

LEBANON

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW

Lebanon VNR presentation to HLPF
2018

UN Headquarters
JULY 18, 2018



Lebanon

Characteristics

- Small upper middle-income country
- Democratic political system
- Liberal economy based on entrepreneurship and largely reliant on services
- Society characterized by cultural diversity and openness

Challenges

- Located at the center of one of the most volatile regions of the world
- Has been exposed to numerous security, political and economic shocks since the end of the 1990s
- Heavily affected by the conflict in Syria; bearing the economic, social and environmental burden of hosting more than 1.5 million displaced from Syria

Recent Positive developments

- Lebanon's 1st VNR takes place at a time when Lebanon has found a promising equilibrium.
- The international community has made it clear that Lebanon's political and economic stability is key, including for the overall region, and needs to be preserved



Lebanon's Progress on MDGs

- Lebanon achieved at least seven MDG targets, mainly in health, primary education and gender equality in education
- Remaining targets showed mixed results, were either not applicable, or not expected to be achieved on time



SDGs roll-out: Institutional Set-up & Stakeholders Engagement

Objectives

- *Localize the ambitious global agenda according to national needs, challenges, and resources*
- *Report on status and progress on all of the 17 SDGs (1st VNR)*
- *Advocate an effective engagement & ownership of stakeholders, including civil society & private sector*
- *Bottom-up, inclusive, participatory and whole-of-government approach*



The Institutional Set-up

National Committee (NC) on SDGs established by a Cabinet decree, chaired by the *PM*, *formed of DGs* of ministries & public administrations (54 members), includes *2 representatives* from *civil society* and *2 representatives* from *private sector* (the chambers)

Role of the National Committee

- a. Coordinate all national efforts to implement the SDGs
- b. Integrate SDGs into national programs and strategies for sustainable development
- c. Contribute to raising awareness about SDGs and the importance of achieving them
- d. Develop a national database for SDGs indicators
- e. Contribute to the preparation of the VNR, which will be presented periodically to the UN-HLPF

Thematic Groupings were formed

- Four of the Five “Ps” have thematic groupings: *People; Planet; Prosperity; Peace*
- The fifth ‘P’ for *Partnership* is a cross-cutting issue for achieving SDGs
- *A task force for statistics* was formed to collect SDG-related statistics
- Coordinators from the NC were appointed for each of the thematic groupings

A Parliamentary Committee for SDGs was also established to monitor and advance SDGs in Parliament, including mapping of existing legislation



Outreach and Awareness

SDGs Lebanon website established: www.sdglebanon.com

Three workshops were conducted to raise awareness about Lebanon's commitments to the SDGs & the 1st VNR, for *ministries and public administrations, civil society* (>50 CSOs from the 5 governorates), and the *private sector* (around 20 associations)



Active Stakeholders Engagement

Civil Society Organizations

- *Autonomy* of CSOs representatives to the NC was ensured
- A *Civil Society statement* was drafted, consolidated and included in the VNR
- *300 NGOs* were consulted, including in *remote areas*
- An official channel of *communication* between CSOs and GoL was established

Private sector

- The Chambers of Commerce conducted consultations, identified integration of SDGs and challenges faced

Global Compact Network Lebanon

- The VNR emphasizes work achieved by the *UN Global Compact Network Lebanon (GCNL)*, to raise awareness about the importance of SDGs within the private sector and civil society



The VNR Process (1)

1. Gap Analysis launched

A gap analysis was launched with the help of the Lebanon UNDP office (not finalized yet as efforts recently focused on VNR)

2. Guidelines for VNR preparations

- Followed UN guidelines and outcomes of UNDESA global workshops
- Drew on other countries' best practices and experience

3. Sources for Data and Information

- Primary and secondary sources
- National and UN data sources



The VNR Process (2)

4. VNR Methodology and Validation process

- i) A questionnaire was sent to line ministries and public administrations to:
 - collect information about national policies and strategies related to the SDGs
 - identify the current status of their sectors relevant to SDGs
 - identify plans, projects, initiatives in the pipelines
 - identify short to medium-term activities
 - identify challenges faced

- ii) First draft of the VNR was synthesized, based on inputs received from stakeholders

- iii) Draft was reviewed by the secretariat of the NC with support from UNRCO & UNDP

- iv) **Validation:** VNR draft content, in sections per goals, was reviewed and validated by the relevant ministries and public administrations



Progress towards ‘People’ (SDGs 1,2,3,4,5,10)

