



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

HANDBOOK

FOR THE PREPARATION OF

VOLUNTARY
NATIONAL
REVIEWS

2024 EDITION



**United
Nations**

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Purpose and aim of this handbook

This is a handbook for countries preparing to conduct a voluntary national review (VNR) and present their VNR at the 2024 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) to be held under the auspices of ECOSOC from 8 to 17 July at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

It provides step-by-step guidance on the process of preparing and presenting a VNR, and includes *The Secretary-General's Voluntary Common Reporting Guidelines for VNRs* in [Annex 2](#).

The handbook and the guidelines both offer instructions and provide practical information on the steps that countries may take when preparing a VNR. The handbook is not exhaustive and there are many other sources of information that may further assist countries, some of which are indicated in the text.

Foreword



The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by all Member States of the United Nations in September 2015, provide a visionary roadmap for all countries and stakeholders to strive for a world of sustainable prosperity, social

inclusion and equality, while preserving our planet and leaving no one behind.

Implementation has not been without its obstacles. Efforts have been particularly challenged by today's concurrent crises. The COVID-19 pandemic has derailed or set back progress on many SDGs. In this past year, the impacts of the pandemic have been further compounded by conflict-driven crises in food, energy and financing and impending climate catastrophe.

Effective follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda is essential for improving action and accelerating progress in achieving the ambitious and interlinked SDGs in these challenging times. At the heart of this process are voluntary national reviews (VNRs), which provide an essential source of lessons learned and an excellent basis for experience sharing and accelerating implementation.

Three hundred and thirty VNRs have been submitted to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) since 2016, with a further 44 due to be presented in 2024. This handbook thus reflects seven years of shared experience in undertaking and supporting VNRs at the HLPF.

As often emphasized, VNRs are not an end, but a means to exchange experiences, identify challenges and accelerate implementation. In that spirit, the handbook further proposes what to do after the VNR presentation.

I hope this handbook will be a useful reference for countries undertaking the VNRs. It will be further refined and updated as more experience and knowledge are acquired along with the deepening of the VNR process including any new guidance by Member States.

Handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of three characters: 李 (Li), 军 (Jun), and 华 (Hua).

Mr. Li Junhua
Under-Secretary-General
for Economic and Social Affairs

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Handbook for preparation of Voluntary National Reviews

A. Getting started: how to initiate a review

Introduction

Voluntary national reviews (VNRs) are part of the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As stated in paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, regular reviews in the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) are to be voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders.¹

VNRs make possible the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They are most meaningful when they involve an inclusive, participatory, transparent, and thorough review process at the national and sub-national levels, when they are evidence-based, produce tangible lessons and solutions, and when they are followed by concrete action and collaboration that drives SDG implementation. The Political Declaration of the 2023 SDG Summit recognized that the VNRs “...have generated valuable lessons learned and have helped countries monitor progress and integrate the Sustainable Development Goals into national plans and policies.”²

It is especially important for countries presenting their second or subsequent VNR to show progress that has been made since their previous VNR and to build on each review. They are encouraged to address those areas identified in their previous VNR as challenging and not to repeat what has already been presented. The emphasis should be on implementation and progress.

The process of carrying out the voluntary national review should not be seen as separate from implementation of the SDGs. Rather than an

¹ Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, [GA resolution 70/1](#). See also [GA resolution 67/290](#), para 8, for more on the reviews and the mandate of the HLPF.

² <https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/A%20HLPF%202023%20L1.pdf>

end in itself, the VNR is a process by which countries assess progress and shortcomings in their implementation of the Goals and targets. It can serve to support national initiatives and policies for implementation of the SDGs, and strengthen coordination through whole-of-government and whole-of society approaches.

The VNRs are intended to track progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda, including the SDGs and targets, in all countries, in a manner that respects their universal and integrated nature and all dimensions of sustainable development. The principles guiding follow-up and review at all levels, contained in paragraph 74, provide, among other things, that reviews will be substantive and knowledge based, as well as open, inclusive, participatory, and transparent for all people, with a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind.³

The HLPF meets annually in July for eight days under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).⁴ Every four years the HLPF also meets under the auspices of the UN General Assembly at the level of heads of state and Government.

The meetings of the HLPF are convened by the President of ECOSOC, who is an ambassador and permanent representative of a Member State, elected for a one-year term of office. The President convenes the HLPF when it meets under the auspices of ECOSOC and as such approves the programme of the HLPF, including the VNR presentations. The current President of ECOSOC is Her Excellency Paula Narváez, Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations in New York. She will chair the 2024 VNRs, with the help of four Vice-Presidents of the Council.

To date, 329 VNRs and one voluntary regional review (EU) have been conducted (22 in 2016, 43 in 2017, 46 in 2018, 47 in 2019, 47 in 2020, 42 in 2021, 44 in 2022, and 39 in 2023). Forty-four countries are now preparing to present their VNRs in 2024.

In total, 188 countries and the EU have carried out reviews, with 134 countries having conducted more than one VNR. All VNR reports, along

³ [GA resolution 70/1](#), para. 74.

⁴ [GA resolution 70/299](#).

with their main messages, are available in the HLPF online repository at: <https://hlpf.un.org/countries>.

The HLPF also carries out thematic reviews of progress towards the SDGs, including on cross-cutting issues.⁵ In resolution 74/298, the United Nations General Assembly decided the theme of the 2024 HLPF as, “Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions”.⁶ It also decided to conduct an in-depth review of SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and SDG 17 (partnerships for the Goals).

How to communicate the intention to conduct a VNR

Given that the President of ECOSOC convenes the HLPF, the practice is for countries to notify the office of the President of the intention to conduct a VNR. There is no registration form or template. Once a country has decided to carry out a review, the decision should be communicated to the President by means of a letter from the Permanent Representative of the country. For a sample letter, see below (Figure 1). The President notifies countries of matters related to the VNRs by means of letters addressed to their Permanent Missions in New York. The list of VNRs countries reporting for all years is available through the VNR database on the [HLPF website](#).

H.E. [Name of Ambassador],
President of the Economic and Social Council,
United Nations

Excellency,

I refer to the [year] high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF), to be convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in July [year].

⁵ [GA resolution 70/1](#), para. 85.

⁶ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26932A_RES_74_298.pdf

With reference to General Assembly resolution 70/1, I have the honour to request that [Name of country] be inscribed on the list of countries participating in the voluntary national reviews (VNRs) to take place at the [year] HLPF.

[Name of country] attaches great importance to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and looks forward to sharing experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned.

I look forward to early acknowledgement of receipt of this letter.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed)

Figure 1: Sample text of letter communicating decision to conduct a VNR

B. Organisation and Preparation of the Review

First and subsequent reviews

The review typically consists of several broad phases, with some occurring at the same time. These include the following phases: initial preparation and organisation; VNR preparation, including stakeholder engagement; and HLPF presentation. The latter aspects are discussed later in the document.

Third and fourth reviews will increasingly begin to predominate at future HLPFs: at the 2024 HLPF, 6 countries are slated to carry out their fourth VNR and 14 countries their third VNRs, 21 their second VNR and 2 will present their first VNR. Against this backdrop, the first report, which often is a baseline assessment of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, could be followed in subsequent reports by a summary and analysis of initiatives and actions rolled out since the last VNR; how challenges in implementation, including persistent challenges, were overcome; a more in-depth coverage of good practices adopted or followed by the country and lessons learned; and an analysis of new or emerging issues. It might also contain description of a roadmap for implementation and a financial framework.

Country examples

In its first VNR in 2018 **Jamaica** identified six areas which would be key to accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. These areas included, full and effective implementation of national priorities outlined in national development plans and frameworks; strengthening the national statistics system; improving policy coherence and building capacity; and ongoing

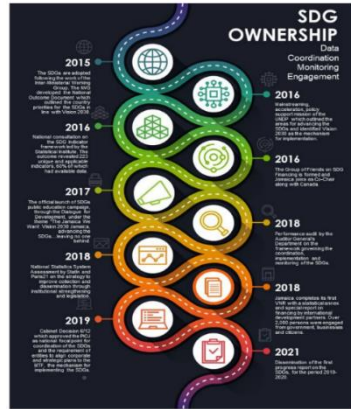


FIGURE 3 | TIMELINE OF SDG OWNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

SDGs communication. Jamaica’s second VNR report in 2022 highlighted the progress made in these six areas since the first VNR report. Jamaica’s second VNR highlighted the process of SDG ownership and domestication in the country, which has been guided by Vision 2030 Jamaica – the country’s National Development Plan.

Source: VNR of Jamaica, 2022

Consider the following when drawing up the work plan / roadmap for the review:

- **Develop a workplan / roadmap with key deliverables aligned with the HLPF deadlines.** Finalized workplans / roadmaps and timelines should be broadly disseminated to government partners and stakeholders. Plan around delivery of Main Messages, 24 April 2024 and the VNR report, 14 June 2024, both covered in greater detail in section F below. Audio / visual materials need to be submitted to DESA by 21 June 2024.
- **Coordination structure.** An entity within the government needs to be responsible for the overall coordination of the VNR. This could be an existing body / institution or an *ad hoc* arrangement, e.g., lead department / agency, or an integrated, inter-ministerial group, coordinating office or committee. A small advisory group could be considered to lead the process of writing of the VNR.

Collaboration with other relevant government ministries, agencies and relevant stakeholders is needed in order to provide information and data. In the interest of country ownership, it is highly desirable that the drafting process is led by government in all respects with the engagement from other stakeholders from the very beginning of the process. For programme countries, if support from the UN is being considered, contact the UN Resident Coordinator.

- **Resources.** Determine estimated costs of carrying out and writing the review, as well as identify possible sources of funding, as required. Costs may arise for organisation of stakeholder consultations and meetings, travel of officials, production of the review (editing, layout, translation), and preparation of audio-visual material, including videos, for the VNR presentation at the HLPF.
- **Scope of the VNR.** It would be important that a VNR shows how the VNR is part of the national implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.⁷ The report could describe how the national strategy or plan, legislation, budgets, and policies have been updated or aligned with the SDGs. Countries are encouraged to be specific in identifying the main challenges and difficulties experienced in implementing the SDGs as a whole and how they foresee overcoming these barriers.
- **Draft outline and information gathering.** Draft a preliminary outline and decide on length and structure of the review. Experience suggests that it is helpful to set a page limit at the beginning of the process. To gather inputs, prepare a list of bodies and agencies that will be providing data and information for the VNR. The national statistical office (NSO) and the relevant line ministries are of special importance, but there should also be other contributors, e.g., academia and think tanks.
- **Develop a stakeholder engagement plan.** Identify key stakeholders, methods of engagement and consider online and other means through which stakeholder contributions could be gathered. All sectors and levels of government, civil society, private sector, trade unions, members of parliament and national

⁷ Political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly adopted on 15 October 2019 (<https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/74/4>)

human rights institutions, should be considered (see Figure 3). To facilitate communication and follow up, it is helpful to clearly identify a focal point for stakeholder engagement.

