared between 2007 and 2018 while the progress on malnutrition indicators for children under 5 is shown through a comparison between 2003 indicators and those of 2018. Yet, it should be noted that baselines are not fully explained in the VNR report or referred to adequately in both of these instances. Data for 2018, were produced by the High Commission for Planning and the reports by concerned government departments. In terms of policies, Morocco also carried out a Rapid Integrated Assessment to examine existing policies and priorities vis-à-vis SDG targets.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

According to the VNR report, Morocco considers the Agenda 2030 for SDGs as a global development framework which overlaps with Moroccans' aspirations. The country's national sustainable development strategy integrates most SDG targets. The VNR report showed that institutional actors have made reference to the 2030 Agenda framework and aligned their programs and strategies in relation to the SDGs. The VNR report refers only to the 2030 Agenda principle of leaving no one behind.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The Rapid Integrated Assessment supported the identification of priorities and an overall assessment of the level of integration of the SDG targets, which in turn helped identify accelerator targets and an approximate correspondence between the SDGs and the National Strategy for Sustainable Development. The VNR report mentions a number of specific national priorities including those related to poverty reduction, improving food security, economic empowerment of women, housing and environmental sustainability.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The 2020 VNR report assesses progress on all 17



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The VNR report notes that an evaluation of the statistical system was carried out to assess data availability with availability overall resting at 42% of the 244

SDGs and adapts a balanced multi-sectoral approach taking social, economic and environmental dimensions into account. The VNR report notes the importance of consolidated public policies to ensure policy coherence and efficient SDG implementation. While the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction are explicitly considered and linked with the SDGs, the Convention on Biological Diversity and frameworks related to aid and development effectiveness are not. The VNR report contains information on the government's actions to face the COVID-19 pandemic however they are not linked with the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Nevertheless, the VNR report proposes different scenarios and mitigating strategies in relation to the COVID-19 response.

## 2030 IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

Efforts to leave no one behind are considered across the VNR report. The groups at risk of being left behind are identified as women, people with disabilities and children. The VNR report explicitly notes that to mitigate the social effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, allowances have been granted monthly to employees and households working in the informal sector. Specific measures have also been taken, either directly or through the support of civil society associations, in favor of addressing the needs of street children, people with disabilities, the elderly and women.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

There are many references in the VNR report to awareness-raising activities, including the organization of three regional consultations between 2017 and 2019, in collaboration with the Wilayas and the regional councils, in partnership with the United Nations

Population Fund. The consultations aimed to raise awareness among stakeholders about the SDGs and to contextualize the goals at the territorial level. They highlighted the need to set up regional statistical databases.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

Civil society organizations, the private sector, and the Parliament have developed activities to implement the SDGs nationally. Multi-stakeholder partnerships are considered as critical to reaching the SDGs. However, the approach to partnerships focuses on national stakeholders, not referring to priority areas for external development partners' support.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report refers only to the mobilization of internal funding for 2030 Agenda implementation mentioning that the proportion of government revenue in GDP stabilized around 21% before rising to 22% in 2019. Concerning technology and innovation, the VNR report mentions that partnerships that were created in order to develop capacities in Morocco. The VNR report also mentions the trade agreements signed by Morocco in order to enhance exchange with southern countries, and also indicates that public-private partnerships are an important step for the implementation of SDGs.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The VNR report mentions that there is a need to further develop the organizational capacity of the national statistical system. To consolidate the performance and strengthen the capacity of its national statistical system, Morocco has drafted a new law (currently in the process of approval) in accordance with the fundamental principles of official statistics adopted by the United Nations. The Commission has mandated that reporting on the SDGs will be annual. A SDG monitoring and support committee was set up for this and is chaired by the services of the Head of Government.



# MOZAMBIQUE

*In 2020, Mozambique submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### ***Leadership, governance and institutions***

Leadership for 2030 Agenda implementation relies on multiple cabinet ministers. The SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) National Reference Group, created in 2017, coordinates implementation and promotes engagement by stakeholders. It includes representatives from different levels of government, civil society, academic institutions, the private sector, cooperation partners, parliamentarians, the National Association of Mozambican Municipalities, the African Peer Review Mechanism and individuals.

### ***Stakeholder engagement***

The VNR report does not lay out a specific mechanism for broader stakeholder engagement beyond the governance mechanism noted above and consultations. However, it does point to participatory processes for the development of national and sectoral plans that include civil society, experts and development partners. One specific example of such engagement refers to a civil society platform and to a global network that facilitates partnerships between the government and the private sector. With respect to the VNR, non-state actors were engaged through data collection and consultations with the first draft of the report circulated for validation. Civil society organizations also carried out provincial workshops.

2016, the government also examined existing data to support monitoring efforts, concluding that 74% of the global SDG indicators aligned with the government's 2015-2019 five-year plan. The VNR report presents gaps and progress for specific SDGs based on the assessments carried out.

### ***Incorporating the SDGs***

Mozambique's Government Five-Year Programme incorporates the 2030 Agenda. The 2015-2019 program accounted for all three dimensions of sustainable development. The National Framework of SDG Indicators adopted in 2020 is aligned with the country's subsequent five-year program for 2020-2024. The VNR report includes a chapter on efforts to leave no one behind (LNOB) and recognizes that the 2030 Agenda includes a commitment to responsibility to future generations. While the human rights-based approach is not explicitly mentioned, the report includes references to human rights.

### ***Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda***

According to the VNR report, Mozambique's national priorities pertain to 1) developing human capital and social justice, 2) economic growth, productivity and job creation and 3) strengthening natural resource management and the environment. These priorities are outlined in the government's five year -plan. In addition, the VNR report presents Mozambique's National Framework of SDG Indicators. Government institutions are responsible for specific targets in the five-year program.

### ***Integration and policy coherence***

The VNR report presents a detailed examination of all 17 SDGs with equal attention to all dimensions of sustainable development and applicable references between them in the goal-by-goal analysis. It refers to policy coherence and mechanisms and approaches to improve it. Moreover, the report refers to a range of international agreements related to climate change, the environment and financing for development as part of 2030 Agenda implementation efforts.



## POLICIES

### ***Baseline or gap analysis***

The VNR report presents an assessment of Mozambique drawing on the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network's SDG Index. Moreover, in developing national indicators, the VNR report notes the use of an in-depth analysis of sectoral programs and targets. In



## GOOD PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

In its efforts to ensure an integrated approach to 2030 Agenda implementation, the government makes use of the SDG National Reference Group to enable different levels of government jointly towards integrating economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and strengthen policy coherence.



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The VNR report indicates that people in situations of extreme poverty, children in difficult situations, the elderly, people with disabilities and people with chronic and degenerative diseases are at risk of being left behind. To support these groups, the VNR report notes the existence of a social protection system and in particular the National Basic Social Security Strategy (2016-2024).

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The VNR report does not include information on awareness-raising activities. Rather, it mentions that the VNR showed a lack of popular knowledge on the 2030 Agenda, noting the need for urgent attention to raise awareness. In terms of localization, the national government has provided guidance to provinces and districts for planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation to integrate the SDGs. The VNR notes the role of provincial parliaments to ensure that SDG indicators and targets are reflected in strategies, plans and budgets. The National Association of Mozambican Municipalities has been supporting local authorities to integrate the SDGs into their activities though work is still needed to properly integrate the 2030 Agenda into plans.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report highlights the role of civil society in supporting VNR consultations, advocacy, awareness raising and collaboration in support of localization and monitoring. The VNR report also mentions civil society reporting on progress and their efforts to capture citizens' perceptions on SDG progress. With respect to the private sector, the VNR report pointed to the 2019 Mozambique Economic and Social Forum which included a focus on the SDGs as a means to drive accelerated, inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The VNR report also notes support from the United Nations and civil society in carrying out the VNR.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report points to a number of systemic issues impacting the realization of the 2030 Agenda including security, climate change, pandemics and human and drug trafficking. For Mozambique, it notes the critical importance of domestic resource mobilization to implement the agenda with a particular focus on increasing tax revenues. The VNR report also notes the role of official development assistance and efforts to improve coordination and monitoring of external support. In terms of efforts needed going forward, the VNR report points to improving overall conditions in the country, implementation tools, mobilization of funding and strengthening partnerships. The VNR report also noted the importance of coordination around data collection and analysis with non-state actors as a challenge to address going forward.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

According to the VNR report, 74% of the global SDG indicators aligned with the government's 2015-2019 five-year plan. Of these, 38% were available and regularly monitored. Twelve percent were partially collected with 24% not collected. Noting that efforts to LNOB require more disaggregated data, there is a need for better coordination between official and unofficial data producers to address this issue, given that much data is produced in the country. The VNR report does not provide information on national reporting processes.



# NEPAL

*In 2020, Nepal submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). Its first presentation was in 2017.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

According to the VNR report, Nepal's Federal Parliament has a Sustainable Development and Good Governance Committee, which counts with the participation of all the main political parties. In addition, at the apex level, a Steering Committee for the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was established under the leadership of the Prime Minister. Moreover, there is an SDG Implementation and Monitoring Committee, which is headed by the vice-chair of the National Planning Commission (NPC). Apart from this tripartite governance mechanism, SDGs Implementation and Monitoring Thematic Committees exist. While Nepal's 2017 VNR report and a 2020 civil society report mentioned nine thematic committees, a representative from another civil society organization referred to the existence of eight of such committees. However, the 2020 VNR report mentions only one SDG Implementation and Monitoring Committee, which counts with representatives from the private sector and has the president of Nepal's National NGO Federation among its members.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The VNR report is vague on the extension of stakeholder engagement towards the SDGs. Although it mentions that efforts are in place to bring different stakeholders onboard in the implementation of the SDGs, it also recognizes that the multi-stakeholder partnership currently in place could be further enhanced and synchronized. With regards to the definition of national priorities, the VNR report mentions that a report on the SDGs Status and Roadmap (2016-2030) was prepared in consultation with stakeholders. However, according to a representative of a civil society organization, this is only partially true. The VNR report also refers to a

needs assessment of SDGs that covered public and private sectors, cooperatives and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). For the preparation of the VNR, several consultations were carried out (including in a virtual setting due to the COVID-19 pandemic) with different stakeholders. Moreover, publications and recommendations from civil society (including non-governmental organizations and Dalit) were considered in the VNR report's literature review. On behalf of Nepal SDGs Forum, the NGO Federation of Nepal prepared a civil society report with the subheading "CSOs' Voluntary National Review 2020." In addition, through the Voluntary Peoples Review process, SDGs National Network Nepal prepared the Civil Spotlight Report on the SDGs in Nepal 2020.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The VNR report refers to a baseline data of the SDGs for 2015, an SDGs Progress Report (2016-2019), and an SDGs Status and Roadmap (2016-2030). This roadmap comprised baseline data and four milestones for the years 2019, 2022, 2025 and 2030. It identified 494 indicators, including 257 local indicators. Information on baseline data is also shown under each one of the SDGs in the VNR's report goal-by-goal analysis. According to the VNR report, data gaps were identified and include SDGs 2 (Zero hunger), 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), 13 (Climate action) and 15 (Life on land). However, according to a representative of civil society, there are data gaps in all the goals, particularly in SDGs 3 (Good health and well-being), 5 (Gender equality), 7 (Affordable and clean energy), 10 (Reduced inequalities), and 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions). Furthermore, aspects such as periodicity, disaggregation, standardization, reliability and quality assurance have been identified in the VNR report as issues regarding the available data.

### ***Incorporating the SDGs***

In Nepal, the SDGs have been incorporated into national development plans and related policies and frameworks. The VNR report notes that the Nepalese government has formulated national plans and programs that support the commitment towards the SDGs. The National Planning Commission (NPC) released its Fifteenth Plan (2019/20 to 2023/24), that will be important to achieve the SDGs in Nepal. In terms of the 2030 Agenda principles, there is reference to leave no one behind, which counts with a dedicated chapter in the VNR report. On the other hand, the human rights-based approach, universality, planetary boundaries, and inter-generational responsibility are not cited in the VNR report.

### ***Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda***

Nepal has established national priorities that relate to the SDGs. According to the VNR report, the country's Fifteenth Plan (2019/20 to 2023/24) established ten national goals that include high and equitable national income, development and full utilization of human capital potentials. However, the information presented in the VNR report does not relate specific SDGs to the outlined priorities. According to the VNR report, country-specific SDG targets and indicators have also been developed and relate to the global indicators.

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### ***Civil society validity check***

A report produced by civil society refers to the government's claim regarding the integration and alignment of the SDGs in the country's Fifteenth Plan. The report points out that coherence, harmonization and alignment across level-wide ministries still remains a challenge, and that the amount of tangible results regarding the SDGs is insufficient. The civil society report highlights the importance of the local level to the realization of change, and flags that the integration of the SDGs in local government's plans, policies, programs and budgets is sometimes being neglected.

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### ***Integration and policy coherence***

Expanding on the 2017 VNR report, in 2020 Nepal examined all the 17 SDGs, providing a detailed examination of each goal and mentioning targets and indicators. Moreover, applicable linkages between economic, social and environmental dimensions are referenced in the analysis of specific goals. Policy

coherence is mentioned in the VNR report as critical for sustainable development, as well as is the alignment of strategies and plans with the SDGs, and the production of disaggregated data at national and sub-national levels. In terms of international commitments, the VNR report refers to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. However, it does not mention linkages to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Aid Effectiveness and Development Effectiveness Agendas, or COVID-19 commitments.



## **IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA**

### ***Leave no one behind***

According to the VNR report, the government is preparing a national framework of leaving no one behind (LNOB). It also refers to the existence of more than eighty schemes under the social protection floor in 2019/20. The VNR report identifies elderly, people from remote regions, those with health problems, single women, widows, people with disabilities, children, sexual and gender minorities, Dalits, Madheshi and indigenous peoples as at risk of being left behind. Some results of efforts to LNOB include the increase of the country's Human Development Index (HDI) and Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, and the strong representation of women and marginalized groups in Parliament, national and local governments and legislative bodies.

