



*Primer Informe Voluntario (INV) de la Republica Dominicana sobre los
Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible y la Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo
Junio de 2018*

COURTESY TRANSLATION
OF THE
Executive Summary

The appropriation of the 2030 Agenda

The Dominican Republic is purposefully moving forward to implement the 2030 Agenda. During the last two years, it has made significant efforts towards combining and aligning the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) with the National Development Strategy (NDS) and other planning instruments, prioritizing objectives based on the country's context, as well as in the exploration of an optimal intervention architecture to accelerate progress.

The purposes and the process to elaborate the VNR

The Dominican Republic's VNR has three purposes:

First, since it is the first report presented, it seeks to account for the evolution and the status of each of the SDGs through the available indicators. In that sense, it is about establishing baselines for the 2030 Agenda in the country.

Second, to present the experience of the Dominican Republic in grounding the 2030 Agenda, based on the establishment of the national articulation mechanism for the achievement of the SDGs from a participatory perspective and alignment of the 2030 agenda with national priorities and the implementation of comprehensive policies with vast content in favor of the SDGs.

Third, register efforts and advances in the analysis, at the national level, around optimal strategies to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. This implies offering an articulated perspective and of synergic interdependence between policies and the SDGs, providing a balance of the national programmatic offer, and identifying combinations of interventions necessary to advance achievements.

With this, we seek to push the frontier of the current analysis –a step beyond knowing the situation– deepening the reflection regarding main and intermediate objectives that should be prioritized in light of the integral nature of the Agenda and the interrelation between the objectives.

This report relies on the following key material:



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- a) National reports on achievements and challenges pending during the MDG era;
- b) Official indicators available for each of the SDGs or proxy indicators, with the highest level of disaggregation available, in terms of territories, age group, sex, and population groups in a particular situation;
- c) Qualitative information on policies and interventions relevant to the 2030 Agenda from public institutions; and
- d) Results of face-to-face consultations with governmental actors, civil society, the private sector, academia, local governments, the Legislative Branch, and agencies of the United Nations System regarding central findings on the status and possibilities for integrating the SDGs into the public agenda, apparent obstacles, best practices, and lessons learned.

I: The status of the SDGs and their indicators

The Dominican Republic can show meaningful progress towards compliance with the 2030 Agenda. At the same time, it faces numerous challenges in overcoming persistent economic, social, environmental, institutional, and policy gaps.

SDG 1. The country has maintained robust economic growth at higher rates than all other countries in the region. Since the nineties, the average annual growth rate of the real GDP is over 5%, and in the last four years has exceeded 6.4% annual average. Likewise, poverty levels have been reduced from close to 40% in 2003 to levels of 25.5% for monetary poverty and 21% for current multidimensional poverty; in turn, extreme poverty is below 6%. Per capita income has increased in the last decade, placing the country as a high middle-income economy.

Although in recent years there have been quite encouraging results in monetary terms, there are still challenges to multidimensional wellbeing, such as improving public services, housing, and avoiding poverty relapse. At the same time, in certain regions of the country, there is a greater incidence of poverty among children and adolescents in rural areas, and among the unemployed population.

To achieve more effective results, public policies should continue to deepen their emphasis on universal social security, coverage and quality of health and education services, and on enforcing existing policies to deal, with more determination, with gender inequalities, unemployment amongst the more vulnerable populations such as young women and those working under precarious conditions. To reach this, it is unavoidable to continue increasing and improving the quality of public social spending.



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SDG2. Malnourishment and malnutrition have also declined, and gaps between rural and urban areas have been closed, but there are still other gaps to be closed and new challenges to face. Malnourishment has declined from more than 30% at the beginning of the 1990s to less than 13% in 2014-2016, and chronic child malnutrition has also been significantly reduced. In addition, there are increases in agricultural production and productivity.

However, an estimated 10% of the population suffers from malnourishment, and there are rates of chronic malnutrition among girls and boys from poor households (11.3% in households in the lowest wealth quintile compared to less than 7% national average) and of mothers with little schooling and nutritional deficits (e.g. vitamin A, iron and iodine) in specific populations. In addition, a high and growing amount of the adult population is overweight or obese, and there is evidence that the productivity and income from small agricultural growers are the lowest in the economy.

