

KEY MESSAGES FROM MONGOLIA'S VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW REPORT 2019

Mongolia is one of the first countries to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals. Six months following the adoption of the SDGs by the global community, the Parliament of Mongolia approved its long-term development strategy (Mongolia's Sustainable Development Vision 2030) reflecting sustainable development.

Despite the early adoption of the Agenda, challenges remain. Localizing the complex, interdependent, and comprehensive development goals to the national context, prioritizing and mainstreaming them, especially into medium- and short-term development policies and government budget framework, is work in progress.

Mongolia has a sound foundation for ensuring future sustainable development. Its past economic growth places it amongst the medium ranking countries while it has been ranked in the high human development category on the Human Development Index since 2015.

But Mongolia remains vulnerable to factors not entirely in its control, as well as factors amenable to policy. An agriculture-based, livestock-dominated economy, with a high-dependency on natural resources, Mongolia's primary, extractive-sector dominant economy is not resilient to external shocks from global commodity price fluctuations. Also, its agriculture is not resilient to natural disasters. These vulnerabilities have had social and environmental consequences, presenting challenges to sustainable development.

Growth needs to be more inclusive, broad-based, and cleaner. It has contributed to disparities in various forms such as gaps in social services across regions, limited employment opportunities, inequalities resulting in poor quality of life for some groups. Air-pollution has become a much-discussed challenge. In addition, Mongolia is significantly impacted by climate change. The frequency of natural disasters is not only directly affecting livelihoods, but also exacerbating environmental degradation, eventually also impacting the economy.

In addressing these development challenges, sound development policy planning that incorporates sustainability will be critical. In light of this, Mongolia is using the Sustainable Development Goals as a compass to strengthen consensus around coherent, coordinated actions within Government and across different stakeholders.

Because of the comprehensiveness and interconnectedness of sustainable development objectives, Mongolia acknowledges the criticality of a "whole of government" plus a "whole of society" approach. In support of this a nationwide effort is underway to initiate the review of existing policy documents for their alignment with the country's sustainable development agenda as well as the coherence between each other. Concrete tools have been developed which are being institutionalized by the Government for assessing policies and enabling alignment of future actions with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Mongolia Sustainable Development Vision-2030. Mongolian government has also initiated multi-stakeholder working groups to identify national Sustainable Development Goal targets and indicators. These initiatives have been instrumental in establishing a foundation for effective implementation of the Agenda 2030.

While apex level national structures are in place, future directions need to include stakeholders at multiple levels. A National Council for Sustainable Development led by the Prime Minister, and a Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Sustainable Development Goals are in place. The National Development Agency provides technical support on localizing the sustainable development agenda and ensuring policy integration and the National Statistical Office strengthens the evidence base. Next steps will focus on strengthening capacity and coordination across and between different levels of government, private sector, think tanks, civil society and people.

Mongolia's first Voluntary National Review presents a snapshot of its status on Sustainable Development Goals. It highlights the risks of disparities preventing, or even reversing development gains. The Report applies the lens of "leaving no one behind" identifying vulnerable groups who are at-risk of being left behind. Most importantly, the Report highlights the criticality of improving Mongolia's development policy and planning, ensuring policy integration, coherence, prioritization, linkages with financing, effective monitoring and reporting, for successful implementation of sustainable development.

The Report features the issue of "Air pollution" as an example of a complex, multifaceted development challenge that would benefit from a comprehensive analysis through a sustainable development lens to develop effective solutions. Air pollution is an increasingly pressing development challenge in Mongolia affecting public health and productivity while creating considerable costs to the economy. Key bottlenecks are identified to inform more integrated and coordinated policy interventions to address it. The aim of the report is to apply this model to overcome other development challenges in the country.