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### ***Civil society validity check***

Although the VNR report does not provide specific information on LNOB data, a report prepared by civil society points to insufficient data: "lack of data has made it impossible to track progress, to monitor inclusive growth and improvement and make sure that no one is left behind. Lack of disaggregated data has affected transparency, accountability and just distribution of resources and focus." (*Nepal Civil Society Perspectives on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: CSOs' Voluntary National Review 2020*, p. 54) One recommendation highlighted in the civil society report refers to the country's upcoming census as an opportunity to collect disaggregated data.



### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The VNR report makes no reference to government initiatives or awareness-raising campaigns around the SDGs. With regards to localization, the VNR report mentions that implementation of the SDGs is facilitated by provincial-level steering committees. Such committees are composed of government representatives, private sector, cooperatives and civil society organizations (CSOs).

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

According to the VNR report, non-state actors are involved in the implementation of the SDGs in Nepal. Parliamentarians advocate for the SDGs and recognize the importance of integrating them in parliamentary discourse and activities. Civil society works on policy advocacy and implementation of targeted programs that include health, education, poverty alleviation, and capacity building. Apart from these examples, the private sector, academia, the National Human Rights Commission, and the Office of the Auditor General of Nepal have also carried out actions towards realizing the SDGs. At the external level, international partnerships and the role of development partners are mentioned in the VNR report.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report points to a number of challenges for SDGs implementation, such as natural disasters (Nepal is particularly susceptible to landslides, floods and droughts) and calamities such as the 2015 earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, it notes lessons learned that include the acknowledgment

that progress is expedited when policy commitment, institutional arrangements, resources and partnerships work in tandem. Elements such as technology, capacity development, and trade are outlined as important to advance the SDGs achievement. In terms of budgeting, the VNR report suggests that public investment has been aligned with the SDG goals. In addition, country level implementation has been costed and Nepal has identified sources of finance, such as domestic resources (both public and private) and grants and loans from development partner countries and institutions.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

Nepal's overall percentage of data availability is unclear, but the VNR report provides percentages for Tiers I, II and III and includes a table on SDG indicators by nature of data availability. The VNR report refers to efforts to put monitoring and evaluation into practice. One example regards the organization of Evaluation Networking (EvalNet) meetings, which comprises representatives from various government levels, United Nations agencies, academia, among others. In terms of progress since the previous VNR, the 2020 VNR report describes improvements in a number of indicators. As for COVID-19 reporting, it counts as a standalone chapter in the VNR report.

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### ***Civil society validity check***

Nepal's country profile has been reviewed by a representative of the National Campaign for Sustainable Development (NACASUD) *Nepal*.

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# NIGER

*In 2020, Niger submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

The Prime Minister is responsible for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Niger's National Coordination Committee is complemented by an implementation mechanism and a monitoring and evaluation mechanism. The National Coordination Committee supports the Ministry of Planning in its role as National Orientation Council secretariat. This committee brings together various ministerial departments, technical and financial partners, civil society and the private sector. It ensures synergy between sectoral coordination units and is responsible for ensuring the submission of high-quality information from sectoral units and regional coordination cells. The sectoral coordination units involve non-state actors through consultation frameworks composed of representatives of the State, technical and financial partners, the private sector and civil society. Their role is to ensure the implementation and periodic review of the Economic and Social Development Plan.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The COVID-19 pandemic complicated the mobilization of actors, consultations and concerted action of the various bodies involved in the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly at the regional level. According to the VNR report, efforts were made to conduct the VNR in the most participatory and inclusive way possible, including the organization of national workshops that saw the participation of all stakeholders (women, person with disabilities, civil society, private sector etc.), meetings and exchange sessions with vulnerable groups to leave no one behind (LNOB), but also email exchanges when in person meeting were not possible.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

According to the VNR report, Niger examined all SDGs except SDG 14, life below water, as Niger is a landlocked country. This process led to the establishment of a reference period at national and regional levels, prioritized indicators and a report on metadata. Among the gaps identified, the VNR report notes low access to energy and no significant change in chronic malnutrition. Per capita income increased by an average of 2.2% over the period 2016-2018, but income inequality has increased. Major challenges remain in terms of decent housing.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

The SDGs have been incorporated at the national level through the Social and Economic Development Plan 2017-2021 and the Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth Strategy. The 2030 Agenda has also been incorporated in regional and municipal development plans. The VNR report has a specific focus on the leave no one behind (LNOB) principle with a specific chapter on measures taken by the government to this end.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

Niger contextualised and prioritized 16 SDGs, except for the SDG 14 on life below water. Forty-three targets out of 100 were further prioritized in addition to 57 targets relating to the conditions of implementation and partnership under the Social and Economic Development Plan. For the 137 indicators selected to support national targets, 43% are not available or were not reported during the reference period of 2016.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

Niger has developed technical capacity by training Directors of Studies and Programming across ministries to integrate the SDGs into sectoral policies and strategies. Managers in charge of planning and locally elected officials have also been trained to integrate the SDGs into local development plans. The VNR report refers to overall policy coherence across sectoral and national policies, respecting the indivisible and

interconnected nature of the SDGs. The VNR report addresses all dimensions of sustainable development equally. The Social and Economic Development Plan has made sustainable management of the environment a specific strategic axis. The VNR report identifies acceleration measures for the SDGs on all the three dimensions. While it does not mention major international agreements, the VNR report does indicate measures taken by the government to protect biological diversity and tackle climate change.

## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

Data to LNOB is provided, although the VNR report notes the need to address the low level of data disaggregation. The LNOB principle underpins the 3N initiative, *les Nigériens Nourrissent les Nigériens*. This program is integral part of the Social and Economic Development Plan. It supports social care and empowerment of the most disadvantaged groups through several sub-programmes, including in the areas of health, nutrition, social protection, reproductive health and childbirth, schooling and training for young girls and empowerment of rural women. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, new programs have emerged. In May 2017, the Government adopted a program aimed at ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. Measures to LNOB also include the continuation of free care for children under five years of age and free cervical and breast cancer treatment for women. The government adopted a law specific to person with disabilities. The VNR report also notes social protection measures undertaken by the government to deal with the negative impacts of COVID-19 on the population.



### **GOOD PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT**

The strategy of “*les Nigériens Nourrissent les Nigériens*” and the policy of free health care and education up to the age of 16 are good practices to LNOB. Together they support multiple SDGs and have a multiplier effect on achieving a sustainable development that is inclusive.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

For a better implementation and an adequate follow-up of the 2030 Agenda, all actors were sensitized and trained to ensure a wide appropriation of the SDGs. To accelerate this process, the dissemination of information on the SDGs is continuing at both central and local levels. Current efforts to raise awareness are expanded using institutions that have access to communities and local populations throughout the country, including community radio stations. In addition to including the 2030 Agenda in regional and municipal development plans, local government officials have also been trained to support their ownership over the agenda.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

Niger’s participatory approach to the implementation of Agenda 2030 has fostered partnerships and collaboration between stakeholders. Partnerships are developed with non state actors such as civil society through the implementation of communication strategies, platforms and frameworks for development consultation. Collaboration with youth has also been strengthened through a civil society sub-platform on youth. The VNR report does not provide information on the role of parliamentarians in supporting 2030 Agenda implementation. A comprehensive response plan for COVID-19 amounting to US\$2.6 billion over two years has been adopted and is being implemented with the support of development partners.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report outlines a number of priority areas in supporting the means of implementation. These include strengthening the financing architecture for the SDGs, building innovative social infrastructure adapted to environmental and climatic conditions, and leveraging innovative financial solutions for women and youth to strengthen resilience and reduce hunger and poverty. The government plans to explore sources of finance including blended finance and funds from philanthropic foundations. Other means of implementation covered by the VNR report include trade, North-South cooperation and triangular cooperation. Public-Private Partnership remains an important channel for private sector involvement, particularly regarding the structural transformation of the economy. In terms of major challenges, the VNR report mentions the need to have more disaggregated, quality and up-to-date statistical data for the monitoring of policies together with the improvement of development financing.

***Measurement and reporting***

Niger's monitoring and evaluation system is embedded in the institutional framework of the Social and Economic Development Plan 2017-2021. The production of data and information for reporting purposes is the responsibility of the Ministry of Planning and more particularly of the National Statistical Institute.

This VNR report has some level of data disaggregation but it is recognized that there is a lack of disaggregated data for most of the indicators. However, efforts are being made to further strengthen the capacities of the National Statistical Institute and its partners to provide decision-makers with objective bases for adjusting or strengthening their actions.



# NIGERIA

*In 2020, Nigeria submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The country's first presentation was in 2017.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

As noted in the 2017 VNR report, the President established a special office within the Presidency headed by the Senior Special Assistant to the President on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2020 VNR report also refers to the establishment of a Presidential Council on the SDGs, which comprises the Inter-Ministerial Committee presented in 2017, and other committees both within the parliament and across all the states of the federation. Moreover, the 2020 VNR report provides information on non-state actor engagement in governance institutions by referring to advisory groups established in 2017 (the 2017 VNR report mentions the Civil Society Organisations Advisory Group on SDGs) that liaise with the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on the SDGs.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

While the 2017 VNR report noted that non-state actors were engaged in the identification of national priorities, the 2020 VNR report makes no reference of national consultations on priorities. It does, however, note the contributions from a Multi-Stakeholder Core Working Group on VNR and a Consortium of the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results in Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Universalis and GRM International in preparing the VNR. The VNR report notes consultation and validation of the VNR report by non-state actors and highlights the impact of COVID-19 as reducing the number of planned consultations and forcing meetings online. The VNR report does not provide information on broader processes for stakeholder engagement.

mapping and published a baseline report in 2016. The 2017 VNR report noted analysis also of policies but the 2020 version refers only to data. In this regard, the 2020 VNR report mentions challenges related to outdated data, as well as issues related to data consistency, variability, coverage and focus.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

According to the VNR report, the Medium-Term Plan (2017-2020) is consistent with the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also notes that realignment of the national statistical system to supporting 2030 Agenda monitoring. The VNR report refers to the principles of universality and leave no one behind (LNOB) but does not make reference to others.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

Nigeria's national priorities include restoring growth, investing in people through social inclusion, job creation and improved human capital, building a globally competitive economy through investment infrastructure and improving the business environment, building strong governance institutions and driving performance and results through vigorous delivery unit. The report outlines national SDG targets for 2020 and 2030.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The VNR report includes a summary examination of a limited set of SDGs with a greater focus on social dimensions of sustainable development: SDG 1 on no poverty, SDG 3 on good health and well-being, SDG 4 on quality education, SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals. The VNR report notes the use of the Nigeria Integrated Sustainable Development Goals (iSDG) Model to ensure policy coherence in relation to planning and budgeting. The VNR report however, does



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The Nigerian government carried out an SDGs data

not refer to relevant international agreements impacting 2030 Agenda implementation.

## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The VNR report does not include a dedicated chapter on LNOB but rather includes efforts under specific SDGs or social inclusion. Efforts appear to be informed by existing data however the VNR report makes very little mention of disaggregated data and gender disaggregated data is rarely presented. LNOB groups include women including pregnant women, girls, unemployed people, older people, people with disabilities, new-borns, work-injury victims and the poor. The VNR report recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic has had particularly negative effects on women and children. The country's national development plan includes reference to social inclusion and the VNR report presents specialized programs and initiatives for women and children.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

While the 2017 VNR report referred to awareness-raising activities, these were not included in the 2020 presentation. In terms of localization, the VNR report notes the need to strengthen sub-national coordination and that sub-national governments are encouraged to adopt and adapt the national plan. Compared to 2017, information is limited. In 2017, the VNR report noted that organizational structures had been established in all thirty-six state governments to support 2030 Agenda implementation and referred to a grant program to support implementation of select SDGs-related projects.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report does not provide significant information on the role of non-state actors. It does recognize, however that civil society and academic institutions have made intellectual contributions and notes that

private sector actors are contributing through Corporate Social Investment Strategies. Nigeria's legislature has two standing committees responsible for appropriating money for the SDGs and oversight of projects in support of SDG implementation.

### ***Means of implementation***

Major challenges to 2030 Agenda implementation include: poor governance and weak regulatory structures, generous tax incentives and accessibility of tax havens outside Nigeria and corruption. A number of these challenges were also noted in 2017, particularly in relation to weak public sector institutions. According to the VNR report, modelling shows that Nigeria will require N142 trillion to achieve the SDGs. It notes the need for an effective financing strategy to this end, pointing to domestic resources, South-South cooperation, official development assistance and foreign direct investment. COVID-19 has impacted the government's fiscal situation with resources diverted to addressing the pandemic and its consequences.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

According to the VNR report, 30% of SDG indicators are drawn from national surveys. While the government aims to have the remaining 70% from administrative data, capacities are not yet in place to make such data available. The VNR report notes the use of a colour system to show the degree of progress achieved since previous reporting with green meaning a target is on track, yellow that it could be achieved and orange that it is unlikely to be achieved. That said, the coding was not available in the VNR report itself.

In 2017, the VNR report noted that the government was establishing a Presidential Committee on the Assessment and Monitoring of the SDGs to serve as the apex national monitoring, reviews, and performance accountability body for SDGs. The 2020 VNR report makes no mention of such a committee and only notes that the next VNR will occur in 2022/3. There is no mention of national reporting.





