

2016

# Synthesis of Voluntary National Reviews



Division for Sustainable Development  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
United Nations

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
Bringing the SDGs into the national context: assessments, strategies and budgets .....	4
Awareness-raising and involving stakeholders.....	5
Institutions for implementing the 2030 Agenda .....	5
Goals and targets .....	6
Means of implementation .....	6
Monitoring, review and reporting .....	7
Thematic Analysis: ensuring that no-one is left behind .....	8
1. Introduction.....	9
2. An overview of the Voluntary National Reviews of 2016 .....	12
3. Bringing the SDGs into the national context: assessments, strategies and budgets.....	15
3.1 National contexts.....	15
3.2 Assessing SDGs for national implementation, interlinkages and trade-offs .....	16
3.3 SDGs in national development plans, strategies and budgets.....	18
4. Awareness-raising and involving stakeholders .....	23
4.1 Inclusion of stakeholders in institutions.....	24
4.2 Involvement of stakeholders in implementation of the 2030 Agenda .....	24
4.3 Awareness-raising.....	25
4.4 Engaging the private sector .....	26
4.5 Challenges.....	27
5. Institutions for implementing the 2030 Agenda .....	28
5.1 Mechanisms to ensure horizontal coordination and coherence.....	28
5.2 Involvement at the highest level .....	30
5.3 Involvement of key ministries.....	31
5.4 Channeling technical expertise through institutions.....	32
5.5 Involvement of parliament .....	32
5.6 Coordinating mechanisms at multiple levels of government.....	33
5.7 Challenges.....	36
6. Goals and targets.....	37
7. Means of implementation .....	41
7.1 Financing.....	41
7.2 International cooperation.....	43
7.3 South-south cooperation .....	45
7.4 Capacity building needs .....	46

7.5 Partnerships, including with the UN .....	48
7.6 Trade .....	49
7.7 Technology.....	50
8. Monitoring, reporting and review .....	51
8.1 Data, statistics and indicators.....	51
8.2 Mechanisms for reporting, follow-up and review .....	54
8.3 Challenges .....	58
9. Thematic analysis: Ensuring that no-one is left behind .....	58
9.1 Cross-cutting efforts .....	59
9.2 Measures targeted at specific groups.....	60
9.3 Policies to address regional inequalities.....	62
9.4 Leaving no one behind in international development policies .....	63
9.5 Challenges .....	63
Annex 1: Proposal for voluntary common reporting guidelines for voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum.....	65
Annex 2: Summary analysis of the questionnaire responses .....	68





## Executive Summary

The 2016 meeting of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) took place from 11 to 20 July 2016 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Twenty-two countries presented voluntary national reviews (VNRs) of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and particularly the sustainable development goals (SDGs), over a day and a half during the Ministerial Segment of the HLPF under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This report synthesizes some of the findings of the VNRs, drawing primarily from the written reports and executive summaries of the majority of countries. It uses a theme based analysis drawn largely from the voluntary common guidelines contained in the Annex to the Secretary-General's report on critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level. The report examines reporting countries' efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda, including challenges, gaps, achievements and lessons learned.

### **Bringing the SDGs into the national context: assessments, strategies and budgets**

Countries reported on the achievement of the SDGs from their national perspectives, including a consideration of their national priorities and approaches, and outlined how they have included the SDGs into national development plans and strategies. They provided information on the context in which they are implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and particularly the overarching challenges they face. These included high levels of poverty and inequality; fragile economies; dependence on natural resources and agriculture and facing the effects of a prolonged fall in commodity prices; epidemics and their aftermath;

high unemployment, and in particular youth unemployment; conflict and post-conflict situations vulnerability to disasters and the consequences of recent disasters; vulnerability to climate change; and financial and institutional shortcomings.

The assessments of what the SDGs imply at the national level were undertaken through both technical analyses and multi-stakeholder consultative processes. In several countries, translating the SDGs into national settings also involved an assessment of lessons learned from implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Countries reported on the incorporation of the SDGs into national development plans, which is essential for them to be reflected in the allocation of budgets and institutional resources. Several stated that their efforts to bring the SDGs into national plans and strategies also involved ensuring synergies with other national strategies and processes and regional and international strategies.

### **Awareness-raising and involving stakeholders**

Most countries highlighted that the scope and complexity of the SDGs require the active mobilization of a broad range of stakeholders in priority setting, implementation and review. Nearly all countries reported involvement by a wide range of government and non-governmental stakeholders including civil society, parliament and the private sector in the process of preparation of the VNR and in implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Though the degree to which the stakeholders are able to participate meaningfully in national formulation and implementation of sustainable development policy varies, several forms of engagement of multi-stakeholders are evident in the reports. This includes participation of all stakeholders through institutions, awareness-raising effort such as briefings to cabinet; meetings in parliament; wide-scale communications and advocacy efforts to raise awareness, interest and ownership; dialogues and meetings, including to gather insights and inputs from multiple stakeholders; radio and television discussions; and the development of communication strategies to make the sustainable development goals more understandable. Web-based platforms are also being used to engage civil society in SDG implementation and future reviews.

### **Institutions for implementing the 2030 Agenda**



The participation of multi-stakeholders in their institutional structures.

The importance of institutions in ensuring coherence and coordination was widely recognized by the majority of country reports as fundamental and one of the first steps in implementation of the SDGs. Most countries have reported substantial progress in establishing and/or strengthening existing institutional frameworks, inter-ministerial coordinating offices, committees or commissions. Several countries ensure the

Many countries have a variety of different mechanisms and bodies making up their institutional framework, making them multi-faceted in nature. Some establish separate coordinating mechanisms for branches and levels of government. An important feature of many of the institutional frameworks was the emphasis on integration and coordination. Some include all relevant ministries and institutions, and in several cases, coordinating bodies are located at the highest levels of government, connected to the offices of Prime Ministers or Presidents. In some countries, specific ministries are designated to coordinate implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Because of the wide-ranging nature of the SDGs, many countries engage technical expertise for the implementation of the Agenda, including the establishment of advisory boards and panels to facilitate discussion about the SDGs. A number of mechanisms and strategies are being undertaken through which national governments are coordinating with, engaging, empowering and building capacity of local and sub-national governments.

### Goals and targets

An overview is provided on the ways in which countries chose to report on the goals and targets. Some countries chose not to address the goals individually; while others targeted specific goals in the light of their national priorities. Some chose to present in-depth reviews of all 17 goals, including efforts that have been taken internationally to achieve them; while others assessed the SDGs by aligning them with their national development plans and other relevant strategies. Some countries addressed interlinkages between the goals, emphasizing the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs.

### Means of implementation



Countries addressed means of implementation both as a cross-cutting element of their implementation strategies and with regard to their commitments under SDG 17. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda was quoted by many countries as a reference for the mobilization of means of implementation. Many countries reported on national and international actions and provided donor and recipient perspectives on international

assistance, with both groups emphasizing efforts to ensure coherence and efficiency. Many countries recalled that, beyond the issue of financing and ODA, trade, technology, innovation and capacity-building are critical elements for implementation. Some countries also addressed the issue of coherence between national and international policy.

The importance of mobilizing resources from public, private, national and international sources, as well as of ensuring that policy environments are favorable to the mobilization of resources are highlighted in the report.

Countries are integrating the SDGs into national budgets and enhancing their capacity to mobilize public funds, for instance through tax reforms, for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Countries also mentioned both initiatives and challenges in mobilizing resources at

subnational and local level. Some countries underlined the importance of devolving responsibilities to local government with matching mechanisms for allocation of resources or budgetary support. Many developing countries noted that the fulfillment of international commitments in the spirit of common but differentiated responsibilities continues to be critical, even for middle-income countries and economies in transition. Some donor countries reported inclusion of national resource mobilization and public finance management in their strategies to support developing countries.

Both developed and developing countries reported on their approaches to the 2030 Agenda in terms of their international responsibilities, ODA commitments, south-south cooperation and regional engagement. Some countries referred to the international components of their implementation strategies, some donor countries reported on their ODA contributions and reaffirmed commitments. Both donors and recipient countries emphasized the need for greater effectiveness and coherence in international assistance and reported on related efforts. Some countries highlighted their experience that alignment of international cooperation strategies to the SDGs help advance both coherence and effectiveness.

### Monitoring, review and reporting



There is wide recognition of the importance of following up on and monitoring the implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. Substantial efforts are being made to develop statistical capacity and to contribute to the definition of global indicators as well as to identify indicators that best reflect national challenges. Countries have established or are in the process of establishing mechanisms for reporting, follow-up and review. Multi-stakeholder participation has been recognized as an important feature of follow-up and review mechanisms in several countries.

National and international efforts are under way to define indicators, to assess and improve the availability of data and statistics, and to put in place transparent monitoring systems. There was acknowledgment by many countries that the SDGs will require a set of data and statistics that is broader, more disaggregated, with greater frequency and shorter lags than those used to monitor development efforts to date. In parallel to international indicators, countries are developing or adapting national indicators, a process which is mirrored in the process of integrating national development plans and strategies, regional programmes and the 2030 Agenda. However, many countries also reported significant human resource and financial constraints to improve the quality of data, noting this area as one in which they require capacity building assistance. Some noted the need to improve capacity in registry systems and management of administrative records, while some stressed challenges in data production both at the local level, and to enable policy to be geared to disadvantaged groups.

