

## Four Years of VNRs

Thank you, Moderator,

I am speaking on behalf of the **Volunteer Groups Alliance**. *We have heard a lot this afternoon about the importance of political leadership, of institutional mechanisms, and of partnerships to drive SDG implementation. These are important,* but I would like to highlight the crucial role played by civil society organizations and volunteer groups in both the implementation of the 2030 agenda, and for holding governments to account for their delivery.

Embedded in communities, volunteers can often reach those who are marginalized, bridging gaps between formal and informal service provision- whether it is girls who are at risk of early forced marriage in Nepal, or deaf young people unable to access health care in Rwanda. They can facilitate people's participation in their own development.

This morning, Sierra Leone spoke of how it had worked with civil society and volunteers to run an inclusive VNR process. In Pakistan volunteers supported data collection, local translation and community engagement with marginalized group across 42 districts of the country to complement the VNR

Volunteer groups and civil society organizations are working with and are ready to work with governments to create awareness about the SDGs, to help localize the agenda, to contribute our data, knowledge and expertise to the process.

But we need to be given the space to operate- which as many of our colleagues have highlighted throughout these debates, is shrinking across the world. So, as member state take stock of the SDG review process, we urge them to think about:

- How to ensure comprehensive multi-stakeholder engagement
- How they can really include those who are most marginalized in the process and SDG delivery, and
- Accepting citizen generated data from communities and volunteers, which can inform and support policy making

The VNRs are not an end point, they are a snapshot in time of progress –as we strive to meet the ambition of the 2030 agenda the dialogue must be ongoing, constructive, and meaningful.

Thank you.

Delivered by:

**Heather Alcock, VSO**