- **Data.** Access to high quality, up-to-date, and disaggregated data is vital for the VNR. Contacts with the national statistical office and other providers of data should be part of the planning process. If a statistical annex is included in the review, more extensive statistics on progress can be included there.⁸ The [UN Open Data Hub](#) could be a good resource if national data is not available.
- **Draw on existing reports.** Use existing national platforms and processes that could contribute to the VNR writing and analysis process. Examples include:
 - national frameworks such as national development plans and national sustainable development strategies;
 - reports submitted to international bodies, including human rights mechanisms⁹, such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), other international treaties and conventions, and other reports such as the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) relating to the Paris Agreement as well as reports to multilateral environmental agreements.
- **Allocate time.** Establish a process and a timeline for technical editing as well as for a high-level review of the VNR and its Main Messages. This should allow for the integration of contributions from within government and from other stakeholders. Also bear in mind the production time and clearance process for audio-visual materials focused on SDG implementation to be used during the VNR presentation.

⁸ The global indicator framework was adopted by the General Assembly on 6 July 2017. See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>

⁹ See: [Operational Common Approach Guidance Note on Human Rights and VNRs](#): https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/sdgs/2030/2022-07-01/HRandVNRs_Guidance_Note2022.pdf

Countries are encouraged to report on the progress on **ALL 17 SDGs**. Where priority goals have been identified nationally, countries could cover those in greater depth. Importantly, while the HLPF annually reviews a set of SDGs in-depth, this thematic review is not linked to the VNRs. VNR countries are not expected to prioritize the SDGs under in-depth review in the HLPF.

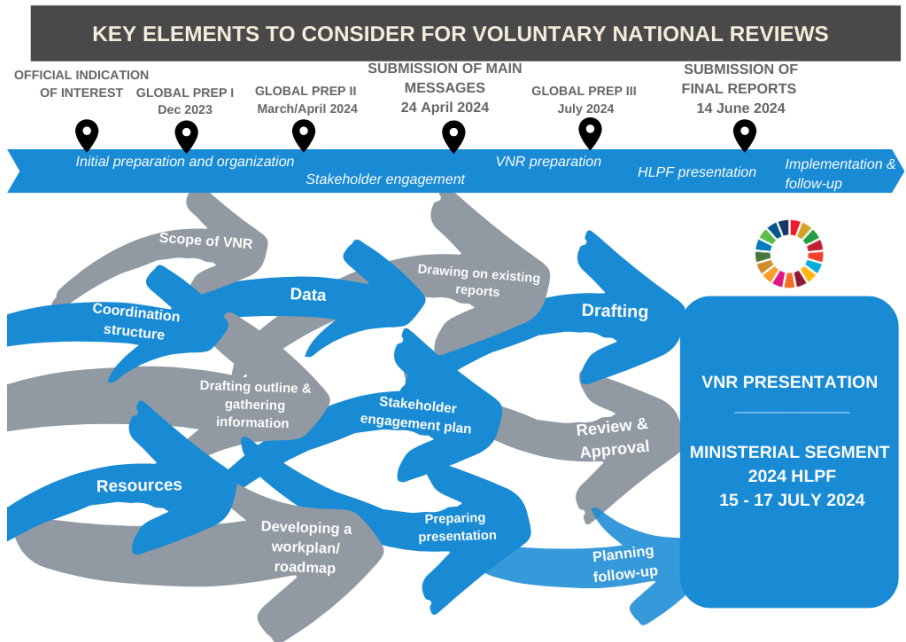


Figure 2: Elements for organization and preparation of review

Strengthening Voluntary National Reviews through country-led evaluation.

General Assembly adopted Resolution 77/283, Strengthening Voluntary National Reviews through Country-led evaluation, on 26 April 2023. The resolution emphasized that Country-led Evaluations of the SDG implementation can provide timely and credible evidence to regain and accelerate progress towards Agenda 2030 and the principle of Leave No One Behind. The resolution encourages “all Member States to present regular Voluntary National Reviews with a Country-led Evaluation

component as deemed relevant and useful at the country level in partnership with all relevant stakeholders, in line with the principles of the 2030 Agenda, taking into consideration that follow-up and review processes at all levels will be voluntary and country-led". Member States can also use the evidence from the country-led evaluations to inform policy and decision-making on sustainable development.

C. Multi-stakeholder participation

One of the founding principles of the 2030 Agenda is the requirement for all implementation and follow-up processes to be participatory and inclusive, including all levels and sectors of government, civil society and the private sector, members of parliament, and national human rights institutions, among others. The 2030 Agenda has a revitalized partnership for sustainable development at its core, and stakeholders are recognized as valuable partners in implementing the Goals and raising public awareness. The participation of stakeholders promotes effective decisions, by giving groups affected by those decisions the opportunity to communicate their needs and interests and support Governments in tailoring, implementing, and reviewing public policies. The 2030 Agenda calls upon stakeholders to be actively engaged throughout the process of design, implementation, monitoring and review of the 2030 Agenda.

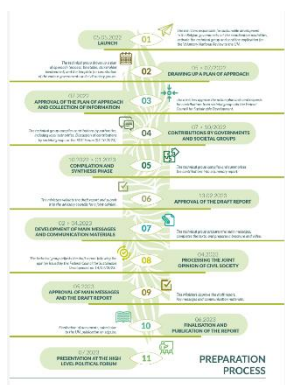
A stakeholder engagement plan can be used, among other things, to frame the strategic purpose for consultations; set up a process to identify stakeholders to be consulted; identify means, techniques and methods for consultation (face-to-face workshops, online platforms, focus groups, written comments); and outline how the consultation process will be documented.

Consideration could be given throughout the process on how to support reporting by relevant stakeholders and how those contributions will be reflected in the final report, as well as how ongoing stakeholder involvement will be reflected in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Additionally, efforts could be taken to identify representative voices from marginalized groups and to enable their meaningful engagement in the process. Awareness raising efforts encompass a range of activities such as simplifying and translating the SDGs into local languages and including the SDGs in school and university teaching programmes.

Some questions that could be considered include the following:

- What mechanisms and platforms are available for stakeholders from civil society and the private sector to contribute to the VNR and implementation of the SDGs?
- Who can participate? Are there umbrella bodies that can be consulted or is there a need to create targeted consultation processes in situations where no multi-stakeholder bodies or fora exist?
- What is the desired mix of in-person or online engagement options?
- How does the Government take into account the views of all stakeholders in developing its implementation plan for the 2030 Agenda?
- What partnerships, including with the private sector, have been put in place for implementation of the SDGs? Consider examples that could be showcased as good practices.
- How can contributions from stakeholders be showcased in the VNR report?

Country examples



The infographic illustrates the 11-step preparation process for Belgium's VNR. The steps are: 01. LAUNCH, 02. DRAWING UP A PLAN OF APPROACH, 03. APPROVAL OF THE PLAN OF APPROACH AND COLLECTION OF INFORMATION, 04. CONTRIBUTIONS OF GOVERNMENTS AND SOCIAL GROUPS, 05. CONSULTATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND SYNTHESIS PHASE, 06. APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT REPORT, 07. DEVELOPMENT OF MAIN MESSAGES AND COOPERATION MATERIALS, 08. PRESENTING THE DRAFT REPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY, 09. APPROVAL OF MAIN MESSAGES AND THE DRAFT REPORT, 10. FINALIZATION AND PUBLICATION OF THE REPORT, and 11. PRESENTATION OF THE FINAL POLITICAL MESSAGE. The process is titled 'PREPARATION PROCESS'.

From the outset of the VNR preparations **Belgium** involved various government agencies and organized civil society groups to provide input into the VNR report. From July 2022, the various governments and civil society actors received a request for contribution to the VNR. The Federal Council for Sustainable Development in Belgium also sought input from members of the main advisory councils. Furthermore, a specific list of organizations representing the most vulnerable social groups were contacted in line with the principle of ‘No One Left Behind’. Belgium hosted the first multi-stakeholder forum on the SDGs, in October 2022, where the contributions of stakeholders were finalized. In early 2023, the draft VNR report was submitted to the main advisory councils of civil society. In May 2023, the Inter-ministerial Conference on Sustainable

Development considered the final approval of the VNR. Belgium decided to include both a chapter written by the Major Groups and other Stakeholders and one written by the associations of the local authorities in Belgium. The full contributions from all actors who have participated (governments & stakeholders) can be found online (www.sdgs.be).

Source: VNR of Belgium 2023

Tips:

- ✓ Stakeholders from different countries and sectors have been coordinating efforts to produce ‘spotlight reports’, reflecting their perspectives on implementation of the 2030 Agenda. National civil society coalitions on the SDGs have been established in several countries¹⁰ and usually take the lead on drafting those reports.
- ✓ Since 2016, DESA and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) have partnered to develop a facilitated online course for government officials in charge of the mainstreaming and review of the SDGs. Information can be found at: <https://www.unitar.org/stakeholders-engagement-implementation-sdgs-giving-countries-best-chances-succeed>

Asylum-seekers, refugees, and displaced persons

- ✓ Countries are encouraged to include asylum-seekers, refugees, and displaced persons as stakeholders in the Voluntary National Reviews
- ✓ Inclusion of refugees, asylum-seekers and displaced persons is in line with the commitment to ‘Leave no one behind’ of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- ✓

¹⁰ Examples of national CSO coalitions on the SDGs can be found here: <http://www.together2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/FINAL-Mapping-of-National-CSO-coalitions-on-SDGs-March-2018.pdf>

D. Key building blocks for preparing the review.

The following headings are generally presented according to the sections of the updated Secretary-General's guidelines, referred to above.¹¹ A number of the steps described below may take place simultaneously and continuously. The guidelines make clear that each country will decide on the scope of their review and the format in which they wish to present their findings. However, countries may voluntarily use the components which are presented in the guidelines to help them frame the preparations for their VNRs and thus increase the comparability of reporting.

The review is expected to show what steps the country has taken to implement the 2030 Agenda, including the goals and targets, and provide an assessment of the results on the ground. Implementation needs to be more visible over time and the country should indicate exactly what concrete, tangible steps it has taken to ensure that the 2030 Agenda is met. The progress and advancement in the implementation should be supported by data, monitoring and evaluation.

In the first parts of the review (**Opening statement, Highlights, Introduction, Methodology for the process of preparation of the review**), countries are invited to give an overview of their own context and overall national objectives and information on the overall process. Countries may provide two or three examples of good practices, lessons learned and challenges on which it wishes to hear about from other countries. Countries may also provide a snapshot of the voluntary national review, including the preparation process and involvement of different sectors and levels of government and multi-stakeholders, and areas where they would need support, including in terms of finance, capacity building, technology, and partnerships. Countries could provide information on how the Government has responded to the integrated and indivisible nature of the SDGs, and the principle of leaving no-one behind. Countries are also encouraged to integrate a gender perspective across all sections of the report. The introduction could also provide links to other international agreements such as the Addis Ababa Action

¹¹ The examples given in this section are illustrative of what countries which have already presented their VNRs have done. More good practice examples are available in the VNRs themselves as well as in the annual VNR Synthesis Reports prepared by UN DESA. The guidelines are attached hereto as annex 2.

Agenda, the Paris Agreement, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Ownership of the SDGs

Tied in directly with the section on multi-stakeholder participation described above, is national ownership of the SDGs. Creating ownership is about ensuring that all in society are made aware of the 2030 Agenda and are brought fully on board in implementation, reporting and monitoring. Engaging in participatory and inclusive processes, a central requirement in the 2030 Agenda, can help to create a sense of ownership. Also, promoting awareness and sharing information about the SDGs among all government branches, at every level, and with stakeholders is a vital and continuous aspect of fostering a supportive environment. Awareness raising and dissemination of information about the SDGs throughout all branches and levels of government and among stakeholders is a crucial and ongoing dimension of creating an enabling environment. Keeping the goals and targets under constant national review and ensuring the sustained involvement of all stakeholders, including through monitoring and review mechanisms, is important to maintain ownership of the SDGs.