# NORTH MACEDONIA

*In 2020, North Macedonia submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

Before the 2030 Agenda adoption, in 2010, the Government of North Macedonia established a National Council for Sustainable Development to guide sustainable development policies. It is chaired by the Deputy President in charge for Economic Affairs. It consists of 12 Ministers, Members of Parliament, representatives from the National Academy of Science and Arts, representatives from the chambers of commerce, and representatives from universities. Technical and expert support is provided by a Technical Working Group coordinated by the Unit for Sustainable Development in the Cabinet of the Deputy President in charge for economic affairs. Later on, a 'Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Sector' was established to promote cooperation and dialogue with the civil society sector. It includes 31 members, of which 13 ministries, the Secretariat of European Affairs, the Agency for Youth and Sport are appointed by the Government, and CSOs propose 16 members.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

Besides participating in the institutional mechanisms to implement the SDGs nationally, the VNR does not identify either a stakeholder engagement or consultation process. The situation changes when referring to stakeholders' participation in the VNR drafting, while the report informs a considerable involvement of Civil Society Organizations, academia, and youth. Less strong participation of chambers of commerce is also reported. No reference about COVID-19 impact on stakeholder engagement in the VNR building is made.

SDGs are incorporated into national planning documents for sustainable development, and a Rapid Integrated Assessment of the alignment of the national policy framework with the SDGs performed in 2019 indicated an 83% level of alignment. However, the report does not reflect the contents or results of the 2016 gap analysis. The mentions gaps in youth and gender employment, gender pay, strategies to face unhealthy foods and diets for children, infrastructural gaps, and data.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

Besides the above mentioned Rapid Integrated Assessment mapping development policy planning documents and legislation against the SDGs, the 2016-2020 National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination -accompanied with amended legislation on the protection of the LGBT community-, the 2017-2020 National Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration, the 2020-2026 National Waste Management Plan, 2017-2027 National Strategy for Nature Protection, and the Climate Action Law and Strategy were aligned with the SDGs.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The report indicates that North Macedonia prioritized five SDGs (SDG 1. No poverty; 4. Quality Education; 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth; 13. Climate Action; and 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), based on priority activities and measures defined in the 2017-2020 Government Program and the five pillars of the 2016-2020 UNDAF. A participatory process for determining national indicators is currently underway.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The report provides a detailed examination of all SDGs, with equal attention to the three dimensions of sustainable development, albeit with limited references to the linkages between them while analyzing each SDG.

Even when the VNR does not provide information on policy coherence for sustainable development or links between the SDGs and the post-pandemic recovery



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The report informs that North Macedonia conducted a Gap Analysis in 2016 to assess the degree to which

plans, it includes some reference to 2030 Agenda international-related documents, explicitly mentioning the Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, among other multilateral environmental agreements.



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The VNR states that the Government has embraced the 2030 Agenda making 'leave-no-one-behind' a key principle underpinning its activities. It identifies vulnerable groups: youth who are not in education, employment, or training; women and girls, the Roma community, children, people with disabilities, refugees/migrants/asylum seekers/internally displaced persons/stateless persons, LGBTI, people living in rural areas/small farmers, and the elderly. The VNR links LNOB with the COVID-19 impacts, indicating that the disruption of social care services and assistance affects the impoverished households the most, forecasting that the effects will also be different for men and women.

The social protection system focuses on social services, implementing temporary residence services, family care, home care, and personal assistance measures to support the most vulnerable.

Regarding gender equality, a National Action Plan for Gender Equality and a Land Tenure Governance Framework promoting women's access to land were adopted, among other actions and policies. In the same line, steps against domestic inequalities were taken. As a result, the report shows statistical data reflecting that many gaps narrowed.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The report does not provide information on the government's efforts to raise awareness of the SDGs. The report provides limited information on the role of municipal authorities in implementing and monitoring the goals but mentions Local governments participation in the national SDGs implementation governance, the adoption of a national law on Municipal Cooperation providing a framework for cooperation between municipal Governments, the development of sustainable tourism strategies by 17 municipalities, and the local Governments responsibility for communal waste management.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

According to VNR, local stakeholders are highly engaged in SDGs' national implementation. It provides examples of partnerships, such as establishing mobile teams of social workers, law enforcement officers, and civil society members to reinforce victims of trafficking assistance. Four agreements between CSOs and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy were signed to financing the delivery of services against domestic violence. The Global Compact National Network awarded companies implementing the 2030 Agenda. Academia has been involved in developing a National Action Plan to Combat Desertification. Y-PEER, a youth network, promoted the 2030 Agenda among young people, and its work is the basis of a report section on youth contribution to the VNR. The country received external partner support to conduct the Voluntary National Review process.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR refers to all the 2030 means of implementation. It notes that the Government created a Fund for Innovation and Technology as part of the Economic Growth Plan and launched an initiative to strengthen local governments and NGOs' capacities for protected areas management. The COVID-19 pandemic and the refugee crisis are two critical systemic issues highlighted in the report. Regarding international financing, North Macedonia's dual role in international cooperation is underlined. North Macedonia's prominent international donors and primary recipients are mentioned.

The VNR also explains that planning and policymaking are done independently from the budgeting process. Consequently, most strategies and programs do not have a concrete budget allocation. This impedes the alignment of financial support with long-term national goals, including the SDGs.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The status of data for SDG monitoring is unclear from the report, however, it is noted that additional efforts are needed to improve data availability, including disaggregated data. To that end, a new Law on Personal Data has been prepared and is currently under review, and the VNR recognizes the need of establishing a National Information System for Nature. Besides national statistics, the 2020 report includes information provided by the IMF, the World Bank, Eurostat, Transparency International, UNDESA, and the OECD.



# PANAMA

*In 2020, Panama submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The first was introduced in 2017.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

An Inter-institutional and Civil Society Commission for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation and monitoring exists. Led by a Superior Directorate composed by the Ministry of Social Development, the Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of Presidential Goals, and the President of the National Agreement for Development, the commission was established in 2015. The Commission was introduced in detail in the 2017 VNR report. A National Development Concertation was established in Panama in 2008, bringing together representatives of the private sector, unions, civil society, churches, academic institutions, indigenous peoples, political parties and national government. It participates in the Inter-institutional and Civil Society Commission for SDGs.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

Beyond governing mechanisms, the VNR report does not articulate broader strategies or processes for ongoing stakeholder engagement in 2030 Agenda implementation. However, it notes that non-state actors were involved in the VNR. This included consultations with civil society organizations, private companies, academia and international organizations through virtual surveys organized around the 2030 Agenda's 5 Ps approach. As a result, the government identified sector priorities for each of people, prosperity, planet, peace and partnership. For example, regarding prosperity, all stakeholders prioritized the need for increasing public investment in science and technology to 1% of the national GDP.

national actors "considered it appropriate to choose 2015 as the baseline for the SDGs" (p.62). There is not information on actual gaps identification. It is relevant to recall that the 2017 VNR report stated that financial allocations could be a way to identify social policy action gaps. Although many vague references to existing gaps are included while analyzing each SDG, the issue is not taken up in this second report.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

Panama considers the SDGs as a strategic framework for designing the Government Strategic Plan 2020-2024, which includes actions related to implementing the 17 SDGs. The SDGs have also been integrated into national and sectoral strategic plans. The 2020 VNR report addresses the principle of leave no one behind (LNOB) as a cross-cutting issue and in a short subchapter. It highlights a human rights-based approach, though it does not mention other 2030 Agenda principles.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The 17 SDGs have been integrated into the Strategic Government Plan through priorities pertaining to 1) good governance, 2) law and order, 3) economic growth for job creation, 4) poverty reduction and addressing inequality and 5) education, science, technology and culture. The VNR report does not explain how the SDGs were incorporated under each of the country's five priorities. It is not clear from the report if the country has also developed national targets or indicators.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The VNR report examines all 17 SDGs and addresses all three dimensions of sustainable development emphasizing the social. Linkages between the dimensions of sustainable development in the goal-by-goal analysis are weak. Policy coherence for sustainable development is only mentioned under the SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals. The VNR report refers to environmental agreements including the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. There



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The 2020 VNR report only makes reference to a baseline exercise in general terms, merely saying that the

are no references to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda nor does the VNR report refer to global commitments related to COVID-19. Nevertheless, the VNR report includes information on the impacts and challenges that result from the COVID-19 pandemic in a stand-alone chapter and throughout the entire text of the report.



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

LNOB is considered across the report as a cross-cutting issue. Groups at risk of being left behind are identified, including people living in multidimensional poverty, Afro-descendants, LGTBI population, persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, girls and boys, women, and people over 60 years old. Universal and new specialized programs are in place to support those groups, such as the Network of Opportunities conditional cash transfers program, supporting households in extreme poverty and the 'Panameño Sano, Panameño Feliz' (Healthy Panamanian, Happy Panamanian) program for primary health care at the local level. The data presented in the report tend to be available by gender and territory; however, it is rarely shown for other groups.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The Social Cabinet's Technical Secretariat leads the task of promoting all sectors' participation in the 2030 Agenda. It convenes conferences and working meetings to raise stakeholder awareness of the 2030 Agenda and supports local government SDGs ownership and its incorporation into national and sectoral strategic plans, integrating local capacities into the implementation of national public policies, improving the alignment between local government work plans and the SDGs and decentralizing public policy management. Still, the localization of the 2030 Agenda is underlined as a national challenge to the 2030 Agenda implementation.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

Civil society organizations, the private sector, academia, and the parliament participate in SDG implementation activities, individually and in partnerships with governmental authorities. Examples highlighted by the VNR report include the installation of a solid-waste removal system in the Matías Hernández River, carried out by a civil society organization; the Private Sector AliaRSE Social Responsibility program, providing support to initiatives aimed at improving vulnerable sectors

conditions of life; and the creation of a multidisciplinary academic Observatory for Monitoring the SDGs.

Regarding external partners, the VNR report notes the need for technical assistance, mainly through capacity development and exchange of good practices and lessons learned. The VNR report highlights the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs' SDGs Task Force support to Panama in the VNR report building through advice and technical assistance.

### ***Means of implementation***

The report refers to technology, capacity development, international public finance, systemic issues, and trade in the discussion on means of implementation. The adoption in 2020 of a Strategic Digital Agenda, the promotion of South-South cooperation as a knowledge transfer mechanism, the constitution of Public-Private Partnerships for infrastructure development and the adoption of laws aimed at facilitating international trade and improving customs administration are examples mentioned in the VNR report. The VNR report also references how the COVID-19 pandemic could affect national capabilities to implement the 2030 Agenda. National public finance has suffered from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including federal options to fund SDGs oriented actions. This is particularly worrying given that financing of efforts that seek to meet the SDGs targets has been primarily financed with resources from the general state budget to date.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

Considering only indicators with an established methodology and for which far-reaching data is available, Panama can report on 30% of the global SDG indicators. In addition, 22 complementary indicators suggested by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean at the regional level are included in national 2030 Agenda monitoring. Considering that data availability must improve, in 2020, the national government created a Technical Bureau of Statistics and Social Indicators and is working to strengthen the National Statistical System.

Panama's second VNR report looked at all SDGs while its first only examined some. The 2020 analysis of the full set of goals results in overlap between both reports. Furthermore, no references were made to the fulfillment of the commitments outlined in the 2017 VNR report. The 2020 report does not provide information on a national reporting mechanism.



# PAPUA NEW GUINEA

*In 2020, Papua New Guinea submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

Papua New Guinea has established a comprehensive set of governance arrangements for 2030 Agenda implementation. A National Executive Council led by the Prime Minister is informed by an SDG Inter-Ministerial committee and supported by an MTDP-SDGS (Mid-term Development Plan – Sustainable Development Goals) National Steering Committee and a core secretariat. These mechanisms are informed by an SDG Council. Other units exist responsible for coordination and statistics. Technical working groups and sub-national technical working groups are also listed. Representatives of the United Nations, private sector, churches, civil society, research institutions, women and nominated individuals are part of the SDGs council. Non-state actors also participate in technical working groups.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

In terms of processes of stakeholder engagement, the National Executive Council has a Consultative Implementation and Monitoring Council (established 1998) that allows for consultation with civil society and the private sector among other interest groups. According to the VNR report, this council has been “an effective model of partnership in addressing urgent development issues associated with [... the SDGs], including the VNR” (p. 20-1). The VNR report also notes that non-state actors were engaged in the identification of national priorities and the VNR. The VNR included one-on-one consultations, workshops and peer reviews, though the country shut down between March and April 2020, which meant canceling stakeholder meetings and consultations during that time.

their 169 targets and 241 indicators was carried out with support from the United Nations. As a result, 46 SDG indicators were embedded in the mid-term development plan. The VNR report also points to gaps under specific SDGs.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

The SDGs are incorporated in the mid-term development plan. An SDG roadmap was prepared in 2016 to assist in the integration of the SDGs into the mid-term development plan. The roadmap includes provisions related to governance and overall SDG coordination mechanisms, financing, monitoring and reporting. The VNR report includes mention of leaving no one behind and highlights “a moral obligation and responsibility to our current and future generations” (p. 5).

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

In addition to the selection of 46 SDG indicators, the VNR report notes national priorities related to the economy, infrastructure, social development, rule of law, justice and national security, improved service delivery, governance, responsible sustainable development, the environment and a sustainable population.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The VNR report provides a detailed examination of all 17 SDGs with equal attention to all three dimensions of sustainable development. In terms of policy coherence for sustainable development, the VNR report emphasizes the National Planning Monitoring and Responsibility Act 2016 that serves as a legal framework for national planning on the SDGs and includes references to budgeting and monitoring and evaluation. The Act requires the establishment of suitable institutional arrangements. According to the VNR report, these efforts help to improve policy coherence (and effective implementation). The VNR report also refers to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, aid effectiveness principles and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

Over 2016-2018, a review of the relevancy of the SDGs,





## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

Papua New Guinea identifies women (including widows), children (including orphaned, adopted, and fostered children), settlers, landless people, those suffering from acute poverty with no means for self-sustenance, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and survivors of domestic violence as at risk of being left behind. According to the VNR report, the government provides special encouragement to partners engaging in the principle of “leaving no one behind” and providing both social and development services to remote and rural areas, with particular attention to more disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. A national poverty roadmap was established and included in national strategic development plans. The VNR report highlights achievements in nine of the SDGs. Although Papua New Guinea has not been severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, the VNR report states that resources were mobilized by the government in order to contain the spread of the virus, giving particular attention to the most vulnerable populations.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The VNR report points to awareness raising activities such as consultations and workshops. Both activities aimed to, for example, validate the progress of SDG implementation, promote the assessment and review of the country’s goals and targets, and engage stakeholders such as the private sector, CSOs and development partners in the VNR process. In terms of localization efforts, the VNR report mentions that the local government is involved in governance mechanisms. It also refers to ongoing processes of decentralization but does not specify actions related to the SDGs. Moreover, according to the VNR report, the tools in place for monitoring and evaluation and to address issues related to tracking performance and reporting are more prominent at the sub-national level.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report recognizes the roles of non-state actors in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Civil society, the private sector and academia are included as important partners in terms of, for example, dissemination of information, provision of infrastructure and social

services, and capacity development. According to the VNR report, apart from playing a role in producing research, tertiary educational institutions are working to strengthen the capacity of sub-national government with regards to the SDGs. Another example refers to members of Parliament and governors at the provincial level who have been locally engaged with, among others, rural communities on the SDGs.