SDG 3. Progress in health coverage is recorded, although with less impact on the quality of services, so efforts to achieve health and wellbeing in the population must be continued and expanded. Maternal mortality rate is high (above 100 per 100 thousand live births), and it has remained high for a long period of time. Mortality among girls and boys under 5 has declined, albeit slowly. Neonatal mortality (in girls and boys of 28 days of age or less) is still high and largely explains childhood mortality. At the same time, the rate is particularly high in the provinces and in the poorest households, as well as in those in which the mother has less education.

Regarding the incidence of epidemics, the results show important progress in HIV / AIDS (new cases could approach zero by 2030) and malaria, although in both cases there are still high rates in specific provinces associated with the development of tourism activities and Haitian immigration. There are improvements with respect to tuberculosis, though the relatively high incidence persists. Likewise, pregnancy rate among adolescents is relatively high in the region with little tendency towards reduction.

Health progress will be reflected to the extent that the new model of primary care develops and consolidates, which implies professionalization of health and education personnel, more effective epidemiological surveillance systems, higher levels of health protocol compliance, and strengthening the institutional articulation in the sector. The previous will definitely imply, in the future, an increase in public spending, which has remained at less than 2% of GDP.

SDG 4. Regarding the education system at the primary level, there is very high coverage, and it has grown at the secondary level, which is promising. However, gaps in both quality and pertinence remain. At the primary level, the net coverage (for population between



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6 and 13 years) is close to 95%, and efforts are made towards 100%. At the secondary level, net coverage (population between 14 and 17 years) has increased moderately but sustained and in 2016 reached almost 64%. At this level, coverage among women, in urban areas, in provinces with less poverty and in the richest strata, is higher than among men. In pre-primary education, coverage is low, has oscillated around 30%, and is higher in urban areas and non-poor households. However, it should be noted that there has been significant achievement in the area of early childhood care with a comprehensive initiative to promote a protection policy. Private education at the early level reflects a much higher coverage.

Illiteracy has been declining and the Government is implementing a program aimed at eradicating it in the coming years. In 2015 it was 7% among the population aged 15 and over. Higher rates are observed in the rural population, in poor households, and among men.

The increase in public education funding since 2013, which has helped to expand school infrastructure throughout the country and increase teacher salaries, is gradually being used to strengthen training programs and recruitment of new teaching talent.

In this context, the principal challenge relates to the quality of educational services that concern Dominican society. Although the country has been subjected to the rigors of regional and global tests the measure the achievements of educational processes in terms of learning, results are low.

SDG 5. Despite the significant advances that have been made in gender equality, it is necessary to complete the legal framework and develop specific actions that contribute to reducing gender inequality, discrimination, and violence against women. The Constitution of the Republic recognizes equality between men and women and the country supports the international instruments on gender equality. There is a Ministry of Women with an explicit legal mandate to promote equality, and the NDS has as one of its objectives "to build a culture of equality and equity between men and women". However, there are no specific laws against discrimination and violence against women.

25% of women have suffered physical violence in adulthood, and 31% of women have suffered emotional violence. In addition, there is a high incidence of early unions: about 28% in adolescents between 15 and 19 years, 11% before 15 years. Likewise, 36% of women between 20 and 24 years old said they had been married or united before they were 18 years old. Early unions are associated with teenage pregnancies.

Women work more than twice as much as men at home in tasks that are not generally recognized or made visible, and despite the existence of obligatory quotas for women in candidacies, their participation in Congress, the Executive Power and local governments is low or very low.



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SDG 6. Coverage of water systems and disposal of excreta is high; although gaps persist that particularly affect the poorest territories and households. Water coverage exceeds 80% of households, but in rural areas only 57%; in urban areas it reaches 86%. Regional differences persist and among households in extreme poverty it is less than 60%. 97.4% of households have excreta disposal systems, and 79% have toilets, which have registered high growth in recent years. 7.6% of rural households do not have excreta disposal systems and 46% of these have precarious systems such as latrines. The lowest availability is observed in the poorer regions such as Higuamo, El Valle and Enriquillo, and in households facing extreme poverty.