Some questions that could be considered include the following:

- How are all sectors and levels of government (local and subnational) being engaged in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda? Have they prepared their own voluntary local reviews?
- How is parliament involved in the preparation of the VNR and the implementation of the SDGs?
- What is being done to keep the SDGs under inclusive and participatory review at the national level? Have the SDGs been taken up by bodies, such as supreme audit institutions, or included in performance monitoring and evaluation systems?
- How is outreach targeted so that marginalised and vulnerable groups are reached and that no-one is left behind?
- Have the actions of all levels of government and all actors been adequately reflected in the VNR report?

The focus of **Timor-Leste's** VNR report was people-centered sustainable development, leaving no one behind. This approach was also showcased in how the country produced its second VNR. The VNR report included messages from postcards written by the youth of Timor-Leste in 2002 of their aspirations for the country by 2020. These postcards highlighted areas of focus, including peace, good governance, invest in people and improve lives. The VNR report also showcased surveys, consultations with stakeholders as well as follow-up to the VNRs to ensure national ownership., Timor-Leste also outlined the synergies of each SDG with other SDGs. The synergies were determined by the quantitative as well as qualitative data from case studies, interviews, and consultations with stakeholders.

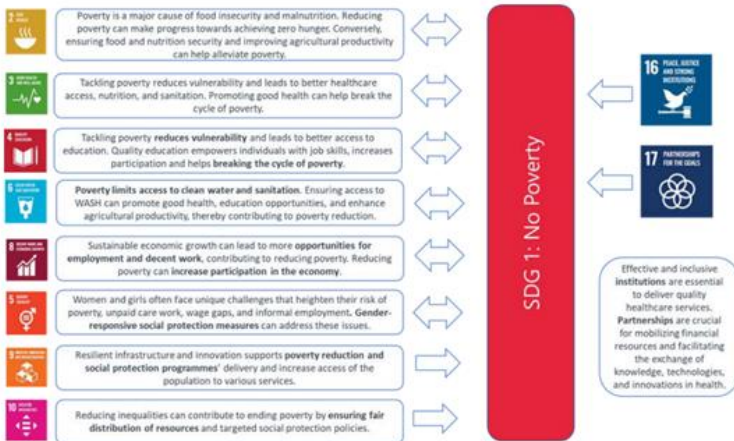


Figure 13: Synergies of SDG 1 with other SDGs
 Note: SDG 1 ties to all SDGs, but for the purpose of this report and based on consultations, interviews, and case studies, only select SDGs are featured. One-way arrows suggest stronger influence on the SDG, two-way arrows represent strong mutual influence.
 Source: Adapted by the author

Source: VNR of Timor-Leste 2023

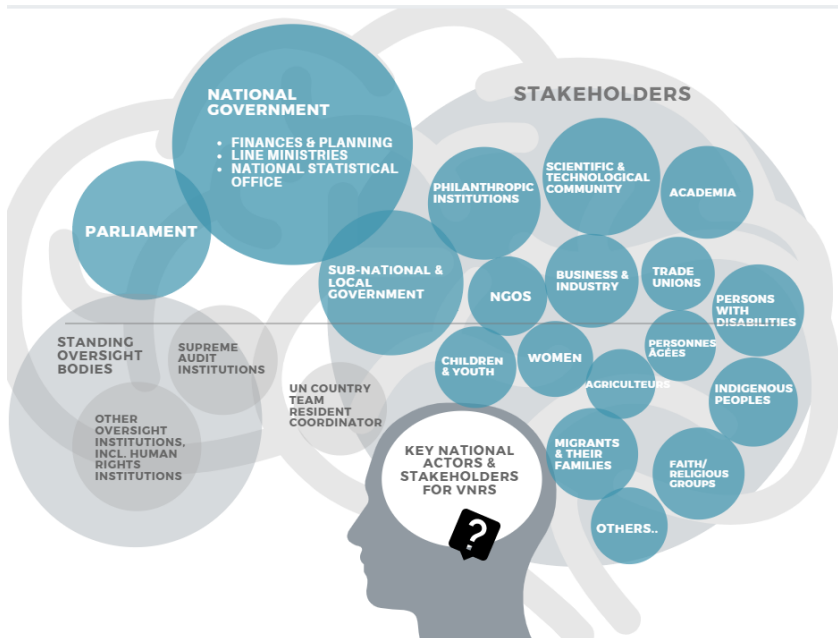


Figure 3: Indicative map of key national actors and stakeholders (DESA)

Incorporation of the SDGs into national frameworks

The effective implementation of the SDGs depends on their incorporation into all relevant national frameworks. The VNR needs to analyze how well such frameworks are aligned with the SDGs and determine whether there are critical gaps. Countries should be specific about the main challenges and difficulties they face in implementing the SDGs and are encouraged to provide an analysis of the causes of these challenges and difficulties and how they foresee overcoming these barriers. There are various laws, regulations and policies that should be examined to assess a country's alignment with the SDGs including:

- national vision documents;
- a national development plan or sustainable development strategy;
- integrated financial frameworks and other fiscal policies;
- sectoral policies, strategies, plans and programmes;
- legislation; and

- local government and sub-national development plans; as well as laws, policies, strategies, and programmes.

Simple grid-based tools are a way to begin to explore the alignment between existing national frameworks and the SDGs. Below is a simplified representation from the Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) tool of UNDP.

Policy Area/Sector	SDG-1: Poverty							SDG-2: Food security								
	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.a	1.b	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.a	2.b	2.c	
Health Strategy	X								X							
Water Sector Development Policy	X				X					X	X					
National Biodiversity Strategy				X							X	X	X			
Land Policy Act	X			X						X	X					
National Smallholder Policy	X			X			X	X	X							
Justice System Reform Programme				X			X									
Prevention of Violence Against Women Policy					X											
Early Childhood Development Programme		X						X								
	4	1	0	4	2	0	2	0	3	3	3	1	1	0	0	

Single target addressed in multiple policies

One plan covering multiple targets

Figure 4: Mapping of existing policies to the SDGs (DESA, adapted from the RIA of UNDP)

Where gaps and convergences are identified, the VNR could propose steps to better incorporate the SDGs into national frameworks. The review could provide an overview of adjustments to existing policies and strategies, or the adoption of new policies and instruments for achieving the SDGs. Specifically, the country may describe how the policy makers are coordinating through national planning, budgetary, financial and investment processes, which may help bring about a deeper, faster and more ambitious response to the challenges which their economies are facing.

Some questions that could be considered include the following:

- Has the country conducted a gap analysis of the SDGs and its national frameworks?
- What has been done to integrate the SDGs into legislation, strategies, policies, plans and programmes and to what extent can the implementation of the SDGs be advanced through existing plans and strategies? Do they need to be updated or revised to implement the SDGs?
- How have the SDGs been aligned with national policy frameworks?
- To what extent have the SDGs been integrated into the policies and programmes of line ministries?
- What are solutions and good practices to ensure policy coherence and identify benefits and minimize trade-offs?
- What are the main results of policy changes or new policies and plans in place?
- What are the main challenges and difficulties that the country faces in implementing the SDGs? What actions have been undertaken by sub-national and local government to implement the SDGs?

Country examples

Bahrain’s Economic Vision 2030 outlines the vision and framework for the Bahrain’s economic trajectory for the period 2008-2030. Under the Economic Vision 2030 the government has included four-year government plans. The government plans are approved the Legislative Authority and seek to be inclusive documents taking into consideration the opinion of all citizens. The 2023-2026 government plan has six policy pillars: Improving living standards; sovereignty and legislations, infrastructure and the environment; economic recovery and financial sustainability; community services; and the government performance and digital performance. Each of the six policy pillars of the



government plan is then broken down into specific and targeted plans, where the relationship between the SDGs and the Government Plans can be seen more clearly.

In 2022, the Government of Bahrain developed its first National Human Rights Plan (2022-2026). Bahrain also presented its fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in November 2022, and in February 2023, it accepted 172 recommendations and took into consideration 73 recommendations. The Government of Bahrain has aligned both with the SDGs.



The Government of Bahrain has aligned both with the SDGs.

Source: VNR of Bahrain 2023

Tips:

- ✓ The Rapid Integrated Assessment Policy Tool developed by UNDP may help countries gauge their readiness for SDG implementation. This assessment tool provides an initial overview of a country's alignment with the 2030 Agenda through a gap analysis of SDG targets. It can be used as a starting point for more focused analysis. The RIA Tool is available [here](#).

Integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development

An integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda means that reviews should discuss the interlinkages that exist between SDGs, both in the form of synergies and also in trade-offs and conflicts taking into account the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. A clear understanding of inter-linkages will, in turn, allow countries to manage them, notably through optimum cooperation and coordination between sectors and institutions.

Under this section, the VNR could provide a brief overview of analysis of interlinkages and institutional arrangements undertaken and designed for integrated policymaking, and examples of policies that integrate the three dimensions.

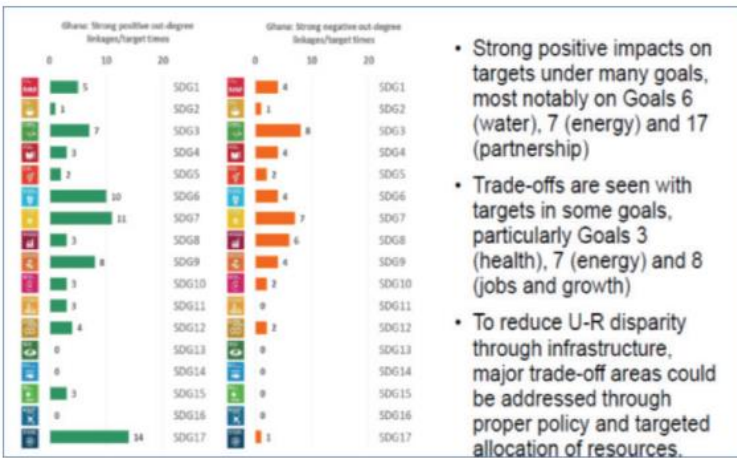
Some questions that could be considered include the following:

- What are the most important national interlinkages, or nexus of interlinkages, between the goals and targets covered in the VNR?
- What are the main barriers to the better integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development and the 17 SDGs?
- How does the country engage in discussion and find effective solutions to trade-offs that have to be made?
- What actions are being taken to ensure that all levels of government work together (horizontally across sectors, and vertically from national to local) to integrate the three dimensions and the SDGs?
- Are there examples of the positive impact of more integrated national policies?

A simple example can be used to illustrate how certain policies/strategies have multiple benefits. Unconditional cash transfers to young girls in Africa can reduce poverty, keep girls in school, reduce unwanted teen pregnancies and decrease HIV transmission by as much as two thirds. Thus, an intervention motivated by a ‘social protection’ objective ends up advancing other SDG targets related to poverty, education, health and gender equality.¹²

A basic template can be used to explore interlinkages between SDG targets, such as the example below from Ghana’s 2019 VNR.

Figure 5.1: Ghana: major synergies and trade-offs of infrastructure-related targets



Such an initial mapping of potential interlinkages can be used to identify targets where more than one government agency has responsibility, which suggests areas for integrated policymaking and implementation. The initial mapping can also be used for more in-depth analysis of interlinkages between targets of special interest, e.g. national priorities, by means of focus groups or more specialised modelling tools. This could include examining synergies and possible strategies for tackling trade-offs.