### ***Means of implementation***

According to the VNR report, the country has identified sources of finance to conduct country level implementation of the SDGs. As public revenues are insufficient to fully cover implementation costs, the VNR report mentions the mobilization of resources both internally and externally through the connection with the private sector, development partners and philanthropists, and the promotion of both North-South and South-South cooperation. Moreover, the VNR report states that Development Cooperation Resources and Official Development Assistance (ODA) remain major contributors towards the achievement of the SDGs in Papua New Guinea. Global trade is recognized in the VNR report as a sustainable means of great economic value whose arrangements are both conducive and complementary to the country’s development policies. Furthermore, the VNR report mentions capacity as an important factor for effective SDGs implementation. It refers to the strengthening of various capacities in both the national and the local levels, including the intensification of effective collaborations with non-state actors such as the private sector, civil society, and umbrella organizations focusing on usually less engaged stakeholders, such as people with disabilities and persons living in prisons.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The VNR report does not provide details on data availability, including disaggregated data. However, it recognizes that, as next steps, Papua New Guinea should improve data collection, including the analysis and synchronization of disaggregated data so that the impact of the established policies can be seen in a more representative way. Although the government does not seem to be producing sufficient data, the VNR report mentions that other data sources have been used, including reports produced by the private sector, development partners, civil society and academia.



*In 2020, Peru submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The first was introduced in 2017.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

The VNR report identifies two primary institutions for 2030 Agenda implementation: the National Agreement Forum and the Roundtable for the Fight against Poverty. The National Agreement Forum is the central multi-stakeholder platform that includes representatives of the federal government, the private sector, unions, civil society, faith-based organizations, local governments, political parties, peasants organizations and professional associations. It is responsible for promoting multi-stakeholder dialogue as part of national strategic planning, including the 2030 Agenda implementation and follow-up policies. The Roundtable for the Fight against Poverty is focused on establishing political consensus between territorial levels and political parties with parliamentary representation. The governance mechanism was discussed in detail in the 2017 VNR report. In the face of COVID-19, the Executive Power created 'Te Cuido Perú' (I look after you, Peru), a multisectoral working group led by the Ministry of Defense, to provide security and assistance to people affected during the lockdown phase. The VNR report does not outline how this body links with implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The VNR report does not include references to stakeholder engagement in the VNR nor in broader 2030 Agenda implementation efforts beyond governance mechanisms. It appears that stakeholder participation by non-state actors occurs largely through the 2030 Agenda implementation institutions.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The 2017 VNR report presented a gap assessment for all SDGs. The 2020 VNR report does not refer to the gap assessment and notes, without providing data, that there are significant gaps in infrastructure, health, education, urban-rural outcomes and housing access. The VNR report highlights that COVID-19 is strongly influencing national development gaps.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

In early 2020, Peru began designing a National Development Plan that will serve as a tool for implementing the 2030 Agenda, including provincial and departmental development plans. Advancement on this plan was severely affected by COVID-19, and the planned framework will require adjustments given the impact of the pandemic on existing progress. The report does not consider any of the 2030 Agenda principles, including leaving no one behind.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The VNR report only mentions that the country's development priorities are established in its National Development Plan, but it does not present them. However, it does point to priorities to confront the COVID-19 effects, namely avoiding preventing losses, ensuring the availability of essential basket components, keeping the economic macro balances in order and considering regionally specific situations in the response to pandemic impacts.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The VNR report does not examine the SDGs but rather synthesizes recent developments to advance emergency plans and the creation of national development plans in severely adverse conditions. The Paris Agreement is the only international agreement mentioned in terms of linkages with the 2030 Agenda, referring to Peruvian efforts to tackle climate change. The VNR report focuses on the COVID-19 pandemic impacts, considered in a stand-alone chapter and as the report's central theme.



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

While the VNR report states that the COVID-19 pandemic has clearly exposed the vulnerable population's reality, the 'leaving no one behind' principle is not articulated. Rather, the VNR report makes a few isolated and general mentions to poor people, women, and indigenous people as vulnerable groups in the pandemic context. A vague allusion to a bonus transfer to the poor, the updating of the National Gender Equality Policy and the adoption of a strategy to guarantee the Amazon indigenous peoples right to life, health and safety in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic are introduced as tools to support those groups.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The VNR report does not mention 2030 Agenda awareness-raising efforts carried out by the government. Regarding localization, local government engagement primarily occurs at the Roundtable for the Fight against Poverty and through the design of SDGs-aligned territorial development plans. In addition, a National Assembly of Regional Governments, as part of a temporary Multisectoral Working Group established to formulate a strategy for a progressive economic reactivation post-COVID-19, coordinates national reactivation efforts with each regional government.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

Multi-stakeholder work towards SDGs implementation is not integrated in the VNR report. Stakeholders

engagement is only considered in relation to its institutional participation in the National Agreement Forum and the Roundtable for the Fight against Poverty.

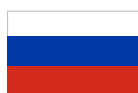
### ***Means of implementation***

The report focuses mainly on information and communication technology access promotion in rural areas as a means of implementation and says little about building human capacities and national financing. Recalling the 2017 VNR report, the 2020 edition states that to improve the Peruvian productive matrix and its ability to attract external funding, the country must reinforce its human resources and science and technology capabilities. The COVID-19 global health impacts are considered a systemic issue that will affect Peru's path to sustainable development, worsening previous trends such as environmental degradation, insufficient multilateralism, and growing world tensions.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The 2020 VNR report makes isolated and general references to the 2017 VNR report, resulting in a weak continuity between the two. Only one commitment established in the first report, related to adopting a "Vision of Peru to 2050," is considered in the second VNR report, informing that it was adopted by the National Agreement in 2019.

The VNR report does not provide information on data availability or disaggregation gaps. It provides no information on efforts to improve data or national statistic system nor strengthening the reporting processes.



# RUSSIAN FEDERATION

*In 2020, the Russian Federation submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

The Inter-Agency Working Group on Climate Change and Sustainable Development at the Administration of the President was established in 2012 and is responsible for 2030 Agenda implementation. The Working Group aims to ensure efficient interaction and information sharing among federal executive authorities, other public authorities, research and other organizations in the implementation of state policies related to climate change and sustainable development. This includes the Concept for the Transition of the Russian Federation to Sustainable Development (Concept for Transition), approved in 1996. Non-state actors are not included in the Inter-Agency Working Group.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

While the VNR report does not mention a formal process for stakeholder engagement, it notes that 17 thematic working groups, coordinated by the Analytical Center for the Government of the Russian Federation, engaged a range of stakeholders in the VNR preparation process. These included various levels of government, development and research institutions, civil society organizations and business associations. Draft VNR chapters as well as the entire report underwent a series of public consultations. In addition to official state statistics, data from development and research institutions were used in the preparation of the VNR report. Stakeholders were not consulted on the identification of national priorities.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

The VNR report notes that most of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets had been integrated, to a varying degree, in the basic strategic and policy documents of the Russian Federation “long before the adoption” of the 2030 Agenda. The basic principles of the country’s transition to sustainable development are reflected in the Concept for Transition targeted at developing balanced solutions to socioeconomic issues and problems related to environmental preservation for present and future generations. The Russian Federation is implementing twelve National Projects and the Comprehensive Plan for the Modernization and Expansion of Main Infrastructure, which aim to achieve the country’s national development goals and strategic objectives up to 2024 as well as the SDGs. While the VNR report does not reference most of the principles of the 2030 Agenda, it highlights the leave no one behind (LNOB) agenda as the underlying principle of Russia’s socially oriented policy.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

National goals and objectives, endorsed by the President in 2019, are reflected in twelve National Projects spanning such areas as demography, healthcare, education, housing and urban environment, environment, safe and quality roads, workforce productivity and employment support, science, digital economy, culture, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and support for individual entrepreneurial initiative, and international cooperation and export. The VNR report notes that the National Projects and the Comprehensive Plan for the Modernization and Expansion of Main Infrastructure cover, directly or indirectly, 107 of 169 SDG targets. The report also notes that the Federal Statistics Plan of the Russian Federation includes 90 indicators from the list of global SDG indicators.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The VNR report does not mention the use of a baseline or gap analysis to inform 2030 Agenda implementation.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The VNR report examines all 17 SDGs through a

detailed examination of many targets. While the VNR report addresses all the three sustainable development dimensions, there is a greater focus is on the social though the goal-by-goal analysis is limited in referencing linkages between the dimensions. Policy coherence is only mentioned as part of analysis of SDG 17.13 and the VNR report does not present an overarching approach to policy coherence for sustainable development. The VNR report refers to the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction but does not reference the Addis Ababa Action Agenda or the Aid Effectiveness and Development Effectiveness Agendas.

## 2030 IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The VNR report mentions “considerable achievements” to LNOB. However, it provides little evidence of efforts to LNOB beyond existing programmes targeting specific groups such as World War II veterans, persons with disabilities, low-income families, persons with certain medical conditions and the elderly. The National Action Strategy for Women 2017-2022 aims to narrow the gender wage gap, reduce violence against women and increase the number of women in managerial positions. The VNR report does not discuss how COVID-19 has impacted those left behind.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The Russian government does not carry out awareness-raising efforts. Instead, it views the VNR report as a vehicle to promote better public awareness of SDG implementation. Some awareness-raising activities are undertaken by youth, civil society and academia. In its analysis of SDG target 10.2, the VNR report mentions programs by Russian cities and regions to assist senior citizens, persons with disabilities and persons experiencing hardship, but does not specify whether these programs explicitly aim to advance the target. Beyond these examples, the VNR report does not address localization efforts.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report recognizes the role civil society plays in SDG implementation by carrying out outreach,

educational, research and charity projects targeting specific SDGs. The VNR report provides a list of such organizations, along with multiple examples of projects. It notes that youth have been involved in awareness-raising activities through the following programs: School SDG Leaders, University SDG Leaders, and Children SDGs ambassadors. It also notes that the business community is actively engaged in projects that help achieve specific SDGs relating to all three components of the 2030 Agenda. Examples of projects are provided throughout. A number of major companies in Russia include the SDGs in their strategies and the VNR report highlights sustainable business practices promoted by the Global Compact Network Russia and the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs. The government also expects increased citizen involvement in SDG implementation. At the international level, the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation is the Chair of the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) Working Group on SDGs and Key Sustainable Development Indicators.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report describes Russia as “an active and responsible member of the international donor community.” The report states that between 2014 and 2020, Russia allocated more than USD 5.5 billion in international development assistance. In 2018, federal official development assistance expenditures amounted to about USD 1 billion. Russia also provides technological and capacity-building assistance to other countries, particularly members of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Russia is actively engaged in building regional cooperation in Eastern Europe, South Caucasus, Central Asia, and Asia-Pacific through multilateral arrangements such as the Eurasian Economic Union, BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization among other initiatives. The VNR report highlights Russia’s contribution to the development and launch of New BRICS Development Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. With regard to COVID-19, the VNR report highlights bilateral aid provided by Russia to other countries which comprised personal protective and medical equipment, COVID-19 test kits, as well as assistance rendered by medical personnel. The VNR report does not present information regarding Russia’s means of implementation for domestic efforts.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The VNR report is unclear on current data availability in Russia. The Federal State Statistics Service is responsible for SDG monitoring and coordination of preparation and submission of official statistics on SDG indicators to international organizations. In 2017, the Federal Plan of Statistical Works included a subsection on “Sustainable Development Goals Indicators in the Russian Federation”

containing 90 indicators from the Global SDG Indicator List. The VNR mentions a 2020 audit conducted by the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation to assess, *inter alia*, the readiness of the SDG monitoring system in the executive bodies but provides no information on its findings. The VNR report does not provide information on future national reporting.



# SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

*In 2020, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines submitted main messages to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development for the first time.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### ***Leadership, governance and institutions***

According to the main messages, government ministries and agencies are responsible for aligning all policies and critical programs with the 2030 Agenda.

### ***Stakeholder engagement***

The main messages state that extensive stakeholder consultations and involvement will underpin the advancement of Agenda 2030. A focus has been placed on strengthening mechanisms to enhance the participation of all stakeholders in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

development of its people, and environmentally sustainable. The National Economic and Social Development Plan aligns the country's development objectives with related SDGs and targets and elaborates five interrelated development goals. These include 1) ensuring a better quality of life for all through the re-engineering economic growth, 2) enabling increased human and social development, 3) promoting good governance and increasing the effectiveness of public administration, 4) improving physical infrastructure, preserving the environment and building resilience to climate change, and 5) building national pride, identity and culture.

### ***Integration and policy coherence***

The main messages do not include an overview of the 17 SDGs.



## POLICIES

### ***Baseline or gap analysis***

A Rapid Integrated Assessment of the country's planning framework highlighted that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines currently has 62 percent of all its planning and policy documents aligned with the SDGs and targets. The main messages document only refers to financing gaps as a challenge to the country's SDGs implementation.