National and international efforts are under way to define indicators, to assess and improve the availability of data and statistics, and to put in place transparent monitoring systems. There was acknowledgment by many countries that the SDGs will require a set of data and statistics that is broader, more disaggregated, with greater frequency and shorter lags than those used to monitor development efforts to date. In parallel to international indicators, countries are developing or adapting national indicators, a process which is mirrored in the process of integrating national development plans and strategies, regional programmes and the 2030 Agenda. However, many countries also reported significant human resource and financial constraints to improve the quality of data, noting this area as one in which they require capacity building assistance. Some noted the need to improve capacity in registry systems and management of administrative records, while some stressed challenges in data production both at the local level, and to enable policy to be geared to disadvantaged groups.

Governance structures are being created or adapted to ensure transparency and accountability in the development and monitoring of indicators, as well as inclusiveness of



multiple stakeholders and multiple areas of government. For many countries, coordination of multiple government sectors in monitoring, evaluation and reporting is still a challenge.

### **Thematic Analysis: ensuring that no-one is left behind**

The principle and the theme of the HLPF in 2016, 'ensuring that no-one is left behind' underpins the policies and initiatives to implement the SDGs. Some countries in their VNRs chose to explicitly address the theme, where other countries addressed similar issues in their analysis of the goals. Cross-cutting efforts have been taken, including laws, policies and programmes, as well as ratification of international treaties, for leaving no-one behind. These include measures to reduce poverty, and eradicate discrimination and promote equality on a number of grounds, including race, gender, pregnancy, disability, age and religion. Many countries reported on measures they had taken to address specific groups such as children and youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, women and girls, refugees and internally displaced persons. Some countries noted efforts to address regional inequalities; and some countries have included the pledge to leave no one behind as a focus of their cooperation strategies with other countries.



## 1. Introduction



This report synthesizes some of the main issues addressed in the first round of the voluntary national reviews (VNRs) that took place during the ministerial segment of the 2016 meeting of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF), meeting under the auspices of Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on 19-20 July. Twenty-two countries participated in the first round of VNRs.<sup>1</sup>

The synthesis report draws primarily from the written reports submitted by the majority of the volunteering countries.<sup>2</sup> Executive summaries and oral submissions during the VNR presentation at the HLPF were used in those cases in which countries did not submit a written report, or where information in the presentation was additional to that provided in written form. The report includes general characteristics of the early implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and identifies challenges and examples of implementation from the reporting countries. It examines a range of topics, including ownership and involving stakeholders, institutional mechanisms, incorporation of the SDGs into national frameworks, means of implementation and an overview of how countries addressed goals and targets in the VNRs. This report attempts to highlight practices from all countries that participated in the 2016 VNR process. However, of necessity, the report is selective and not exhaustive with respect to practices and examples. All examples chosen are illustrative and their selection does not imply that the 2016 VNRs do not contain other equally valid and useful examples of country practices.

In September 2015, the General Assembly adopted a new agenda to guide sustainable development efforts for the period from 2015 to 2030 (Resolution A/RES/70/1: *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*). The 2030 Agenda

<sup>1</sup> These were China, Colombia, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Republic of Korea, Madagascar, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Norway, Philippines, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, and Venezuela.

<sup>2</sup> The written reports and executive summaries of the 2016 VNRs are available on: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) sets out 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 targets which jointly constitute a comprehensive plan of action to eradicate poverty and ensure sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda outlines a follow-up and review process. Member states committed to a robust, voluntary, effective, participatory, transparent and integrated follow-up and review framework, designed to help countries to maximize and track progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda in order to ensure that no one is left behind. The framework, operating at the national, regional and global levels, promotes accountability to citizens, supports effective international cooperation in achieving the 2030 Agenda and fosters exchanges of best practices and mutual learning.

The High-Level Political Forum<sup>3</sup> has a central role in overseeing the follow-up and review process at the global level. Among other functions, the HLPF facilitates the presentation of the VNRs which are state-led, involving ministerial and other relevant high-level participants' and should provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders.<sup>4</sup> It facilitates the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, and provides political leadership, guidance and recommendations for follow-up.

Paragraph 74 of the 2030 Agenda provides that nine principles will guide the follow-up and review process:

- (a) They will be voluntary and country-led, will take into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and will respect policy space and priorities. As national ownership is key to achieving sustainable development, the outcome from national-level processes will be the foundation for reviews at the regional and global levels, given that the global review will be primarily based on national official data sources.
- (b) They will track progress in implementing the universal Goals and targets, including the means of implementation, in all countries in a manner which respects their universal, integrated and interrelated nature and the three dimensions of sustainable development.
- (c) They will maintain a longer-term orientation, identify achievements, challenges, gaps and critical success factors and support countries in making informed policy choices. They will help to mobilize the necessary means of implementation and partnerships, support the identification of

---

<sup>3</sup> The High Level Political Forum was established in GA Resolution A/RES/66/288.

<sup>4</sup> Resolution 67/290 (12 July 2013) which defined the 'Format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development', established, among the attributions of the HLPF, meeting under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), that of conducting 'regular reviews, starting in 2016, on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives, including those related to the means of implementation, within the context of the post-2015 development agenda'. The Resolution determined that these reviews would replace the national voluntary presentations that were previously held in the context of the annual ministerial-level substantive reviews of ECOSOC, as determined by General Assembly Resolution 61/16 in the aftermath of the 2005 World Summit, ([http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/67/290](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/67/290))

- solutions and best practices and promote the coordination and effectiveness of the international development system.
- (d) They will be open, inclusive, participatory and transparent for all people and will support reporting by all relevant stakeholders.
  - (e) They will be people-centred, gender-sensitive, respect human rights and have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and those furthest behind.
  - (f) They will build on existing platforms and processes, where these exist, avoid duplication and respond to national circumstances, capacities, needs and priorities. They will evolve over time, taking into account emerging issues and the development of new methodologies, and will minimize the reporting burden on national administrations.
  - (g) They will be rigorous and based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.
  - (h) They will require enhanced capacity-building support for developing countries, including the strengthening of national data systems and evaluation programmes, particularly in African countries, least developed countries, small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and middle-income countries.
  - (i) They will benefit from the active support of the United Nations system and other multilateral institutions.

Paragraph 79 of the 2030 Agenda encourages member states to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and subnational levels which are country-led and country-driven. Such reviews should draw on contributions from indigenous peoples, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders, in line with national circumstances, policies and priorities. National parliaments as well as other institutions can also support these processes.

Participating in the VNR process under paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda<sup>5</sup> would normally consist of the following elements: a national review component (drawing on the national review process); preparation of written material to submit to the HLPF, for which the Secretary-General has proposed voluntary common reporting guidelines;<sup>6</sup> a presentation at

---

<sup>5</sup> Paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda provides that the HLPF will carry out regular reviews, which will be voluntary, while encouraging reporting, and include relevant United Nations entities and other stakeholders. It also provides that the reviews shall be state led, involving ministerial and other relevant high-level participants; and provide a platform for partnerships.

<sup>6</sup> A/70/694. The main elements the guidelines suggest addressing were how the review was prepared, the policy and enabling environment (including creating ownership of the SDGs, incorporation of the SDGs in national frameworks, integration of the 3 dimensions, goals and targets, institutional mechanisms, and an

the HLPF meeting; and a feedback process for volunteering countries, including lessons learned and recommendations for follow-up.



The voluntary common reporting guidelines contained in the Secretary-General's report make clear that each country will decide on the scope of their reviews and the format in which they wish to present their findings. However, countries may voluntarily use the components which are presented in the guidelines to help them frame the preparations for their VNRs. These would prove helpful for comparability, while ensuring flexibility and would be periodically updated, taking into account the experiences of countries. The voluntary common guidelines are contained in annexure 1 of this report.

The Agenda does not stipulate periodicity for the reviews. The Secretary-General's report notes the importance of regular reviews and suggests countries consider carrying out up to two voluntary national reviews during the period of implementation of the Agenda.

## 2. An overview of the Voluntary National Reviews of 2016



This section of the report provides an overview of the general characteristics of the VNRs presented in 2016 in terms of process and content.

Of the 22 countries presenting, 19 presented a full report and an executive summary. Three countries presented only executive summaries. Full reports varied widely in extension and format. Most contained the main elements, or some of the main elements, suggested in the guidelines. Some countries presented supporting documents in addition to reports and summaries. The 2016 VNRs were presented over a day and a half of the Ministerial Segment of the HLPF, under the auspices of ECOSOC. Each country delivered a presentation, in some cases complemented by videos and power-point presentations. Countries could choose between two formats for their presentations: panel-style presentations or consecutive presentations.

Delegations were composed mostly of government representatives, including the Prime Ministers of two countries (Norway and Togo). Other government presenters included Ministers and State Secretaries, Vice-Ministers/Deputy Ministers or equivalent, the Chief of Staff of the Office of the President, a director-general and head of department or

analysis on the theme of the HLPF for that year), means of implementation, next steps, and a statistical annex. There are no guidelines for the oral presentation of the VNR at the HLPF, and in 2016 the format and structure of the presentation was left to the discretion of countries.

Permanent representatives to the United Nations supported by government officials. Finland, Germany, Norway and Switzerland included members of civil society, private sector and unions in their delegations.

The General Assembly<sup>7</sup> encouraged that experience gained from the VNRs at the HLPF should be taken into consideration in the development of new and flexible arrangements for the preparation of subsequent sessions. Every participating country was sent a questionnaire with a view to facilitating future learning and sharing of experiences. The answers to the questionnaires, which included recommendations for improvement and suggestions for enhancement of the VNR process, were synthesised and analysed. The summary of the questionnaires is contained in an annexure 2 of this report.

