

KEY MESSAGES

Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to be committed to the transformation and modernization of the entire society in accordance with Agenda 2030 with a view to achieving good and efficient administration and public sector management, a society of equal opportunities and smart growth.

Since the European Union (EU) accession process is the main political goal of the country, it is very important to emphasize that there is full synergy in the implementation of both agendas. Therefore, better results in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda means stronger progress towards full membership in the EU.

After the last VNR presented at the High-Level Political Forum in New York in 2019, Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the most important document for the implementation of Agenda 2030 - the SDG Framework. Thereafter, most of the key development strategies at different levels of government were harmonized with it.

Unfortunately, there has been a significant setback due to the new challenges the world has faced in recent years, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. With the resulting rising rate of inflation, especially rising energy prices, some achievements in poverty reduction are reversed.

Nevertheless, strong efforts are still being made to improve vertical cooperation between different levels of government, as well as horizontal exchange of best practices, especially between local communities and different stakeholders. This is especially challenging given the very complex federal structure of the country. While the ambitious programme of the SDG localization process was launched a year ago, additional efforts are being made to engage the private sector, citizens and academia for the purpose of achieving tangible results on the ground.

It is generally recognized that better and more efficient administration and infrastructure upgrades could significantly improve the position of the most vulnerable groups and the fulfillment of the “Leave No One Behind” principle, but it was also realized that it would be almost impossible to achieve this without further involvement of the local communities.

Fully aware of the fact that public funds are insufficient for the implementation of the Agenda, the SDG Financing Working Group, which was established two years ago, made recommendations on how to mobilize other resources and proposed the introduction of innovative ways of financing that would bring us closer to achieving the set goals by 2030. We expect that the implementation of these proposals will begin in the period after the presentation

of the VNR. In addition, the progress made in digitalization, energy transition and efficiency brings new job and environmental protection opportunities.

With the aim of strengthening sound competition and greater commitment to achieving the SDGs, the SDGs Business Pioneers Award was established to recognize the efforts of private sector to achieve sustainable development, and similar awards have since been established for the most prosperous local communities and the academic sector. BiH is even leading a project within the South-East European cooperation process that initiates the annual Regional Award for academic researchers for the best innovations in the implementation of the SDGs.

Furthermore, through the online platform and the e-consultation process launched to create this Voluntary National Review, a wider group of civil society organizations and citizens were involved in this exercise.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been very active in promoting regional cooperation. Several very important initiatives and meetings were organized with the aim of improving the exchange of experiences, addressing the bottlenecks and similar challenges. Some of them include the meeting of the states of the EU Adriatic-Ionian macro-region focusing on a mid-term evaluation of the progress in achieving the SDGs, the annual meetings of the Western Balkan experts, launched at the end of 2021, activities within the Central European Initiative, and active participation in the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in Geneva.

We must be fully aware that in the second half of the SDG implementation period, we may encounter many unpredictable and unpleasant events and phenomena, which we have already faced in recent years. Therefore, we must make every effort to build resilience and to respond better and faster in order to overcome such situations as best as we can.