

15 July 2019

**HLPF 2019 TURKEY VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW STATEMENT
(Mr. Naci Ağbal)**

Madam President,
Distinguished Ministers and delegates,

I'm honored to be here with you today to present our progress to achieve SDGs.

I would like to start by thanking the panelists for their comprehensive and insightful presentations on their VNR experiences.

Taking ownership of the twenty thirty (2030) Agenda, as Turkey we emphasize keen commitment to contribute to a sustainable world in every occasion.

We submitted our first VNR in 2016 that laid down a roadmap to achieve SDGs.

As an important step of the roadmap, a stocktaking project has been carried out in 2017 to analyze the baseline of SDGs in Turkey with regard to national policies, legislation and practices. In Turkey, Presidency of Strategy and Budget is the leading organization of national SDG Agenda. Given the importance of National Development Plans at the top of our policy hierarchy, implementation of SDGs is a shared responsibility of all ministries.

With the purpose of vertical and horizontal policy coherence at all levels, we distribute responsibilities, link SDGs with institutional policy documents and allocate resources.

We believe this accumulated ground will contribute to our success to achieve SDGs.

Regarding monitoring, TURKSTAT works on SDG indicators. Responsibilities are assigned to line ministries in the Official Statistical Program. Sustainable Development Indicators of Turkey comprised of 83 items was published in February 2019.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Strong and transparent institutions are key for inclusive and sustainable growth. Therefore, Turkey takes governance and strong institutional capacity as the fourth pillar of sustainable development.

Turkish Supreme Audit Institution has started a thematic audit in 2019 to assess the readiness of the country to implement the SDGs, including institutional structure. Results of the audit will deliver independent and impartial information to the public.

Excellencies,

The second VNR process commenced with the highest-level political ownership, upon His Excellency President Erdogan's call on all government entities.

In a participatory manner, partnerships were established with umbrella organizations of civil society, private sector, academia and municipalities.

Through their support, nearly 3.000 individuals and institutions were involved in the VNR process.

An online platform was established to stock best practices on SDG implementation. Approximately 400 good practices were submitted to the platform by all stakeholders.

In the VNR Report, we have elaborated the status of progress and gaps since 2010, with a special emphasis on the period after 2015. Focus areas for each SDG have been identified in line with our policy priorities.

This approach has given us a strategic mapping of SDGs and Turkish policy priorities and thus key policy areas to concentrate on.

The analysis reveals that most targets have been incorporated in our policies. The current institutional structures and legislation provide adequate framework for the effective implementation of SDGs. However, there is still room for improvement in practices and projects until 2030. Also, further effort is needed to enhance financial and technical capacities.

As a middle-income country, Turkey has made progress in all three dimensions of sustainable development.

We have taken fundamental steps in eradicating poverty, reducing inequalities and addressing needs of vulnerable groups.

Based on a human-centered development approach, Turkey has achieved remarkable progress in providing better quality, broader and more accessible public services, particularly for education

and health.

Policies to reduce disparities in inter-regional infrastructure and promote technological advancements marked an inclusive development pathway.

I would like to touch upon some of the Goals with significant achievements.

Turkey is among top performers in eradicating poverty. Pro-poor policies in employment, social security, education, health, and housing have significantly contributed to this outcome.

Health Transformation Program resulted in increased access to health services, improved physical infrastructure and service quality. On the other hand, additional measures are still needed in the areas of non-communicable diseases, preventive health services and health problems of growing elderly population.

Almost forty percent (40%) of Turkey's population is under 24 years old. Therefore, children and youth constitute the largest potential for our development.

With significant measures taken to increase access to education, net schooling rates at all levels of education have substantially grown. Increasing the quality of education will continue to be our main priority until 2030.

Nearly the entire population have access to clean water and sanitation. Water and sanitation infrastructure investments of municipalities are supported by the central budget.

Efficient management of water resources is ensured by river basin management plans.

Turkey attaches great importance to renewable energy resources to reduce import dependency and curb greenhouse gas emissions. A significant increase has been achieved in the share of renewables in electricity supply.

Turkey stands at a very advanced level in terms of urban infrastructure and the service delivery capacity of local administrations. Transportation and communications hold the highest share in our investment budgets.

Particularly large subway investments are ongoing in the metropolitan cities. Increase in the high-speed train passenger transportation is expected to accelerate after the completion of ongoing projects.

The share of R&D expenditure in GDP almost doubled from 2002 to 2017. Likewise, private sector's share in the total R&D expenditures also followed the similar pathway.

As a result of the recent increase in housing supply, access to affordable housing is quite high. Extensive urban regeneration projects are undertaken to increase resilience and quality of life.

The Zero Waste Project which was initiated to limit waste generation and promote recycling is spreading around the country to all government institutions.

Dear Participants,

We believe that e-government is a crucial enabler for the implementation of SDGs by improving public service delivery. In the recent years we have expanded the services we provided through E-government applications. The number of users registered for these services has reached approximately 43 million in 2019. The financial and administrative burdens on citizens and businesses were reduced remarkably.

Excellencies,

The principle of "leaving no one behind" reflects the spirit of the whole 2030 Agenda. Thus, policies and practices addressing vulnerable groups have been elaborated in a separate chapter in the VNR Report.

Additionally, actions towards these groups are assessed under each Goal with an inclusive and coherent approach.

In line with our human-centered development approach, vulnerable groups are empowered through interventions including social transfers, differentiated tax policies, incentives towards women labor force and sound measures against informal employment.

Dear colleagues,

The success of the SDGs highly depends on the ability of several partners to act collectively. Turkey also promotes “leaving no one behind” principle both at home and abroad.

As an emerging donor, Turkey supports development efforts of developing countries. In 2018, with its total ODA of 8.6 billion USD and ODA over GNI ratio of 1.10%, Turkey surpassed 0.7% ODA over GNI target. Our development assistance from 2014 to 2018 exceeded 38.7 billion USD, including 7.3 billion USD in NGO grants and private sector direct investments.

The establishment of the Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries as a UN entity in Turkey in 2018 marked SDG 17.8 as the first global target achieved.

Ever willing to offer a helping hand to those in need, Turkey has generously responded to the influx of Syrians since the onset of Syrian humanitarian crisis.

Today, we host nearly 3.6 million Syrians within our borders.

We provided temporary protection status for them, which ensures easy access to public services such as health, education and social protection.

In this respect; Syrians benefit from public health and education services in the same conditions with all citizens.

They are free to attend labor market, and also receive various social assistance benefits financed through national and international funds.

Until now, for all these services, Turkey spent approximately 37 billion US Dollars only from its own resources.

Dear colleagues,

Looking ahead, Turkey will focus on maintaining the pace of progress towards 2030. On the basis of an inclusive and sustainable economic growth, efforts will be continued to distribute increased prosperity among all segments of the society.

We will keep on taking steps to improve the quality and effectiveness of services.

We will focus on R&D and innovation to transform our manufacturing industry into a more

competitive and high value-added production structure.

In line with the requirements of information society, we will take measures to strengthen our human resources.

I thank you.