### ***Incorporating the SDGs***

The country's vision of "Improving the Quality of Life for All Vincentians" is built on the principle of putting people at the center of its development. According to the main messages, country's National Economic and Social Development Plan (2013-2025) was aligned with the SDGs.

### ***Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda***

St. Vincent and the Grenadines focus its development plans on being a diverse, modern, internationally competitive country, committed to the social



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

According to the main messages, the concept of leave no one behind is critical to the country's development pathway. For the country, this means reducing inequalities, eliminating all forms of poverty and empowering women and youth.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

There are no references to awareness-raising actions taken by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Information on localization refers only to operationalizing the national development plan.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The main messages recognize the importance for partnerships as part of 2030 Agenda implementation but do not provide information on specific stakeholder groups. Rather, it notes that SDG implementation



requires a holistic approach involving the public and private sector, civil society, the media and youth engagement.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR building process required innovative solutions as the country battles issues related to mitigating mechanisms resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, heightening the role of technology in accomplishing these goals. At the time of a global pandemic, the preparation of the VNR report highlights how current known and new and emerging vulnerabilities can

suddenly affect countries' development trajectory. The main messages note that the challenges and opportunities arising from the fight against COVID-19 must be considered to achieve the 2030 Agenda in the new context.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Statistical Office was tasked with creating mechanisms for data mining of SDG indicators. The monitoring and evaluation framework for SDG implementation should be completed to facilitate better tracking, reporting and progress analysis.



# SAMOA

*In 2020, Samoa submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Its first presentation was in 2016.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

According to the VNR report, Samoa made progresses since its first VNR report by further integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into national processes. The country's leadership on SDGs implementation lies with multiple cabinet ministers, as the Samoa SDGs Taskforce core members include the Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Ministry of Natural Resources, and the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development Environment. Samoa participates in activities at the regional level, engaging in regional coordination on the SDGs.



### GOOD PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

Samoa participated in a good practice initiative regarding regional coordination. Alongside Papua New Guinea, Australia, and a CSO representative from Fiji, Samoa engaged in the first global review of a VNR process. This initiative, named Pacific Islands Forum Peer Review, focused on Vanuatu's VNR report in 2019. The participation in Vanuatu's review bared lessons that were valuable for Samoa's own VNR process.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The VNR report mentions a concrete form of stakeholder engagement through a funding mechanism, through which financing and support facilities are dedicated to civil society and private sectors. With regards to the VNR process, data validation consultations were carried out across government, civil society, and private sector stakeholders to, among others, validate and

discuss existing data, and further contextualize goals and targets. The processes of stakeholder engagement were affected by both the measles and the COVID-19 pandemic, as key consultations were either delayed or postponed.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The VNR report shows that Samoa has identified and assessed data by using the latest data matrix from the Samoa Bureau of Statistics. Moreover, the SDGs Taskforce Secretariat, with the support of the United Nations system, compiled a matrix with all the relevant data for each global indicator. However, the VNR report does not present numbers on the available data in terms of identified gaps.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

The VNR report notes that the SDGs have been integrated into the Strategy for the Development of Samoa (SDS), which contextualizes implementation at the country level and includes the SDGs in national processes of planning, budgeting, and accountability. While the VNR report does not make reference to some of the principles of the 2030 Agenda, it mentions the establishment of institutions and mechanisms to enhance a human rights-based approach to development, and includes a dedicated chapter to leave no one behind (LNOB).

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

National priorities have been selected through a people-centred approach. According to the VNR report, the main priorities for the country emphasize, among others, social inclusion, economic sustainability, and environmental resilience. The VNR report states that the national targets and indicators are aligned to the global targets and indicators. More specifically, it notes that there are 246 indicators that either align with global SDG indicators and/or have been built to be relevant to Samoa's national context.

### ***Integration and policy coherence***

The VNR report examines all 17 SDGs through a detailed examination that mentions targets and indicators. Policy coherence is referred to as an outcome of the country's sector-wide approach, which aims to increase the coherence between sectoral policy, spending and results through the promotion of transparency and dialogue. The VNR report refers to several applicable linkages between the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) in its analysis of specific goals, targets and indicators.



### **GOOD PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT**

Samoa's second VNR analyzed the country's priority areas established by its development strategy and highlighted that such strategy shares the 2030 Agenda's interlinkages of the three dimensions of sustainable development. In the goal-by-goal analysis of the VNR report, specific sections named "interlinkages" indicate such interrelations for each SDG.

The VNR report refers to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the Aid Effectiveness and Development Effectiveness Agendas.



### **GOOD PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT**

In 2010, Samoa was one of the few Pacific Island Countries (PICs) participating in the global evaluation on the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness implementation. Moreover, Samoa engaged in both global and regional aid and development effectiveness efforts, such as the High-Level Conferences carried out in Accra (2008), Busan (2011), Mexico (2014), Nairobi (2016), and the Pacific Forum Compact between 2010 and 2015.



## **IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA**

### ***Leave no one behind***

According to the VNR report, Samoa's approach to leave no one behind (LNOB) relates to the reduction of poverty and addressing the needs of those groups considered most vulnerable. With regards to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the VNR report refers to the announcement of a stimulus package, through which the government aimed to target vulnerable groups and provide them with more focused social protection measures. Results of LNOB efforts are mentioned under each one of the groups specified in the VNR report. One of these results refers to the constant improvement of Samoa's Gender Inequality Index.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The Samoan government carried out awareness-raising campaigns that relate to the SDGs (for example, a campaign on the importance of vaccination directly connects to SDG 3. Good health and well-being), although they are not specific to SDGs-awareness. In terms of localizing the 2030 Agenda, the VNR report mentions that local governance and non-state actors at the villages and communities' level are engaged in, for example, disaster management and response plans, water management, and energy efficiency.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report recognizes that non-state actors play a role in SDG implementation. Some examples refer to actions carried out by civil society, the private sector, children and youth, and the Samoa Audit Office. The later conducted a performance audit to assess Samoa's level of preparedness for SDGs implementation, whose findings and recommendations were widely shared and provided input to the SDGs Taskforce. In the context of COVID-19, a Samoan company developed a mobile phone application to connect vendors and buyers and therefore help generate income for vulnerable groups such as rural farmers, fishermen, artisans while still complying with social distancing requirements.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report describes some lessons learned in accelerating SDGs implementation. These include the importance of leadership and capacities at the national level, and the importance of all levels-partnerships that

are both respectful and accountable. Both challenges and opportunities regarding implementation are highlighted throughout the goal-by-goal analyses through dedicated sections. Some challenges referred to in the VNR report are limited capacity in data analysis and management, uncoordinated SDGs support efforts, vulnerability to natural disasters and external shocks, and measles and COVID-19 socio-economic impacts. With regards to budgeting and financing the 2030 Agenda, the VNR report mentions that the SDGs have been incorporated into Samoa's development strategy, including in budgeting processes, and mentions domestic financing, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Official Development Assistance (ODA) as sources of revenue for SDGs implementation.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The VNR report is unclear on current data availability in Samoa, although it suggests that the country has met 23 global indicators of the 246 ones selected to measure Samoa's progress on SDGs implementation. The VNR report recognizes challenges regarding available data, but where no data was available from national reports, different source bases were used, such as datasets on SDGs from the Pacific Sustainable Development Report 2018, the United Nations, the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), among others. In terms of the VNR process, the VNR report refers to improvements and achievements since the previous report, but data is not presented with graphic mechanisms (such as a traffic light system, for example) to show progress since the last report.

*In 2020, Seychelles submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### ***Leadership, governance and institutions***

Created in 2016, the Economic Planning Department was responsible for developing “Vision 2033” and the country’s National Development Strategy (2019-2023) to support implementation of the Vision. A

National Oversight Strategic Committee for the Implementation of Seychelles’ Regional and Global Commitments exists, established in 2017. Chaired by the Minister for Economic Planning and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs as alternate chair, the Committee includes representation at Principal Secretary and Chief Executive Officer levels of government institutions, civil society, the private sector and the Parliament. United Nations agencies participate as observers with meetings held every two months.

### ***Stakeholder engagement***

In terms of nationalizing the 2030 Agenda, the VNR report notes a “bottom-up” approach to developing Vision 2033 informed by widespread consultations, including with vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities and elderly persons. For the VNR, consultations were held through workshops with diverse groups and an awareness-raising campaign was launched to encourage engagement. The VNR report notes collaboration with non-governmental organizations and the private sector on the VNR process. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, some face-to-face meetings had to be cancelled as well as some planned awareness-raising activities. Moreover, the VNR report mentions a synchronized approach for ongoing stakeholder engagement through consultations. Such consultations strengthen partnerships at the local level and involve stakeholders into, for example, budgeting processes, national plans and country’s reforms.



## POLICIES

### ***Baseline or gap analysis***

According to the VNR report, Seychelles carried out an assessment of data to inform 2030 Agenda implementation. The VNR report includes a statistical annex that provides an overview of available indicators. The country’s SDG Baseline Assessment Report of 2019 noted significant gaps in data collection and dissemination.

### ***Incorporating the SDGs***

As noted above, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were incorporated into Vision 2033 and the National Development Strategy (2019-2023). In addition, government institutions have adopted the SDGs as part of sectoral mandates and functions. The VNR report includes a dedicated chapter on leaving no one behind and refers to preserving the environment for future generations though not explicitly the term intergenerational responsibility.

### ***Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda***

The government’s five-year national development strategy has six pillars pertaining to 1) governance, 2) people at the centre of development, 3) social cohesion, 4) innovative economy, 5) economic transformation, and 6) environmental sustainability and resilience. According to the VNR report, Seychelles has identified national targets and indicators that are aligned with the 2030 Agenda.

### ***Integration and policy coherence***

The VNR report provides a detailed examination of all 17 SDGs with equal attention to all dimensions of sustainable development. It refers to policy coherence for sustainable development, understood in the context of ensuring policy coherence between national policies, the 2030 Agenda and other major international agreements relevant for 2030 Agenda implementation, notable the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the SAMOA Pathway and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The country's assessment of available SDG baselines suggests that more data is needed to leave no one behind (LNOB). Groups at risk of being left behind include youth, poor people, women, people with disabilities and elders. In 2017, the government established a Poverty Alleviation Department under the Ministry of Family Affairs to help better target poverty alleviation measures. An Inclusive Education Policy was launched in 2015 followed by a National Gender Policy in 2016. The VNR report includes a number of other existing and new specialized initiatives to help particular LNOB groups.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The VNR report points to a number of efforts by the government to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda in relation to specific SDGs. In terms of broader awareness-raising efforts, it points to the VNR process that included media awareness campaigns and the use of social media to raise awareness. For example, several outreach and educational campaigns were carried out by the government and non-state actors alike to raise people's awareness pertaining specific SDGs. The VNR report recognizes the importance of local partnerships and refers to a synchronized approach to collaborate with local stakeholders to move the 2030 Agenda forward. The VNR report also refers to participation by and involvement from local governments, civil society and private sector at the local level in the implementation of specific SDGs.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report includes examples of specific efforts by non-state actors and others to implement the SDGs. Parliament is noted to be an advocate of the agenda. Civil society and the private sector are helping to implement specific goals and assisting the government

in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts. The VNR report also highlights the role of youth organizations in promoting the SDGs.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report notes a key challenge for Seychelles pertaining to its high-income status achieved in 2015. The country is now on "equal footing" with other more developed countries that are better able to manage emerging challenges while still having a small population and limited resources to implement the 2030 Agenda. Moreover, the country faces global systemic issues pertaining to climate change and rising sea levels. In terms of financing for implementation, the VNR report notes that the SDGs are included in the national budget speech and that the budget is explicitly inked to Vision 2033 and hence the SDGs. The country has limited access to concessional finance given its income status and as such, focuses on domestic resource mobilization, public-private partners and innovative finance to implement the 2030 Agenda. While the VNR report notes positive historic trade and foreign aid relationships with Europe, it also emphasizes the country's exposure to Europe in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Contractions in European economies will have a significant effect on the country.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The VNR report does not indicate the total number of indicators for which Seychelles has data to monitor 2030 Agenda implementation though it notes challenges in generating reliable statistics and that the government would appreciate capacity development to better monitor and evaluation its efforts. There is a need for the country to better coordinate data production and make better use of administrative data. The VNR report does not provide information on overall national reporting – timelines, responsibilities or frequency. It does, however, note that parliament held a meeting in 2019 to review progress towards achieving SDG 16, carried out in collaboration with other stakeholders.





# SLOVENIA

*In 2020, Slovenia submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The country's first presentation was in 2017.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

The 2017 VNR report refers to a permanent Inter-ministerial Working Group on Development Planning as a coordination mechanism to promote policy coherence. However, the 2020 VNR report only refers to the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy that coordinates monitoring, awareness raising and information flow between government institutions. As was the case in 2017, the 2020 VNR report does not outline how nonstate actors are engaged in governance or institutional mechanisms related to SDG implementation.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The 2017 VNR report noted that representatives of different groups were included in the process of drafting the Vision of Slovenia 2050 that informs the national development strategy. The 2020 VNR report refers only to a survey of youth that informed national priorities. According to the VNR report, the VNR was a highly inclusive process involving a diverse range of stakeholders that provided expertise.

first countries to incorporate the 2030 Agenda into its policies, namely through the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030. The VNR report refers to the 2030 Agenda principles of universality, leaving no one behind, and recognizes inter-generational dynamics. While it does not refer to planetary boundaries, the VNR report does refer to the capacities of the planet.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The 2020 VNR report re-iterates many of the priorities presented in 2017 including the need for balance economic, social and environmental development, highlighting high quality of life for individuals. To this, it adds an emphasis on the low-carbon circular economy and managing demographic change. The VNR report mentions only the establishment of national indicators, pointing to 54 indicators that reflect the country's sustainable development situation.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

Like in 2017, the 2020 VNR report provides a detailed examination of all SDGs, with equal attention to economic, social and environmental dimensions, and refers to applicable linkages between dimensions in analysis of specific goals. Policy coherence for sustainable development is supported by coordinated efforts across ministries and defined contact points for 2030 Agenda implementation. The VNR report refers to environment and climate-related international agreements that support the 2030 Agenda.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

In its 2017 VNR report, the government reported having carried out a preliminary gap analysis of the government's policies and existing measurements. The 2020 VNR report refers to an assessment of available data and a review of responsibilities for data collection. This process led to the selection of national indicators and clear responsibilities for monitoring.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

According to the VNR report, Slovenia was one of the



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### **Leave no one behind**

The VNR report does not specifically identify groups at risk of being left behind, but does not retired women, tenants and the unemployed are at the highest risk of

poverty. In 2017, the VNR report pointed to children and adolescents, the elderly, women who experience domestic violence, people with mental health problems, homeless people, at-risk users of illicit drugs, people with various forms of functional disability, Roma, and immigrants as at risk of being left behind. In comparison to 2017, the 2020 VNR has a more limited presentation of efforts to leave no one behind.

