

Voluntary National Review - 2020

Main Messages

Georgia

Georgia is committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and fulfilling the core pledge – “to leave no one behind”- that underpins the Agenda. The Government’s policies and priorities are well-aligned to the SDGs – making them a very solid basis of the country’s reform agenda. The level of integration of nationalized SDGs into Georgia’s development planning, in line with its EU integration aspirations, is very high - 36 sector strategies and the EU-Georgia Association Agreement jointly incorporate 96% of the country’s nationalized SDGs targets.

As Georgia presents its second VNR, it is important to mention that overall country has progressively advanced towards achieving the nationally set targets. Analysis of the review shows that Georgia has made significant progress - making itself well-on-track of the Agenda 2030 but also marking need for acceleration in some areas The VNR provides in-depth review of three priority areas (**economic growth; human capital development and social welfare; governance**). The report highlights main achievements, challenges, best-practices and identifies areas where further work is needed.

Notwithstanding several challenges and keeping in mind that 20% of the Georgian territory is under Russia’s occupation, the country managed to sustain the stable **economic growth** in 2019 with annual real GDP growth rate of 5.1% and over the past years has been shifted from lower middle to upper middle income countries by the World Bank classification. However, inclusive growth remains a major challenge for the Georgian economy. The Government has prioritized knowledge based and innovation driven economic development and actively supports increase of innovative activities of the micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, including startups, and individuals and their participation in the digital economy. Over the past 5 years Georgia also took active steps towards responsible production and consumption. The country pursues reforms within all of its environmental sector policies – including water resource, forestry, air quality and waste management systems.

Quality of and accessibility to **knowledge, education and healthcare and social services** are key elements for sustainable development of the society. Georgia, in line with the pledge to “Leave No One Behind”, has introduced Universal Health Care (UNC) program enabling full access to healthcare services to each citizen. Education has been selected as one of the key priorities of the country’s development agenda. Georgia’s education system underwent considerable reforms in the education making it more accessible for everyone, updating and enhancing national curriculums, improving infrastructure of the education institutions, and popularizing vocational education to overcome skills and/or education mismatch problem on the Georgian labor market. In order to accelerate societal cohesion, the government has redesigned existing social programs – making them more effective and

targeted. Overall, proportion of total government spending on essential services such as education, healthcare and social protection is increased.

Georgia has achieved the tangible progress in **democratic governance** by building effective, transparent, inclusive and accountable state institutions. It is committed to furthering public administration and open governance reforms, increasing transparency and accountability of state institutions. The country continues further development of its already robust public service delivery bringing innovation and technology for increased efficiency. Georgia has made significant progress in putting in place the legal framework to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on any possible ground. While streamlining the Georgian Government's efforts in order to leave no one behind, people residing inside the Russia's occupied regions of Georgia are deprived of benefits of development and continue to suffer from persistent violations of their fundamental rights, including rights to life, health and freedom of movement, the right to receive education in the native language, illegal detentions and kidnappings of the local population.

Despite significant progress challenges still remain for which future steps are being designed and applied, as the country entered in to the Decade of Action. Nevertheless, it is abundantly clear that the ongoing pandemic, with its anticipated outcomes, in the long-term perspective will have a complex negative impact for the whole world. Addressing these lifetime challenges require more concerted, innovative, complex and resolute solutions by the strong leadership of the member states, development partners, international organizations and civil society. Georgia remains fully dedicated to this purpose.