

SESSION 3

Voluntary National Reviews
(VNRs): What have we learned?
How to enhance impact moving
forward?

**2018 Sustainable
Development Transition
Forum**

**Accelerating Progress
towards the SDGs:
Enhancing the Role of
the High-Level Political
Forum (HLPF)**

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Holiday Inn, Incheon
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Three issues

Where we are



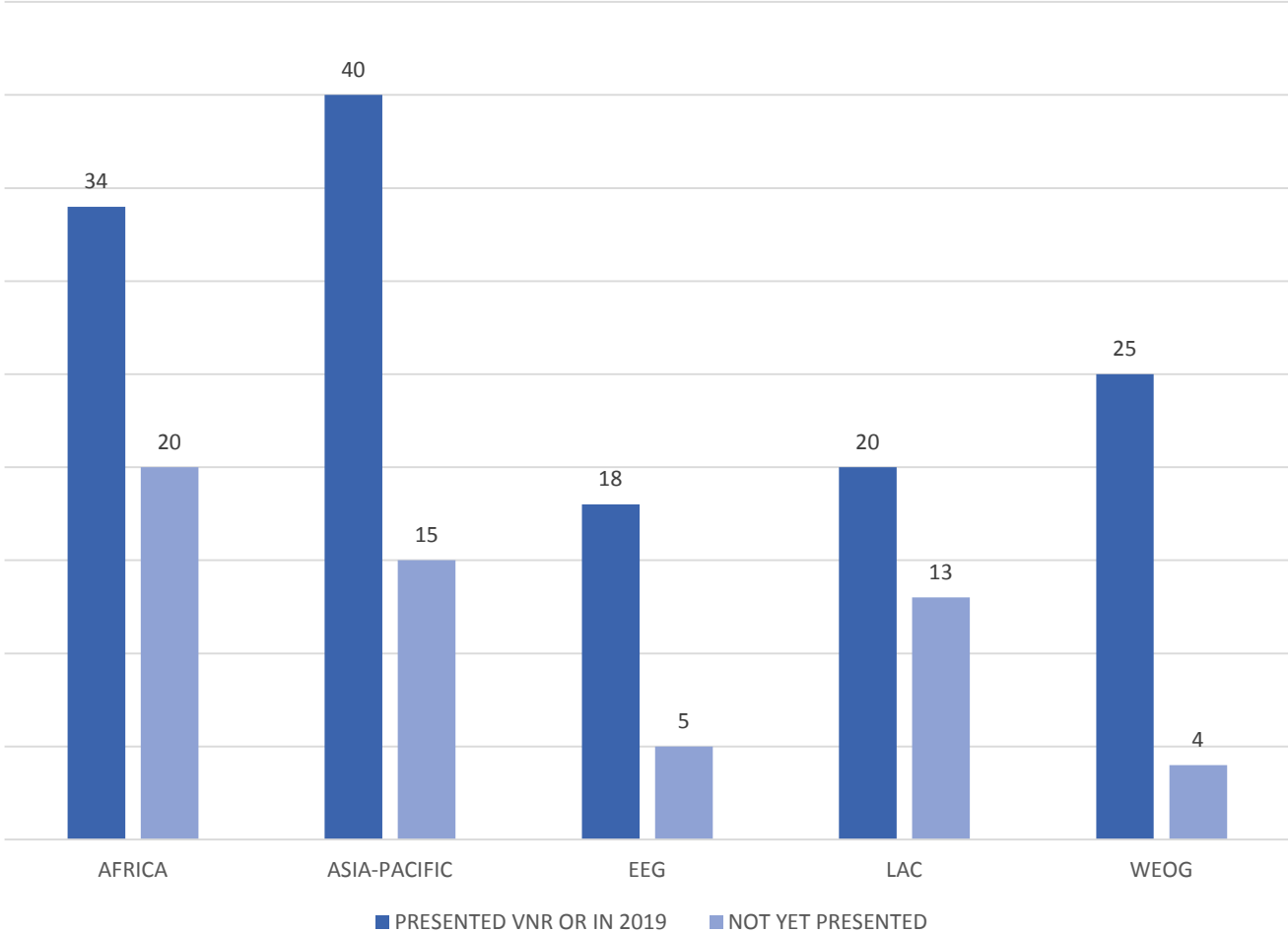
What we have learned so far



What could be improved

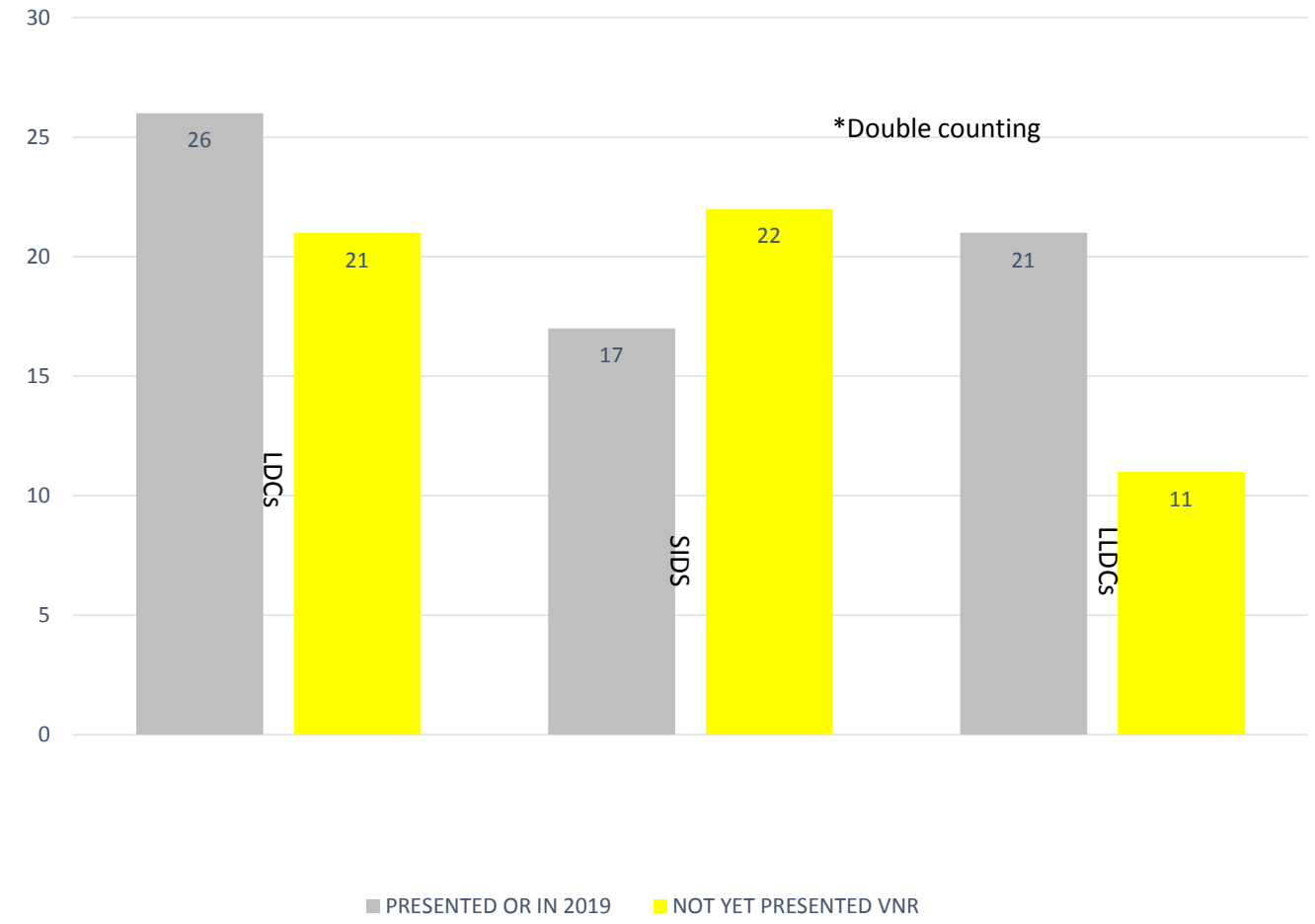
WHERE WE ARE

VNRs BY REGION 2016, 2017, 2018 AND 2019



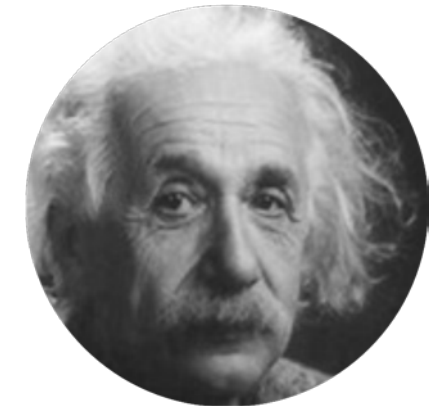
WHERE WE ARE

COUNTRIES IN SPECIAL SITUATIONS VNRs 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019



WHY UNDERTAKE A VNR?