¹² This has been adapted slightly from the example used in *UNDP Support to the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* available at: http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/SDGs/SDG%20Implementation%20and%20UNDP_Policy_and_Programme_Brief.pdf

Country examples

The SDGs have been mainstreamed into key national planning and developmental documents in the **Seychelles**, through their national Vision 2033 and the National Development Strategy (NDS) 2019-2023. These key strategies provide frameworks for achieving sustainable development through the integration of economic, social and environmental dimensions. Furthermore, the documents include many crosscutting issues such as gender, culture, spirituality, equity, values, citizenship, youth, employment, the blue economy initiative, disaster risk management, climate change, information and communications technology (ICT) and data/statistics.

The SDGs, the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the SAMOA Pathway have all been mapped onto each of the six pillars of the NDS, as shown below.



Source: VNR of the Seychelles, 2020

Tips:

- ✓ UNESCAP has developed a framework and tools for integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development. This and other tools are available [here](#)

Leaving no one behind

Countries could set out actions they have taken to mainstream the principle of leaving no one behind in the implementation of the SDGs. This could include actions to prioritise outcomes for vulnerable groups, as well as looking beyond population averages to identify who they are, where they are located and what their specific needs may be. Countries are encouraged to go beyond social policies and include macroeconomic policies and technology that impact the situation of those who are furthest behind. Particular attention should be placed on efforts to empower women and girls. Starting points for addressing the area of ‘leaving no one behind’ could include actions to end extreme poverty, policies aimed at reducing inequalities and policies aimed at overcoming discriminatory barriers, including those arising from geography, as well as efforts to ensure inclusive and effective participation in implementation. The impact of multiple and overlapping inequalities—for example the challenges of women with disabilities living in rural areas—could also be considered.

Some questions that could be considered include the following:

- How are vulnerable groups and those furthest behind being identified?
- Who is being left behind and what are the underlying reasons for their vulnerability?
- What disaggregated sources of data are available and what are the data gaps?
- What actions are being taken to determine the needs of the vulnerable and furthest behind?
- What is being done to support the empowerment of vulnerable groups?

Country examples

Ireland took an open draft approach to their second VNR and allowed non-governmental participants to review and contribute to the VNR report. Key national stakeholder groups representing a variety of sectors were invited to contribute a chapter for inclusion in the VNR

report. Public submissions of up to 800 words were also invited from national stakeholders to form part of a compendium of stakeholder contributions. These contributions were not edited, to demonstrate inclusivity and transparency in reporting on Agenda 2030. Ireland also held an SDG National Stakeholder Forum to foster a broad and inclusive dialogue on the principle of leaving no one behind and for further incorporation into policy and national SDG structures. Ireland's VNR report also includes a chapter on youth assessment of Ireland's progress towards the implementation of the SDGs, which was written by Ireland's United Nations Youth Delegates with support from the National Youth Council of Ireland.

Table 3: Groups to be empowered in Ireland*

Everyone living in Ireland should be empowered. Groups at particular risk of being left behind and whose needs should be specifically considered when developing policy include:

- Children and young people
- Disabled people
- People living with long-term health issues, including HIV and AIDS
- Older people
- The Travelling community
- Refugees, internally displaced people and migrants
- People who are homeless
- People with mental health issues and/or affected by addiction
- People living in rural Ireland
- LGBTQI+ community
- People who are socio-economically disadvantaged; the working poor and those below the poverty line
- Ethnic minorities
- Disconnected Communities
- Single parent families and carers
- Victims of human trafficking

*Developed by the SDG National Stakeholder Forum 17 January 2023

Source: VNR of Ireland 2023

Institutional mechanisms

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda will require countries to examine and often strengthen their institutional tools, ensuring that existing and/or new mechanisms are robust and inclusive. In many countries, institutions have been put in place and/or strengthened. Institutional mechanisms are often multi-faceted and integrated, characterised by inter-ministerial coordination and multi-sectoral involvement, seeking to harmonise different workstreams and involving all agencies in cross-

cutting efforts to achieve the SDGs. Responsibility for coherent implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda is often shared and allocated among various levels of government (national, subnational and local).

Country examples

In **Botswana** the institutional mechanisms for the implementation of the SDGs have evolved since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Botswana’s initial approach was to map and align the relevant SDG targets and indicators to existing programmes and projects that addressed specific national development priorities. The country has since developed SDG Planning Guidelines to facilitate the transition to a more structured and systematic mainstreaming of specific SDG targets in national and sector-level plans. The guidelines also assist in strengthening the capacity to collect administrative data to improve SDG monitoring in the country.

Botswana adopted its SDG Roadmap in 2017, the year it presented its first VNR. The country also has SDG focal points in each Ministry. In 2022, the Joint National Steering Committee on SDGs was created to enhance partnerships and ensure scaled up and more effective international support for the SDGs.



Source: VNR of Botswana 2022

The institutional mechanism should remain relevant across political cycles and should overlap with rather than follow the national electoral cycle. This ensures that the institution’s work extends beyond the term

of the current Government and engages both current and future decision makers and political parties. The review can provide an opportunity to include information on how the views of different ministries, agencies, levels of government and non-governmental stakeholders, including representatives of vulnerable groups, have been mobilized around the 2030 Agenda and how their views are considered. Countries may also consider incorporating information regarding the institution(s) or mechanism(s) responsible for coordinating and integrating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as their collaboration with pertinent national entities, including national planning organizations, oversight bodies, or national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up.

This section could also include a reflection of how the country has ensured that the institutional mechanisms supporting SDG implementation are effective, accountable, and inclusive. The review could consider highlighting efforts to successfully mobilize institutions around the SDGs, improve their functioning, make them more responsive, accountable and transparent and promote collaboration and change to achieve policy coherence and integration across sectors. It would be useful to highlight how the country is reviewing progress in implementing the SDGs, including mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures; possible plans for the conduct of national reviews that take into account the presentation of the VNR. The review could also highlight how the preparation and follow-up to VNRs at the HLPF are embedded in the ongoing processes.

Some questions that could be considered include the following:

- How does the institutional framework incorporate different actors and stakeholders and their interests? How do the overall institutional arrangements relating to the SDGs involve key line ministries, sub-national and local levels of government, parliament, human rights institutions, civil society organisations, and the private sector, oversight bodies and/or national mechanisms for follow-up and review?
- What is the involvement of the highest level of government in the institutional arrangement?
- How does the institutional arrangement work to mobilise all stakeholders around the SDGs and promote change?

- Are there examples of how the institutional arrangements have had an impact, for instance through more integrated policymaking?
- How does the country review progress in implementing the SDGs, including possible plans for the conduct of national reviews that take into account the presentation of the VNR at the HLPF?

CEPA Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development

Institutions play a crucial role in the achievement of all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets. Yet, public sector reforms needed to achieve the SDGs remain a major challenge in many countries. In order to address this challenge concretely, the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) has developed a set of 11 principles of effective governance for sustainable development. The principles, endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in July 2018, highlight the need for pragmatic and ongoing improvements in national and local governance capabilities to reach the SDGs. They are given depth and made operational through a selection of 62 commonly used strategies and related practices in areas such as sound policymaking, transparency, leaving no one behind and intergenerational equity. Together the principles and related strategies constitute a powerful analytical framework for assessment of national and local progress in both Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). An accompanying series of strategy guidance notes being developed by UN DESA serves to help government officials adjust specific elements of their practice to achieve better results in building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, as indicated in SDG 16 and across all SDG areas:

Link: <https://publicadministration.un.org/en/Intergovernmental-Support/CEPA/Principles-of-Effective-Governance>

Structural issues

Countries could reflect on the cross-cutting / transversal / structural issues that impact on the implementation of the SDGs of, for example, gender equality, inequality, trade, peaceful societies, production and consumption patterns, and structural transformation of the economy. The analysis could consider relevant institutional barriers to change at the national, regional, or international level. Countries could also provide examples of policies they have implemented that have resulted in transformative changes and/or show institutional changes they did to address structural issues or barriers and how to avoid trade-offs among the SDGs.

Goals and targets

Countries are encouraged to provide brief information on progress and the status of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals contained in the 2030 Agenda. The consideration of Goals could focus on trends, successes, critical challenges, interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs, emerging issues, and lessons learned, and describe what actions have been taken to address existing gaps and the challenges that have been identified. While countries are encouraged to report on all 17 SDGs, more in-depth analysis of a few selected Goals and targets seen as national priority and their related gaps and challenges may also be reflected in the VNRs. This in-depth analysis may be guided by the country based on national priorities and include best practice examples in implementation or innovative policies to share at the global level. Examples that are particularly interesting for peer learning and in an international context are encouraged. The review of goals could include a qualitative and / or a quantitative dimension. Countries conducting second and subsequent VNRs should focus on progress made since the previous review, along with details of specific efforts that have been undertaken to address recommendations from the previous review.

VNRs have covered the Goals and targets in a range of different ways, including providing:

- a snapshot of the status of the Goals and targets;
- notable achievements and good practices;
- the impact of country interventions at home and abroad;

- gaps and challenges;
- interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs with other Goals;
- an analysis of emerging issues; and
- plans for future enhanced implementation.

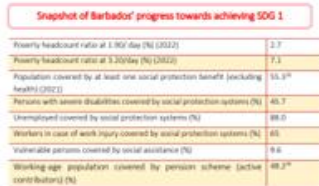
Some questions that could be considered include the following:

- Has a baseline for the SDGs been established and used? Have specific efforts been undertaken to address recommendations from the previous review and the findings of the national processes to prepare the VNR?
- Has the country prioritised certain SDGs? What criteria /process was used to derive priorities and who was engaged in prioritizing the SDGs?
- How are the various levels of government, parliament, and stakeholders working together to achieve the goals and targets?
- What progress has the country made on the goals and targets? What are the trends? Are there emerging issues of concern? Consider how the VNR can analyse progress/challenges, rather than describing existing/planned policies.
- Where gaps and challenges have been identified, what measures have been put in place, or are planned, to address them?
- What efforts have been made to ensure that all policies, plans and programmes reach the most marginalised and leave no one behind?
- Are there good practice examples of achieving the goals and targets which other countries would find useful?

Country examples

Barbados embarked on a data-driven approach to measuring progress towards the achievement of the SDGs. In consultation with key technical personnel from each Ministry, the 17 SDGs were mapped and aligned to Ministries, with several SDGs falling under the remit of two or more Ministries. The government of Barbados also adopted core SDG Indicators for reporting in a concerted effort to enhance data collection and analysis systems to monitor progress on the SDGs. In the VNR preparation process, Barbados utilized their stakeholder engagement to collect quantitative and qualitative data on the activities of stakeholders contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. Under each SDG of the VNR report, Barbados included a snapshot of

progress towards achieving that Goal as well as dashboard indicating the progress under each target.



Source: VNR Report of Barbados 2023

Means of implementation

The review process should discuss how means of implementation are mobilized, what difficulties are being encountered, and what additional resources are needed to implement the 2030 Agenda, looking at the full range of financing sources (public/private, domestic/international) and non-financial means of implementation, such as capacity development and data needs, technology, and partnerships. Gender-responsive budgeting can be highlighted, if applicable.