1 NO POVERTY



2 ZERO HUNGER



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



5 GENDER EQUALITY



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



- People are at the center of the government’s priorities
- Poverty rates, already high before the Syrian crisis, have recently worsened
- The communities that host the majority of displaced Syrians lack the resources and capacity to address the increased demand for public and social services
- This has not halted the GoL’s efforts to create a better environment for all, including through programs (such as the NPTP) to enhance social assistance for the most vulnerable citizens
- The government continues to offer numerous types of social services, such as health and education, universal subsidies for electricity, wheat and bread, and tobacco farmers, and interest subsidies for housing and other productive sectors
- The government provides various social protection schemes





SDG 3

Good Health

- The quality and coverage of health services have been improving and universal access to healthcare services is on the right track
- Targets related to maternity and children under five years of age score well, and reproductive health services are accessible to nearly all Lebanese
- The government's health sector strategy 'Health 2025' will provide universal health coverage
- SDG targets have been integrated in the plans and strategies of the MoPH
- **Challenges**

These include financial constraints, understaffing (specifically an imbalance between medical doctors and nurses, paramedics, and administrative staff), a focus on tertiary care and poorly regulated ambulatory care. Despite these hurdles, Lebanon is committed to moving towards universal health coverage in line with the global engagement





SDG 4

Quality Education

- Progress in the education sector has been sustained
- The Lebanese, especially male and female youth, have very high literacy rates. A 90% enrolment rate has been achieved in primary education—mainly because primary school education is compulsory and free in public schools
- Gender parity exists in almost all education indicators, including equal access to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and universities
- A pilot project is underway to establish a large number of resource rooms in public schools for children with different learning needs
- A National Education Plan for 2010–2015 is developed to address disparities between private and public education, and between geographical regions





SDG 4

Quality Education

- However, the government had to reshuffle its priorities to manage the large influx of displaced Syrians while continuing its long-term reforms. Consequently, the RACE 2 strategy (2017–2021) was developed with a hybrid approach to support quality and systems alongside enrolment targeted at Lebanese and Syrian students
- The Lebanon Education 2030 Strategy is being developed, taking into consideration fiscal and legal requirements. In the first half of 2018, MEHE launched the national strategic framework for TVET (2018–2022)
- Lebanon is also developing an action plan for its existing Youth Policy that will help reach SDG4

- ***Challenges***

Intra-sectoral coordination and planning, along with a general revision of the education curriculum, making pre-primary education compulsory, strengthening regularization of education providers, develop further inclusive policies and a coherent education system based on planning and alignment between curriculum, educational leadership, assessment, teacher preparation, and management





SDG 5

Gender Equality



SDG 10

Reduced Inequalities

Women:

- A Minister of State for Women's Affairs has been appointed for the first time in Lebanon's history
- Women's low participation in political and economic spheres is slowly improving
- In the last Parliamentary elections (May 2018), women candidates were 14.4% of total candidates, compared to 2% in 2009. And women gained two additional seats and now hold six seats out of the 128 in the new Parliament
- The PM adopted a quota of 30% for women in the recent senior public sector appointments
- To help combat domestic violence, legislation has been passed to protect women and children although its implementation will require further efforts





SDG 5

Gender Equality



SDG 10

Reduced Inequalities

Recent legislative reforms include :

- annulment of Article 562 of the penal code, which mitigated the sentence of people who claim they killed or injured in the name of “family honour”
- issuing Law 293 on domestic violence, which was followed by the amendment of a series of discriminatory laws to empower and protect women
- In August 2017 Parliament abolished article 522 of the penal code that had allowed prosecution to drop charges against a rapist if he marries his victim
- Also in 2017, the CoM approved the first drafted law to criminalize sexual harassment in public places and work places, and is in the Parliament awaiting final promulgation to be enacted
- CoM approved a draft law to eliminate discrimination in the NSSF, and a draft law to grant paternity leave, to assure gender balance
- One of the most challenging issues remains passing on nationality to children of Lebanese mothers married to foreign nationals



Progress towards 'People' (SDGs 6,7,12,13,14,15)

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



The government is striving for better environmental conditions for its citizens.

Lebanon has shown its commitment towards international environmental conventions and set out its agenda on natural resource management and protection.