The challenge of universal coverage in access to water systems and disposal of excreta, adds the need to increase the proportion of wastewater that is treated, improve the quality of services in terms of continuity and quality, and protect water sources. This is particularly relevant in light of climate change scenarios available to the country that indicate a reduction in rainfall and therefore in water availability, a critical factor for a small island developing state.

SDG 7. Electric power systems reach 97% of the 2.9 million households in the country. However, coverage is lower in rural areas (91%) than in urban areas (99%), and 93,000 households still lack access to electricity. The greatest lags are seen in the poorer regions (Enriquillo, El Valle, Cibao Northwest and Yuma), in households facing extreme poverty and isolated mountain areas. However, the quality or continuity of the service is the main concern. Official data indicate that, of the total demand for energy, the systems only satisfy about 85%, which implies interruptions in service, although progress is being made in incorporating circuits with 24-hour supply.

In 2015, energy generation from renewable sources reached 16.24% of total production. Likewise, the Energy Intensity Index has been systematically reduced since the beginning of the last decade, which indicates that the country has been using electricity more and more efficiently.

The challenges of the electricity system are mainly associated to: supplying 100% of the demand, which means making the sector financially sustainable by increasing the billing and collection of the energy served, continuously increasing generation to meet the growing demand in a context of sustained expansion of economic activity, and of transforming the energy matrix towards one in which renewable energies have a greater weight. Similarly, a key element for the sustainable management of the use of energy is to improve energy efficiency.

SDG 8. The high level of economic growth in the country, which on average has exceeded 5% of GDP for many years, has contributed to decrease unemployment.



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Indeed, unemployment has been falling in recent years, from a rate of 7.3% in 2015 to 5.5% in 2017; although the results in terms of quality employment are still not enough.

Unemployment affects young people in particular, especially women, and poor people, who show greater difficulties of insertion into economic activity than the national average or adult men. In addition, more than half of occupations are informal, with challenges in terms of productivity, income and access to social security and pension systems. It should be noted that the services sector, which shows greater dynamism with respect to economic growth, has been characterized in the country by a low productivity. While other activities, such as mining, also recorded reduced contributions to employment.

In 2014, 12.8% of the population between 5 and 17 years of age did some type of work, in economic activities or in household chores. Child labor has declined, although it still affects some of the infants of households in poverty.

Generating economic growth that produces more jobs is a challenge of the first order. To this end, a productive development policy must be in place that fosters the creation of jobs, and a national employment policy that includes a specific strategy for the young population and women.

Tourism, as one of the central activities of the economy and the main generator of foreign exchange, has been growing systematically at 10.6% in the last four years, although it must be diversified and it is necessary to ensure more for its environmental sustainability. Tourism accounts for 46% of exports of goods and services. The country is characterized by being an almost exclusive destination of sun and beach, under the "all inclusive" modality. In order to learn more about the environmental impact of tourism, it is necessary to develop indicators that estimate its sustainability (in terms of the intensity of the use of natural capital). This is aimed at strengthening national capacities to design and implement mechanisms and policies that reduce the effects on coasts and coastal ecosystems, underground aquifers and pollution derived from inadequate waste management. There are also important areas for the development of the offer of individual tourism modalities associated with the mountain, trail tourism, health, and cruises, among others.

SDG 9. Manufacturing has lost relative weight in the economy, despite the fact that public policies have made efforts to expand access to credit for small industries and, therefore, their expansion. Production in the manufacturing industry accounts for less than 14% of GDP -a product of the sustained tendency to outsource the economy- and has been losing jobs. An important challenge is to improve the availability of statistics on the activity carried out



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by small industries in a systematic and periodic manner, in order to develop instruments and indicators to design and implement truly effective industrial policies.