In terms of content, the VNRs included a large variety of approaches. Because of the relative novelty of the 2030 Agenda, some countries addressed first measures taken and outlined their future plans to implement the sustainable development goals. Others listed challenges; achievements, gaps and lessons learned, including from implementation of the Millennium Development Goals; experiences, including perceived barriers and opportunities, in implementing sustainable development strategies. Most countries addressed some or all of the SDGs, the institutional mechanisms planned or in place, how they are incorporating some or all of the goals and targets to their national circumstances, and efforts to engage and raise awareness amongst all stakeholders. Some countries presented, in addition to reports and summaries, supporting documents.

Multi-stakeholder participation was prominent in the preparation of the voluntary national reviews. Almost all countries reported the involvement of non-governmental stakeholders in the preparation of the review and implementation of the Agenda, and parliaments and local governments were, in some cases, involved in all stages of the review process. Means of implementation featured in all reports. Some countries included not only actions on implementation within their borders but also ongoing and planned initiatives and approaches supporting other countries, or identified areas where international (including regional cooperation) is called for. Several presented assessments of the availability of indicators and statistics.

Countries reported benefits from participating in the review process. The VNRs, it was reported, were an opportunity to take stock of the implementation of sustainable development and for the purpose of continued policy planning. The country reports stated that the VNR process, among others:

- Helped to map the baseline for implementation of the Agenda, raise political and public awareness and to create ownership;
- Led to enhanced national understanding, collaboration, and commitment by the different stakeholders towards identifying the roles they will play in implementing the Agenda;

---

<sup>7</sup> GA Resolution 70/299.

- Contributed to greater coherence and ownership of the follow-up process within the government; and
- Contributed to significant public interest and strengthened the framework for coordinated monitoring.

Many countries recognized that the VNR process is not a once-off event, but is both an articulation and culmination of national processes to take stock of implementation of sustainable development. Some countries recognized the cyclical and dynamic process of using the VNR to manage progress towards the achievement of the SDGs rather than producing a final end plan. Some countries such as Finland and Mexico presented preliminary or interim VNRs which will be further developed. Sierra Leone noted that their VNR provided only a broad framework to guide more intensive processes ahead, and that needed to be done to integrate the goals into the planning process. Countries including France, Estonia, Germany, Togo, Switzerland and Venezuela used the process of drawing up the VNR as a planning and consultation exercise and the development of their national action plan on the sustainable development goals will follow at the end of 2016. Togo will present its second VNR in 2017 to present its plan, while Switzerland has established a transition phase from 2016 to 2017, and will present its second VNR in 2018. Germany will present its second VNR in 2021.



Many countries recognized that fostering coordination at the domestic level is important to ensure reporting synergies and may reduce the reporting burden by avoiding fragmentation and duplication of national reporting processes, including the VNRs. Countries, including Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Mexico and Switzerland, noted the overlap between various international instruments/international human rights agreements and the goals and targets. Mexico reported that international agreements will support SDG implementation, and among the challenges are commitments contained in the various international conventions. Estonia pointed out that the implementation of several targets takes place on the basis of international agreements or by participating in the work of international organizations or conventions. Georgia noted that its various national and international commitments lead to proliferation of the policy and strategy processes. Switzerland stated that international strategies and policies form part of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

### 3. Bringing the SDGs into the national context: assessments, strategies and budgets

*This section of the report examines how countries have included the SDGs into national development plans and strategies. It highlights information on the context in which countries are implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and the overarching challenges they face. Countries reported on the incorporation of the SDGs into national development plans, which is essential for them to be reflected in the allocation of budgets and institutional resources. Several countries stated that their efforts to bring the SDGs into national plans and strategies also involved ensuring synergies with other national strategies and processes and regional and international strategies.*

A central characteristic of the 2030 Agenda is its recognition of the difference of national realities, levels of development, capacities and priorities. Accordingly, implementation of the Agenda at the national level has involved critical assessments of the SDGs and how they apply to each particular context, in both developed and developing countries. The scope and ambition of the Agenda and SDGs require their inclusion in the instruments that define government action, including the national development plans and budgets. In the VNRs, countries reported on the processes whereby they have considered or are considering what the achievement of the SDGs involves from their national perspectives, what their national priorities and approaches are, and how they have included the SDGs into national development plans and strategies as well as in their budgets.

#### 3.1 National contexts

In the VNRs, countries provided information on the broad context within which they are implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and particularly the overarching challenges they face. Contexts vary widely, as countries participating in the VNRs ranged from least developed countries to some of those with the highest per capita income, but among them were: high levels of poverty and inequality (Madagascar, Mexico, Sierra Leone, Togo); a fragile economy (Sierra Leone); economies dependent on natural resources and agriculture, facing the effects of a prolonged fall in commodity prices (Sierra Leone, Uganda); epidemics and their aftermath (the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone); a growing population (Egypt and Uganda); low economic growth and high unemployment, and in particular youth unemployment (Sierra Leone, Georgia, Egypt, France, Uganda); conflict and post-conflict situations (Georgia, Colombia); economic performance reflecting adjustments of the transition period (Montenegro); vulnerability to disasters and the consequences of recent disasters, including massive flooding (Sierra Leone), tsunamis and flooding (Samoa); vulnerability to climate change (Samoa), structural characteristics of a small island developing state - small size and extreme isolation, limited and narrow resource base, geographic dispersion and isolation from markets, diseconomies of scale, capacity limitations (Samoa); weak multi-sectoral implementation planning, coordination gaps, data and reporting inadequacies, weak public private partnership and limited financial resources (Uganda); gaps between social groups – including gaps in pay between men and women – and challenges to securing the welfare society (Estonia, Finland); long chronological perspective of Agenda 2030 in relation to other political cycles; strengthening ownership



and commitment and the government's facilitating role; and ensuring the synergy of implementation in execution at various levels (Finland).

Countries reported that the principles of sustainable development are incorporated into their national legal frameworks, including at constitutional level. Sustainable development is a core value in Egypt's 2014 constitution, which, like most other constitutions in the world, covers several aspects of the 17 SDGs. Uganda's constitution integrates key principles of balanced and sustainable development and addresses issues related to the 2030 Agenda including the right of citizens to peace and democracy, a clean environment, food security and nutrition, clean and save water, national unity and stability and recognition of the role of women in economic development. Sustainable development is stipulated in Switzerland's Federal Constitution and thus an objective for all state authorities. It must be integrated from the start in existing planning and control processes of the Federal Council, the departments and offices of the Federal Administration.

### 3.2 Assessing SDGs for national implementation, interlinkages and trade-offs



An important part of the first steps in implementation of the 2030 Agenda has been the assessment of what each of the SDGs implies at the national level, taking account of country contexts and challenges, and national priorities. These assessments were undertaken through both technical analyses and multi-stakeholder consultative processes discussed in chapter 4. Estonia undertook a gap analysis of its policies and SDGs and found

that gaps remained in achieving productivity growth, developing an energy- and resource efficient economy, lowering CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita, an improvement in the subsistence of low income people and tackling the gender pay gap. In Madagascar, national consultations were held to assess the consistency of the SDGs with the National Development Plan, to identify SDGs which would help accelerate Madagascar's path towards development, and to determine targets for the preliminary implementation phase. In Mexico, national consultations were held to identify challenges and actions for the implementation of the Agenda in the national context. Samoa conducted a preliminary assessment of its Strategy for the Development of Samoa (SDS) against the SDGs through a consultative process, and this served as an input for the elaboration of the 2012-2016 component of the SDS. In Sierra Leone, a process of consultations and technical workshops were undertaken for the SDG Adaptation Report in which alignment of the SDGs with the country's Agenda for Prosperity was defined. Switzerland was, at the time of the VNR, conducting a gap analysis of its SDGs and targets. In Venezuela, the government analyzed the alignment of the relevant objectives with its Economic and Social Development Plan (2013-2019). In Turkey, the government undertook a rapid screening of the alignment of the national development strategy and the SDGs.

In several countries, translating the SDGs into the national setting also involved an assessment of their experiences with the Millennium Development Goals. Lessons learned from these processes included the need to measure advances and make information available to the public, improving statistical capacity and overcoming gaps in statistics (Mexico, Philippines, Samoa, Togo), to build institutional capacity (including Samoa, Mexico, Philippines, Togo), to ensure greater stakeholder ownership and involvement (Philippines, Samoa, Turkey), to have an implementation plan (Philippines), to address root causes of inequalities, poor development and to coordinate donor support (Samoa) and to start implementation early (Togo). Developed countries, for which involvement in the Millennium Development Goals was limited to their engagement in the global partnership for development (Goal 8), addressed the issue of what the universality of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs implied for their countries. In addition to addressing their own national development challenges, some countries, including Finland, Germany and Norway, are addressing both the national and international dimension of their contributions to the SDGs. For example, in Germany, measures have been defined for each goal at three levels: with regard to implementation and impacts in Germany; with regard to impacts in other countries and on global public goods – i.e. on global well-being; and with regard to supporting other countries through international cooperation.