Land management, water and air pollution and solid waste management, remain the main impediments to environmental sustainability





SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation

- The national water sector strategy aims to develop the infrastructure for surface water storage and recharging groundwater, and resolve transmission and distribution problems
- The Capital Investment Program (CIP) includes projects & supports ongoing projects to increase water supply, improve existing systems and provide additional surface water sources
- The water sector strategy intends to increase coverage of the wastewater collection network and treatment capacity





SDG 7 Affordable and Clean Energy

- Although thermal generation remains the main source of energy in Lebanon, the country is slowly moving towards increasing reliance on renewable sources, and has recently started planning for offshore petroleum resource exploration
- Through its electricity sector emergency plan, the government aims to bridge an electricity generation supply-demand gap and resolve transmission and distribution problems
- The strategy aims for better accessibility and reliability while improving energy efficiency and increasing the share of energy from renewable sources. Knowing that emissions from electricity generation constitute more than half of total emissions in the country, yet emissions in Lebanon remain a minimal percentage compared to other global rates



12 RESPONSIBLE
CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION



SDG 12

Responsible Consumption
and Production

- National and sectoral legislation, policies and strategies in Lebanon have partially incorporated sustainability principles in line with the country's commitments under multilateral environmental treaties, protocols and conventions
- Lebanon now has an environment protection law, a national biodiversity action plan, and an action plan for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) for the industrial sector





SDG 13

Climate Action

- Following its signature of the Paris agreement on climate change, Lebanon seeks to have dedicated legislation to address climate change
- Several policies and pieces of legislation contribute towards its climate change commitments such as those on energy efficiency, renewable energy, and air pollution



Progress on Prosperity (SDGs 8,9,11)

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

- The GoL's Vision for Stabilization, Growth and Employment (CEDRE) outlines plans to spur economic growth, create decent jobs and provide a conducive environment for private sector investment in the medium to long term, to help meet the SDGs

The vision is based on four pillars

- a) Sharply increase the level of public investment (CIP developed)
 - b) Ensure economic and financial stability through fiscal adjustment
 - c) Undertake sectoral and structural reforms to modernize the economy, public institutions and public procedures
 - d) Develop a strategy to diversify Lebanon's productive sectors and increase the country's export potential sectors
- A Capital Investment Plan (CIP) has been developed, and approved by the Cabinet, to improve public investment planning in Lebanon.
 - One of the selection criteria for CIP projects was their potential to contribute to the SDGs
 - Consultations around the CIP took place with various political parties, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders including civil society
 - Investments in the electricity, transport and telecommunications sectors will help increase productivity of Lebanon's economy and reduce business costs





SDG 11

Sustainable Cities and Communities

National Jobs program

A national job program has been recently negotiated and approved by the World Bank

Urban Development

The *National Physical Master Plan of the Lebanese Territory* remains the country's overarching framework for urban development

Labor

The *Decent Work Country Program for Lebanon (2017-2020)* was recently signed by all social partners (Ministry of Labor, ILO, General Federal of Lebanon's Workers, and Association of Lebanese Industrialists)

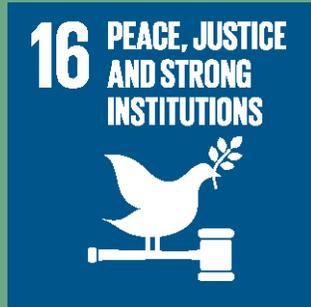
SMEs and Entrepreneurship

The challenges faced by a majority of Lebanese businesses are being addressed through the SMEs strategy and the entrepreneurship ecosystem, both currently under development.

- A short- and medium-term plan is being implemented to streamline and re-engineer the *business registration processes and provide a one-stop-shop* for opening a business.
- A *Business Support Unit* has been established in IDAL aimed at providing start-ups with free information, advice and licensing support.
- “Plans have been developed for out of court workouts” Legislation modernization for *Out of Court Workouts*
- *IDAL Export Promotion Program*



Progress on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16)



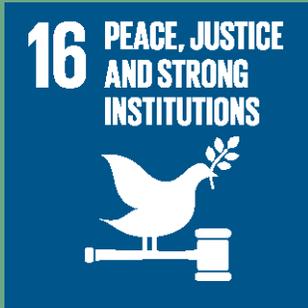
- SDG 16 is at the core of advancing on all the SDGs
- A new parliamentary elections' law that ensures a wider representation based on proportionality was ratified in 2017