- Galvanizes political will
- Changes mindsets
- Identifies and acts on priorities and principles of 2030 Agenda
- Maps gaps and defines challenges
- Engages all stakeholders
- Improves policy coherence
- Draws lessons and provides critical reflections on the process:
 - increased level of meaningful consultations and coordination
 - whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach
 - forging of partnerships



The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED SO FAR

NATIONAL LEVEL

Benefits

- Strengthening political will around the implementation of the 2030 Agenda
- Mobilizing all parts of government (especially parliaments and local government) and stakeholders around 2030 Agenda
- Focusing on priority areas and mapping this with budget requirements and resource mobilization

Challenges

- Creating national ownership for 2030 Agenda with whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach
- Accelerating action in priority areas, the localization of the SDGs and the strengthening of the institutional capacities of all key stakeholders engaged in the process, including the monitoring and reporting institutions
- Lack of alignment with the budget and cost evaluation and lack of resource mobilization

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED SO FAR

GLOBAL LEVEL

Benefits

- Drawing international attention to the national level implementation of the 2030 Agenda
- Sharing of benefits and challenges
- Identifying and sharing best practices and lessons learned

Challenges

- Insufficient analysis in the reports on WHY and HOW a certain measure constitutes a good practice
- Insufficient time for more in-depth discussions and inadequate response from other countries in commenting and asking relevant questions on the report
- Lack of institutionalized follow-up

SUPPORT TO VNR PROCESS

Preparatory process

UN DESA in cooperation with UN country teams, regional commissions and regional and subregional organizations as appropriate conducts a preparatory process for VNR countries through

- 3 global workshops
- Regional and subregional workshops in UN regions
- Individual assistance upon request from countries
- Preparation of synthesis report of VNR reports each year
- SG voluntary common reporting guidelines
- Synthesis of main messages from VNR reports
- Handbook on preparation for VNRs updated each year

Benefits

- Familiarization with VNR process, peer learning and capacity building
- Sharing of lessons learned, best practices and experiences from countries who have already presented their VNRs
- Regional and subregional specificities discussed among VNR countries and benefits and challenges connected to them

Challenges

- Insufficient time and resources for more robust capacity building
- Not sufficiently coordinated approach by the UN system
- Lack of comparability among reports due to different approaches and methods used

**WHAT could be improved:
recommendations bearing in mind
voluntary and flexible nature of
VNRs**

National level

- Strengthening national ownership including through capacity building and whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach and through preparing the VNRs by national team using international assistance when needed
- Linking the VNRs to reporting to other mechanisms and conventions
- Strengthening monitoring and oversight including through parliaments and supreme audit institutions, strengthening cooperation among all branches of government
- Explaining the impacts of strategies and policies on national level implementation of the 2030 Agenda

**WHAT could be improved:
recommendations bearing in mind voluntary and flexible nature of VNRs**

Global level

- Using SG voluntary common reporting guidelines to increase comparability, but also to improve overall quality of reports over time by learning from good practices and reflecting these by updating periodically the guidelines
- Focusing VNR presentation at HLPF on explanation of impact of policies and strategies, lessons learned and peer learning that can be of benefit to all countries
- Strengthening of interactive discussion including through providing more time for Q&A
- Strengthen the role of HLPF as a platform for peer learning and exchanging of experiences
- Strengthen HLPF to serve as a broker and matchmaker for partnerships in the follow-up after the VNRs through looking at areas where countries need support

Lessons learned from 2018 VNR Synthesis report

- Align Agenda and the SDGs with national plans and strategies;
- Ensure that strategies and plans contain priorities;
- Improve policy coherence and building capacity in policy integration and the use of goal oriented, evidence-based, and participatory frameworks to formulate, implement and review policies and strategies for sustainable development;
- Encourage work and analysis on interlinkages between the Goals;
- Continue commitment to achieve more meaningful engagement with stakeholders.



THANK YOU

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Is a VNR process useful for countries, presenters as well as others?
- How can the content of VNRs be improved? (for example, in terms of analysis, showing impact of policies and strategies, integration and interlinkages, support of arguments by data)
- Have VNRs adequately reflected non-state actors' inputs?
Could the engagement of non-state actors be improved?
- What has been the national follow-up to VNR presentations?
- How should the VNR process evolve in next four years?