In the process of translating SDGs into national contexts and reflecting on national priorities, countries are faced with the task of identifying the interlinkages between goals, ensuring that implementation strategies integrate the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) and addressing trade-offs, all in the context of national planning instruments and development strategies. Institutional arrangements are discussed further in chapter 5. Analytical instruments have also been used to support different aspects of those challenges. For example, in the Philippines, the use of the Threshold 21 model, which allows the simulation of long-term development scenarios and comparative analysis of policy options, supported the elaboration of the Long-Term Vision (LTV), 'Ambisyon Natin'.<sup>8</sup> Madagascar and Mexico reported using UNDP's Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) tool.<sup>9</sup> Togo is using the Analytic Framework for Sustainable Development developed by the University of Québec in partnership with the Francophone Institute for Sustainable Development, to ensure integration of the dimensions of sustainable development in the implementation of policies, strategies, programmes and projects by line ministries. Togo's Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Employment Promotion, its National Sustainable Development Strategy and its National Programme for Capacity-Building and Modernization of the State, were analyzed under this framework and improved. Training in the application of this instrument has been part of the first 2030 Agenda implementation stage and one of the main elements of support by technical and financial partners.

---

<sup>8</sup> For more information on the Threshold 21 model, see [http://www.millennium-institute.org/integrated\\_planning/tools/T21/](http://www.millennium-institute.org/integrated_planning/tools/T21/)

<sup>9</sup> According to UNDP, the Rapid Integrated Assessment tool "reviews current national development plans and relevant sector strategies, and provides an indicative overview of the level of alignment with the SDG targets. It also identifies interlinkages across targets" (*Implementing the 2030 Agenda: SDG Rapid Integrated Assessment*, presentation, [https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/RIA\\_presentation-18.03.2016.pptx](https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/RIA_presentation-18.03.2016.pptx), January 2016).

In some countries, legal requirements for impact assessments also provide a tool to ensure that the process of translating the SDGs into national planning instruments and action is carried out in an integrated way. For example, in Estonia, legal acts, development plans and approval of government's positions on EU matters must be preceded by an analysis of their impact on various fields: 1) social, including demographic; 2) security and foreign policy; 3) economy; 4) living and natural environment; 5) regional development; and 6) organization of government institutions and local governments. In addition, in accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Act, when compiling strategic planning documents and local plans, a strategic environmental impact assessment has to be conducted, encompassing impact on the natural, social, economic and cultural environment. In Germany, sustainability impact assessments are used to examine every draft item of legislation and legal ordinances proposed by the government against the objectives, indicators and management regulations laid out in the National Sustainable Development Strategy for the impacts they can be expected to have on sustainable development.

### 3.3 SDGs in national development plans, strategies and budgets



A critical aspect of implementing the 2030 Agenda and enabling action to achieve the SDGs at the national level is their incorporation into national development plans and strategies, which guide the work of the government, the enactment of legislation and the distribution of budgetary resources. As Colombia mentioned during its presentation at the HLPF 'if something is within the planning system, that means it is part of the investment budget'. Depending on the stage of the planning cycle, some countries reported undertaking assessments of how the SDGs fit into their existing development plans, while others reported incorporating them into new plans. In both cases, this implies that the SDGs are becoming part of the central instruments for government action.

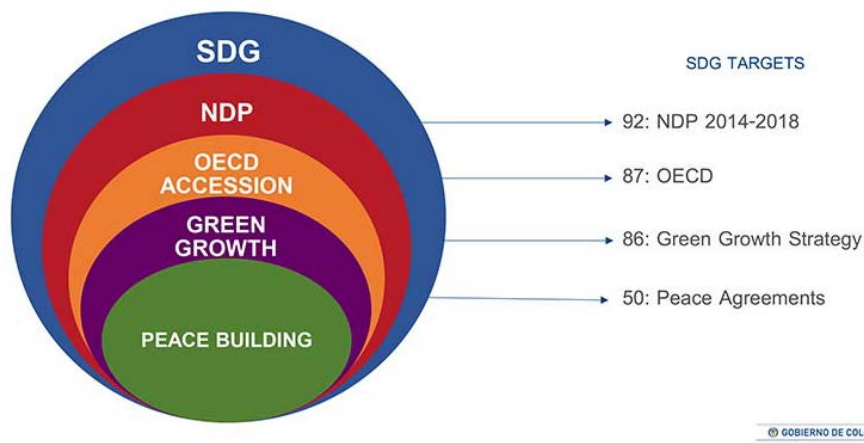
The following is a list of initiatives that reporting countries have taken to incorporate the SDGs into their national development plans and strategies:

- China (in its presentation) stated that in March 2016 the government published the outline of its Thirteenth Five-Year Plan (2016-2020), with the commitment to implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It also stated that China's implementation of the 2030 Agenda takes place in the context of its medium- and long-term development strategies. The SDGs are translated into specific missions such as a national strategy for innovation-driven development, or a national plan for sustainable agriculture, among others. China would conduct annual assessments of implementation of the Five-Year Plan synchronized with the assessments of implementation of the Agenda.

- Colombia incorporated the SDGs into its national development plan even before the 2030 Agenda was adopted, to ensure they were included in the cycle that began in 2015. SDG implementation is also taking place in the context of the peace process, the process of accession to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the country's green growth strategy (see figure 1).

**Figure 1: SDGs and other national agendas in Colombia**

ACTIVE NATIONAL AGENDAS DETERMINE ACTIONS RELATED TO AT LEAST 146 SDG TARGETS - 86%



GOBIERNO DE COLOMBIA  
 TODOS POR UN NUEVO PAÍS

Source: "Colombia National Voluntary Review – The SDGs: a Tool for Peacebuilding", Presentation by Mr. Simón Gaviria Muñoz, Minister of Planning of Colombia, HLPF, July 20, 2016.

[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21388Colombia\\_PPT%20NVR%2020%20JULIO.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21388Colombia_PPT%20NVR%2020%20JULIO.pdf)

- Egypt reported that its 'Sustainable Development Strategy: Egypt Vision 2030' is aligned with the SDGs in content and implementation period. The strategy was reflected in the Government program for 2016-2018 and the annual plan for 2016-2017, both of which were approved by parliament. This enables parliament to monitor the implementation of the strategy's objectives, targets, programs and projects within a specific timeframe and against a clear set of key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Estonia's Sustainable Development Act, adopted in 1995, set the foundations for long term planning. All government actions must take account of the Sustainable Development Strategy, which was, at the time of the VNRs, under revision to ensure its compatibility with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.
- In Georgia, the SDGs, as a group, are being recognized as an overarching objective and as a framework to encapsulate various sectoral policies and strategies. Implementation is being undertaken in the context of the Annual Government Work Plan (AGWP), alongside the implementation of the EU Georgia Association Agenda, the Social and Economic Development Strategy 'Georgia 2020' adopted in 2014, the National Strategy for Protection of Human Rights in Georgia (2014-2020) and the Public Administration Reform Roadmap (2015) and its Action Plan 2015-2016.
- In Madagascar, the Ministry of Finance and Budget prepared a budgetary framework for the medium term, to support the elaboration of a Finance Law that reflects priority actions and instruments for poverty reduction and progress towards the SDGs. From 2017, the budget will be aligned with the National Development Plan and the effort of

prioritization of national policies and strategies on SDGs targets in Budget Framework Medium-term would be the logical continuation of the process.

- Mexico's development efforts have been deployed through 6-year national development plans. The current plan (National Development Plan 2013-2018), while elaborated before the 2030 Agenda, was found to be compatible with the Agenda and the SDGs. Mexico, like Madagascar, has used, with support from UNDP, a Rapid Integrated Assessment Tool to align the SDGs and the national development plan.
- In Montenegro, implementation of the 2030 Agenda is taking place in the context of a group of instruments including the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, the National Strategy on Climate Change until 2030, the Spatial Plan of Montenegro, the Program of Economic Reforms, Macro-Fiscal Guidelines, the medium-term public debt management strategy, the medium-term program of accession to the European Union, and the Program of Structural Reforms by 2020, adopted in April 2016, which promotes six areas of structural reforms.
- Morocco reported on its national consultations which had the main objective of establishing national priorities and also enabled discussion of sectoral strategies and their integration. The consultations revealed that many of the SDGs are included in sectoral strategies.
- The Philippine priorities with respect to the 2030 Agenda are based on the new administration's ten-point socioeconomic agenda, the Philippine Development Framework, the Long-Term Vision and the results of national and local consultations for defining the Post-2015 Development Agenda.
- In Sierra Leone, the 2016 budget includes an annex showing the links between the SDG goals and targets and the eight pillars of the country's Agenda for Prosperity. SDGs are aligned to each spending category of the Budget, and the Budget Statement will define actors and responsibilities for reporting within the government units that will be allocated government resources.
- In Togo, after the adoption of the SDGs, capacity-building efforts were undertaken involving national and sub-national actors on the tools and methodologies for the integration of the SDGs and their targets into planning. The government also launched the process for the elaboration of its National Development Plan for 2018-2022, which will serve as the basis for integration of the SDGs.
- Turkey first introduced the concept of sustainable development in development planning in its 7<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan (NDP), in 1996. Outcomes of Rio+20 were reflected in the 10<sup>th</sup> NDP, which covers 2014-2018. Turkey was, at the time of the VNR, in the process of preparing the long-term vision on which the 11th National Development Plan will be based, and intended to make the SDGs one of the main inputs of that vision.
- Uganda's long-term Comprehensive National Development Planning Framework (CNDPF) provides for the development of a 30-year Vision, three 10-year Perspective Plans, six five-year Development Plans, five Sector Development Plans and Local Government Development Plans and annual plans and budgets. The second National Development Plan (NDP II 2015/16-2019/20) is the framework for implementing the 2030 Agenda and SDGs during that period, and will be followed by a third and fourth NDP which will further integrate the SDGs. The preparation of NDPII coincided with the deliberations and adoption of the 2030 Agenda and this provided an opportunity for Uganda to integrate the SDGs into the plan. An assessment undertaken by the National

Planning Authority indicated that the NDPII has integrated 69 percent of the SDGs. Parliament ensures the national budget is aligned to the NDP.