Countries could collaborate on their financing strategy for the SDGs or their integrated national financing framework (INFF) where applicable, as well

as the appropriate policies and reforms in place to finance the strategy. Countries could also provide an overview of the institutional set-up and coordination mechanisms (intra-government and with other stakeholders) that help implement the financing strategy. The review could indicate how financial systems, statistical data and resource allocations are being aligned to support the realization of the 2030 Agenda and its pledge to leave no one behind. Coverage of domestic resource mobilization could include the contribution of the private sector. Countries are also encouraged to identify concrete technology, capacity development and data needs.

Partnerships, including public, public-private and multi-stakeholder, as an effective vehicle to implement the SDGs could be elaborated upon. Costing and budgeting for the SDGs, as well as strengthening institutional and human capacities for implementation should also be considered when preparing the review.

Some questions that could be considered include the following:

- What are current resource flows? Summarise steps taken to mobilise domestic resources, official development assistance and additional sources of funding, such as foreign direct investment and remittances.
- What steps have been taken to identify critical gaps and estimate additional resources that are needed to implement the 2030 Agenda? Relevant aspects include financing, capacity development needs, including for data and statistics knowledge sharing, technology and partnerships.
- How can financial systems and resource allocations be aligned to support the realisation of the 2030 Agenda?
- How is the country engaging in international cooperation? Examples could include South-South, North-South and other forms of cooperation.
- How is the Addis Ababa Agenda being used to mobilise means of implementation? Has the country adopted a financing strategy/ integrated national financing framework, where applicable? What policies and reforms are in place to finance this strategy?

- What partnerships is the country involved in? Are there opportunities to expand partnerships for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda? What role does/can the private sector play?
- What capacity development services does the country need for more effective implementation of the SDGs? This is an opportunity to identify specific needs for the country.

Resource: Integrating South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the Voluntary National Reviews

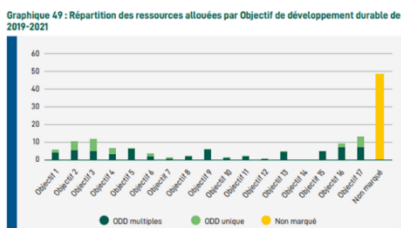
South-South and triangular cooperation are a valuable catalyst in galvanizing political will and in enhancing knowhow to implement the much needed economic and social reforms to rescue the SDGs. The integration of South-South and triangular cooperation perspectives in the VNRs helps in tracking progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda more comprehensively and inclusively and generates valuable evidence of South-South and triangular cooperation contributions toward achieving the SDGs. The *Handbook on Integrating South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the VNRs* provides step-by-step guidance, drawing from good practices and examples of integrating South-South and triangular cooperation in the preparation and presentation of VNRs. It was developed in close collaboration with Member States, United Nations entities and relevant stakeholders.

Link: [Handbook on Integrating South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the Voluntary National Reviews](#)

Country examples

Burkina Faso's VNR report includes a chapter on how the country has responded to multiple crises and emergencies, including displacement due to subnational conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic. The VNR outlines measures taken to promote good economic governance and address the humanitarian crisis, as well as measures to increase finance for small- and medium-sized enterprises and measures to fight inflation. Burkina Faso's VNR also includes a chapter on resource mobilization to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In Burkina Faso the SDG targets are achieved through the

implementation of the National Development Plan (PNDES 2016-2020), which includes a costing of implementation. There is an assessment of internal resources, i.e. total public revenue through taxation, as well as external resources such as innovative financing, public-private partnerships, and foreign direct investment. The report also includes a Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD) assessment, which is an international standard for measuring the full array of resources to promote sustainable development in developing countries.



Source: VNR of Burkina Faso 2023

Based on the outcomes of the review, countries could outline what steps are planned to enhance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the coming years. Countries could also indicate their plans for continuing review of progress towards the SDGs at the national and sub-national levels, including dissemination of VNRs and other national reviews and their findings, and any plans for future voluntary local reviews. The section could highlight what lessons the country has learned from the review process, how it will apply them in the continuing implementation and what support it would need in the future for preparing such reviews.

The following issues/questions could be addressed:

- A summary of the analysis, findings from policy bodies, the public, civil society and the private sector
- New and emerging issues
- What lessons can be learned from the review process?
- What support does the country need to prepare future reviews?
- What adjustments should be made to the voluntary national guidelines to ensure that they are useful?

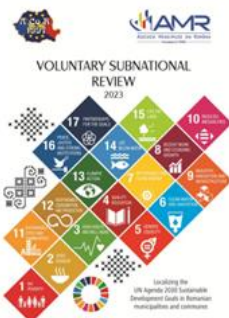
Countries are encouraged to reflect on how the VNR will contribute to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through identifying concrete follow-up actions. Some questions that could be considered include the following:

- How are the outcomes of the VNR being taken up at national level? Is the review being disseminated?
- What additional steps are planned to integrate the SDGs into government activities, e.g. the budgeting process and policies and programmes of line ministries, other institutions or legislation?
- Are there plans for regular review of progress at the national level on the implementation of the Agenda?
- What follow-up actions are being defined after the presentation of the VNR at the HLPF?

Country examples

Romania's 2023 VNR was drafted through a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder participatory process. In parallel to development of the VNR, a Voluntary Subnational Review was also developed. The subnational review mapped the SDGs at the level of municipalities and communes in Romania and was overseen by the Romanian Municipalities Association and the Association of Communes of Romania. Romania's VNR report highlights that the subnational report can be a powerful tool to raise local awareness about the SDGs and can help to improve policy-making processes by stimulating bottom-up transformation. During the process of developing the subnational report there was a close collaboration between coordinating entities at

local levels and the Department of Sustainable Development, to harmonize efforts and ensure complementarity with VNR. The subnational report was developed between January and May 2023. The methodology included the collection and primary analysis of qualitative and quantitative data at the level of municipalities and communes in Romania. The goal of the subnational report was to reflect the contribution



of municipalities and communes to SDGs achievement, especially in cases where there is no aggregated statistical or administrative data at local level.

Source: VNR of Romania 2023

Annexes

Countries are encouraged to include an annex with data, using the global Sustainable Development Goals indicators and adding priority indicators identified at the regional and national levels where appropriate. They may highlight whether statistics, including gender statistics, were collected from the national statistical system and pinpoint major gaps in official statistics on indicators.

Some questions that could be considered in relation to a statistical annex include the following:

- What criteria were used for selecting the indicators in the annex?
- How does the annex supplement and support the content of the review? Consider what is more effective – a very comprehensive presentation or a selection of the most relevant indicators?
- What is the most user-friendly format for presenting the data?
- Is it feasible to present time-series data?

Countries may also consider including additional annexes covering, for example, best practices and/or policies and strategies that have advanced implementation of the 2030 Agenda, interlinkages between the Goals and targets as well as the global impacts of national actions (spillover), comments and inputs from stakeholders, as well as a list of all the actors that contributed to the report.

Countries may also send other reports to UN DESA for posting on their national page in the VNR database, including complementary reports by stakeholders.

E. Monitoring and Review

Effective monitoring and review processes are key to the 2030 Agenda. Monitoring national implementation of the SDGs requires the collection,

processing, analysis and dissemination of reliable, timely, accessible and sufficiently disaggregated data. This includes the global SDG indicator framework for the follow-up and review of progress that was adopted in 2017, which contains 231 indicators used to measure progress towards achieving the SDGs. Countries are developing their national statistical capacities as part of this process and contributing to the definition of global indicators by also identifying indicators that best reflect national challenges.¹³

Countries utilize many different institutions for monitoring the achievement of the SDGs, including national institutional frameworks, which reflect various issues such as aligning the SDGs with national and international human rights obligations.

Many countries also recognize the value that supreme audit institutions can bring to the implementation and review of the SDGs.

Some questions that could be considered include the following:

- What efforts are being made to strengthen national statistical systems and the availability of quality data? Are there any institutional innovations to support the collection of data?
- What efforts are being made to disaggregate data? What constraints do countries have in this regard?
- What challenges are being faced with data collection and management?
- What data gaps have been identified and what steps are being taken to address these gaps?
- What efforts are being made to monitor the indicators and ensure transparency and accountability?
- What efforts are being made to follow up on and review implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including multi-stakeholder participation and mobilizing support through partnerships?
- Are monitoring efforts presented in a way that allows for sufficient review and dialogue by all stakeholders?

¹³ See note 8.

Country examples

Chile's third VNR report elaborates on the process of implementation of the 2030 Agenda from its first and second VNRs. Chile's 2023 VNR discusses how the country navigated changes in governance of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on implementation. Since September 2022, Chile has designed the strategy for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for the period of 2023-2030, which is based on a participatory and inclusive process. 2,000 people and organizations were brought together through 7 participation mechanisms to

OTRAS ACCIONES PARA EL LOGRO DEL ODS 1

A continuación, se reportan acciones de otras partes interesadas en la Agenda 2030 y su contribución al ODS 1.

ORGANIZACIONES DE LA SOCIEDAD CIVIL

El catastro permite conocer que, de las iniciativas o actividades presentadas por cada organización, 31 se encuentran relacionadas a este ODS.

Importante es destacar que las organizaciones al presentar sus iniciativas o actividades debieron vincularla con un ODS en específico, pero en la práctica, estas iniciativas se relacionan con más de un ODS, siendo el 1 el que más coincidencias tiene en la descripción del tipo de actividad o iniciativa presentada.

- » Promoción de la diversidad.
- » Acompañamiento para la regularización migratoria, así como también apoyo psicosocial, vivienda y alimentación.
- » Capacitaciones para mejor atención y contención de población en situación de vulnerabilidad.
- » Programas de inclusión social y laboral.
- » Residencias para personas en situación de calle, personas mayores, NNI y jóvenes.
- » Apoyo económico a familias de escasos recursos en sectores rurales.

develop the strategy. Under each SDG in Chile's 2023 VNR report, there is a section on public initiatives to advance the achievement of that SDG, highlighting the contributions by various government ministries as well as the contributions of civil society towards that SDG.

Source: VNR of Chile 2023

Monitoring and reporting on the SDGs forms part of the **European Union's** whole-of-government approach. At the global level, the EU actively participates in the annual meetings of the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF). The EU presented its first voluntary review at the 2023 HLPF, as the EU's contribution to the shared universal peer review effort. The Commission also reports regularly on progress towards the SDGs across EU internal and external policies and actions. Each year, Eurostat publishes a report covering progress towards the SDGs, based on the most relevant SDG indicators at the EU level. The EU's Voluntary Review includes a statistical and analytical annex that presents EU-level data for the official EU SDG indicators. The indicator set was developed by the European Commission in 2017 to monitor the SDGs in an EU context. The selection of indicators is updated every year. The EU SDG indicator set serves as

the basis for Eurostat’s annual monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context.

Figure 1: The EU’s ‘whole-of-government’ approach



Source: Voluntary Review of the European Union 2023

F. Preparatory workshops and submission of VNRs¹⁴

The preparatory process for the VNRs includes workshops based on countries’ previous experiences in participating in the VNR process. The workshops are organized by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and are designed to facilitate peer learning and interaction, providing a space for exchange of views, lessons learned and experiences in preparing VNRs. The workshops are intended for working-level officials who are closely engaged in the national preparatory process. Subject to availability of funding, it is anticipated that support may be provided for one participant per developing country. Additional participants from presenting countries may attend on their own funding.

The preparatory process for the 2024 VNRs includes the following:

First global workshop (4-5 December 2023): Based on peer learning and exchange between countries conducting VNRs in 2024 and countries that have carried out VNRs in previous years (2016-2023). The workshop is also designed to cover key components of the preparatory process.