In terms of CO2 emissions, the Dominican Republic accounts for less than 0.1% of global emissions. Per capita emissions are below the average for Latin America and the Caribbean. However, emissions of CO₂ and greenhouse gases have increased, consistent with the remarkable expansion of economic activity in recent years, supported by production models with little sustainability. It was estimated that, in 2010, the last available year of data, the gross emissions of equivalent gigagrams of CO₂ were 31,044. In 1990 they had been 7,040 and in 1998 23,741. 62% of these originated in the energy sector (2010). Reducing emissions means migrating towards a matrix with a greater weight of renewable and clean energy, and towards more efficient transport systems. In August 2015, the Dominican Republic submitted to the UNFCCC its Predicted and Determined Contribution at the National-RD Level, committing itself to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 25% to 2030. It should be noted that, although there are still important gaps to be covered, the materialization of the requirements to transfer financial resources and technologies from developed countries to developing countries has remained at levels well below the needs and commitment of the international donor community.

SDG 10. The levels of inequality in the economy have been reduced, reflected as a decline in the concentration of income since the beginning of the last decade. The share of labor remunerations in value added (GDP) has remained stable.

During the 2000-2016 period, progress was made in terms of distributive matters. While in 2012 the Gini index stood at 0.4713, in 2015 it fell to 0.4578, although there was a small setback in 2016.

According to the Poverty Bulletin of 2017, a higher level of inequality was reported in the urban area of the country, where the Gini coefficient stood at 0.4729, which is approximately 15% higher than the value reported for the rural area (0.4127).

SDG 11. The proportion of the population living in slums has been reduced significantly, but still 12.1% of the urban population lives in informal settlements and inadequate housing. As a result of initiatives to improve access to quality housing in areas of high poverty density, low-cost housing projects have been developed with a comprehensive vision for the social and economic inclusion of the beneficiaries. This has allowed a housing deficit reduction, improving the resilience of these homes, although with localized impact in specific areas. It is vital to address the housing issue in the Dominican context because of its geographical location on the route of storms and hurricanes that significantly affect households in poverty. The slums are very vulnerable to extreme weather events, which often impact the country, generating substantial economic and life losses.



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Therefore, an important challenge is to systematically account for the housing situation and the economic impact of disasters in order to design policies that effectively promote resilience. By 2030, the total population will reach 11.25 million people, of which 39.8% will live in the metropolitan area. Currently, the Dominican Republic is the tenth country on the planet most vulnerable to the hydro meteorological risks derived from climate change (GCRI 2017).

SDG 12. Efforts to promote sustainable production and consumption are incipient. The country has an adequate general legal framework for this, which has been strengthened, and a series of private initiatives have been created to promote a culture of sustainability in production. By 2015, the Dominican Republic had reduced 16% of the consumption of substances that deplete the ozone layer, thus surpassing the country goal to the Montreal Protocol (10% to 2015). These advances must be complemented with: a) more and better statistics and indicators that allow the design of effective policies, since limitation in terms of data availability is one of the obstacles to achieving this objective; b) improve compliance with regulations, which is one of the weakest points perceived to achieve a more sustainable management of production; c) the drive towards an integrated waste management system, of which the recent governmental initiative called "*Dominicana Limpia*" is an example; d) the promotion of a culture of sustainable production and consumption that contributes to changing standards, practices and habits; e) greater efforts to continue transforming the energy matrix towards a sustainable sources; and f) complete the regulatory framework with the final approval of ongoing legal initiatives such as a water law, a territorial ordinance law and a law on integral waste management.

SDG 13. In the last two decades, there have been positive advances in risk management and the construction of institutions to face climate change and its effects. The National Risk Management System (2002), the National Comprehensive Risk Management Plan for Disasters (2013) and the strengthening of integrated disaster response capacities are evidence of this. Institutional spaces have also been created and designed and approved plans, policies and strategies for the preparation and response to climate change. This needs to be complemented with specific actions on climate change, and generate quality information that will feed the interventions. The climate change scenarios project changes in the climatic variables that will produce impacts in the country. The increase in maximum and minimum temperatures will be accompanied by sea level rise and severe alterations in precipitation patterns, although it is estimated that the national average precipitation for 2050 will be progressively reduced up to 15%, reaching 17% in the year 2070.