Financial laws

- 1) The *law to fight against money laundering and the financing of terrorism* coupled with the legislation on *tax transparency* and *access to information* were ratified
- 2) The *Code of Commerce* is being reviewed, for SAL & SARL companies, and Sole Partnership companies
- 3) An *e-transaction and protection of personal data law* has also been discussed in Parliament and should be adopted soon
- 4) Credit Infrastructure legislation being discussed in Parliament : *Preferred Shares, E-Transactions, Insolvency Law, Insolvency Practitioners, Judiciary Mediation, Secured Lending, Private Equity Fund*
- 5) Capital Market Authority is currently implementing a market development plan with WB support, to transform the Beirut Stock Exchange into a joint stock company as a first step before privatisation. This also includes launching an electronic trading platform that would include SMEs and start-ups, and would provide access to trading by the Lebanese diaspora



Progress on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16)

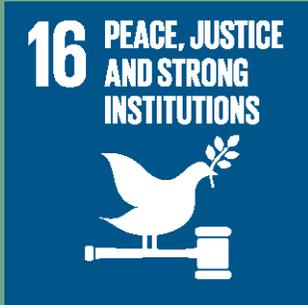


Human Rights law

- The *law to criminalize torture* was ratified
 - A *National Human Rights' Institute* was established
- Other related laws being reviewed and modernized include:
- Law 236/2014 on *Reducing violence*
 - Law 164/2011 on *People trafficking*
- Other areas of concern include: *Pre-trial detention* and *Birth registration*, both a particular challenge with the influx of the Syrian displaced
 - OMSAR is promoting human rights to reduce inequalities through the EU-funded Enhancing Human Rights and Democracy in Lebanon program
 - Other EU- funded *judicial reform* programs are currently being implemented in Lebanon



Progress on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16)



National statistics

Improving government statistics constitutes a cross-cutting reform to facilitate mapping SDGs & targets, and ultimately serves to improve policy making

Financial Challenges

Fiscal and trade deficits, coupled with the high debt burden and slow economic growth

Partnerships for the SDGs

Lebanon is determined to mobilize the resources needed for implementing Agenda 2030 through:

- ✓ Tapping into resources from international partners and institutions
- ✓ Mobilizing private sector resources
- ✓ Tapping into the large and successful Lebanese diaspora



VNR process – Challenges faced

- *Time frame* to prepare for the 1st VNR was short. *Within less than a year*, GoL formed the NC, organized awareness raising workshops, and launched and finalized the VNR drafting process
- Many of the stakeholders' *knowledge of the SDGs and Agenda 2030* was limited at the beginning of the process
- Consolidating input from a *large number of stakeholders/members* of the NC required major efforts



VNR process – A means to an end

- *Stakeholders' active participation* in the process from *its early stages*, ensured stronger *national ownership*, better *localization of the global agenda*, *participatory and whole-of-government approach*
- *Validation* of the VNR by the various Lebanese administrations reinforced collective work and efforts as well as cooperation among government administrations
- *VNR process promoted cooperation* between the GoL & *non-governmental stakeholders*



Key Challenges facing progress on the SDGs

1. Lack of robust *statistical system* and database of SDGs targets and indicators: *capacity building and technical assistance* is needed
2. *Institutional capacities of public sector administration* need to be strengthened (with support from UN agencies and International partners)
3. Lebanon's development agenda will need to be *financed* through *highly concessional lending and grants* and through *mobilizing private sector resources*, under *the public-private partnership framework*, given the high fiscal deficit and public debt ratios
4. Advancing on Lebanon's development agenda will be more challenging given the ongoing *Syrians displaced crisis and its unprecedented repercussions* on Lebanon's economy, environment, public services, and infrastructure



Next Steps

Going forward, work will focus on:

- Prioritization of the goals or prioritization of the targets within each goal
- Ensuring an integrated approach to development (role of the NC and thematic groups)
- Ultimate goal: develop a medium term vision for development



Conclusion

- We, in Lebanon, are determined to take our economy to a new level, improve the livelihoods of Lebanese citizens, and achieve sustainable development in all regions of Lebanon. Also, we are keen on preserving our natural resources and rich heritage of cultural diversity
- The parliamentary elections held in May this year and the subsequent government formation will constitute new grounds for taking forward the government's vision for growth and employment with a clear prioritization of reforms
- We greatly appreciate the valuable support of our friends in the international community, including all UN agencies, and we look forward to strong future cooperation to achieve our targets and goals for sustainable development and a better prosperous future for all the Lebanese
- In particular, GoL greatly appreciates the valuable support of UNRCO and UNDP Lebanon during the SDGs roll-out process and the VNR preparations



THANK YOU