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### ***Civil society validity check***

The report provided by Slovenian civil society organizations provides a significantly more robust discussion of challenges related to leaving on one behind in comparison to the official VNR report. Notably, the civil society report points to the need for greater efforts by the government to support individuals that identify as part of the LGBTI community.

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### ***Awareness raising and localization***

As was the case in 2017, the government made use of the VNR in 2020 to further raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda. While the VNR report does not provide a comprehensive overview of the status of localization in the country, it includes examples of local initiatives as part of good practice in the presentation of some SDGs.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The 2020 VNR report showed improvement over 2017 in terms of providing information on the contributions of most stakeholder groups to the SDGs. However, it does refer to efforts with civil society organizations, noting their work in supporting consultations. The VNR report also recognized that civil society organizations were preparing a parallel report and noted examples of civil society implementation in realizing specific goals.

Specific projects involving the private sector, academia and youth.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report highlights examples of good practices and challenges throughout the goal-by-goal analysis but does not provide an overall view of them in the context of implementation more generally. Many aspects of the means of implementation are not included, particularly in relation to capacity development, the impact of systemic issues, budgeting and financing for 2030 Agenda implementation. The VNR report does have a strong focus on Slovenia's provision of international public finance however, noting examples throughout and the country's commitments to official development assistance. The VNR report notes efforts to address the impacts of COVID-19 mainly in the areas of restricting close contact, suspension of air traffic, school closures and freezing the budget to provide additional resources for addressing the pandemic.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

In 2017, the government noted it would strive to increase the amount of available data for SDG indicators. The 2020 VNR report however does not provide information on overall data availability, nor efforts to improve data availability. The VNR report notes that challenges exist in terms of ensuring representative statistics for vulnerable groups. In 2017, Slovenia noted the plan to report on the SDGs as a regular part of annual reporting on the implementation of the new national development strategy. This appears to be the case as well in 2020, with the government adding that a website was created that showcases indicators for Slovenia. The Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy has overall responsibility for annual reporting working with the national statistical office and government ministries.



# SOLOMON ISLANDS

*In 2020, Solomon Islands submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

The VNR report mentions awareness raising efforts carried out by the government towards parliamentarians, and it also refers to organizational structures to build the VNR report itself, but it does not really inform about governance structures towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On the other hand, the VNR report outlines the way through which the SDGs have been integrated into Solomon Islands' national development strategy and the involvement of non-state actors in this process. The VNR report mentions that the ownership of the SDGs has been continuously promoted at the national level through the National Development Strategy Implementation Oversight Committee, in which civil society organizations and the private sector participate actively.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The VNR report notes that representatives of different groups were included in the process of identifying national priorities in the context of the 2016-2035 national development strategy, both through local and national consultation processes and through coordination committees focused on minority groups. According to the VNR report, Solomon Islands' efforts towards a participatory and inclusive process of SDGs implementation was recognized by the country's Office of the Auditor General. The VNR preparation process was also inclusive of non-state actors, as the VNR report states that development partners and civil society organizations were represented in the VNR Coordination Committee, established in 2019.

medium-term strategies. However, it does not clearly mention the principles of the 2030 Agenda: apart from leaving no one behind, which counts with a dedicated chapter in the VNR report, there is no explicit reference to the principles of human rights-based approach, universality, or planetary boundaries. On the other hand, the VNR report has a strong human-rights focus and recognizes the importance of protecting the environment for future generations.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The VNR report mentions the establishment of national priorities that are linked to the SDGs and focus on five objectives: "economic growth, poverty alleviation, quality health and education, environmentally sustainable development and good governance." (p. 21) According to the VNR report, performance targets and indicators have been established, but the availability of data to inform each one of those is unclear.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

Solomon Islands' VNR report provides a detailed examination of all SDGs and refers to applicable linkages between economic, social and environmental dimensions in the analysis of specific goals. Policy coherence for sustainable development is not explicitly mentioned in the VNR report. However, it refers to international agreements that support the 2030 Agenda, including the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA



## POLICIES

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

The VNR report indicates the incorporation of the SDGs into the country's national development strategy and

### **Leave no one behind**

The VNR report identifies groups at risk of being left behind, including poor people, children, people with disabilities, women, and ethnic groups. The efforts to leave no one behind are overarching; apart from

universal programmes such as social assistance, the VNR report does not mention more specialized programs focusing on specific groups.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

According to the VNR report, the country was able to mobilize different stakeholders around the SDGs and to enhance public awareness in order to structure responses to achieve the SDGs in a collective way. In terms of localization, the VNR report mentions consultations at a nation-wide level to introduce the SDGs at the provincial level. In addition, it mentions the prioritization of a Pacific-based peacebuilding approach that includes the assessment of local contexts and the development of locally derived indicators that aim to support the achievement of SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions).

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The 2020 VNR refers to the participation of non-state actors towards the implementation of the SDGs. For example, it mentions the involvement of Members of Parliament in a seminar around the SDGs and risk development, the strengthening of public-private partnerships, and the role of civil society in addressing specific needs of vulnerable groups.



## **GOOD PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT**

Youth had an interesting participation in the implementation of SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) by organizing a film festival on the topic of anti-corruption. Through this action, a youth group was able to engage a number of candidates running in their constituency to sign political and integrity commitments.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report highlights examples of challenges affecting the SDGs implementation, but recognizes the importance of peer learning and sharing to further develop elements like data collection and capacity. Being a Small Islands Developing State (SIDS), a post-conflict country that still emerges from a period of ethnic tensions, and a country that is highly vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change and natural disasters, Solomon Islands have these systemic issues to face while implementing the 2030 Agenda. On the other hand, the country is aware of the positive impacts of technology, has linked its national development objectives to the SDGs and the national budget, and has costed country level implementation. Moreover, the VNR report shows that the country has identified sources of finance, which includes partnerships and Official Development Assistance (ODA). The VNR report does not mention how trade and the COVID-19 response affect the means of implementation of the SDGs.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The VNR report acknowledges the need to strengthen data and statistical systems and capacity. While it does not provide significant information on data availability, including disaggregated data, it mentions the use of unofficial documents, such as ones produced by United Nations agencies, the International Institute for Sustainable Development, Yale University and the World Health Organization. The VNR process was recognized by Solomon Islands' Office of the Auditor General as a reporting mechanism. However, the VNR report also mentions the recognition that the processes of monitoring and evaluation must be documented in a comprehensive way, including with disaggregated information, and circulated among all stakeholders.



*In 2020, Syria submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

The VNR report refers to Syria's National Committee, whose mission is to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the National Development Program for Post War Syria and the progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The VNR process was carried out in cooperation with the country's Supreme Council for Economic and Social Planning, which is responsible for the planning and monitoring of the SDGs implementation. Such council is chaired by the Prime Minister and includes a number of ministers, representatives from the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), experts and academics. However, the VNR report is not clear as to how the non-state actors are officially engaged in SDGs implementation governance arrangements.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The VNR report mentions that Syria has been working on the participation of all stakeholders (e.g. relevant government agencies, NGOs, the parliament, academics, university and school students, civil society, the private sector) towards the achievement of the SDGs. Nevertheless, no further details are provided in regard to an overarching approach to stakeholder engagement, nor more practical or tangible examples are provided. On the other hand, the VNR report refers to efforts towards the strengthening of international cooperation, despite the war conditions, so that Syria can benefit from other countries' expertise in the field of achieving the SDGs. According to the VNR report, the war situation and the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic have precluded the possibility of a full commitment to direct participation of multiple stakeholders, especially in regions most affected by the war. In the context of the VNR process, engagement has been partially compensated for by the use of online platforms, which have been used for

consultations and surveys whose inputs informed the VNR report.



## POLICIES

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

The VNR report mentions briefly the existence of a technical task team responsible for the preparation of a statistical report about the progress on the SDGs (indicators and targets) between 2015 and 2019. However, no additional details are provided.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The VNR report establishes a comparison between the 2030 Agenda and the National Program for Syria. The comparison is done through the 5 Ps (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships) and shows, under each P, elements from both the Agenda and the national plan in order to show the consistency between the two frameworks.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The VNR report assesses the progress on all 17 SDGs via a 5Ps (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships) analysis. It includes a detailed examination of all the goals, mentions targets and indicators, and adapts a balanced multi-sectoral approach that takes social, economic and environmental dimensions into account, with an emphasis on social elements. On the other hand, linkages between the three dimensions in the analysis of each goal are weak, and there is no reference to policy coherence. The VNR report does not mention engagement with international agreements on sustainable development, such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and Aid and Development Effectiveness Agendas. With regards to COVID-19, even when the VNR report contains information on the government's actions to face the pandemic, these are not linked with the 2030 Agenda achievement.



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The VNR report considers “Leave No One Behind” (LNOB) as the overall slogan of the national report. It stresses the importance of adhering to this principle in national policies, as well as of achieving an inclusive kind of development that spreads all its results in a context of social justice, rejecting discrimination and ensuring that those in the poorest and most marginalized areas have their rights secured. The VNR report mentions that the targets of LNOB efforts are women and girls, displaced persons and refugees, and the Golan population. However, the VNR report rarely includes gender disaggregated data and considers that additional data is required to LNOB. The efforts towards LNOB are majorly overarching (e.g. social protection system), and the VNR report does not outline specialized programs for specific groups. There is no information on specific efforts to address the impacts of COVID-19 in the most vulnerable populations.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

According to the VNR report, there are awareness raising efforts being carried out towards the SDGs. Some of the most prominent initiatives include the Syrian Youth platform to advocate for the SDGs, “training of trainers” workshops, and a program to support and train young leaderships on the SDGs in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program. In terms of localization, the VNR report mentions workshops aimed at providing a participatory space for stakeholders at the local levels in several governorates at the local level, and states that the 2030 Agenda has been localized in the national development program for Post War Syria. Moreover, the VNR report mentions the existence of programs at the local level, such as the Provincial Disaster Management Development Program, the National Framework for Regional Planning Program, and the Regional Development Plans Program, but does not clarify the role of local governments.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report mentions that global partnerships are essential to successfully implement the SDGs. However, it does not specify actions regarding multi-stakeholder implementation efforts. The VNR report considers that a main obstacle is the economic and development blockade that Syria is exposed to at different levels. Measures taken by some countries and

organizations impose severe restrictions on sensitive and essential sectors in the fulfillment of the livelihood requirements of the Syrian citizens, and on the process of reconstruction and future development. According to the VNR report, the most important restrictions currently in place include remittances, bank blockades, and restrictions on investment sectors such as oil, technology, travel and aviation. The VNR report suggests that the current situation hinders Syria’s development and actions towards the SDGs and highlights the importance of international partnerships and cooperation.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report estimates Syria’s financing needs until the year 2030 at about 86 trillion Syrian pounds, which include both relief work and physical reconstruction of infrastructures, according to planned priorities. About 32% of Syria’s financing needs could be covered by local sources, which suggests that the gap amount of about 58 trillion Syrian pounds should be covered by the international community. The VNR report describes programs and initiatives to realize the SDGs, including the national development program. However, attempts to address structural challenges remain limited, and with the continuation of war and conflicts, the work on development is less likely to produce results. The VNR report considers the war on Syria as an external issue that is hampering the development process of the country.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The VNR report mentions that insufficient statistical data and limited efficiency of the monitoring and evaluation system are main challenges faced by the country with regards to the SDGs. The VNR report outlines objective impediments (e.g. geographical divide, insecurity in some areas, large population mobility, instability in foreign prices) that make the traditional methods of monitoring, evaluation and statistics ineffective. On the other hand, the VNR report alludes to the necessity of a smart use of technology and the need for future efforts on a national monitoring and evaluation system. Such system should be incorporated in a national plan and should include indicators to monitor the country’s progress in achieving the SDGs, therefore setting up an implementable statistical mission before national stakeholders, according to the VNR report. In the context of the VNR process, a technical working group was tasked with putting in place an interactive electronic platform that includes an updated database to monitor the progress in achieving the SDGs in cooperation with the Arab Portal for Sustainable Development.





# TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

*In 2020, Trinidad and Tobago submitted voluntary national review report (VNR) to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

According to the VNR report, there is no lead institution for implementation and follow-up on the 2030 Agenda. Instead, all ministries should incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into public policies and plans, through close collaboration between all relevant stakeholders. Efforts are underway to strengthen the institutional framework underpinning the SDGs and enhance cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors. The main messages do not set out information regarding if and how non-state actors are formally engaged.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The VNR report notes a high level of stakeholder participation in 2030 Agenda implementation, including in defining national priorities through a government-designed survey to citizens and representatives from the private and civil society. Civil society organizations, the private sector, women, youth, academia, experts and the general public participated in the VNR through consultations and providing information on their efforts to implement the SDGs. Some of this information was included as boxes in the VNR report, mentioning stakeholders as sources of information. Nevertheless, the country still lacks formal mechanisms to engage stakeholders in the SDG implementation process more broadly.

pandemic presented an opportunity to further assess the gaps in social and economic initiatives, which would allow for the implementation of changes and the development of strategies to overcome them.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

Vision 2030 is the Trinidad and Tobago National Development Plan. The 17 SDGs were integrated across its national goals and thematic areas to implement the 2030 Agenda while remaining focused on local development needs. Vision 2030 has shaped the national commitment to ensure that no one is left behind, a principle that became critical in the country's action to face the COVID-19 pandemic. The VNR report does not mention other principles of 2030 Agenda implementation.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

Vision 2030 integrates and prioritizes all 17 SDGs across five thematic areas into a three to five-year plan. The thematic areas include: 1) Putting People First, 2) Delivering Good Governance and Service Excellence, 3) Improving Productivity through Quality Infrastructure and Transportation, 4) Building Globally Competitive Businesses, and 5) Placing the Environment at the Centre of Social and Economic Development. The VNR report does not make references to specific national targets or indicators.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

Trinidad and Tobago's VNR report focuses on eight SDGs including SDGs 3. Good health and well-being; 4. Quality education; 5. Gender equality; 8. Decent work and economic growth; 10. Reduced inequalities; 13. Climate action; 16. Peace, justice, and strong institutions; and 17. Partnerships for the goals. Goals covered by the VNR report are examined in detail though with limited reference to linkages between dimensions of sustainable development. Overall, the VNR report tends to focus on social aspects over economic and environmental ones. Policy coherence and effectiveness are considered



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The VNR report does not include information on gap analysis or baseline studies, though it does not important gaps in terms of gender equality, reduction of inequality, partnerships and statistical capacities and skills gaps. The VNR report states that the COVID-19

critical to implementing plans for national development. The Paris Agreement, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda are explicitly linked to SDG implementation. The VNR report includes a chapter addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, which is also considered across the report in a cross-cutting manner.



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

Women, children, persons with disabilities, the elderly, persons living with HIV/AIDS, ex-prisoners, deportees, and the socially displaced are considered at risk of being left behind. Street dwellers and domestic violence survivors are also mentioned as vulnerable groups. The VNR report recognizes that COVID-19 will negatively impact the living conditions of poor and vulnerable persons. Trinidad and Tobago's social protection system supports them mainly through a new set of focused policies. In 2019, the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago adopted a national policy for persons with disabilities white paper. Gender focal points have been established across all government institutions and the government distributed food cards to individuals and households living in poverty. The lack of sufficient and disaggregated data is underlined as a challenge to identify and support those at risk of being left behind.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

Building greater awareness of the SDGs was a central pillar of the communication strategy adopted for the VNR process. Several mediums, including electronic and print, were used to create and disseminate information on the SDGs. Topical articles on Vision 2030 and the SDGs were featured in major newspapers between December 2019 and January 2020. The Ministry of Communication's news website highlighted Trinidad and Tobago participation in the 2020 HLPF and social media platforms were used to spread relevant information. The main tools used to engage stakeholders include print and social media campaigns, interviews, works with focus groups and on-line SDGs surveys.

Localization of the SDGs is not addressed in the report.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report reflects broad stakeholders' engagement in implementing the SDGs. Activities carried out by the parliament, civil society, the private sector, and academia are mentioned. Some examples include a European Union-funded project to empower the civil society, government and local-communities partnerships to implement coastal tree-planting projects and collaboration with the private sector to implement a ban on the sale of sugary drinks in public schools to combat child obesity. The report identifies trade and green energy as the two primary areas in which external partner technical and tailored financial support is needed. The VNR benefited from support by three external consultants recruited with help from the United Nations Country Team.

### ***Means of implementation***

Technology, capacity development, trade, international and national public finance, and systemic issues are addressed as means of implementation. The adoption of laws is the primary tool used by the country to promote them. Thus, in 2018 the government integrated the Vision 2030 development plan into the public sector's annual budgetary process and adopted a National Environmental Policy that promotes environmental capacities building. The government has led strategic trade missions, identifying countries for new trade agreements. Global systemic issues referenced are mainly linked to COVID-19 impacts. Specific actions to confront the pandemic are informed, such as providing rental assistance to families whose income was negatively impacted. However, those actions are not linked with SDG implementation efforts.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The level of national data availability is not clear from the VNR report though data availability and national capacity to collect and disseminate disaggregated data are considered major country challenges. However, no efforts to improve data availability are reported, and the VNR report does not outline national reporting on the SDGs.



# UGANDA

*In 2020, Uganda submitted its second voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Its first presentation was in 2016.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

A multi-stakeholder National SDG Coordination Framework, established in 2016, guides 2030 Agenda implementation under the leadership of the Office of the Prime Minister. At the parliamentary level, an SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) Policy Coordination Committee also exists. Moreover, there is a National SDG Taskforce that receives input from five task working groups. These are chaired by government organizations and count with civil society, private sector, academia and development partners as official members.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

A National SDG Taskforce was established in 2019 to provide advice on the processes leading up to the VNR. Headed by the Permanent Secretary of the Office of the Prime Minister, the Task Force includes government institutions, parliament, United Nations bodies, civil society and the private sector. Non-state actors were also included in VNR technical working groups. Beyond these institutional structures, the VNR also included broader consultations with citizens and organized groups. The VNR report highlights a number of lessons learned from carrying out the VNR consultations during the pandemic, namely the ability to attract more participants and more diverse participants (including those at risk of being left behind) and cost savings. The government plans to build on this experience to inform future consultations. In terms of consultations on national priorities, while the report does not refer to national priorities specifically, it does note widespread consultation to develop a costed national roadmap for 2030 Agenda implementation.

the alignment of its second national development plan with the SDGs, noting 70% alignment. The VNR report also notes plans to review monitoring and reporting systems going forward.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

Uganda's second National Development Plan affirmed the importance of the 2030 Agenda for realizing Uganda's Vision 2040 and was 70% aligned to the SDGs. According to the VNR report, the third National Development Plan (2020/21-2024/25) provided an opportunity to further incorporate the SDGs. The VNR report refers to the human rights-based nature of the 2030 Agenda and examines efforts to leave no one behind (LNOB) through a dedicated chapter and in a cross-cutting approach. While it does not refer to intergenerational responsibility as an overarching principle of the 2030 Agenda, it does refer to conservation tourism for future generations.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The VNR report notes that the overall goal of the third National Development Plan is to increase household incomes and improve quality of life. It also lays out specific national priorities, mentioning that industry, governance and environment are priority investment areas for the country to accelerate the SDGs. Moreover, the VNR report notes that SDG targets and indicators have been integrated into the plan.

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The VNR report includes a detailed examination of all 17 SDGs with a greater emphasis on social dimension of sustainable development over others. The government notes that it is improving policy coherence for sustainable development by: 1) developing partnership policies and frameworks to improve the relationship between government and donors, 2) better differentiating between financiers, and 3) improving coordination with different non-state actors.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

According to the VNR report, the government examined

The VNR report refers to a range of international agreements related to climate change though not the Paris Agreement specifically. It does not refer to other relevant agreements pertaining to financing for development or aid and development effectiveness.

## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

Women, youth, children, girls, adolescent girls, people with disabilities, children with disabilities, and refugees are noted as groups at risk of being left behind in the VNR report. It appears that efforts to LNOB are guided by existing data. The VNR report notes efforts in relation to the national development plan, as well as a range of existing and new programs directed at supporting specific groups through legal instruments, policies and institutional mechanisms.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The government supported an SDG Awareness Month in October 2019 with a focus on youth engagement. Activities included an SDG marathon, regional concerts, a high-level panel discussion and media campaigns. In terms of localization, the VNR report notes challenges for local governments in terms of integrating the 2030 Agenda into their day-to-day work and securing local leadership. Local government level associations have been working with civil society however to promote participation by local governments. Local governments have identified SDG focal points to liaise with the SDG secretariat and SDG technical working groups. The VNR report also notes a Local Voluntary Review Report was prepared for Ngora District.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR report suggest broad engagement by non-state actors, including examples of their activities under specific SDGs. Parliament has been engaged through formal committees and established a Parliamentary Forum on the SDGs. Civil society coordinates through

a CSO SDG Core Reference Group and also launched the Tondeka Mabega (Leave No One Behind) initiative to localize the SDGs and amplify the voices of marginalized groups. The private sector has a specific coordination platform and has been engaged in policy making and overall government level coordination. The VNR report also highlights efforts by youth, such those carried out by Open Space and Youth SDG Ambassadors. One Million Youth One Million Solutions was also launched to identify young and talented innovators for continuous mentorship to scale up their ideas.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report recognizes the twin global health and economic crises as impacting Uganda's ability to implement the 2030 Agenda. The country notes a variety of different sources of financing including official development assistance, domestic revenue and private finance. According to the VNR report, the government ensures alignment between national budgets and the SDGs through an assessment process for sector budgets. While the VNR report recognizes the impact of COVID-19, it does not lay out the government's specific response and adaptation to the crisis.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

According to the VNR report, Uganda has invested in data generation for nationwide coverage with disaggregated data according to gender, age and disability status, among other relevant forms of disaggregation. Efforts are underway to improve 2030 Agenda monitoring and evaluation, including revitalization of the SDG monitoring and reporting platform. While the VNR report refers to parliamentary review of the 2018 Auditor General's Report on progress on implementation of the SDGs, it does not provide information regarding the regularity of national level reporting and the specific provision in place. In terms of reporting in 2020 over what was presented in 2016, the VNR report included a narrative regarding progress made on implementation overall, including information on specific SDGs in which progress was more evident and providing data on progress against specific indicators to compare what was reported in 2016 with progress since.



# UKRAINE

*In 2020, Ukraine submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

The VNR only mentions that Ukraine's government created an Inter-Agency Working Group on SDGs. However, it explains neither its structure nor its memberships, limiting to inform that such Inter-Agency Working Group should coordinate the SDGs achievement efforts.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The report does not articulate any process for stakeholder engagement. The only information available is that the Ministry for Development of Economy, Trade, and Agriculture of Ukraine established four thematic expert groups on economy, environment, social, and institutions as part of the VNR preparation. The groups included leading experts from line ministries and representatives from executive authorities, Academia, the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, the UN system, the UN Global Compact Network in Ukraine, NGOs, and specialists from analytical centers. It also states that they have made efforts to involve young people's innovative and creative VNR preparation potential. As a result, the only reference of COVID-19 impact on stakeholder engagement is related to its participation in the VNR building process, stating that amidst the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the public meeting programmed series schedule was revised, and virtual discussions were held in May. The draft VNR report was placed on the Ministry website for interactive online debate and comments. No information on that consultation results is given.

for each national indicator. When analyzing each goal, the report compared those baselines with the 2020 real situation to see if they were reached.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

Ukraine has incorporated the SDGs into its national development plans and related policies. The first step was to incorporate the SDGs in the country development planning documents. To that end, the SDGs national adaptation process began in 2015. Four years later, an analysis found that the 17 goals and 86 national targets have been incorporated in 162 regulatory legal acts of the Government; 1,394 targets, and 4,296 actions enshrined in those acts are intended to achieve the national adapted goals. However, the report affirms that not all the targets of 17 goals have been taken into consideration, without providing more specific information. Leave no one behind is the only 2030 Agenda principle considered in the VNR.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The report informs that the government set national priorities. Nevertheless, it shows internal contradictions. On the one hand, the VNR states that all the 17 goals are equally valuable and essential, but some are viewed as transformation accelerators, namely 3. Good health and well-being; 4. Quality education; 8. Decent work and economic growth; 9. Industry, innovation, and infrastructure; 12. Responsible consumption and production; and 16. Peace, justice, and strong institutions. On the other hand, the report affirms that 'Major importance in Ukraine is attached to SDG 8, decent work and economic growth, that should become an accelerator of transformations. It's the only goal closely inter-related with all other goals' [p.10].



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The government assessed all SDGs. Presented as a 2017 National Baseline Report 'Sustainable Development Goals: Ukraine', it established benchmark lines to 2020

Besides, the 2017 National Baseline Report 'Sustainable Development Goals: Ukraine' selected 86 SDGs' national targets and 172 indicators. Later on, the number of indicators was increased to 183. Target values were set for a 2030 horizon, with intermediate values for 2020 and 2025.

### ***Integration and policy coherence***

The report covers the 17 SDGs, providing detailed information on most of them. The three dimensions of Sustainable Development are considered, but environmental issues receive less attention. Ukraine added 'effective management' as a national fourth national development dimension, including creating a transparent and fair system of social lifts, improving the efficiency of public authorities and local governments while respecting human rights, ensuring gender equality, and achieving societal intolerance to corruption.

Regarding coherence, a national analysis has revealed shortcomings in the Ukrainian system of state strategic planning and budgeting, resulting in unclear coordination of efforts on the achievement of goals and targets still to be solved. International documents related to the 2030 Agenda are only taken into account by the VR when it focuses on climate change, mentioning the country's ratification of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement.

## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The report states that Ukraine is committed to achieving the SDGs by 2030 according to the 'leave no one behind' principle. However, vulnerable national groups are not identified, and only gender-disaggregated data is available most of the time. Even though, mentions to women and children shows that they are considered as vulnerable groups. The VNR also identifies state social support -without details- to fight against poverty.

The gender component has been integrated into national strategies and sectoral regulatory documents, and a national mechanism for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men has been strengthened. Regarding children, Ukraine presented its *National Thematic Report 'Sustainable Development Goals for Children of Ukraine'* in the framework of the 2019 High-Level Political Forum. Many results of efforts to leave no women behind are reported in the SDG analytical chapter.