SDG 14. We are making progress in the conservation and sustainable use of the seas and oceans and effective protection of marine ecosystems, although there is still a



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demand for more information and more quality that allows the construction of relevant indicators and policies and concrete initiatives of a wide scope. The country has a system of protected areas that includes two subsea parks, with an area of 256.57 km², in addition to which 99.16% of the country's strict protection areas belong to the marine area. The country has signed the main international instruments in this area, and has one of the Caribbean's most extensive coastlines, with 1,575 km of sewage. In addition, the country has a notorious extension of mangroves, which represent 0.61% of the national territory (2012).

SDG 15. Although the DR has a remarkable system of protected areas, and the preservation of terrestrial ecosystems has made important advances, it requires more and better statistics for its monitoring, as well as higher levels of resources in general.

Along with the dynamic growth of the forest area, only a fraction of it is under sustainable management and requires greater protection effectiveness in the case of the surface for exclusive preservation purposes. At the same time, the quality of the new forest areas is uncertain, which also makes the environmental services they are able to provide uncertain. The Red List Index of the country is 0.74, it is estimated that 22% of animals are in danger of extinction, 38% of plants are in some kind of danger, and invasive species are the third cause of biodiversity loss. In 2016, the proportion of important places for terrestrial biological diversity was 40%, and the value of ecosystem services is estimated between 2.2% and 7.6% of GDP. In 2012, 1.1% of the total area of the country was in a state of degradation. Due to fiscal limitations, in the period 2000-2016, public spending for environmental management remains low.

It is expected that ongoing initiatives to offer support to agroforestry projects will represent a critical impetus to efforts to strengthen the protection and sustainable management of forests, which today only represents 3%.

SDG 16. The construction of solid and inclusive institutions, improving the public access to and trust in justice and achieving a more transparent State is one of the great challenges of the Dominican society.

The evidence indicates that, in the long term, there has been an increase in the rate of homicides and other crimes. Also, there is a high incidence of physical and psychological abuse of girls and boys, together with a high prevalence of sexual exploitation of girls and adolescents. 60% of the inmates have not received a sentence, which shows the existence of important barriers to access to justice, and there is a lack of trust in the police and other institutions related to justice. In addition, more than 3% of the population and 12% of children under 5 years of age lack legal identity, particularly affecting the population of the poorest households and provinces.

There has been significant progress in achieving a more transparent State, especially in terms of budgetary management and public procurement.

However, the path to reach satisfactory levels of transparency and effectiveness is still long. Improvements in budgetary management are highlighted from the monitoring of protected programs, access to information



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on the budgetary allocation to citizen service, among others. The country has a transactional portal for public procurement strengthened and mechanisms for the inclusion of SMEs in the registry of state suppliers, especially companies led by women.

SDG 17. The fiscal constraint is one of the main barriers to implementing the 2030 Agenda. The financing of the Agenda is a significant element that requires the country to identify traditional and innovative mechanisms for its achievement. Although at the global level it has been agreed that the main source of funding for the agenda comes from national resources, it is necessary to explore options and financing mechanisms - which complement these national resources. Access to external financing, above all, the Dominican Republic as a country classified as having high average income and therefore with few options to increase official development aid flows, is of paramount importance

Almost 90% of the population has access to mobile telecommunications, 54% have Internet access, although only 27% have their own access through computers or tablets. Poor people, from rural areas, from the poorest provinces, and from households with a lower level of education and wealth, have the least access. There are also notable gaps by age: the younger population uses the computer and the Internet more than the older age group.

The Digital Republic initiative, which involves numerous public bodies, seeks to significantly increase access to and use of the Internet and reduce the digital divide thanks to the expansion and strengthening of the connectivity infrastructure, to the reduction of connectivity costs, and the access of students, teachers and teachers to electronic devices. In fact, the initiative is already significantly improving access to public services through the Internet.

Significant progress has been made in planning capacity and international commitments (SDG's and Montevideo Consensus) have been incorporated into national planning, and progress has been made in connecting planning and public budgets. There is progress in integrating international cooperation into national plans and in aligning the SDGs with national goals. However, there are insufficient indicators on sustainable development, particularly related to the objectives linked to the planet.

The current landscape shows that the implementation of the 2030 agenda in the country has been assumed by all sectors in an important way, auguring significant results by 2030. However, this requires the full alignment of national planning and budgeting with the SDG targets. It is essential to translate the advances in terms of access or availability of public services and goods - as evidenced in the MDG era - into the provision of quality services that make the sustainability approach possible in all its dimensions.