- In Venezuela, the government has found that most of the SDGs are in line with the relevant objectives of the Economic and Social Development Plan (2013-2019). The country is reviewing the plan to make it compatible with the 2030 Agenda and applicable during the period from 2016 to 2030.

In some countries, including Finland, Montenegro and the Republic of Korea, the 2030 Agenda has been linked to sustainable development strategies that can be traced back to earlier commitments, instruments and processes, such as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992).

Several countries stated that their efforts to bring the SDGs into national plans and strategies also involved ensuring synergies with other national strategies and processes (Colombia’s peace process, Mexico’s structural reforms (see figure 2); Sierra Leone’s Agenda for Prosperity and National Ebola Recovery Strategy), regional strategies and visions (Europe 2020 – Finland, Germany, France; Africa 2063 – Egypt, Madagascar, Uganda; East African Community’s Vision 2050 - Uganda), requirements for accession to the European Union (Georgia, Montenegro) and the OECD (Colombia), and other international strategies and instruments (SAMOA Pathway, smooth transition strategy out of LDC status both in the case of Samoa). Some countries referred to their green growth or green economy strategies (for example, Colombia, Republic of Korea, Germany, Uganda, Montenegro, Turkey and Switzerland). Several countries also reported on efforts to align 2030 Agenda implementation with their strategies in regard to climate change, including commitments under the Paris Agreement including Samoa, Norway, Uganda and Togo.

Figure 2: Alignment of Mexico’s 13 structural reforms with the 17 SDGs (in Spanish)

ODS/ REFORMA		Reforma Energética	Reforma en Telecomunicaciones	Reforma en Materia de Competencia Económica	Reforma Financiera	Reforma Hacendaria	Reforma Laboral	Reforma Educativa	Código Nacional de Procedimientos Penales	Nueva Ley de Amparo Electoral	Reforma Política	Reforma en Materia de Transparencia	Reforma Disciplina Financiera de las Entidades Federativas y los Municipios	Reforma anticorrupción
15	Objetivo 1. Poner fin a la pobreza en todas sus formas en todo el mundo.	✓												
2	Objetivo 2. Poner fin al hambre, lograr la seguridad alimentaria y la mejora de la nutrición y promover la agricultura sostenible.	✓												
3	Objetivo 3. Garantizar una vida sana y promover el bienestar para todos en todas las edades.	✓												
4	Objetivo 4. Garantizar una educación inclusiva, equitativa y de calidad y promover oportunidades de aprendizaje durante toda la vida para todos.						✓	✓						
5	Objetivo 5. Lograr la igualdad entre los géneros y empoderar a todas las mujeres y las niñas.						✓	✓						
6	Objetivo 6. Garantizar la disponibilidad de agua y su gestión sostenible y el saneamiento para todos.						✓							
7	Objetivo 7. Garantizar el acceso a una energía asequible, segura, sostenible y moderna para todos.	✓												
8	Objetivo 8. Promover el crecimiento económico sostenido, inclusivo y sostenible, el empleo pleno y productivo y el trabajo decente para todos.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
9	Objetivo 9. Construir infraestructuras resilientes, promover la industrialización inclusiva y sostenible y fomentar la innovación.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
10	Objetivo 10. Reducir la desigualdad en y entre los países	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
11	Objetivo 11. Lograr que las ciudades y los asentamientos humanos sean inclusivos, seguros, resilientes y sostenibles.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
12	Objetivo 12. Garantizar modalidades de consumo y producción sostenibles.	✓												
13	Objetivo 13. Adoptar medidas urgentes para combatir el cambio climático y sus efectos	✓												
14	Objetivo 14. Conservar y utilizar en forma sostenible los océanos, los mares y los recursos marinos para el desarrollo sostenible	✓												
15	Objetivo 15. Promover el uso sostenible de los ecosistemas terrestres, luchar contra la desertificación, detener e invertir la degradación de las tierras y frenar la pérdida de la diversidad biológica.	✓												
16	Objetivo 16. Promover sociedades pacíficas e inclusivas para el desarrollo sostenible, facilitar el acceso a la justicia para todos y crear instituciones eficaces, responsables e inclusivas a todos los niveles.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
17	Objetivo 17. Fortalecer los medios de ejecución y revitalizar la Alianza Mundial para el Desarrollo Sostenible.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: “Reporte Nacional para la Revisión Voluntaria de México en el Marco del Foro Político de Alto Nivel sobre Desarrollo Sostenible”, p. 19.

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10756Full%20report%20Mexico%20-%20HLPF%202016%20FINAL.pdf>

An issue addressed by countries in the context of bringing the SDGs to the national level was how to ensure that they remain relevant across political cycles. In Finland, the term of the National Commission on Sustainable Development overlaps rather than follows the four-year electoral cycle. This will ensure that the Commission's tasks are not excessively tied to Government programmes and cabinet compositions and that the Commission can consider issues key to long-term sustainable development. Also, the implementation plan extends beyond the term of the present Government and to which both current decision-makers and all political parties are committed. Madagascar stated that it was making efforts to include the SDGs in the political agenda of the central and regional governments, to ensure they outlast political cycles. In Mexico, institutions would be put into place to support strategies and mechanisms throughout successive administrations, by means of a Decree and revision of the national strategy every five years. In the Philippines, the long-term vision will serve as an anchor to medium-term 4 development plans in the next 25 years to ensure continuity of policies, programs and projects across political administrations.

#### 4. Awareness-raising and involving stakeholders

*In this chapter, involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is examined. Nearly all countries reported involvement by a wide range of government and non-governmental stakeholders including civil society, parliament and the private sector in the process of preparation of the VNR and in implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The involvement of parliament is dealt with in a subsequent chapter. Though the degree to which the stakeholders are able to participate meaningfully in national formulation and implementation of sustainable development policy varies, several forms of engagement of multi-stakeholders are evident in the reports.*

Many countries, while supporting the wide-ranging nature of the 2030 Agenda, stated that its scope and depth could be a challenge. Norway was of the opinion that the scope of the SDGs is so comprehensive that no state, organization or institution can pursue it in isolation. Finland noted, in general, that one of the challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda lies in bringing its somewhat remote goals and targets closer to citizens and making them tangible enough to incentivize the general public and organizations to find everyday ways of contributing. It highlighted that the ownership of the SDGs will involve various actors in society to devise governance models for the further development of their work. Samoa pointed out that the breadth and depth of the SDG goals and targets will be a challenge for many of the small island countries which lack capacity and have major resource constraints. Mexico highlighted the fact that implementation of the SDGs is the responsibility of society as a whole and can only be achieved through its full participation.

Some countries stated that to implement sustainable development effectively, a whole-of-society approach was needed, recognizing that a more integrated approach and collaborative responses to complexity of the problems were necessary. The whole-of-society approach would help to ensure close and well-coordinated cooperation between all levels and sectors of government, and with representatives from all stakeholder groups required to create broad ownership of the SDGs. The Republic of Korea noted that civil society organizations assume the dual roles of service delivery agency and monitoring and advocacy agents in the implementation process of the SDGs in national and international contexts.

A prominent feature of implementation of the 2030 Agenda was the multi-ministerial and multi-stakeholder involvement, with nearly all countries reporting involvement by a wide range of government and non-governmental stakeholders; and many countries reporting the participation of parliament in the preparation of the VNR, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the review process. The role of parliament is discussed in chapter 5. Multi-stakeholder engagement was widely highlighted as an important success factor in SDG implementation by countries such as Egypt, Samoa, Switzerland and a necessary condition of ensuring necessary ownership in countries including China, Finland and Philippines. Some countries, such as Madagascar, Sierra Leone and Uganda, reported consultation and meetings occurring in various outlying regions to ensure the widest possible participation.



#### **4.1 Inclusion of stakeholders in institutions**

A number of countries, among them Colombia, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Madagascar, Mexico, Morocco and Turkey, are already active in stakeholder engagement in setting up institutional frameworks for sustainable development. In Estonia, the Estonian Sustainable Development Commission which formed in 1996, is an advisory body consisting of civil society umbrella-organizations and covers different fields of sustainable development including education, environmental protection, culture, children, health, local governments, academia, private companies, and agriculture. The Commission meets 4-5 times per year to hold thematic discussions on different sustainable development topics, discuss drafts of sustainable development related strategic action plans before they are adopted by the government and publish focus reports with policy recommendations. In Finland there are two major multi-stakeholder committees that have an integral role in the national coordination, implementation and follow-up system. Membership of the committees is broad thereby ensuring that the voices of civil society organizations, private sector actors, interest groups and other stakeholders are heard. To improve the policy coherence for sustainable development, the collaboration between the two committees is being intensified since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, for example, through joint meetings, workshops and discussion papers. Madagascar created a Committee for Guidance and Follow-up and a Technical Committee for implementation of the SDGs which have a number of multi-stakeholder representatives on them. The Committee for Guidance is composed of representatives of the Prime Minister's office, the National Assembly, 13 Ministries, the United Nations system and the African Union. The Technical Committee is composed of representatives of the United Nations System, technical departments, civil society, the private sector, universities and research centres.

