

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW

REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

Main messages

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT

The Republic of Armenia has been firmly committed to the implementation of the “Agenda 2030” for sustainable development.

Beginning with 2015 the established Intergovernmental Council has actively worked on creating the necessary infrastructure for the implementation of SDGs as a matter of institutional and systemic approach towards the SDGs policy.

The renewed Intergovernmental Council for SDG headed by Deputy Prime Minister has been recently established with broader representation and mandate to coordinate and monitor the SDG implementation and nationalization processes. This is an inclusive and collaborative endeavor between the Government and wider participatory networks, including civil society, academia, the UN country team, etc. that correspond to the “whole-of-government” and “whole-of-society” approach.

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP

The Government of Armenia is in the process of incorporating the 2030 Agenda into the national reform agenda and strategies. Currently the Government is developing the “Armenia Transformation Strategy 2050” which includes 16 megagoals with their own targets, indicators, tasks and solutions. The Strategy is considered as a framework of implementation of the SDGs and the megagoals mainly correspond with them.

SUCCESSFUL PATH FOR DEVELOPMENT

Armenia was named “Country of the year 2018” by “The Economist” indicating the country's remarkable improvement in 2018. That was a year of fundamental democratic transformation manifested by the peaceful Velvet Revolution, which has demonstrated the considerably high degree of political maturity and legal literacy of the Armenian public.

Since 2018, the Government has been implementing a wide range of reforms to ensure full and unimpeded realization of civil and political rights, including rule of law, independent judiciary, campaign against corruption and strengthening the democratic institutions, which has widely contributed to the successful implementation of especially SDG16. This progress has been asserted also by reports of reputable international organizations, such as Freedom House, Gallup Institute, etc.

Armenian democratic transition has been manifested by “Democratic Index 2019” (Economist Intelligence Unit). Armenia managed to show the notable improvement and made substantial steps towards democracy upgrading its position by 17 points (ranking 86th) despite the fall in average global score of democratic index.

Another important achievement was the considerable improvement of the position of Armenia in the Corruption Perception Index conducted by Transparency International. Armenia has

progressed by 28 points (ranking 77th), which became possible due to the high political will and the elimination of “systemic corruption”.

The Government has launched nationwide economic reforms targeting specifically on modernizing Armenia’s economy with particular emphasis on advancing high tech industry, developing the innovation ecosystem.

In 2019 the GDP growth rate in Armenia was 7.6 % which was the highest among the Eurasian Economic Union member states, neighboring countries and the European countries. The poverty rate continued to decline reaching 23.5% in comparison with 29.8% in 2015. The extreme poverty rate decline has been diminished twice since 2015 reaching 1%. The Government aims to eliminate the extreme poverty until 2023.

Underlining “leaving no one behind” principle the Government initiated a number of reforms targeting vulnerable groups, gender inequality reduction, accessibility and quality of health services, like adopted law on tobacco-control, launched air ambulance services for health emergencies, accessible education, like transition to universal inclusive general education until 2023, revision of state educational standards, fostering labor-market oriented skills.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

There are still gaps in the process of SDG implementation. The efforts need to be doubled to overcome the general challenges revealed during the review process, such as:

- legislation concerning equality,
- mitigation and adaptation to climate change,
- energy diversification and sustainable use of natural resources,
- judicial reform.

COVID-19

The continued spread of COVID-19 pandemic is expected to considerably weaken the progress of the implementation of SDGs in many countries, including in Armenia. The Government undertakes substantial measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 and to ensure the proper functioning and preparedness of health system. To mitigate the foreseen socio-economic slowdown, the Government initiated an assistance package amounted \$300 million (2% of GDP), including:

- ✓ direct grants to SMEs and microentrepreneurs,
- ✓ state-sponsored targeted loans,
- ✓ compensation for utility payments,
- ✓ financial support to vulnerable groups,
- ✓ tuition fee support.

The spread of COVID-19 has also negatively influenced the VNR preparation process with cancellation of planned meetings, workshops, replacing them with online tools.