Introduction to Voluntary National Reviews: Major Groups and other Stakeholders

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

1 February 2019
What is a Voluntary National Review (VNR)?

- Voluntary National Reviews are part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’s follow-up and review mechanism.
- The 2030 Agenda encourages Member States to "conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven" (paragraph 79).
Principles of Voluntary National Reviews

- **Voluntary**: encourage reporting and include developed and developing countries

- **State-led**: country driven reviews of progress at national and sub-national levels

- **Platform for partnerships**: including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders

- **Learning experience**: facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, part of a process

- **National circumstances**: reviews in accordance with national circumstances, policies and priorities, together with relevant partners

- **Open, Inclusive, Transparent**: Facilitates communication with all stakeholders
Benefits of VNRs

• CATALYZER
• STOCKTAKING
• COORDINATION
• “WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT” APPROACH
• “WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY” APPROACH
• AREAS FOR SUPPORT
• COMMUNICATION TOOL
What can be done to maximize benefits from the VNRs?

✓ Embed VNRs into institutions and link the VNRs to report to other mechanisms and conventions
✓ Undertake costing analysis for SDGs and align with national budgets
✓ Strengthen policy coherence, interlinkages among SDGs and assess trade-offs
✓ Monitor SDG implementation including through parliaments and supreme audit institutions
✓ Measure impacts of strategies and polices put in place
✓ Report at the national level before and after a VNR has been presented at the HLPF
✓ Strengthen VNR follow-up by implementing lessons learned from other countries at HLPF
✓ Take actions in the executive and legislative branches of government
How can the VNR process support national implementation of the 2030 Agenda?

• Strengthens political will, national ownership, institutions and coordination
• Identifies areas where support is needed
• Provides an important communication tool
• Changes mindsets
• Draws lessons and provides critical reflections on the process
• Provides impetus to continue national implementation after the VNR has been presented at the HLPF
Who is engaged in the VNRs?

- National Government
  - Finance & Planning
  - Line Ministries
  - National Statistical Office
- Parliament
- Supreme Audit Institution
- Standing Oversight Bodies
- UN Country Team
- Other Oversight Institutions, incl. Human Rights Institutions
- Key National Actors & Stakeholders for VNR
- Stakeholders
  - Scientific & Technological Community
  - Academia
  - Philanthropic Institutions
  - Sub-National & Local Government
  - NGOs
  - Business & Industry
  - Trade Unions
  - Women
  - Farmers
  - Older Persons
  - Persons with Disabilities
  - Indigenous Peoples
  - Persons with Disabilities
  - Migrants & Their Families
  - Faith/Religious Groups
  - Others
Global Status of VNRs

STATUS OF VNRS 2016 - 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
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Number of Countries

Regional Distribution

Countries in Special Situations
What is the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process for 2019?
Regional Division of 2019 VNRs

- Latin America and the Caribbean: 6 countries
- Western Europe: 7 countries
- Eastern Europe: 4 countries
- Asia Pacific: 16 countries
- Africa: 18 countries

Legend:
- 2019 VNR countries
- Other VNR countries
### 2019 VNRs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRST TIME PRESENTERS (41)</th>
<th>SECOND TIME PRESENTERS (10)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
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<td>Saint Lucia</td>
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<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guyana</td>
<td>Palau</td>
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**VNR Countries at the HLPF in 2019**

- France
- Indonesia
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Qatar
- Republic of Korea
- Switzerland
- Sweden
- Turkey
- United Arab Emirates
- United States
- United Kingdom
TIMELINE FOR 2019 VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

GLOBAL PREP I
16-17 OCT 2018 | GENEVA

GLOBAL PREP II
19-20 FEBRUARY 2019 | BONN

REGIONAL PREP WORKSHOPS
MAR-MAY 2019
IN COLLABORATION WITH REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

GLOBAL PREP III
14 JUL 2019 | NEW YORK

Second-time Presenters:
15 JUL 2019
First-time Presenters:
16-18 JUL 2019
NEW YORK MINISTERIAL SEGMENT HLFF

