

Q&A for Voluntary National Reviews at the 2017 HLPF

Q: What should be the scope of national reviews at the HLPF?

A: As implementation advances, the scope of national reviews at the HLPF is expected to be as broad as possible, while taking into account country specific circumstances. Given that countries in 2017 will already be in year two of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, they are expected to report on the actions and measures taken to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, and where available, to provide information on progress made.

This means that there may still be focus on baselines, strategies, and policies that are being put in place to facilitate implementation, but it is also expected that countries will begin to share progress and accomplishments, as well as gaps and lessons learned, related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Q: Are there any guidelines to the Voluntary National Reviews at HLPF?

A: The Secretary-General's Report [A/70/684](#), entitled "Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level", included in its annex a set of voluntary common reporting guidelines, which outlined suggested components to help countries frame their preparations for voluntary national reviews at the HLPF.¹

These components are indicative, aiming at suggesting a broad structure, bearing in mind that each country will decide on the scope of their review and the format in which they want to present their findings. The voluntary common reporting guidelines aim to introduce comparability among countries to make the discussion of good practices and the tracking of global trends more effective.

Countries reporting in 2016 mostly found it useful to structure their reports accordingly. They are [available in all UN languages](#) on the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform.

Q: Will there be an updated set of guidelines for countries participating in the Voluntary National Reviews at the 2017 HLPF?

A: General Assembly resolution [A/RES/70/299](#) has requested "the Secretary-General to update, as appropriate and taking into account feedback from countries participating in the high-level political forum, the voluntary common reporting guidelines as provided for in the annex to the report of the Secretary-General, and to make them available to Member States as a suggested tool in the preparations for voluntary national reviews".

The voluntary guidelines will be updated in due course, based on feedback from countries, which is incoming. For the 2017 HLPF, the existing guidelines remain applicable.

Q: What does it entail to participate in voluntary national reviews at the 2017 HLPF?

¹ See http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/684, available in all official languages of the United Nations.

A: Member States are encouraged to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and local levels which are country-led and country-driven, involving stakeholders in accordance with paragraphs 78 and 79 of the 2030 Agenda (A/RES/70/1).

Voluntary national reviews at the HLPF, aiming at facilitating the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, are expected to be based on such robust follow-up and review processes at the national and local levels.

The expectation is that each country participating in the Voluntary National Reviews in 2017 may present a focused report in writing and make a brief oral presentation during the 2017 HLPF. The guidelines proposed by the Secretary-General take the format of sections of a report, to make them user-friendly. To facilitate effective peer learning, it is expected that reports, and/or executive summaries of the reports, are to be submitted to the Secretariat prior to the 2017 HLPF (Deadlines to be communicated through the Secretariat).

Q: HLPF will consider each year a specific theme and discuss a group of SDGs; are the Voluntary National Reviews expected to address this theme and the group of SDGs in their reports and presentations?

A: No, countries do not need to address a theme and a group of SDGs that will be discussed at the HLPF that particular year. However, they may do so if they so want and find that it is relevant for their national implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

Q: Are the Voluntary National Reviews expected to include statistics and indicators and corresponding analysis supporting the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda?

A: It is up to individual countries to see how they would want to include statistics and indicators. Countries may want to illustrate the main elements of the reviews with figures showing trends, as appropriate. Countries may include an annex with data, using national indicators and/or the global SDG indicators proposed by the UN Statistical Commission.

Q: At what level should countries be represented in their national reviews at the HLPF?

A: It is suggested by the Secretary-General that the report include an opening statement by the Head of State or Government, a Minister or other high-ranking Government official, highlighting the key messages from the review and touching on critical issues in implementation that the country wishes to highlight. It is recommended that officials with the rank of Minister or equivalent lead the presentation during the three-day ministerial segment at the HLPF.

Q: How much time will countries have to present their national reviews at the 2017 HLPF?

A: Consultations are underway to identify the most effective way to present national reviews at the 2017 HLPF. The presentation at the HLPF is intended to focus on the key messages from the review process.

Q: What is the format for the presentation of the national reviews at the 2017 HLPF?

A: As was the case for the 2016 VNRs, the format of the sessions will be designed to accommodate to the maximum extent possible the presenting countries' preferences. In 2016, presentations were

made mostly by government representatives, but in some cases also by members of civil society and the private sector. Use can be made of slide presentations (PowerPoint) and short films.

Q: How will DESA and other UN entities support countries in their preparation for the national reviews at the HLPF?

A: Depending on request for support by countries for the preparation of their reviews, DESA and other UN entities will work with countries to identify countries' needs and provide capacity building in these areas. Several developing countries that conducted reviews for the 2016 HLPF reported on assistance received from UN Country Teams.

DESA will also support countries that will present VNRs through a robust preparatory process for the preparation of country reviews, including by creating space for exchange of experience and lessons learned before the HLPF, at regional and global levels, to improve country reviews and to strengthen preparations of voluntary national presentations, as well as to identify areas where they need support.

Q: How will major groups, other stakeholders and partnerships be involved in national reporting?

At the national level, Member States are encouraged to involve stakeholders in the national voluntary reviews in accordance with paragraphs 78 and 79 of resolution 70/1. The specific modalities for engagement are likely to vary from country to country and are to be decided by the national governments.

At the global level, the HLPF supports effective and broad participation of major groups and other stakeholders in follow-up and review processes at the HLPF in line with resolution 67/290. Representatives from civil society, academia, private sector, and parliament have been included in the delegations of some countries to the 2016 HLPF. Major groups and other stakeholders also commented and asked questions during the 2016 HLPF VNR presentations.

Q: What to expect after participating in voluntary national reviews at the 2017 HLPF?

Voluntary national reviews at the HLPF should not be a stand-alone exercise, but rather as part of a cycle of review and national implementation.

Participating countries are encouraged to continue engaging in the peer-learning exercises within relevant VNR networks, fostering an environment of mutual support and shared progress, and to apply lessons learned to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at their national and local levels.

It is anticipated that a synthesis report will be prepared by the Secretariat after the HLPF, highlighting good practices and lessons learnt from the VNR countries. The factual summary of the discussions at the HLPF, prepared by the President of ECOSOC in consultation with the Bureau, may also reflect key points from the presentation of the VNRs.