

[Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development](#)

The recent (COVID-19) outbreak has demonstrated that we live in a world of changes so profound and rapid that no country can stand alone. The world is at the crossroads, and, therefore, we are in need of a stronger cooperation, solidarity and multilateralism in order to deliver for all and leave no one behind. International order based on rules, effective multilateralism, with the central role of the strong and action-oriented United Nations, is necessary in a world of everyday uncertainties. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes this and provides a useful universal framework to strengthen collective action towards common goals and challenges of shared prosperity and the fulfillment of our intergenerational responsibilities that can only be achieved through a collaborative partnership involving all countries and all stakeholders. Eradicating poverty and hunger, equal rights for all men and women, girls and boys, good health and good governance, while preserving nature and working together – these noble goals keep inspiring us since 2015.

We have only 10 years left to deliver on our promise to leave no one behind. The “Decade of Action” - an additional impetus to work towards achievement of this transformative agenda - is crucial at this moment.

In 2018, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, through the National Council for Sustainable Development, reaffirmed the commitment to implement the Agenda 2030 and by identifying five Prioritized Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 1, SDG4, SDG8, SDG 13 and SDG16), based on the priority activities and measures defined in the Government Programme for 2017-2020 and the five pillars on the basis of which the current United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the period 2016-2020.

As a government, our reform agenda focuses on key development objectives shared by all citizens: a better life for all citizens, the development of the economy, the restoration of democracy, rule of law and justice, equality of citizens, efficient institutions, gender equality, quality education, and health, as well as improving our country’s international reputation and standing.

The Rapid Integration Assessment of the SDGs conducted in 2019 found that 83 percent of national strategic development plans were aligned with the SDGs. Full compliance was observed for goals 4 (Education), 6 (Water), 7 (Energy), 9 (Infrastructure and Industrialization), and 16 (Inclusive Governance). In these areas, all global targets are reflected in national policy instruments. The least amount of alignment – 50% – was found for Goal 10 (Inequalities

between and within countries). The Government is committed to continuing its efforts to further bring the national policy and legislative framework in line with the SDGs. This commitment is fully compatible with the country's Euro-Atlantic Integration strategic priority and the Government will seek to strengthen the alignment and build synergies between these two processes.

Our country's sustainable development requires growth acceleration in order to speed up income convergence, transformative pathways, and improve the citizens' quality of life. No less important is ensuring that economic growth is inclusive so that prosperity is enjoyed by a much larger share of the population. This has to be accompanied by changes in production and consumption patterns, along with the sustainable energy use and production, in order to minimize the depletion of natural resources.

In order to achieve the Agenda, 2030 multiple stakeholder engagement is crucial in order to keep the ambition and the promise of leaving no one behind.

The recent spread of COVID-19 and the toll it has taken on our societies presents another serious challenge we will be dealing through out the coming months and years in the context of our development efforts. The quest for sustainable development is therefore a complex task that requires coherent, integrated, and coordinated reforms. Even though the largest payoff of these reforms is well beyond election cycles, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and its international development partners are strongly committed to tackle this challenge.

This is why our Sustainable Developments Cooperation Framework for the next 5 years has PEOPLE centered focus and it is in line with the EU accession process of the Country. By the end of September/beginning of October 2020, the Framework will be approved by the Government with encompassing 3 priorities:

1. Sustained and Inclusive Economic and Social Development;
2. Climate Action, Natural Resources and Disaster Risk Management;
3. Transparent and Accountable Democratic Governance.

The new strategic framework for sustainable development comes at the time when North Macedonia achieved important milestones: NATO membership and opening of the EU accession negotiations. These are not only achievements; they also bring new responsibilities and ultimately should lead to change in the mentality. Therefore, we need to strike the right balance between the need to build capacities and to avoid long-term dependency on development and technical cooperation.

The National Voluntary Review that will be presented this July and provide an insight into the streamlining of Sustainable Development Goals into national strategic documents, actions,

activities and statistics, and will also identify systemic gaps as well as challenges critical to the full implementation of Agenda 2030.

The Government of North Macedonia is cognizant of the fact that more work lies ahead in the achievement of the SDGs. This is particularly the case after the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic that is continuing to present serious challenges to our society and economy while we aim to reach the objectives of the EU GREEN DEAL through digitized society and circular economy. To address short-term and long-term challenges in the context of the achievement of the SDGs additional financial resources will be needed. The Government is working on rationalizing available resources and attracting increased investments from the private sector domestically and abroad.

We should recall that the Global Goals are not just an additional plan for the world. They are the shared vision of a world and they remain within reach if we embrace transformation and accelerate implementation. Agenda 2030 is our promise to our children and the youth of today that they will achieve full human potential and carry the torch of sustainable development for the future generation. It is on our determination to move forward!

As a government and policy makers we should look beyond the COVID 19 crisis, use the decade of action towards recovery and implementation of the Agenda 2030. We have an opportunity to restart in a more thoughtful, environmental, and inclusive way.

Everyone's contribution inspires hope.