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II. The Dominican Republic's experience in the "landing" of the 2030 Agenda.

The results in the country are recorded in two dimensions:

1. Processes linked to the creation of a national mechanism for monitoring and implementing the 2030 Agenda, and,
2. Advances in the design, articulation and implementation of policies and programs aimed at achieving sustainable development.

In relation to the **processes for the creation of a national mechanism**, by means of the Presidential Decree in 2016, the **High Level Inter-Institutional Commission for Sustainable Development** was created, composed of the heads of the main public institutions with direct responsibilities in each of the SDGs. with representation from the private sector and civil society. Its responsibility, as a national mechanism, is to trace the route and coordinate inter-institutional and cross-sectoral efforts for the implementation of the Agenda. The Commission is organized into four subcommittees linked to the pillars of sustainable development (People, Prosperity, Planet and institutionalism), a Statistics Committee and a Technical Secretariat. Recently, following the recommendations of a MAPS mission, a Cross-cutting Development Finance Committee will be created to work with all the Subcommittees.

In the framework of the work of this Commission, **three** important products were generated to position the SDGs in the public agenda:

- a) The **evaluation of the availability and feasibility of measuring national indicators** for monitoring the SDGs that showed that for 37% of the indicators there is information available, for 19% improvements are required in existing sources and for 45% it needs the creation of new sources or significant changes in them;
- b) **Integrated Rapid Assessment (IRA)**, which analyzed the level of preparedness of a country at that time to launch the agenda. In this sense, based on an analysis between the objectives and goals of the 2030 Agenda and the main instruments of national planning, particularly the National Development Strategy (NDT), the National Pluriannual Plan for the Public Sector (PNPSP) and some sectoral plans - an alignment level of 72% was found. This percentage is broken down by 89% for the People pillar, 86% for the Prosperity pillar, 78% for the Institutional pillar and 42% for the Planet pillar. Likewise, the document identifies as opportunities for improvement the provision of quality services at the local level as well as mechanisms to implement and measure cross-cutting policies.



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c) **Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Advisory Report (MAPS)**, which identified five significant development challenges for the country - Multidimensional Poverty, Sustainable Production and Consumption, Competitiveness and Employment, Populations vulnerable to climate change and others risks, and State Institutionalism - as well as critical areas of acceleration with a multiplier effect in achieving the SDGs.

These three products complement other important actions such as the incorporation of goals and indicators of the SDGs in the National Multi-Annual Public-Sector Plan (PNPSP) 2017-2020 and in their updates, ensuring a budgetary expression and generation of public value for ODS goals. In addition, several institutions have carried out exercises to align their planning instruments with the 2030 Agenda.

Importantly, it has been possible to incorporate new relevant actors for the Agenda such as academies, NGOs and the private sector, promoting the sustainability approach in their actions. For example, in the framework of the Subcommittees, 7 non-profit organizations and 7 entities representing the private sector participate in addition to the state bodies. In addition, the Commission signed the agreement "Academy for the 2030 Agenda" with the main representatives of the higher academic sector, committing to support national efforts in favor of the SDGs with the dissemination in academic circles, the incorporation of content in the programs universities and the joint development of research on sustainable development. There are ongoing efforts to create similar alliances with the private sector, local authorities and civil society and the national congress, among other relevant actors.

In relation to **the design of instruments for programs and policies aimed at achieving the SDGs**, interesting results are recorded. In order to implement the agenda and through a participatory process, the country defined a Road Map to advance in SDG 2 (End hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture). Work has begun to define and implement a National Strategy to achieve SDG 1 (End poverty in all its forms and throughout the world), based on the combos¹ methodology. In addition, a national process of consultations on the oceans that addressed SDG 14 was carried out, and a strategy for gender mainstreaming in the SDGs was defined.

These efforts are progressing in tandem with the implementation of national policies related to: the increase in coverage of health insurance, labor accidents and maternity insurance, early childhood protection, access to credit for associations of small producers, increased coverage of social protection programs, improvements in infrastructure and coverage of health and education services, reduction of exclusions due to the digital divide, a program for emergency

¹ The "combos" approach offers a multisectoral treatment of problems, policies and interventions, recognizing synergies and interconnections among related elements.