#### **4.2 Involvement of stakeholders in implementation of the 2030 Agenda**

Countries have involved stakeholders in reporting and implementation of the 2030 Agenda in several ways. Some countries, such as Mexico, Egypt, Finland and Sierra Leone involved non-governmental organizations in the preparation of the VNR. In Mexico, the VNR was prepared under the leadership of the office of the President, which reached out to numerous actors to obtain information and perspectives, including civil society, academia, the legislative power and the private sector. A different outreach strategy was adopted for each type of actor. Government entities were engaged through a specialized technical committee. Civil society was involved through working meetings and open dialogues. The private sector's contributions were made through the Mexican Agency for Cooperation for Development. Following suggestions by civil society and academia, a didactic brochure was produced to communicate advances in the implementation of the Agenda to a wider public. Mexico expected to incorporate additional inputs from civil society obtained through the Myworld online survey results. In Sierra Leone, consultations were held both in the capital and in each of the country's districts. They involved middle to high-level officials from the government, parliament, local governments, the private sector, trade unions, civil society/non-governmental organizations and universities. Trade unions, the private sector, civil society organizations and other non-governmental organizations, were engaged to ensure onward dissemination of information on the goals and targets to other development

actors, including the local communities. Interactive radio and TV discussions were held to raise awareness among the larger public.

Countries have adopted several forms of engagement of civil society for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In Norway, civil society stakeholders were actively involved and consulted during the post-2015 process, and expressed strong interest in being involved in the implementation and follow-up of the Agenda. The indigenous peoples' assembly, the Sámediggi (Sami Parliament), has been involved through dialogue with the line ministries and formal consultation mechanisms. The Philippines highlighted its SDG Youth National Convergence, which consists of youth leaders from different sectors committing to work towards the SDGs. Turkey plans to continue its 24 best practice examples, started during the Rio+20 process, drawn from applications from public institutions, private sector, civil society and academia for implementation of the SDGs. In Georgia, business, civil society and academia have already been involved in efforts to advance SDGs, and it was reported that the scope and depth of their engagement will grow as the adjusted priorities and indicators are presented for general review and consultation later in 2016. These non-governmental bodies are foreseen to play a crucial role in offering feedback, policy advice and participating in M&E loop at the central, as well as local levels. Their awareness building and engagement will also be generated through consultative efforts supported by Georgia's development partners.

Finland has adopted an operational tool for the involvement of multiple stakeholders. 'The Finland we want by 2050 – Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development' was launched by the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development in order to engage larger segments of the society in the work on sustainable development. The Society's Commitment offers a multi-stakeholder operational tool and is a partnership model that aims at boosting ownership, concrete action, innovative solutions and impact throughout the society. By April 2016, over 240 actors from companies to ministries, schools, municipalities and civil society organizations, as well as individuals have already joined Society's Commitment by launching their own operational commitments.

### **4.3 Awareness-raising**

Countries reported several activities that had been adopted to increase national ownership and awareness of the 2030 Agenda. This included awareness-raising events including workshops, meetings and conferences organized on the SDGs; briefings to cabinet; meetings in parliament; wide-scale communications and advocacy efforts to raise awareness, interest and ownership; dialogues and meetings, including to gather insights and inputs from multiple stakeholders; radio and television discussions; and the development of communication strategies to make the sustainable development goals more understandable. Web-based platforms are also being used to engage civil society in SDG implementation and future reviews.

Countries such as Mexico and Sierra Leone included the SDGs in activities and speeches of high-level officials to increase awareness. Citizens in countries such as Germany and France have been involved through internet platforms which allow various interest groups to present their points of view. Egypt has created short films about their sustainable

development strategy, and a simplified version of the strategy has been disseminated through a dedicated website and social media coverage has been launched. Egypt has also assigned a company to consult with various stakeholders, which established trust and encouraged them to actively participate in negotiations and debate. Sierra Leone has produced a simplified version of the SDGs which was distributed to parliament and the general public, and used in television and radio. Mexico, too, produced a brochure about the SDGs in simplified language. In the preparation of its forthcoming national implementation plan, Finland plans to conduct a regional tour, in cooperation with cities, municipalities, non-governmental organizations and signatories of the regional operational commitments to sustainable development, to disseminate information on the 2030 Agenda. The Philippines government has tapped radio guesting and attendance to special events to reach the public and disseminate the 2030 Agenda.

Estonia, Finland and the Republic of Korea are among the countries that have included sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda in school and university programmes and have included it in teaching materials. In Norway, the Ministry of Education has recommended the inclusion of the SDGs as part of the curriculum in schools. The Republic of Korea has encouraged the inclusion of content on the SDGs in textbooks for primary and secondary school students.

#### **4.4 Engaging the private sector**

Countries made specific reference to the private sector's role in implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Several countries including Egypt, Germany, Madagascar, Montenegro, Mexico, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland and Uganda recognized that private businesses can generate important impetus to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda if they integrate sustainable development into their business models.

Some countries are looking into how to harness the potential of private sector in, inter-alia, mobilizing financial resources and investment to achieve the SDGs as an agent of innovation. Madagascar noted the private sector's capacity for innovation and the potential for private sector investment in local, regional and national development. The Malagasy private sector could play a crucial role in achieving horizontal and vertical policy coherence, mobilizing financial resources to achieve the SDGs in the country context, and monitoring and review of the implementation. France in 2016 adopted a strategy entitled 'Let's Innovate Together' to prompt businesses to take Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to the next level and encourage social and cooperative economic initiatives. In Finland, the government considers it important for companies to participate in the promotion of sustainable development in their respective sectors, in compliance with the best practices and obligations of CSR.

The Finnish government regards companies as vital partners in development cooperation and encourages them to actively seek participation in development programmes funded by Finland. Companies are encouraged to increase investments in Finnfund, which is a national development finance company and development cooperation actor tasked with mobilizing private capital towards supporting sustainable development in developing countries. Germany has supported the mobilization of private capital via various innovative funding

and mechanisms, which will be used to support sustainable development in developing countries.

Strong policy/legal frameworks and strong public institutions can play an important role in enabling meaningful engagement of private sector. Uganda has passed the Public-Private Partnership Act of 2015, which encourages the private sector's involvement in financing and ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth that generates decent employment and reduces poverty and inequality. In Mexico, the Office of the Presidency plays a key role in building partnership with private sector, particularly through the establishment of the Sustainability Alliance, an institutional mechanism and platform for dialogue between the government and 80 Mexican and multinational firms to promote the integration of the SDGs in business models and design international cooperation projects in line with the 2030 Agenda. The government of Republic of Korea, in its partnership with the UN Global Compact, is involved with more than 280 companies of all sizes in both the public and private sectors which has been particularly active in disseminating ideas on the implication of the SDGs for business and sharing the good practices of private companies' actions to support for the SDGs.

In engaging with the private sector, some countries note the responsibility of policy makers to protect the most vulnerable and to ensure the protection of the labour and environmental standards and other human rights. In this regard, Germany notes that high social and ecological standards, solid regulatory frameworks, comprehensive disclosure rules and an enhanced sustainability risk analysis are needed.

#### **4.5 Challenges**

Despite the high involvement of multiple stakeholders, a number of countries including Estonia, Finland, Madagascar, Montenegro and Uganda noted that increasing awareness and ownership regarding the SDGs is a challenge. In the Madagascar VNR, it was reported that civil society organizations are not sufficiently organized and structured to establish formal representation in the debates on development. Montenegro recognized the need for further development of capacity and mechanisms for the participation of civil society, the involvement of the private sector, the improvement of the institutional frameworks and capacities of the public sector, particularly local government and institutions, as well as in academic and research institutions. While they have made efforts to popularize and rally support for the national development agenda, Uganda pointed out that citizens and stakeholders are not sufficiently empowered to access information, meaningful participation, and understanding of their roles in the process of development. The German government is looking for ways to take the interests and concerns of civil society into account to an even greater extent in the future. Finland stated that it would welcome information on approaches taken by other countries to reach out to the local communities, children and youth, people with disabilities and migrants.

## 5. Institutions for implementing the 2030 Agenda

*Most countries have reported substantial progress in establishing and/or strengthening existing institutional frameworks, inter-ministerial coordinating offices, committees or commissions. This chapter examines these. Important features of many of the institutional frameworks were the emphasis on coherence, integration, coordination and multi-sectoral involvement. Many countries have a variety of different mechanisms and bodies making up their institutional framework, making them multi-faceted in nature, including coordinating mechanisms at the highest level of government, and coordination of implementation by specific ministries. Parliaments and their roles are also discussed in this chapter. A number of mechanisms and strategies are also in place through which national governments are coordinating with, engaging, empowering and building capacity of local and sub-national governments.*

The scope of the Agenda 2030 is wide-ranging and broad, and countries recognized the need to strengthen links both horizontally among sectors and vertically among levels of government to achieve the SDGs. Coordination and collaboration are essential to ensure that all stakeholders, including all sectors and levels of government, integrate the goals and targets into their policy areas. They are also critical to ensure coherence and as part of national efforts to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development in a balanced manner. The importance of institutions in ensuring coherence and coordination was widely recognized by the majority of country reports as fundamental for the implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, and one of the first steps in implementation. Most countries have reported substantial progress in establishing and/or strengthening existing institutional frameworks. Several countries mentioned a whole-of-government approach, where countries have been focusing on incorporating the SDGs into the actions of all parts of government, while also bringing the various government institutions together to develop and implement integrated policies.

