

## **MAIN MESSAGES-National Voluntary Review of Republic of North Macedonia**

North Macedonia is fully committed to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the EU integration process; this commitment is demonstrated through the government reform agenda that focuses on key development objectives meant for all the citizens. In line with this, the National Council for Sustainable Development identified SDG 1, SDG4, SDG8, SDG 13 and SDG16 as five priority goals for the period 2018-2020. North Macedonia's existing policy framework addresses a number of aspects of sustainable development while the Rapid Integrated Assessment conducted in 2019 assessed the alignment of 83 percent with the overall Agenda.

The Macedonian National Voluntary Review was prepared with a participatory approach of various stakeholder groups. The following are North Macedonia's main achievements and challenges in each of the 5 areas of Agenda 2030:

### **People**

Poverty has been reduced among the poorest sections of society by 21.9%. The Gini coefficient has decreased from 37% in 2013 to 31.9% in 2018. In December 2019, the average paid financial assistance per household, under the new law compared to the old law, has increased by 142%. Within the de-institutionalization process, all children under the age of 18 accommodated within care institutions were resettled in the community homes.

The country faces serious challenges dealing with non-communicable diseases and high mortality rate from cardiovascular diseases and cancer. The outmigration of medical personnel remains strong challenge for the health sector. On a positive note, the negative trend of infant mortality decreased from 11.9 in 2016 to 5.7 in 2018 and immunization coverage for all vaccines is below the recommended 95%.

North Macedonia aims at providing an environment for inclusive education. The country's PISA ranking showed improvement in the last review in 2019, especially in the area of science, however remains low, which makes the investments in education a key priority for the government.

### **Prosperity**

Before the COVID-19 crisis, active employment measures put in place through the Operational Plan for Employment led to the lowest unemployment rate ever of 16.6%. Contract enforcement, informal economy, skills mismatch continue to pose challenges for the business environment.

North Macedonia is small economy strongly integrated with the EU and CEFTA markets. Through the Plan for Economic Growth, it managed to attract foreign investments and largely diversify exports towards higher-value products.

The energy policy and legislation are now fully aligned with the EU Energy Community prioritising energy efficiency and renewable energy; however coal still accounts for 60% of the electricity production.

## **Planet**

The country is highly vulnerable to climate-induced natural disasters, including earthquakes, floods, heat waves and forest fires. At the Paris climate summit in December 2015, the Government committed to reducing emissions from fossil fuels by as much as 36% by 2030 compared with the baseline scenario. In terms of nature protection, the process of identification and designation of NATURA 2000 sites in the country, as obligation from the EU acquis, so far has resulted in nine potential future NATURA 2000 sites and is still ongoing.

## **Partnership**

As a generational commitment, North Macedonia's strategic decisions have been made while focusing on becoming a NATO and EU member-state and being responsible member of the United Nations. This year we have witnessed the accomplishment of two key foreign policy priorities in March North Macedonia became the 30<sup>th</sup> member state of NATO - the strongest political and military alliance in the world, and will start negotiations for accession to the European Union.

## **Peace**

North Macedonia's legal framework for the protection of human rights is largely in line with European standards and the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the national legislation, although implementation remains a challenge. The climate for media freedom and freedom of expression has improved as a result of amendments to the Law on Audio and Audio-visual Media Services.

The Government has achieved significant progress in enhancing the regulatory framework to address corruption and ensure the impartiality and efficiency of the judiciary.

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In order to achieve the Agenda 2030 and address challenges such as COVID-19 in the coming years, the Government of Republic of North Macedonia will remain fully committed to the development of the institutions and partnerships that will enable sustainability for the present and future generations.