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care, among others. A relevant element of many of these initiatives is their integral vision consistent with the multi-dimensionality of the 2030 Agenda and attacking more than one SDG. In this sense, the following programs are highlighted:

- *Quisqueya Sin Miseria: impacting ODS 1, 2, 5 and 10.*
- *Dominicana Limpia: impacting ODS 1, 5, 11, 12.*
- *Digital Republic: impacting SDGs 1, 4, 8 and 17.*
- *Educational Revolution: impacting SDGs 1, 4, 5 and 8.*
- *Promotion of SMEs: impacting SDGs 1, 8, 9 and 16.*
- *Presidential Surprise Visits: impacting ODS 1, 2, 8 and 10.*
- *Housing and transportation solutions in neighborhoods with high poverty density: impacting SDGs 1, 10, 11.*

III. Accelerating the progress of the 2030 Agenda

One of the most outstanding characteristics of the 2030 Agenda is that it recognizes that its 17 objectives are closely linked to each other. This implies that advancing in some objectives accelerates progress in others, while attaining achievements in each of the objectives depends on the results obtained in the rest.

That is why the idea has been gaining ground to guarantee success in advancing such an ambitious and broad agenda as the SDGs, it is necessary to identify, based on evidence:

- a) *National priority objectives that contribute to accelerating progress in a critical number of other objectives;*
- b) *The barriers and the factors that contribute to accelerate the achievement of the prioritized objectives;*
- c) *The combination of policies and interventions that are more likely to accelerate achievements.*

The Dominican Government, together with the United Nations System, identified **five policy areas** (accelerators) that would help to speed up the achievement of the SDGs. These are:

1. Multidimensional poverty reduction,
2. Competitiveness and decent employment,
3. Sustainable consumption and production,
4. Resilient populations in the face of climate change and other risks, and



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5. Robust and inclusive national institutions

For the purposes of the VNR, the Dominican government decided to initially address two of these accelerators: Multidimensional poverty reduction, and sustainable consumption and production.

Accelerator: Multidimensional poverty reduction

Multidimensional poverty is understood as a concrete life situation of many people marked by a series of deprivations that not only restrict the quality of life but also the opportunities.

Despite the advances, the gaps and lags continue to be important. This merits thinking about the determinants of the persistence of poverty, especially in specific population groups and territories, and interventions that can accelerate change.

The intermediate objectives and the necessary interventions that were identified are:

- Create more formal quality jobs through a national policy of first employment focused on young people in poverty. This is due to the fact that unemployment is particularly high among young people and that half of the population (52.0%) is engaged in informal activities;
- Strengthen food and nutrition security, addressing persistent chronic malnutrition among very poor girls and boys, malnutrition in specific populations and promoting productivity and sustainability in small-scale agriculture;
- Improve access to health services and quality education by strengthening collective and primary care, prioritizing educational quality objectives, and expanding coverage at the initial and secondary levels. This is associated with the fact that the poorest population is the one that demands services from the public network and the one that registers less education coverage at those levels;
- Reduce the number of early unions and pregnancy in adolescents, strengthening collective health services, promoting learning about comprehensive sexual health in education, encouraging the use of ICT in young people to access knowledge about prevention of violence and rights, and promoting policies for the retention of children and adolescents in schools and the reintegration of adolescent mothers, and training for employability after pregnancy;
- Promote gender equality, facing unemployment, which disproportionately affects women, recognizing work in the home, and facing violence against women, which mainly affects poor women;
- Eradicate the lack of legal identity, which is particularly high in people from poor households. This severely restricts the opportunities for people to be subject to



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- protection by the social security system, to access the educational system, to employ themselves and to undertake their own economic initiatives; and
- Promote the accumulation of assets, especially for the poor, by accelerating land titling and land tenure programs, improving housing and reducing access barriers to the financial system.