### 5.1 Mechanisms to ensure horizontal coordination and coherence

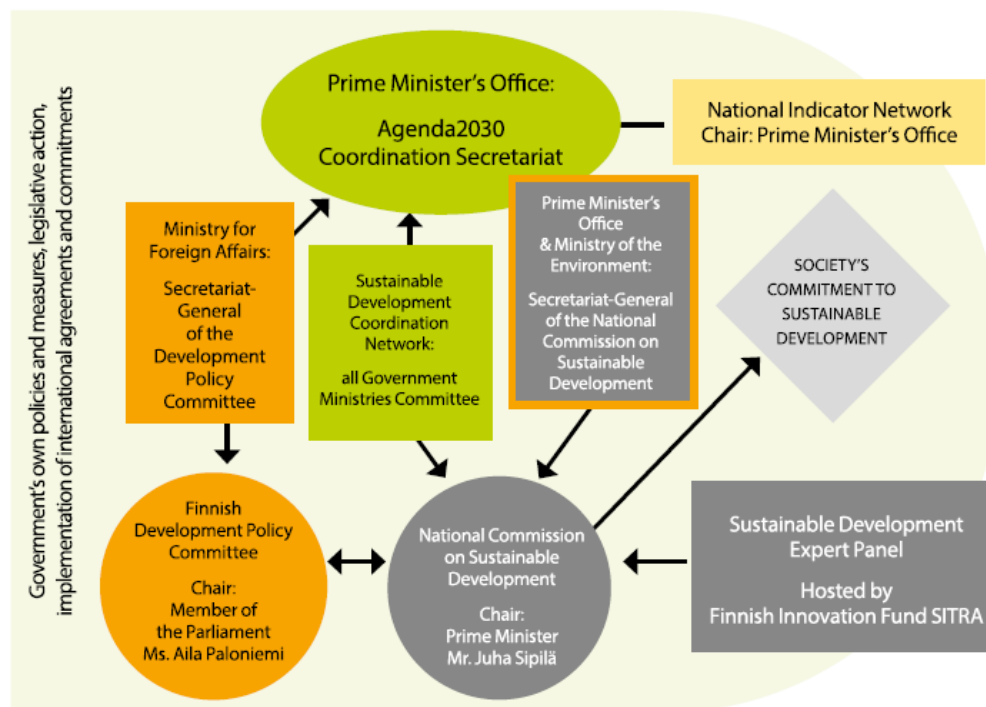
Integrated, inter-ministerial coordination and multi-sectoral involvement for the implementation of SDGs featured prominently in the 2016 VNRs. This included the establishment of inter-ministerial coordinating offices, committees or commissions consisting of relevant line ministries and other stakeholders to ensure the provision of a central coordinated function with an overarching policy mandate for achieving the SDGs. These institutional frameworks for implementation seek to harmonise different work-streams, break down 'silos' to address the interrelated nature of the SDGs, and involve all agencies in cross-cutting efforts.

Most institutional frameworks have included numerous relevant ministries and institutions, including those addressing economic growth and poverty reduction, the social, health and employment sectors, national machineries for the advancement of women as well as environment/natural resource ministries. In Egypt, for example, a national committee to follow-up on and coordinate the implementation of the SDGs was created in 2015. The committee is under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister, and is comprised of the Ministries of International Cooperation; Planning, Follow-Up and Administrative Reform;

Environment; Social Solidarity; Local Development; Higher Education and Research; Health; Housing, Utilities, and Urban Communities; and Education and Technical Education. The National Council for Women, the National Council for Motherhood and Childhood, and the Central Authority for Public Mobilization and Statistics are also members of the committee. China’s coordination mechanism is composed of government agencies, responsible for formulating the implementation plan, reviewing implementation progress, strengthening policy coordination and communication. The Commission broke down the implementation of the 17 SDGs and 169 targets into more specific tasks, assigned them to specific departments, and ensured that each department sets up an internal mechanism and develop a detailed implementation plan.

Figure 3 illustrates the institutional and coordination mechanism of Finland in this regard for the implementation of Agenda 2030. The variety of different mechanisms constituting their institutional structure can be seen through the Agenda 2030 Coordination Secretariat; the Sustainable Development Coordination Network, which includes the representatives of key ministries and is responsible for the coordination of sustainable development between various administrative sectors; the National Commission on Sustainable Development, a multi-stakeholder entity; the Finnish Development Policy Committee, which monitors and assesses the implementation of Finland’s international development policy; and the Sustainable Development Expert Panel to support the work of the Commission. The National Commission on Sustainable Development and Development Policy Committee has strengthened cooperation in order to enhance policy coherence.

**Figure 3: Coordination mechanisms for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Finland**



Source: “National report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – FINLAND”, p. 12. , [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10611Finland\\_VNR.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10611Finland_VNR.pdf)

## 5.2 Involvement at the highest level

High-level political support was highlighted as important to mobilize and coordinate public institutions and policies. In several cases, coordination takes place at the high-levels of government, and the coordination mechanisms such as those described above are connected to the offices of Prime Ministers or Presidents. In Colombia, Finland, Madagascar, Mexico, Sierra Leone and Uganda, among others, institutional mechanisms at the highest level of government have been established where the Offices of Prime Ministers or Presidents' Offices take overall leadership. In Finland in 2016, the coordinating secretariat of the commission was transferred from the Ministry of Environment to the Prime Minister's Office in order to strengthen policy coherent and ensure the equitable and integrative implementation of the various dimensions of sustainable development. In Mexico, a technical committee led by the Office of the President of the Republic, the national statistics institute and the National Board on Population had been set up for the MDGs, and was expanded in 2015 to meet the challenges of the SDGs. It started work in 2016. Leadership for the 2030 Agenda is under the Office of the President. This has been important to enable the necessary agreements involving multiple levels of government.

In Germany, the Federal Chancellery is the lead agency for the national sustainable development strategy, with all government departments having primary responsibility for their own contributions to implement the 2030 Agenda in their respective policy fields. The institutional structure consists of the State Secretaries for Sustainable Development, which steers the implementation of the sustainable development strategy, and which invite external experts from the private sector, the scientific and research community, civil society, and from the federal states and local authorities to attend its meetings; the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development, which raises policy-related sustainable development concerns in parliament; and the German Council for Sustainable Development, which is an advisory panel consisting of 15 persons who represent the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development.

Figure 4 illustrates how development actors in Sierra Leone are coordinated within the country's institutional framework. In Sierra Leone the Office of the President is the overall coordinator of the 2030 Agenda. A steering committee on the SDGs comprises a number of other ministries, together with the Sierra Leone Environmental Protection Agency, Statistics Sierra Leone and civil society and private sector representatives.

Figure 4: Institutional coordination framework in Sierra Leone



Source: "Advanced draft report on adaptation of the goals in Sierra Leone", 2016, p. 25.

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10720sierraleone.pdf>

### 5.3 Involvement of key ministries

Countries reported a diversity of practices in terms of mandating different ministries as overall coordinators to spearhead the central coordinating function for the implementation of the SDGs. Though practices vary by specific country context, the importance of leadership by a government ministry with sufficient political power and clout as well as some degree of control over financial resources was highlighted. In practice, some countries are using the leadership of finance ministries or other influential ministries such as planning ministries and sectoral lead ministries, to operationalize their institutional framework.

In Uganda the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development is the leading ministry, with the responsibility for resource mobilization and allocation and ensuring that there is a direct linkage between planning, budgeting, and resource allocation during budgeting and implementation. Some countries are tasking a variety of key ministries such as Ministry of Tourism and Sustainable Development (Montenegro), Ministry of Economy and Planning (Madagascar), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation (Morocco) and Ministry of Development (Turkey). Some countries also articulated the need to mainstream the SDGs across government institutions so as to avoid the implementation of the SDGs from being 'siloed' into categories.

Some countries have requested relevant ministries to identify their responsibilities vis-à-vis specific SDGs. For example, in Finland, all Ministries were required to chart key policy measures taken in implementing the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda on the basis that the SDGs are integrated, meaning that the implementation of the individual goals and targets cannot be directly assigned to sectoral Ministries. To ensure the realization of the mutual links between the goals, all sectoral ministries assess their role with regard to all 169 targets. In Norway, responsibility for each of the 17 SDGs has been attributed to one ministry, which coordinates with others involved in the various targets of the goal it



coordinates. As mentioned above, the Ministry of Finance receives from each of the coordinating Ministries reports on the follow-up of each goal and budget proposals, which the ministry then consolidates and presents to Parliament.

Specialized units are in some cases being created within line ministries. In Egypt, the national committee to follow-up on and coordinate the implementation of the SDGs is complemented by a Sustainable Development Unit, which was established at the Ministry of Environment, and similar Units are currently being established within other line ministries. The responsibility of planning, coordinating, following up on implementation of the sustainable development strategy falls on the Ministry of Planning, Monitoring and Administrative Reform, while the responsibility for implementation is a collaborative effort among different ministries and governmental units. In Samoa, the National SDG Task Force comprises representatives of the three lead ministries, ie. the Ministries of Finance and Planning, Natural Resources and the Environment and Community and Social Development.

#### **5.4 Channeling technical expertise through institutions**

The wide ranging nature of the SDGs often results in expert planning to coordinate and integrate sustainable development issues into the mainstream agenda, and technical committees have been set up in several countries. In France, a committee of international experts was set up to inform government thinking on the development of the next national action plan. The multidisciplinary nature of this committee is designed to guarantee a holistic approach to the challenges and better capture the systemic nature of the SDGs. In Turkey, the coordination role is played by the Ministry of Development, and a task force of relevant experts will be assigned to integrate the SDGs into public policy documents at all levels; while the National Sustainable Development Commission will form the background for the high-level technical setting for the reviewing, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and international reporting processes. In Turkey, within the Ministry of Development responsible for the preparation of national development plans, a task Force composed of relevant experts has been assigned to integrate the SDGs into national and regional development plans, annual programmes and sectoral strategies. Countries such as Germany, Finland and Norway also have advisory boards and panels to assist long-term thinking about the nature of the SDGs and the best way to integrate them into policy planning.