Second global workshop (Spring 2024): Will facilitate a sharing of experiences among the 2024 VNR countries, including on lessons learned and challenges encountered in the process up to this point. It will also

¹⁴ For the most updated information on dates and deadlines indicated in this section, refer to the 2024 HLPF website.

feature more in-depth exchange of knowledge and guidance on the preparation and presentation process and will facilitate discussion on how to draft sections of the report and make VNR presentations at the HLPF.

Third global workshop (July 2024, New York, USA): Scheduled to take place on the Sunday prior to the presentation of the VNRs at the HLPF, the meeting will cover final preparatory matters and engage countries in a discussion of anticipated follow-up to the VNRs.

UN Regional Commissions

The Regional Commissions support countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as in the preparation for the HLPF and VNRs. For the 2023 HLPF, it is expected that five regional VNR workshops will be held on the margins of the regional fora for sustainable development convened by the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The regional workshops discuss the specificities of each region and provide for an additional exchange of experiences and lessons learned among the VNR countries.

Regional Preparatory Meetings

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

- Week of 22 April 2024

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)

- 13-14 March 2024

United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

- 15-19 April 2024

United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

- 20-23 February 2024

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

- 5-7 March 2024

Review – deadlines for submission to UN DESA

Two documents are to be submitted to the Secretariat, and there is a deadline for each of them.

VNR countries need to submit **Main Messages** for their VNRs in one of the six official UN languages by **24 April 2024**. The Main Messages allow preparation by stakeholders, including other countries, for the HLPF. The Main Messages need not be a conclusive summary of the VNR but can contain emerging conclusions from the review. The Main Messages provide an indication of some of the principal findings of the review. They should try to already highlight good practices and challenges and areas where the country would need support or advice from other countries or institutions.

The word count of the Main Messages **may not exceed 700 words**. Main Messages are translated by the Secretariat into all six official UN languages and are issued as an official document of the UN. The Main Messages are posted online.¹⁵

The final **VNR report** should be submitted in electronic format to DESA by **14 June 2024** (a month before the HLPF). The final reviews are posted online. It is important to leave time for national approval of the review before the submission, and to translate it into English if desired. The VNRs are not translated by the Secretariat but are posted on the HLPF website in the UN language/s in which they are submitted. VNR reports need to use official UN country/designations in order to be posted on the UN website. Kindly submit the VNR reports in PDF (machine readable) format.

¹⁵ [Main Messages from the 2023 VNRs](#)

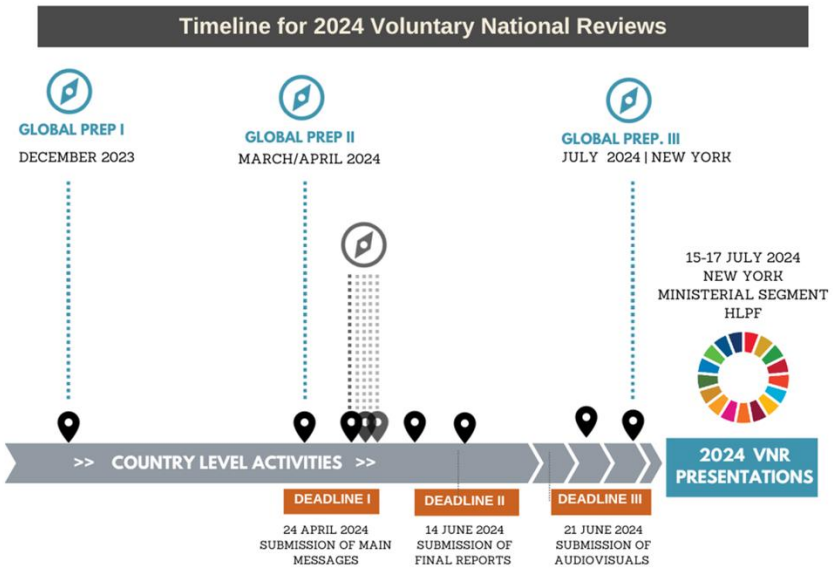


Figure 5: Timeline for 2024 Voluntary National Reviews (DESA)

Audio-visual materials for the VNR presentation should be submitted to UN DESA by **21 June 2024**. The material must highlight the implementation of the 2030 Agenda or the VNR. The technical team requires sufficient time to check all audio-visual materials for technical accuracy and compatibility with UN equipment and to liaise with countries to make the necessary adjustments if problems arise. If submission is delayed and not enough time is provided, the Secretariat will not be able to guarantee a seamless presentation should any technical issues or error arise during the presentation.

G. Presentation of the VNR at the HLPF

Preparations related to the presentation at the HLPF are an important part of the process. Coordination between country's focal points in both capitals and the Permanent Missions in New York is key for a successful VNR presentation at the HLPF. The presentation should convey the key findings of the VNRs, including good practices, challenges and areas for support and advice.

Questionnaire

To gather relevant information, UN DESA sends a questionnaire to countries a few months before the HLPF. This questionnaire seeks to establish:

- whether the country presenting for the first time prefers the panel or individual-style presentation format for its presentation (see below);
- preliminary information on the composition of the delegation and who will present the VNR;
- information on audio-visual materials, including videos, that will be used; and
- any other special requests, including dates on which the lead presenter (minister) is/is not available, so that the draft schedule for the VNR presentations can be prepared.

Format of presentation: In the *panel format*, the countries in a VNR session (between two and four) each make their presentations. Presenting countries may also consider having a dialogue among themselves on their VNRs. Once all the VNRs in the session have presented, questions are posed to the presenters. Second-time presenters will present in the *panel format* only. In the *individual format*, one country presents their VNR, followed by questions from countries in the audience, as well as from major groups and other stakeholders. This is then followed by the next VNR country in that VNR session. Unless agreed to otherwise by the presenting countries, the order of presentations within a particular session is by protocol level of presenter. For the same level, order of presentations is by presenting country name in English alphabetical order.

VNR schedule

The draft schedule for the VNR presentations is prepared based on the principle of universality, so that sessions seek to reflect regional diversity and different levels of development. Consideration will be given to accommodating the time constraints of presenting ministers if this is communicated timeously to UN DESA. Countries may also propose their

own grouping, bearing in mind the above-mentioned regional diversity. The President of ECOSOC shares a draft schedule with the VNR countries' representatives in New York.¹⁶

In advance of the presentation at the HLPF, the country should prepare to:

- submit any audio-visual material on the SDG implementation of the VNR by the deadlines communicated by UN DESA;
- finalise details of the composition of the delegation;
- coordinate with its Permanent Mission in New York;
- finalise the person/persons to be seated on the podium, taking into account available seating; and
- consider whether national stakeholders will be allocated time to speak as part of the VNR presentation.

Presentation at the HLPF

Under the current modalities, the time provided for countries to present at the HLPF is limited.

Countries presenting a VNR for the first time will have 15 minutes for their presentation, followed by 20 minutes for questions from other countries and stakeholders and factoring in time for podium changes. The 10-minute time allocation for the presentation includes the use of audio-visual material, including videos.

Countries presenting a VNR for the second time will be allocated a total of 25 minutes each in a panel format: 10 minutes will be allocated for the VNR presentation and 15 min for Q&A.

The presentation at the HLPF could highlight the key messages from the review and touch on critical issues in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It is recommended that a minister or person of higher rank lead the presentation of the VNR at the HLPF. In previous years presenters have included prime ministers, deputy prime ministers, and ministers from a range of portfolios.

¹⁶ See Note 4 above

To effectively use the limited presentation time, countries may further wish to consider the options below:

- Submit the VNR report well in advance of the HLPF to inform a substantive interactive debate at the HLPF.
- Use focused infographics, data visualization, and where meaningful videos, to communicate complex messages on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the VNRs such as preparatory process, linkages, priorities, innovations, progress and challenges in a very short period of time.
- Providing space for stakeholders such as civil society, youth, children and the private sector and others to share their contributions to and views on SDG progress.
- Working informally with other presenting countries in advance to compare review processes and findings, for example twinning for peer learning, with a view to facilitating an exchange of lessons learned and good practices during and after the VNR presentation. A Group of Friends of VNRs has been launched in 2019 which stands ready to support the preparation of the interactive discussion following a given country's VNR presentation at the HLPF, if the respective VNR presenting country so wishes.
- Making best use of the allocated time, including possibly written questions and answers, to allow for interactive discussions and Q&A sessions during the HLPF, which can strengthen peer learning and exchange of best practices.
- Consider actively using the regional sustainable development forums in the five regions as a preparatory step to share progress and challenges and best practices on the preparation of the VNRs and reflect on the follow-up to the VNRs.

Think about your audience and which experiences of your country's 2030 Agenda implementation efforts could speak to other countries. Which messages would you want to highlight for potential partners?

Tips:

- ✓ Videos of past VNR presentations are available in the archives of UN Web TV: <http://webtv.un.org/>
- ✓ Power-Point presentations of past VNR presenters are posted on the presenting country's national page in the VNR database: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>

Countries may also wish to consider how best to use the time around the formal meetings of the HLPF to further engage on the lessons emerging from the review process and seek feedback on their VNRs, including through actively participating in special events and VNR Labs, by co-organizing side events or using other means to share relevant experience and lessons learned. Presenting countries are encouraged to make sure that their presentation panels are gender balanced.

H. After the presentation

To benefit more fully from the resources invested in preparing and presenting the VNR, countries could consider taking concrete follow-up steps, including the following:

- Ensure wide dissemination of the VNRs. For example, countries could convene a press conference to present outcomes of the VNR presentation at the HLPF.
- Debrief the VNR project team on the outcomes of the presentation at the HLPF. This could include a summary of lessons learned and good practices from other countries.
- Promote concrete action on priorities contained in the VNR. For example, convene a cabinet meeting or other appropriate decision-making body to consider VNR follow-up.
- Develop an action plan/road map covering who, what, where and when for priority follow-up.
- Consider meeting, where applicable, with the Resident Coordinator's Office and the UN Country Team as well as with

bilateral donors on follow-up and support for priorities identified in the VNR.

- Take initiatives to simplify the review for wider public consumption.
- Consider presenting an annual report to Parliament on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- Consider sharing the VNR and lessons learned at the regional level.
- Institutionalise the collection of the material for the VNRs.
- Use lessons from the VNR process to refine and enhance institutional arrangements.
- Consider initiating a decision on preparation and presentation of a follow-up VNR.

