

MAIN MESSAGES FOR THE SECOND VNR OF AZERBAIJAN ON SDGs

Building opportunities for inclusive and sustainable economic growth for all and ‘leaving no one behind’ is a priority for Azerbaijan and we have demonstrated firm commitment to transitioning to sustainable development and aligning our national development strategy to the SDGs. The National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development facilitated preparations of VNR. Alongside with the series of meetings with all stakeholders a set of guidelines was prepared by the Working Groups of the Council and presented to each line Ministry to identify specific work falling within their respective areas of responsibility that contribute to the 2030 Agenda.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO SHARE





- Thanks to its continuous efforts at establishing a sustainable development model, Government of Azerbaijan approved a strategic roadmap for the social and economic development of the key sectors with short-term (by 2020), medium-term (by 2025) and long-term target outlooks (beyond 2025).
- Azerbaijan was one of the first countries in the region to undertake MAPS mission aimed at creating a roadmap outlining definitive steps to be taken to accelerate the implementation of SDGs.
- Azerbaijan was named among the top ten reformers in World Bank’s Ease of Doing Business Report for 2018, allowing the country to secure 25th place as a favorable investment destination among 190 countries.
- Azerbaijan is investing in innovation initiatives and innovative ideas within the spectrum of SDG accelerators. In 2018 alone, the national innovation contest attracted 220 proposals from young Azerbaijani entrepreneurs, researchers and scientists focused on solutions to some of the pressing challenges towards the implementation of the SDGs.
- In October 2018, Azerbaijan hosted the first high-level forum on sustainable development, a platform to discuss practical solutions to challenges involving inclusive economic growth, productive employment, gender equality, youth participation, peaceful coexistence and justice for all, as well as access to clean resources and tackling climate change.
- Agency for Development of SME was launched in 2018 and has already started the process of drafting regulatory acts to establish SME Development Centers.
- Active labor market policies, and social protection, play a crucial role in the achievement of SDGs. Assuring equal access of all to public and social services, Government established “Sustainable and Operative Social Protection Agency”.

LESSONS LEARNT

- Along with the nationalization of the SDGs, and alignment of the existing strategies with prioritized targets and indicators, we should work on a new development strategy (2020 to 2030) based on predefined SDG accelerators and integrate those in our state budget.
- Ensuring complete and integrated implementation of the SDGs, participation of businesses in the

process is indispensable. Awareness raising, more stringent regulation of environmental issues, increasing private sector financing for SDGs and harnessing CSR funding are all therefore impending.

CHALLENGES AND AREAS WHERE SUPPORT IS NEEDED

-  Statistical framework and other data-related complexities, remains a significant challenge for the country to define our targets for the prioritized SDG indicators, while we seek beneficial partnerships to increase the impact of our investments and interventions in these areas.
-  The Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh conflict represents a serious threat to peace, security and cooperation in the South Caucasus. Armenia continues to use military force against Azerbaijan by occupying one fifth of its territory and preventing Azerbaijani internally displaced population from returning to their homes. It disregards the UN Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), which reaffirm that the Nagorno-Karabakh region is an inalienable part of Azerbaijan and call for immediate, full and unconditional withdrawal of the occupying forces from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Addressing the challenges associated with the conflict through its lasting political settlement in accordance with the above-mentioned UN Security Council Resolutions will be a significant contribution to the implementation of SDGs.
-  Azerbaijan endeavors to protect and restore its land ecosystems and promote their sustainable use. However, low environmental awareness is one of bottlenecks to progress in fighting climate change and protecting environment.
-  Implementation of the SDGs also requires widespread application of the principles of the circular economy – such as efficient and responsible resource consumption, waste management and symbiosis among the major industries currently dominating the country’s economy.

CONCLUSION

Azerbaijan will continue its efforts to implement 2030 Agenda with a view to achieve the SDGs. The country will strive to preserve macroeconomic stability by allocating resources in such a manner as to increase the share of the private sector in the overall economy, reducing economic dependency on oil and gas production thus promoting diversification of the economy, accelerating resource mobilization, and integrating sustainability practices into overall national development strategy.