The VNR states that 'Of all eight indicators measuring progress in the achievement of the national ambitious Goal 10, it is currently impossible to monitor progress in one of them because of the absence of data. Only two of 7 indicators show positive dynamics; for one of them, it is weak and not sufficient to achieve the 2020 target value' (p.71). Nevertheless, no measure of reducing domestic inequalities is identified.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

No awareness raising actions are reported by Ukraine, and not localisation of the 2030 agenda at country level is reported, out of a few mentions to activities funded by local budgets.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

The VNR reports Civil Society activities to implement the SDGs. Still, it is impossible to know how deep the non-state actors' engagement is because of the lack of concrete information regarding implementing the 2030 Agenda. The private sector increasingly engages in public-private partnerships, but there are no direct links in the report between PPP and SDGs implementation. Ukraine's leading universities and the Ministry for Development of Economy, Trade, and Agriculture signed a memorandum of cooperation to assess the SDGs' achievement progress and forecast development tendencies for the next decade. Youth participation is informed only regarding the VNR building process. The report also includes general references to local non-state actors participating in implementing the SDGs. Parliamentary activities are underlined, but there are 'business as usual,' mainly adopting laws that reinforce gender equality.

### ***Means of implementation***

Even if the VNR does not identify any good practice, it is possible to highlight youth participation in the report preparation process. Among the lessons learned in accelerating SDGs' implementation, the report mentions that systemic changes are necessary to formulate a national development long-term strategy involving civil society. The VNR also includes lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the need of a health care reform, resuming a full production cycle of some chemical and pharmaceutical industries goods, and updating national distance learning approaches. The occupation of Crimea, Sevastopol city, and some others part of the national territory oblast by the Russian



Federation, obsolete infrastructure, inefficient public administration, insufficient resource support, and limited financing are the main challenges to be faced in the SDGs implementation.

Budgeting for the SDGs is not considered. There are always broad references to technology, capacity building, trade, and systemic issues as means of implementation, but neither international nor national public financing is analyzed. In no case, a link between means of implementation and the COVID-19 response is established by the report.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The data availability and its disaggregation levels are unclear from the report. Data gaps are easy to identify in the VNR. Nevertheless, two actions towards improving Ukraine's data availability are presented: The State Statistics Service of Ukraine has established a special

unit within its structure to provide information support for SDGs monitoring, and planning and coordinating information between official data suppliers was institutionalized in 2019. The report also states that the analysis and comparison of the SDGs indicators achievement used data from the UN Sustainable Development Report 2017-2019 and statistical offices of third countries. However, when we look at the reported data sources, we find the Federation of Organic Movement of Ukraine, the USAID New Justice program, the Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development, and the UNDP as data providers. As national reporting efforts, the report mentions the creation of a special section on the SDGs at the State Statistics Service of Ukraine official website, showing information about official national and international documents on the SDGs, data, and metadata on the SDG indicators, and relevant publications. The SDGs' indicators are monitored on an annual basis.



# UZBEKISTAN

*In 2020, Uzbekistan submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

Implementation of national SDGs is overseen by an interagency Coordination Council, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister, at the new Ministry of Economic Development and Poverty Reduction. A Parliamentary Commission to monitor and facilitate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Uzbekistan was established in February 2020. Non-state actors are not included in SDG governance structures.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

No formal process for stakeholder engagement is articulated in the report. While non-state actors were not engaged in the identification of national priorities, the United Nations Office in Uzbekistan, in partnership with the Legislative Chamber of Parliament and the national movement 'Yuksalish,' conducted consultations with civil society on the first draft of the VNR report. In the context of VNR preparations, online consultations were also held on human rights and good governance, environment and climate change, and livelihoods and social protection. A series of seminars and roundtables were organized.

adopted in 2018. The report notes that the SDGs broadly align with the National Action Strategy 2017-2021 – a framework for carrying out large-scale reforms in the country. The government is also working on integrating the SDGs into national, sectoral and regional development strategies and program, including the Concept of Comprehensive Socioeconomic Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030. The VNR report does not explicitly reference the principles of the 2030 Agenda beyond leaving no one behind.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

The VNR report lists poverty eradication as Uzbekistan's top priority. Other national priorities include women's rights, sustainable employment and climate change mitigation and adaptation. The government prepared a list of "some 200 priority indicators" selected from the global SDG indicators deemed relevant to Uzbekistan. Today, of 125 national SDG indicators, 105 (84%) are covered in more than 190 normative, programmatic and strategic government documents. More specifically, 100% of national targets under SDGs 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 10 and 11 is covered in the government's programmatic documents. National targets under SDGs 13 and 17 are covered to a lesser degree, at 50% and 40%, respectively.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

The VNR does not indicate whether a baseline study or gap analysis was carried out to inform 2030 Agenda implementation. Nevertheless, information presented in the VNR report on nationalization suggests that national targets and indicators were selected based on a review of global indicators against national priorities and policies.

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

The SDGs are incorporated into national development plans and related policies and frameworks and through the use of a national SDG implementation strategy. A Roadmap for National SDG Implementation was

### **Integration and policy coherence**

The VNR report examines all SDGs, except SDG 14 (life below water) because the country is landlocked. It provides a summary examination of goals, targets and indicators with limited detail (much of the information presented in the report is not integrated into target- or indicator-based analysis). The report addresses all three dimensions of sustainable development, with limited focus on environmental, and contains limited reference to linkages between the economic, social and environmental dimensions in the goal-by-goal analysis. The VNR report indicates that efforts are underway to establish and evaluate policy coherence mechanisms. The VNR report makes limited reference to other relevant international frameworks and agreements, referring only to the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.



## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The VNR report argues that the principle of “human interests are above all,” which informs the reforms in Uzbekistan, aligns with efforts to leave no one behind (LNOB). Efforts to advance specific SDGs target the elderly, persons with disabilities, people in closed institutions, families that have lost their main income earner, low-income families with young children and single mothers through existing specialized programmes. Such efforts are also directed at reducing the impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups. The report refers to new initiatives to LNOB in light of COVID-19. These include: expansion of social assistance benefits and coverage for low-income individuals, persons with disabilities and members of vulnerable groups that are quarantined or infected; extension of unemployment insurance payments; and measures to simplify application and eligibility assessment procedures.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The VNR report states that the government used printed and electronic media to raise awareness and inform the public about national SDGs implementation. Twenty-eight SDG consultations in five regions were conducted, reaching 1,348 representatives from non-governmental organizations, youth, persons with disabilities, the media and bloggers. The VNR report does not articulate SDG localization efforts.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

A Parliamentary Commission to monitor and facilitate the implementation of the SDGs in Uzbekistan was established in February 2020. The VNR report notes that civil society, youth and leading non-governmental organizations are “actively involved” in SDG implementation but does not explain how. The report notes that the government is reassigning some of the functions traditionally performed by the government to specific civil society institutions while retaining its leadership functions. The VNR report references legislation aimed at enhancing effective partnerships between the government, the private sector and civil society to implement socioeconomic development programs.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report mentions challenges to the implementation of specific SDGs, e.g. reducing domestic violence is a challenge to meeting SDG 5 on gender equality. According to the VNR report, the government signed over 70 cooperation agreements for science, technology and innovation and knowledge exchange over the past two years. It provides examples of cooperation and partnerships between Uzbekistan and India, the Republic of Korea and Germany, among other countries, in this context. In addition to identifying capacity-building needs under specific SDGs, the VNR report points to the need to enhance Uzbekistan’s statistical and monitoring and reporting capacity. The VNR report recognizes the lack of development of civil society as a systemic issue.

Uzbekistan plans to factor SDG implementation into the state budget and prioritizes increased finance mobilization through public-private partnerships. The government has implemented numerous trade liberalization measures, concluded free trade agreements with several Commonwealth of Independent States member states, and undertaken efforts to eliminate trade barriers and join the World Trade Organization. Uzbekistan’s response to COVID-19 includes measures in the health care sector, expansion of social programs for low-income and vulnerable population groups and efforts to support businesses. These measures are financed through the newly established Anti-crisis Fund.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

As noted, a Parliamentary Commission monitors and facilitates SDG implementation. Only half of Uzbekistan’s 200 indicators reflecting national priorities have been reported. Work is underway to increase the availability of high-quality, accurate and reliable data, including through the National Strategy on Statistics Development in Uzbekistan in 2020-2025, on the remaining 100 indicators. The government is planning a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey to gather information on indicators to monitor progress towards national goals and global commitments on improving the situation of women and children. While the VNR report points to the role of parliament in monitoring implementation efforts it does not indicate the frequency of reporting nor does it provide information regarding how reports will be prepared and by whom. Efforts are ongoing to develop a national monitoring and reporting methodology.



# ZAMBIA

*In 2020, Zambia submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) report to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.*



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

### **Leadership, governance and institutions**

The Zambian parliament plays an active role in promoting the 2030 Agenda at the national level, particularly through the Parliamentary Caucus Committee on the SDGs. Moreover, according to the VNR report, the office of the clerk of the National Assembly promotes coordination between parliament and government (represented by the Ministry of National Development Planning). Still at the national level, the National Development Coordinating Committee, which comprises a wide membership including representatives from cooperating partners, the private sector, trade unions, civil society organizations, academia and youth, has a National SDGs Sub-Committee. This Sub-Committee is responsible for looking over partnerships, data information, monitoring, among other functions.

### **Stakeholder engagement**

The VNR report does not specify mechanisms for stakeholder engagement beyond national consultation processes. It notes that the process of developing a roadmap for 2030 Agenda implementation started in 2017 and that implementation involves engagement by all stakeholders (including both state and non-state actors). However, information is not provided on consultations with non-state actors in preparing the roadmap nor is information available on consultations to identify national priorities.

In terms of engagement on the VNR, a roadmap was widely shared with stakeholders who were also asked to provide material, financial and technical contributions. The Ministry of National Development Planning ensured engagement with government institutions, development partners, academia, youth, the private sector and civil society, including representatives of vulnerable groups. Virtual conferencing was used to validate the report by

stakeholders, with the VNR process impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. A draft version of the VNR report was made publicly available on a government web portal as part of validation exercises.



## POLICIES

### **Baseline or gap analysis**

According to the VNR report, Zambia examined both policies and data to inform its approach to 2030 Agenda implementation. This included an examination of alignment between the national development plan and the SDGs (75% of applicable SDG targets are fully aligned and 11 percent partially aligned) through a Rapid Integrated Assessment. The government also reviewed baselines and progress on the targets under the five-year plan (which is presented in the VNR report through the goal-by-goal analysis).

### **Incorporating the SDGs**

Zambia's National Vision 2030 integrates the 2030 Agenda. It has the goal of transforming Zambia into a middle-income country by 2030. It is underpinned by five-year National Development Plans with the current plan covering 2017-2021. Sustainable development has also been enshrined in Zambia's 2016 Amended Constitution. The VNR report makes reference to the 2030 Agenda principles of universality and leaving no one behind.

### **Nationalizing the 2030 Agenda**

Zambia's national development plan includes five pillars: 1) economic diversification and job creation, 2) poverty and vulnerability reduction, 3) reducing developmental inequalities, 4) enhancing human development, and 5) creating a conducive governance environment for a diversified and inclusive economy. The VNR report also indicates that national level targets and indicators have been selected as part of the Seventh National Development Plan.

### ***Integration and policy coherence***

Zambia reported on a limited set of SDGs, excluding SDG 10 on reduced inequalities (which was seen as cross-cutting with other goals), SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production and SDG 14 on life below water (Zambia is land-locked). Overall, the VNR report had a stronger focus on economic dimensions of sustainable development though linkages were made to different dimensions in the goal-by-goal analysis. Reference to policy coherence in the VNR report pertains largely to coherence between national policies and relevant international agreements, namely the 2030 Agenda, the African Union Agenda 2063, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Rio+ and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

## IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA

### ***Leave no one behind***

The VNR report refers to a range of groups as at risk of being left behind: orphans and vulnerable children, households affected by HIV and AIDS, elderly, people living with disabilities, the chronically ill, female-headed vulnerable households and small-scale/poor and vulnerable but viable farmers. The National Development Plan includes a pillar aimed at addressing poverty and vulnerabilities and the VNR report points to a range of dedicated programs to support specific groups including through policy and legislative interventions and social protection schemes.

### ***Awareness raising and localization***

The VNR report notes that an awareness-raising campaign was carried out to raise capacities for SDG implementation. The campaign included the creation of an SDGs guide prepared in English and translated into the seven main local languages namely. Civil society was involved in the SDG awareness campaigns. According to the VNR report, 2030 Agenda implementation includes involvement of local actors, namely grassroots communities, civil society, local authorities, cooperating partners and government units at various levels. As part of 2030 Agenda implementation, Provincial Development Coordinating Committees, District Development

Coordinating Committees and Ward Development Committees are operating through supervisory and implementation roles.

### ***Partnership to realize the SDGs***

According to the VNR report, Zambia's parliament discusses the 2030 Agenda and coordinates with the government. A Parliamentary Caucus Committee exists. While civil society has been involved in awareness raising and the private sector is noted for supporting implementation of specific SDGs, the VNR report includes a recognition on the need to better engage stakeholders in implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation.

### ***Means of implementation***

The VNR report notes challenges for Zambia with respect to enhancing climate resilience. This is an area in which the country would benefit from learning from others. The VNR report also includes lessons learned to accelerate 2030 Agenda implementation, notably from a Performance Audit of Zambia's Preparedness to Implement the SDGs, particularly around coordination. The VNR report that Zambia is in the process of enacting legislation that will strengthen coordination of the national development plan and the SDGs within the national planning framework and decentralised national planning and budgeting processes. These processes are expected to be participatory in nature. The VNR report mentions official development assistance (which is declining), domestic resources (such as private sector engagement), and foreign resources (such as foreign direct investment) as key sources of financing.

### ***Measurement and reporting***

The VNR report includes an overview of the status of data availability for SDG indicators, which is at 34% percent. The VNR report recognizes as need to improve the availability of disaggregated data. The VNR report refers to the creation of a 2019 Monitoring and Evaluation Policy of 2019 aimed at improving information to track progress towards national outcomes, including the SDGs. While the VNR report notes that parliament has played an oversight role in terms of monitoring progress on the SDGs, there is no information provided regarding when national reporting occurs and how.