Annex 1: VNR preparation checklist

Item	Actions
1. Initial preparation and organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Send letter to the President of ECOSOC to communicate the decision to conduct a VNR. <input type="checkbox"/> Assign responsibility for coordinating and preparing the VNR. <input type="checkbox"/> Estimate and identify resources required. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider scope of review. Countries are encouraged to provide brief information on progress and the status of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals <input type="checkbox"/> Develop work plan/road map with deliverables aligned to HLPF deadlines (e.g. submission of Main Messages, VNR Report and audio-visual materials). <input type="checkbox"/> Map key national actors (e.g. Parliament, line ministries, national statistical office, local government officials, stakeholders). <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare draft outline of VNR and develop key messages. Consider the storyline behind the VNR:

	<p>what is your country's sustainable development story?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Assign information- and data-gathering tasks, including drawing on existing national documents and previous VNR reports. <input type="checkbox"/> Assign the preparation of infographics, data visualization etc. for the VNR presentation.
<p>2. Stakeholder Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Contact relevant government departments (line ministries) and agencies, setting out basic details, e.g. about the VNR, the information/data requested, and establishment of a focal point. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a stakeholder engagement plan which identifies key stakeholders, and method of engagement (consider offline and online options). <input type="checkbox"/> Establish awareness-raising and public outreach component to disseminate avenues for stakeholder engagement in the VNR process, making use of government communication services, social media, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure targeted efforts are made to reach groups that are marginalised and at risk of being left behind.
<p>3. VNR Preparation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Review and incorporate material received, including data, other reports and previous VNRs. <input type="checkbox"/> Follow-up with government colleagues/information providers to secure missing material or provide additional analysis. <input type="checkbox"/> Decide on participants for the preparatory global and regional workshops. <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare zero draft, including identifying remaining gaps, together with stakeholders. <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare draft of Main Messages (not more than 700 words) for approval and submission to DESA by 24 April 2024

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Carry out internal review of VNR, including quality control, allowing time for resolution of possibly contentious issues. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish comment period and circulate draft to relevant government officials. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunity for stakeholders to comment and integrate comments from all national actors and stakeholders to the greatest extent possible. <input type="checkbox"/> Edit the VNR and arrange for translation into English, if needed/desirable, and design and layout. <input type="checkbox"/> Submit for endorsement and approval if required (for example to the Minister, Prime Minister, Cabinet). <input type="checkbox"/> Transmit electronic copy of the VNR to DESA by 14 June 2024.
<p>4. HLPF Presentation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Fill out questionnaire on the preferred presentation format (panel / individual), presenter, and composition of delegation, and return to DESA (deadline will be indicated) for information on HLPF presentation. <input type="checkbox"/> Produce visual materials for the VNR presentations and submit to UN DESA by 21 June 2024. <input type="checkbox"/> Select key messages for VNR presentation, with time limit scheduled for that year in mind. <input type="checkbox"/> Coordinate logistical arrangements with the Permanent Mission in New York.
<p>5. Follow-up to the VNR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a plan for the wide dissemination of the VNR. <input type="checkbox"/> Plan to debrief the VNR project team, partners and stakeholders. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop an action plan/ roadmap for the follow-up of the recommendations and findings from the VNR. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider initiating a decision on preparation and presentation of a follow-up VNR.

Annex 2: Secretary-General's voluntary common reporting guidelines for VNRs

I. Introduction

Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) are the cornerstone of the follow-up and review framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The VNR process culminates in a country report that is submitted to and presented at the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). The VNRs are most meaningful when they are conducted through an inclusive, participatory, transparent and thorough review process at the national and sub-national levels, when they are evidence-based, and produce tangible lessons, solutions and commitments, and when they are followed by concrete action and collaboration that drives implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The common reporting guidelines seek to support member States in conducting VNRs. Initially prepared by the Secretary-General in December 2015,¹⁷ they were updated in December 2017 and November 2019 to reflect lessons learned, taking into account experiences from the first cycle of the HLPF,¹⁸ and were most recently updated in January 2021. They provide a framework for certain common elements within reports while allowing for flexibility so countries can adapt to their own circumstances.¹⁹

The guidelines apply to the preparation of both the first and subsequent VNRs. As part of the Decade of Action and Delivery for sustainable development, launched at the SDG Summit (the HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly) in September 2019, numerous countries are now preparing their second and subsequent VNRs, which provide a new and unique opportunity for all countries to learn from each other how to launch an ambitious and accelerated achievement of the SDGs. Second and subsequent VNRs also provide an opportunity for reporting countries to share knowledge, strengthen accountability and inclusiveness, improve coherent reporting across different levels of government, and express their need for increasingly specific support from external partners.

II. Guiding principles

In paragraph 74 of the 2030 Agenda, member States identified a number of principles to guide the follow-up and review process at all levels. In preparing the voluntary national reviews, it is important that these principles be taken into account:

- a) The follow-up and review processes will be voluntary and country-led, will take into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and will respect policy space and priorities. As national ownership is key to achieving sustainable development, the outcome from national-level processes will be the foundation for reviews at the regional and global levels, given that the global review will be primarily based on national official data sources.

¹⁷ See annex to [A/70/684](#), the Secretary-General's report on "Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level".

¹⁸ See paragraph 9 of [A/RES/70/299](#) of 29 July 2016, "Follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level".

¹⁹ It is important to note that the UN Sustainable Development Group has also released [Guidelines for UN Country Teams for the preparation of UN Country Results Reports](#). While they can serve to complement the present Secretary-General's voluntary guidelines, it should be noted that the VNR is different from a country results report.

- b) They will track progress in implementing the universal Goals and targets, including the means of implementation, in all countries in a manner, which respects their universal, integrated and interrelated nature and the three dimensions of sustainable development.
- c) They will maintain a longer-term orientation, identify achievements, challenges, gaps and critical success factors and support countries in making informed policy choices. They will help to mobilize the necessary means of implementation and partnerships, support the identification of solutions and best practices and promote the coordination and effectiveness of the international development system.
- d) They will be open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people and will support reporting by all relevant stakeholders.
- e) They will be people-centred, gender-sensitive, respect human rights and have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind.
- f) They will build on existing platforms and processes, where these exist, avoid duplication and respond to national circumstances, capacities, needs and priorities. They will evolve over time, taking into account emerging issues and the development of new methodologies, and will minimize the reporting burden on national administrations.
- g) They will be rigorous and based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.
- h) They will require enhanced capacity-building support for developing countries, including the strengthening of national data systems and evaluation programmes, particularly in African countries, least developed countries, small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and middle-income countries.
- i) They will benefit from the active support of the United Nations system and other multilateral institutions.

III. Structure and content of a report for the HLPF

Countries are encouraged to structure the report along the lines highlighted below, which will give an overview of the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda and promote consistency and comparability between reports of different countries, as well as between second and subsequent reports of all countries. Doing so will also help inform the process of review and generate reflections on implementation at national, regional and global levels. Countries are encouraged to develop each of the proposed points in a balanced manner.

1. Opening statement. An opening statement by the Head of State or Government, a Minister or other high-ranking Government official could highlight the current status of SDG progress and how the Government is responding to the transformative nature of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including through its national development plans, strategies, policies or other relevant documents, including sectoral policies and specific action and financial plans. It could highlight outcomes and results

accomplished since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and indicate steps that the country intends to take to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as part of the Decade of Action and Delivery for sustainable development launched at the SDG Summit in September 2019 along with ten political commitments.²⁰ It could also link COVID-19 recovery plans with the 2030 Agenda and concrete measures taken to achieve the SDGs, leaving no one behind and moving towards a more equal society. Second and subsequent VNRs could highlight the main steps taken towards SDG implementation since the previous report, with a focus on those identified as most vulnerable.

2. Highlights. A synthesis of one or two pages in length, briefly highlighting the following:

- The number of VNRs previously presented to the HLPF, and the most significant changes since the last review.
- The core elements of the country-level review process.
- The status of SDG implementation based on statistical data, using SDG indicators to the extent possible and outlining the factors of success or failure to achieve progress.
- New and emerging challenges related also—but not only—to the COVID-19 pandemic, discrimination and inequality, the impacts of climate change, and other relevant issues.
- How the Government has responded to the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the SDGs and whether that helped address trade-offs and accelerate implementation.
- How the Government has responded to the principle of leaving no one behind, including with regard to gender equality.
- Two or three examples of good practices and lessons learned that may be relevant for other countries, preferably with a focus on measures with a transformative potential, considering the interlinkages and synergies among the SDGs, including in the context of COVID-19 response and recovery. These could be elaborated in boxes interspersed throughout the report.
- Two or three examples of challenges encountered on which the country wishes to hear about other countries' and other stakeholders' experiences including the United Nations system.
- National Initiatives that need support in terms of finance, capacity-building, policy advice, data gathering and analysis, technology, partnerships, etc. It is hoped that this would lead to mobilizing support through international cooperation and continued collaboration/twinning with one or more other countries.

3. Introduction. The main results, context and objectives of the review could be presented here in a succinct way and emphasizing the most critical elements emanating from the report. The introduction may briefly describe key features of the country context as it pertains to the 2030 Agenda, the national review cycle, and whether and how existing national reports to regional and international mechanisms have been used. It could outline how the 2030 Agenda was reflected in the national sustainable development plans and strategies and in the financing and budgetary frameworks. It could outline how the policy architecture supports the implementation of all three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) and what policies and mechanisms have enabled this integration. It could highlight links to other international agreements such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Samoa Pathway, Istanbul or Vienna Programme of Action, Global Compact for Migration etc. This could include describing how

²⁰ Political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly adopted on 15 October 2019 ([A/RES/74/4](#)).

synergies among those agreements are being pursued in the national plans so as to meet multiple objectives in an efficient manner. For second and subsequent reports, it may briefly describe what elements of the previous VNR have changed and refer to the section in which they are presented in depth.

4. Methodology and process for preparation of the review. This section may discuss the methodology that was adopted for the review, including its scope, depth and limitations and how the principles on follow-up and review from the 2030 Agenda, including paragraph 74, were used. Information on the process for preparation of the national review may be presented, including, for example, how different levels and sectors of Government contributed to the review and whether and how the whole-of-Government approach was used to work across sectors and institutions in the implementation of the SDGs;²¹ whether parliaments were engaged; whether national evaluation/oversight or human rights institutions contributed; what mechanisms have been used to meaningfully and effectively engage civil society, whether representatives of vulnerable groups, academia, youth, children, the business sector, other stakeholders and, where applicable, whether the UN Country Teams were engaged. The section could describe how the national report to the HLPF was discussed at the national, regional and local levels and who was engaged in the discussions. It may describe how national-level, regional-level and global-level reporting on the 2030 Agenda were combined. Countries may consider whether to showcase any voluntary local reviews undertaken or actions by cities. They may also highlight any social platforms used to engage stakeholders. If other novel approaches to stakeholder engagement were used, countries may wish to elaborate on this here. Countries presenting a VNR for the second and subsequent times could avoid unnecessary repetition by focusing primarily on how the report builds on previous reviews, how the methodology for the review differs from the previous ones and why, and how the review helped to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda at the national level, particularly among people.

5. Policy and enabling environment. For second and subsequent VNRs, the elements outlined below could indicate whether efforts have continued since the previous VNRs, what changes have been introduced or how the commitments in the previous VNR have been implemented. The subsequent subsections may all be addressed, while avoiding duplication of information.

(a) Ensuring ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals and the VNRs. The review could outline how stakeholders, such as national and local governments; legislative bodies, national oversight/auditing bodies, national human rights institutions or other relevant entities; the public, civil society and the private sector were continuously involved in the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda, including its Goals and targets. The review could address how different groups, particularly women and youth, as well as children, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons, migrants and other vulnerable groups in the country have been engaged and contributed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and how direct engagement of people has been facilitated. The countries presenting a VNR for the second and subsequent times could explain how ownership evolved since the first VNR, indicating efforts to sustain or mainstream it, and could discuss how this impacted stakeholder engagement. Boxes could be used to highlight efforts of stakeholders.

²¹ Under this heading, countries may wish to report on the national institutional arrangements for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as well as the extent of collaboration with governmental structures established to coordinate reporting to other international and regional bodies.