A balance of the most salient interventions among those that would accelerate the reduction of multidimensional poverty suggests that:

1. The programmatic offer of the State has focused on interventions in the areas of:
 - a. social protection (social security and social assistance)
 - b. horizontal coverage of education and health services,
 - c. food security, and
 - d. Small business promotion (accumulation of productive assets).
2. These efforts would need to be complemented with relevant interventions that seek to:
 - a. create more formal and quality jobs, especially among women and young people,
 - b. improve access to quality health services,
 - c. guarantee a quality education,
 - d. promote gender equality,
 - e. ensure the legal identity of everyone, and
 - F. reduce teenage pregnancies and early marriages.

Accelerator: Sustainable production and consumption

Since the beginning of the current century, and particularly since the adoption of the General Act on the Environment and Natural Resources of the year 2000 (68-00 Act), the Dominican Republic has adopted a series of legal and normative instruments that have further built on a framework increasingly robust to conserve and use and its resources sustainably.

However, these frameworks need to be supported by two things. First, quality statistical and qualitative information that allows to design good policies. Second, concrete and effective actions that contribute to protect natural resources and achieve their sustainable management.

As previously indicated, the Dominican Republic has been identified as one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. In this regard, it managed to move forward on the issue



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of risk management and on the creation of institutions, strategies and policies on preparedness and response. But it lacks sufficient and relevant indicators to design adequate policies.

The country also has an extensive protected areas system that includes coastal and marine areas. However, marine ecosystems are being affected by climate change, pollution and unsustainable fishing as well as deforestation, unsustainable agriculture and livestock expansion generate great pressure on forests.

In this regard, some barriers were identified which limit the advancement towards a more sustainable consumption and production as well as its intermediate objectives. These are:

- Manage resources in a sustainable manner: Agriculture and livestock, tourism, mining and fishing, which rely on the use of natural resources, have put significant pressure on existing resources. The adoption of sustainable production practices would contribute significantly to the recovery of terrestrial and marine ecosystems and their capacities to provide critical environmental services.
- Promote a clean energy matrix, thus reducing pollution and CO₂ emissions. In 2015, these emissions reached 22.8 million tons, of which 62% were the result of the burning of fossil fuels for the generation of electric power. Hence, it is essential to make progress in reducing the CO₂ emissions by substituting energy production based on fuel oil to one that is less polluting, promoting the use of renewable sources and responsible consumption at the household levels.
- Managing waste and pollution in a comprehensive and environmentally sustainable manner. The Dominican Republic has a severe problem of solid waste management and river pollution.
- Promote innovation and sustainable business, contributing to change the "culture of production". Advances have been achieved by articulating cross-sectoral alliances, strengthening capacities and generating incentives for cleaner production, but the challenges are immense and much more will be required.
- Promote knowledge, attitudes and practices of sustainable production and consumption, establishing long-term bases for these purposes. Although environmental education is part of the school curriculum and there is a national policy and program in that regard, unsustainable practices of consumption and production persist. Public incentives and price signals have been too weak to make a difference.
- Update the regulatory framework and strengthen its application. The current framework is outdated, incomplete and its application is weak. Territorial planning and the integral water management and solid waste are three very clear examples. Likewise, an effective application requires strengthening institutional, human and resource capacities, and mainstreaming environmental criteria in the norms and policies of productive development



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A balance of the specific efforts to accelerate the progress towards a more sustainable production and consumption points to:

1. The country has been endowed with a broad set of rules that support the sustainable management of resources;
2. Important initiatives for protection, sustainable management of forests and reforestation are promoted;
3. The capacities to enforce regulations and protect forests is insufficient;
4. We must redouble our efforts to:
 - a. make renewable sources have a significant weight in the energy matrix,
 - b. strengthen the sustainable management of solid waste, and
 - c. update and complete the regulatory framework, especially with a good water law, a territorial ordinance law and a solid waste management law.

This reflection on the identification of persistent challenges and possible interventions - which in an articulated manner can accelerate a synergistic impact - is key to advancing strategically in the achievement of the Agenda. It is emphasized that this is a process currently underway, and that the implementation of the accelerators will require discussions and consensus at the level of the instances involved.

Finally, the IVN culminates with a section on next steps to be developed as well as with a statistical annex that poses the opportunities and challenges in terms of data generation and systematization of information for the follow-up of the SDGs in the country.