COUNTRY LEVEL ACTIVITIES

DEADLINE I
17 MAY 2019
SUBMISSION OF MAIN MESSAGES

DEADLINE II
14 JUN 2019
SUBMISSION OF FINAL REPORTS

2019 VNR PRESENTATIONS
KEY ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER FOR NATIONAL REVIEWS

OFFICIAL INDICATION OF INTEREST

Initial preparation and organization
  Stakeholder engagement

VNR preparation

HLPF Presentation

Implementation & follow-up

SUBMISSION OF MAIN MESSAGES 17 MAY 2019

SUBMISSION OF FINAL REPORTS 14 JUN 2019

Scope of VNR

Coordination structure

DATA

Drafting outline & gathering information

Stakeholder engagement plan

Review & Approval

Drafting

Preparing presentation

Planning follow-up

VNR PRESENTATION

Second-time Presenters: 15 JUL 2019
First-time Presenters: 16-18 JUL 2019
MINISTERIAL SEGMENT 2019 HLPF
Q&A
What should be included in a VNR?
UN Secretary-General’s voluntary common reporting guidelines

• To promote comparability and consistency and help countries structure their VNRs, the Secretary General has developed a set of common reporting guidelines.
SG’s Guideline Highlights

VNRs should:

✓ be **open, inclusive, participatory and transparent** for all people and will support reporting by all relevant stakeholders.

✓ be **people-centred, gender-sensitive**, respect human rights and have a particular focus on the **poorest, most vulnerable** and those furthest behind.

✓ maintain a **longer-term orientation**, identify achievements, challenges, gaps and critical success factors and support countries in making informed policy choices.

✓ Help to **mobilize the necessary means of implementation and partnerships**, support the identification of solutions and best practices and promote the coordination and effectiveness of the international development system.
Components of a VNR

• Highlights (summary)
  • overall progress, best practices, lessons learned, key challenges and support needed

• Introduction
  • context and objectives of the review, key features of the country context, policy architecture and policy tools for integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development

• Methodology of the review
  • discuss the process for preparation of the national review
  • whole-of-government approach and mechanisms for stakeholder engagement
Components of a VNR

- **Policy and Enabling Environment**
  
  a) *Creating ownership of the SDGs;*
      - efforts made towards all stakeholders to inform them on and involve them in the SDGs
  
  b) *Incorporation of the SDGs in national framework;*
      - initiatives undertaken to adapt the SDGs and targets to its national circumstances
      - policy coherence and interlinkages
      - implementation challenges and way forward
  
  c) *Integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development*
  
  d) *Leaving no one behind*
  
  e) *Institutional mechanisms*
      - how the country has adapted its institutional framework in light of the 2030 Agenda, coordination and integration to achieve policy coherence
  
  f) *Structural issues*
Components of a VNR

- **Goals and targets**
  - Brief information on progress and the status of all 17 SDGs
  - Critical difficulties in reaching goals and how they have been addressed
- **Means of implementation**
  - How MOI are mobilized, difficulties, and what additional resources are needed.
  - How financial systems and resource allocations are aligned with 2030 Agenda
  - Technology; capacity development and data needs; multi-stakeholder partnerships
- **Next steps**
  - Next steps to enhance implementation, national and sub-national level, dissemination
- **Conclusion**
  - Summary of analysis, findings and policy implications and how to apply lessons learned in the future
- **Annex**
  - Statistical annex with data and/or annexes to showcase best practices or comments from stakeholders
VNR Handbook

- Supplement to the SG’s guidelines
- Provides basic, practical information on the steps that countries may take when preparing VNRs
- Available in English, Arabic, Chinese, French, and Spanish
Best Practices in VNR Development

• Start early
• Designate coordinator(s) and the “penholder(s)”
• Engage a broad range of stakeholders early on
• Focus on quality, not quantity
• Include a statistical annex, if suitable
• Address implementation of all 17 SDGs
• Include analysis, lessons learned and detailed examples
• Avoid mere listings of strategies and programmes
• Showcase both strengths and weaknesses
• Identify areas where additional support is needed
• Spell out the next steps in implementation
Stakeholder Engagement in the VNR Process
2030 Agenda-Levels of Stakeholder Participation

01 Inform
One-way communication, where governments inform stakeholders of their plans for implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda.

02 Consult
Government presents plans and options for implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda, and receives feedback from stakeholders.

03 Involve
Stakeholders are meaningfully engaged with governments in generating plans and options for implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda. Action plans based on decisions that arise from this input.

04 Collaborate
Governments and stakeholders decide together on the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda. This is long-term, complex and demanding, requiring resources.

