

## **Process for Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) Engagement in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) Sessions<sup>1</sup>**

### **Voluntary National Reviews and MGoS engagement**

Voluntary National Reviews are presented by countries during the second week of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). Countries report on progress achieved in SDGs implementation at the national level. Countries are allocated 30 minutes for first-time presenters and 20 minutes for second-time presenters to present their VNRs and then receive questions and provide answers. This established practice also includes time for Major Groups and other Stakeholders to deliver collaborative statements and pose questions to the respective Government. This document outlines the MGoS engagement opportunities, provides guidance on how to participate and includes a number of rules for participation.

### **Objective**

The objective of the MGoS engagement is to deliver at least 1 collaborative statement at each VNR session<sup>2</sup>, which includes specific, targeted questions. However, MGoS aim to deliver the maximum number of collaborative statements possible in order to enter into dialogue with Member States.

### **Context for MGoS engagement**

Past experiences show that each VNR session varies. While for most MGoS participants the VNR sessions are the most critical part of the HLPF, it is important to be realistic and to manage expectations. The UN Secretariat assures MGoS that there will be time allocated to deliver at least 1 collaborative statement at each VNR session. However, it is important to understand that the final decision remains in the hands of the Chair of the actual session. This means that it is possible that several MGoS collaborative statements can be delivered during a single session, but it is also possible – though rarely - that the floor will not be given to a MGoS speaker.

### **Process and steps of engagement**

Prior to the HLPF many MGoS members work hard at the national level to engage with their governments but are unable to attend the HLPF. Therefore, we are proposing a process where remote participation and an opportunity for collaborative input can be offered. This will not only accommodate those who lack financial resources to participate, but will also provide an opportunity for those, who for security reasons cannot raise challenges regarding their governments.

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of drafting this document all guidelines and proposals are an outline on the basis of experiences from the previous years. As for 2019, we will only be able to work on an assumption basis.

<sup>2</sup> A VNR session is the presentation of voluntary national report, which can be either individual country presentations or presentation by a group of countries. MGoS aims to define statements/ questions for each country and they will adjust these statements in light of presentation format.



## HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

As such, we propose the following process:

1. The objective is to prepare the draft statements and identify speakers prior to the HLPF.
2. A call is circulated by the UN Secretariat on the MGoS Coordination Mechanism (CM) list in the first week of May to collect comments – via Google Document, as well as in MS Word Format for accessibility purposes – and to formulate very clear questions country by country.
3. Organizations and networks that are engaged in national implementation processes and may have participated in any stage of the VNR preparation are particularly encouraged to provide comments and inputs. Further, contributors are encouraged to:
  - a) analyse the VNR reports - if available already - submitted by their respective governments and published on the HLPF website and/or
  - b) compare and draw on respective governments' previous VNR reports and/or
  - c) base comments and contributions on national experiences and pertinent issues relevant to the SDGs implementation.
4. All contributors will be invited to participate in writing the collaborative statement online during the period of June 17<sup>th</sup> to July 8<sup>th</sup>. All inputs will be shared with the statement writers.
5. Statements will be developed on a country by country basis and contributors will be guided by members of the Steering Group (SG). As much as possible, statements should be developed on the online platform to allow for transparency and greater accountability (Google document allows the tracking of any changes.)
6. Simple guidelines will be developed to serve as a template and/ or guidance for drafting the VNR questions/ statements.
7. Statements have to be delivered within 2 minutes. The team working on the statement is strongly recommended to keep it within 300 words.
8. In case statements have not been finalized for any reason prior to the HLPF, there will be a time and location allocated to clarify all outstanding issues during the first week of the HLPF.
9. Contributors will be asked whether they wish to volunteer to deliver the statement and agree to the speaker rules, which will be developed separately.
10. The engagement process will be led by members of the MGoS Steering Group. In the case of any disputes on content, 3 Steering Group members will work together to seek a resolution.



### **Aspirations and criteria regarding MGoS collaborative statements and speakers**

- Collaborative statements: Due to limited speaking opportunities allocated for MGoS statements during VNR sessions, all statements delivered must be a collaboration between different groups. This does not mean that the statements are automatically delivered on behalf of the entire MGoS, but on behalf of those who are working together on the statement, which may include groups working at the national level. The reason for this is that there are sensitive/ political issues that are not equally shared/ endorsed among all MGoS members. Allowing collaborative statements to be developed by some groups, rather than all MGoS, helps the system remain open and prevents it from becoming a reductive mechanism. It is also important to allow input to country statements from transversal and thematic viewpoints.
- Generic statement: In some instances, there is no MGoS input received nor anyone present from certain countries that present at the HLPF. In this case, the MGoS Steering Group will define a generic statement, drawing on inputs in relation to interlinkages and will provide questions on behalf of MGoS. One member of the SG will deliver it during the VNR session. The rationale behind such a statement is to ensure that all allocated speaking opportunities are filled.
- Identification of speakers: On agreement by the statement drafting groups, members of the group will present and, in particular, nationals of the VNR country and those engaged within the local/ national process will be given priority to deliver the statement. A list of speakers will be drawn up in priority order in case a speaker fails to attend the HLPF. While finalizing the list of speakers, the SG will aim to ensure diversity of constituencies.
- Role of VNR Task Group and Steering Group: The VNR Task Group is responsible for the facilitation of this process and the content of MGoS engagement in the VNR sessions at the HLPF. Further, the Steering Group, as the decision-making body, has the responsibility to work with the MGoS members to maximize their engagement opportunity. As such, the Steering Group is accountable and responsible for deciding on strategic steps as well as for answering any outstanding questions and resolving necessary disputes.

### **Final clause**

The above process for MGoS engagement in VNR sessions has been developed based on experiences gained in previous years and shall apply to the year 2019. The process outlined is a guide. Alteration and flexibility shall be allowed, and the review of these processes shall be undertaken annually.