(b) Integration of the Sustainable Development Goals in national frameworks. The review could outline how the further integration of the Goals into the country's legislation, policies, plans, budgets and programmes, including the sustainable development strategy, if there is one, has helped with successful implementation of the SDGs and targets. This would include examining policy coherence and interlinkages.²² Countries are encouraged to be specific in identifying the main challenges and difficulties experienced in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals as a whole and how they foresee overcoming these barriers. Specifically, the country may describe how the policy makers are coordinating through national planning, budgetary, financial and investment processes, for example to bring about a deeper, faster and more ambitious response to the challenges that their economies are facing. Countries are encouraged – even in cases of incomplete data – to provide, as far as possible, an analysis of the causes of their SDG implementation challenges and possible ways forward, including how the engagement of different actors can help, and is helping, to bridge these gaps. Countries could consider outlining how cities, local authorities and communities have been pursuing the 2030 Agenda and how they have supported their efforts. Countries could also refer to major efforts undertaken by local authorities and non-State actors to implement the Goals, the role of scientists and academia in advising the government and benefits arising from multi-stakeholder partnerships. They are also encouraged to integrate a gender perspective across all sections of the report.

(c) Integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions. The review might discuss how the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) are being integrated and how sustainable development policies are being designed and implemented to reflect such integration including an analysis of the relevant interlinkages among the goals and targets and lessons learned in this regard. This can also include an analysis of progress and initiatives related to the high-level political forum's theme for that year.

(d) Leaving no one behind. The review could also assess how the principle of leaving no one behind has been mainstreamed in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. This would also address how this principle has been translated into concrete actions for tackling inequalities and discrimination, as well as efforts to ensure inclusive and effective participation in implementation efforts. In this regard, the review could detail how the people who are the furthest behind and vulnerable groups have been identified, including through improved data collection and disaggregation, how they are involved in finding solutions, as well as what policies and programmes are being implemented to address their needs and support their empowerment. Countries are encouraged to go beyond social policies and include macroeconomic policies and technology that impact on the situation of those furthest behind and provide support to the social and economic inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status. Particular attention should be placed on how national efforts seek to empower women and girls and help realize human rights.

(e) Institutional mechanisms. The review could provide information on how the country's institutional framework has evolved in light of the 2030 Agenda. This could include information on how the views of different ministries, agencies, levels of government and non-governmental stakeholders, including representatives of vulnerable groups, have been mobilized around the 2030 Agenda and how their views are considered. Countries may also consider including information on how the institutions and mechanisms are progressing in their coordination and integration for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and analyze their interaction and collaboration, including joint planning, with relevant

²² In this vein, the review might discuss how analysis, guidance and recommendations from regional and international mechanisms have been incorporated in national frameworks and policies in support of SDG implementation.

national bodies, such as the national planning entities, oversight bodies or national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up. This section could also include a reflection of how the country has ensured that the institutional mechanisms supporting SDG implementation are effective, accountable, inclusive and adequately funded. The review could consider highlighting how it was possible to successfully mobilize institutions around the Sustainable Development Goals, enhance systematic collaboration, improve their functioning—making them more responsive, accountable, inclusive and transparent—and promote change to achieve policy coherence and integration across all sectors of Government. Information may also be provided on how responsibility is allocated among various levels of Government (national, subnational and local) for coherent implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda. This section could highlight what has been done to ensure that relevant data, information and analysis is systematically gathered, shared, analyzed and used across sectors and how this has helped with implementation of the SDGs and ensuring no one is left behind. It would be useful to highlight how the country is reviewing progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, including mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures. The review could also highlight whether and how the preparation and follow-up to VNRs is embedded in these ongoing processes. This may include the preparation of national SDG reports, supported by the UN Country Team, where applicable as well as the preparation of regional or international State reports.

(f) Systemic issues and transformative actions. Countries are encouraged to report on relevant structural issues or barriers they have faced in implementing the 2030 Agenda, including the possible external consequences of other countries' domestic policies on their economy and societies and the impact of their own policies on other countries. Countries can highlight the transformative policies, tools, or institutional changes they have used to address these issues or barriers and avoid trade-offs among the goals. The 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report could be used as a source of inspiration for how to identify entry points and levers for transformative action to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

6. Progress on Goals and targets and evaluation of policies and measures taken so far. Countries are encouraged to provide brief information on progress and the status of all Sustainable Development Goals. It would be desirable to analyze critical difficulties encountered in reaching them and how these could be addressed, referring to data provided in a statistical annex, as well as ways of fostering inclusive participation in addressing these challenges. The review could indicate whether a baseline for the Goals has been defined and evaluate the main gaps identified, assessing the policies and measures taken so far, and identifying the remaining obstacles. Countries are encouraged to review all 17 SDGs; however, some could be addressed in more depth, for instance, to illustrate innovative policies to achieve goals, to reach those furthest behind, or to showcase examples that could be especially interesting for peer learning in an international or regional context. The consideration of Goals could focus on trends, successes, challenges, emerging issues, and lessons learned, and evaluate actions taken to address gaps and challenges. It could support the identification of solutions, best practices, synergies, trade-offs and spillovers and areas requiring advice and support from other countries or institutions. The review may examine the agreed global indicators for SDGs and related targets, but countries may also choose to refer to complementary national and regional indicators. Conclusions presented in this section should be based on said empirical evidence, in order to have concrete elements to measure progress. Countries presenting their second and subsequent voluntary national reviews could highlight progress made since the previous presentation, noting specific efforts undertaken to address findings, define next steps and overcome challenges identified in the previous review. Countries should also identify relevant actions they intend to take in the near future and over the coming years to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda, based

on the findings of the VNR and the challenges it identified, and as a result of the Decade of Action and Delivery for sustainable development launched at the SDG Summit in September 2019.

7. New and emerging challenges. This section could describe how the country is recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, including plans and concrete measures taken for building back better, ensuring that recovery measures advance the Sustainable Development Goals and target those most at risk of being further marginalized, strengthening resilience in the social, economic and environmental dimensions. It may also describe other new and emerging challenges such as food insecurity, migration, violent conflict, gender inequality, environmental degradation, and the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss. Beyond assessing negative effects, the section should also be analytical and forward looking in terms of discussing policies and measures for how to recover better, addressing any underlying structural frictions, and defining future actions needed if faced with another pandemic or similar calamity, with a focus on leaving no one behind. New and emerging challenges can have an impact across all or some SDGs and may create new vulnerable groups or enhance the marginalization of some already at risk of being left behind. This section could analyze such impact and vulnerabilities, with inclusive and meaningful participation of those concerned.

8. Means of implementation. Based on the above challenges and trends highlighted, the review may discuss how the means of implementation (financing, technology, capacity building, etc.) are mobilized, what difficulties this process faces, and what resources are needed to implement the 2030 Agenda, looking at the full range of financing sources (public/private, domestic/international) and non-financing means of implementation, such as capacity development and data needs, technology, and partnerships. It could include ideas and experiences for how to align recovery plans and funds with the Sustainable Development Goals (support schemes, investment plans, restructuring of subsidies, as well as an analysis of budgetary reallocations with a view to ensure addressing vulnerabilities and sharing experiences on what works in this regard). Countries could elaborate on their financing strategy/integrated national financing framework where applicable, and the appropriate policies and reforms in place to finance their strategy. The review could indicate how financial systems, statistical data, and resource allocations are being aligned to support the realization of the 2030 Agenda and its pledge to leave no one behind. Coverage of domestic resource mobilization could include the contribution of the private sector. Experiences with gender responsive budgeting, where applicable, should be reflected. Countries are also encouraged to identify concrete technology and capacity development and data needs and request external support to improve it, if necessary, as well as include the contribution of multi-stakeholder partnerships. Countries could also provide an overview of the institutional set-up and coordination mechanisms (intra-government and with other stakeholders) that help implement the financing strategy. Donor countries could describe how they have reviewed their development cooperation guidance to align with the 2030 Agenda. Countries could consider linking their VNRs to the country's participation in the ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum, sharing national experiences on means of implementation at the Forum. The countries presenting a VNR for the second and subsequent times could focus on the changes that took place between the previous and current VNR(s) in the above-mentioned areas.

9. Conclusion and next steps. Based on the outcomes of the review, the country could outline what steps are planned to enhance and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, notably as part of the Decade of Action and Delivery for sustainable development, and within the efforts for an inclusive and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, including any specific support that is needed. It could also indicate how it plans to keep the implementation momentum at the national and sub-national levels, including through dissemination of the VNRs and other national reviews and their findings, forging of new partnerships, commitments to accelerated action, and implementation of concrete policies or programmes. It could highlight what lessons the country has learned from the review process, how it will apply them in the continuing implementation and what support it would need in the future for preparing such reviews. Next steps should be as concrete as possible, to allow targeted follow-up in subsequent VNRs or related documents.

10. Annexes. Countries are encouraged to include an annex with data, using the global Sustainable Development Goal indicators and adding priority indicators identified at the regional and national levels where appropriate. They may highlight whether statistics, including gender statistics and disaggregated data, were collected from the national statistical system and pinpoint major gaps in official statistics on indicators. Countries may want to include additional annexes where they would showcase best practices and/or policies and strategies that have advanced implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Countries might consider including an annex specifically on interlinkages between the goals and targets as well as the global impacts of national actions (spillover). They could also include a list of all the actors consulted in the preparation of the report. They could also include comments from stakeholders on the report in an annex. If countries so wish, they can send other reports to DESA for posting on their national page in the VNR database, including complementary reports by stakeholders.

IV. Making presentations at the HLPF

Under the current modalities, whether virtual or hybrid, the time provided for countries to present at the HLPF is limited. Countries may therefore wish to consider a number of measures/options when conducting their presentations at the HLPF:

- Submit their written report well in advance of the HLPF to inform a substantive interactive debate at the HLPF.
- Focus on selected key messages and lessons from the VNR, for peer learning during the HLPF. Highlight areas where advice or support is needed.
- Use focused infographics, data visualization, and meaningful focused videos, to communicate complex messages related to SDG implementation (such as VNR preparatory process, linkages, priorities, innovations, progress and challenges) in a very short period of time. It is important to keep these tools focused on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and leaving no one behind.
- Provide space for stakeholders such as civil society, youth, children, national human rights institutions, and the private sector to share their contributions to the VNR and their views on SDG progress in the country.
- Ensure gender balance if there is a panel of speakers.
- Work informally with other presenting countries in advance to compare review processes and findings, for example through voluntary twinning for peer learning.

- Make best use of the allocated time during the HLPF to allow for interactive discussions and questions and answers, which can strengthen peer learning and exchange of best practices. This may include written questions and answers. In virtual or hybrid settings possibilities for dialogue after the presentation should be preserved.
- Consider actively using the regional sustainable development forums in the five regions as a preparatory step to share progress and challenges and best practices on the preparation of the VNRs and reflect on the follow-up to the VNRs.

Other important considerations:

The “Group of Friends of VNRs and Follow-up and Review of the 2030 Agenda” created by the ECOSOC President will prepare discussions on specific VNRs at the HLPF.

Countries are encouraged to submit their written reports at least a month in advance of the HLPF and they are made available in the [VNR database](#).

VNR reports need to use official UN country/designations in order to be posted on the UN website.

Presenting countries are encouraged to make sure that their presentation panels are gender-balanced.

Countries may also wish to consider how best to use the time around the formal meetings of the HLPF to further engage on the lessons emerging from the review process and seek feedback on their VNRs, including through actively participating in special events, and VNR Labs, and by co-organizing side events.