05 Empower
Final decision making placed in the hands of the stakeholders. Stakeholders collectively decide what should be implemented.
Numerous countries have requested inputs from stakeholders and organized consultations to collect them.

Represent
Some included Stakeholder representatives in their official delegation sitting on the podium during the VNR presentation at the HLPF, ready to answer potential question.

Present
Several countries have included presentations and comments from different stakeholders in their 15 minute Presentation or in their official report.
Levels of Participation - Inform

In the **Maldives**, the government works with the official “Public Service Media” in disseminating information related to the SDGs. Capacity building workshops have been organized for journalists from various media in order to enhance and develop their skills to report on the SDGs.

In the **Netherlands**, the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) launched the Municipalities4Global Goals campaign to promote awareness of the SDGs among municipalities and help them contribute to the goals.
In Sierra Leone, consultations were held both in the capital and in each of the country’s districts. The consultations engaged officials from the federal government, parliament, local governments, the private sector, trade unions, civil society and universities on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the country.

Brazil established the online portal “Participa.br”, a social media instrument providing participation tools for citizens, networks, social movements and organizations, enabling dialogue among governmental bodies and society, through public consultations, debates, conferences and online events.

Chile, in cooperation with UNDP, designed focus groups that sought to prioritize the voice and participation of different populations such as persons with disabilities, immigrants, and indigenous peoples.
The Australian government along with Global Compact Network Australia, have set up a website to provide Australia with a live and ongoing platform to centralize and showcase action being taken across government, business, civil society and academia to advance the SDGs in the Australian context. Organizations that are undertaking concrete initiatives to help Australia deliver on the Sustainable Development goals are invited to submit case studies to the platform’s database which include the initiatives’ impact.

Levels of Participation- Involve/Collaborate

The **Estonian** Sustainable Development Commission is an advisory body consisting of civil society umbrella organizations and covers different fields of sustainable development. The Commission meets 4-5 times per year to discuss drafts of strategic action plans before they are adopted by the government and to publish focus reports with policy recommendations.

In **Norway**, the indigenous peoples’ assembly, the Sámeddigi (Sami Parliament) engages in dialogues on the 2030 Agenda with line ministries and formal consultation mechanisms. Consultations have strengthened the Sámediggi’s role as a representative voice for the Sami people and increased the awareness of Sami issues within the government. Sami culture is taken into consideration in policies particularly for fisheries and ecosystems protection, restoration and sustainable use of natural resources.
Stakeholder engagement in VNRs at the HLPF

- MGoS participation in VNR presentations at the HLPF
  - Each country has 10-15 minutes to present
  - After presentations, there is time for Q&A, in which Major Groups and other Stakeholders can participate
  - Participation in the VNR sessions is coordinated by the MGoS HLPF Coordination Mechanism

- There are also a number of “VNR labs” which occur during the HLPF, and provide room for informal dialogue between Member States and Major Groups and other Stakeholders on specific topics related to the VNRs
How to get engaged when your country is presenting a VNR

VNR focal points on website

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2019

- Find out about opportunities for engagement (coordination structures, stakeholder engagement plans)
- Plan engagement with other civil society organisations
- Participate in national consultations
- Review the VNR report
- Engage at the HLPF
- Follow-up with government – call for a dialogue
Resources

- UN Secretary-General’s updated voluntary common reporting guidelines for VNRs at the HLPF
- Handbook for VNR Preparations
- Q&A for VNRs at the 2019 HLPF
- Register to join the Major Groups and other Stakeholders HLPF Coordination Mechanism here
- All the above can be found at HLPF VNR database https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/
- Together2030 Report on civil society engagement in VNRs
Regional Preparatory Meetings in Spring 2019

ECE
Geneva, 21-22 March 2019

ESCAP
Bangkok, 27-29 March 2019

ECLAC
Santiago, 22-26 April 2019

ESCWA
Beirut, 9-11 April 2019

ECA
Tangier, 16-18 April 2019

Regional Sustainable Development Forums
organized by Regional Commissions
Upcoming Webinars

DESA will host two more webinars for Major Groups and other Stakeholders in preparation for the 2019 HLPF on the topics of:

- Global level preparations- Documents and inputs to the HLPF, Expert Group Meetings, Political Declaration
- Opportunities for attendance and participation at the HLPF

Dates to be announced
Thank you!

HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

We look forward to your participation!
For the latest information and to register (April 2019), visit
https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2019
Contact link on website