



Eswatini Second VNR Key Messages

Based on the presentations and deliberations during the VNR consultation process, key messages were developed. These comprise of key issues, trends and recommendations to accelerate SDGs implementation at national level.

- a) **Emerging Challenges** -Eswatini has been hit hard by the COVID- 19 pandemic, Cyclone Eloise and civil unrests in the last two years all of which had a devastating effects on an economy that was already faced with low economic growth. Economic growth rate declined from 2.2% (2019) to -1.9% (2020) and is estimated to increase to 5.9% (2021). Unemployment rate increased from 23% reported in the last VNR to 33.3% (2021). These shocks have adversely affected progress under poverty and economic related SDGs.
- b) **Financing of SDGs** -The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated that funds be redirected to the health sector to respond to the pandemic hence compromising progress on other goals. Government needs to work in partnership with development partners, private sector organizations and the civil society to bring the economy back on the recovery path.
- c) **Data** – National development plans and reports produced by the country continue to be compromised by the lack of credible and timely data. Also producers of data need to engage more with their stakeholders in order to better appreciate data needs and priorities. There is a need for government to invest in both qualitative and quantitative data.
- d) **SDGs popularity** – Stakeholders particularly at grassroots level are not adequately informed about progress on the SDGs and their roles. Government needs to scale up efforts to raise awareness on the SDGs and support the preparation of Regional Development Plans that incorporate the SDGs in order to improve ownership and implementation.
- e) **Accelerating implementation**- Sectors where services have not been decentralized are at risk of being left behind. There is an urgent need for government to decentralize functions and powers to local level in order to fast- track developmental projects and programmes and reduce disparities.

SDGs specific key messages are as follows;

SDG 1 - End Poverty

- Climate and economic shocks have worsened the problem of high poverty rate and inequalities. In view of these challenges, social protection needs to continue to be one of government's top priorities.

SDG 13 - Climate action

- Given the devastating impact of climate change, National Development Plans need to be climate proofed. Also an adequate budget needs to be allocated towards implementation of programmes on climate change.

SDG 15 – Life on land

- Communities need to be sensitized to continue practicing climate friendly agriculture to reduce disaster risk, to plant trees to prevent land degradation, to conserve nature and forests for green growth. Government working with development partners should continue mobilizing resources so as to protect life on land. Also important is for Government to continue implementing measures on Disaster Risk Reduction so as to mitigate disaster risks and build resilience.

SDG 4 – Quality Education

- The country has made huge strides in improving the primary education completion rate to 105.2%. However, the completion rate in the lower secondary education remains low at 67.8% and this is a major concern for the country. There is need to remove bottlenecks hindering survival of learners at this level.

SDG 5 – Gender Equality

- There is need for advocacy and to strengthen enforcement of policies and legislations that support the rights of women in society and their participation in economic activity i.e. access to land tenure rights, access to finance etc.

SDG 17 – Partnerships

- The country needs resources to fund its development agenda if it is to achieve Agenda 2030. Government needs to act with urgency in providing an environment that would allow for resources to be mobilized using innovative measures while managing debt level. Also, government needs to act fast in putting in place measures for the restoration of peace and stability so as to boost investor confidence as well as an enabling environment for long-term and smart partnerships.

Conclusion

The Government of Eswatini remains committed to implementing the 2030 development agenda. Going forward, we hope to strengthen partnerships with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and private sector. The main focus will be on building back better from the economic shocks through systems strengthening and mobilization of resources.