#### **5.5 Involvement of parliament**

Parliaments have a critical role in SDG implementation and through their oversight and legislative functions, including adoption of the budget. Many countries emphasized the importance of meaningfully engaging them, including Colombia, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, Madagascar, Mexico, Montenegro, the Philippines, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, Republic of Korea, Uganda and Togo. Mexico highlighted that lawmakers are key to ensuring accountability of the executive branch.

Some parliaments are represented in the institutional framework to implement sustainable development. In Germany, the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development works to support the German government's National Sustainable Development Strategy and raises policy-related sustainability concerns in parliament. The Council also formally reviews

whether the sustainability impact assessment of draft legislation of the government has been conducted in a plausible manner, and it regularly holds public hearings and publishes policy papers to trigger debate on various aspects of sustainable development. In Finland, the Parliamentary Development Policy Committee is tasked to follow up on the SDG implementation from the development policy perspective and to monitor the implementation of the programme in compliance with the government's development policy guidelines.

In Madagascar, the National Assembly participates in the Committee for Follow-Up and Review of the SDGs. In Colombia, a cross-parliamentary group participates in monitoring the goals and targets. Mexico is in the process of implementing parliamentary mechanisms to strengthen implementation of the 2030 Agenda and undertake legislative changes. The Philippines notes the explicit support from the legislative branch in implementation of the SDGs, including by the creation of a special committee that functions as an oversight body of parliament in attaining the SDGs.

Some parliaments have the sustainable development goals integrated in their activities. In Norway, parliament has an important role to play in follow-up and review as it receives reports and approves the budget proposal submitted by line ministries and consolidated by the Ministry of Finance. The indigenous peoples' assembly, the Sámediggi (the Sami Parliament) is involved through dialogue with line ministries and formal consultation mechanisms. Parliaments review reports on the SDGs in Samoa, Switzerland and Montenegro. In the Republic of Korea, the Korea National Assembly UN SDGs Forum, a consultative group of congressional leaders for the SDGs, was established by 43 representatives across political parties and has held seven regular forums and conducted two campaigns for the SDGs.

## **5.6 Coordinating mechanisms at multiple levels of government**

One of the principles of mainstreaming sustainable development is strong vertical integration which ensures alignment among all levels of Government. Proper alignment can reinforce and support achieving the SDGs across different regions and facilitate implementation at all levels taking into account that local Government is often at the front-line of implementation. Decentralization and strong leadership at provincial and local levels allow communities to take charge of their development priorities and claim ownership of initiatives.

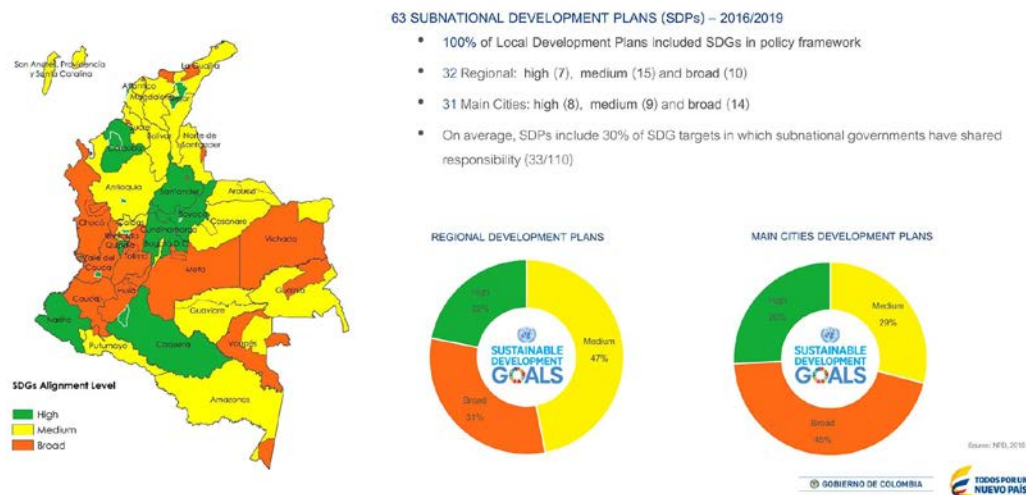
Recognizing that much of the 2030 Agenda will actually be implemented at local and sub-national level, some countries highlighted that successful implementation of SDGs will largely depend on local authority actions and effective national-local collaboration and coordination. A number of mechanisms and strategies are being undertaken through which national governments are connecting, engaging, empowering and building capacity of local and sub-national governments. Colombia and Mexico highlighted regional disparities in their reports, making vertical coordination of efforts a priority.

Some countries are coordinating national efforts with sub-national and local levels of government. In Germany, federal states and local authorities are responsible for making and enforcing laws on sustainable development. Two-thirds of all federal states already have their own sustainability strategies or are currently in the process of producing a strategy. The federal government is engaged in regular dialogue with the 16 federal states on matters relating to sustainable development, and in particular on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In Switzerland, integrating sustainable development principles into all levels of government is a key concern for the Swiss Confederation in creating and increasing ownership. In the past, many cantons and communes have already used the Federal Council's Sustainable Development Strategy as a reference framework for their own activities. In the context of the 2030 Agenda implementation, the cantons and communes are called upon to do their part to implement the 2030 Agenda and decision-makers at all levels of government are asked to enhance their engagement and to launch relevant initiatives. The preparation of Federal Council decisions in consultation with various offices or in inter-ministerial working groups on specific topics is central to ensuring policy coherence at the federal level. There is also need to make greater use of synergies between different policies and to mitigate any conflicting aims and negative side effects.

Sierra Leone used the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development to engage the 19 local councils to integrate the SDGs into their district and municipal development plans. This will ensure that future annual budget proposals of councils are aligned to the SDGs to aid progress reporting on the goals and targets at the local level. In Colombia, the government works closely with municipal and departmental authorities to disseminate the SDGs and develops compatible budgetary and regulatory policy measures in local development plans to ensure the incorporation of the SDGs into subnational planning framework.

An assessment was made of the alignment of the SDGs and subnational and local development plans (see figure 5) Local governments in the Republic of Korea have voluntarily established implementation strategies for sustainable development at the local level and drafted evaluation reports to measure their progress since 2010, which provides a strong basis for the local implementation of the SDGs. Finland has representatives of the regions, cities and municipalities in the national commission on sustainable development.

Figure 5: alignment of SDGs and subnational development plans in Colombia



Source: “Colombia National Voluntary Review – The SDGs: a Tool for Peacebuilding”, Presentation by Mr. Simón Gaviria Muñoz, Minister of Planning of Colombia, HLPF, July 20, 2016.

[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21388Colombia\\_PPT%20NVR%2020%20JULIO.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21388Colombia_PPT%20NVR%2020%20JULIO.pdf)

In Uganda, programmes are being undertaken to mobilize local revenues to finance local government priorities, as well as to mobilize the population to participate in development programmes. The Ugandan government has developed and disseminated development planning guidelines for sectors and local governments which provide for integration of SDGs into Sector and Local Government Development Plans. The national development plan in Uganda provides national strategic direction and guides planning at decentralized levels, and capacity building workshops have been run with local governments on SDGs. According to the report, more efforts need to be done to further the involvement of local government in the implementation for SDGs, which include detailed frameworks that sectors and local governments can use to integrate SDGs; national capacity for planning and integration of SDGs; and non-state actors, particularly the private sector and civil society, to integrate the SDGs into their investments, programmes and plans. Colombia undertook an assessment of the extent to which subnational and local governments consider the SDGs and equivalent goals and targets in their development plans.

In some countries, umbrella organizations for SDGs support implementation at the local and subnational level. Global partnerships between cities for the implementation of the SDGs have been pursued in the Republic of Korea. The Seoul Metropolitan government held the International Forum on Urban Policy for the SDGs aimed to provide a global platform to support local action for the implementation of the SDGs. Mexico has used the National Conference on Governors and the National Conference on Municipalities to ensure the integration of the 2030 Agenda at the level of states and municipalities. In the Philippines, an umbrella organization of the leagues of local government units and federations of local elected and appointed officials serves as an avenue for local government officials to implement the SDGs in that country. In Norway, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) is a national members’ association for municipalities, counties and public enterprises under municipal or county ownership. There is ongoing contact between the central and local government authorities on a number of specific issues, including implementation of the 2030 Agenda, on both administrative and political levels.

Consultative meetings take the form of plenary meetings and bilateral meetings between KS and ministries. They also provide a forum for discussing the framework for distribution of revenues in relation to the tasks carried out by the local authorities, the financial situation of the local authorities, and efficiency measures. The consultations also include arrangements for involving KS in the ministries' studies of the cost of reforms, and studies of how legislation proposals will affect the municipalities.

In Madagascar, the government has recognized the importance of autonomy for local governments and other territories in the implementation of the SDGs. Madagascar has positioned decentralization at the heart of its national strategy for development in order to implement the SDGs and has adopted its National Strategy for Local Development which serves as a framework for decentralization and will be executed through a National Action Plan for Local Development.

### 5.7 Challenges

Some of the challenges that countries identified were: insufficient synergy, communication and coordination between the different ministries, agencies and other sectors that deal with sustainable development; and a fragmentation of mandates and responsibilities for implementation, including subnational and local government action. Turkey highlighted that many institutions still have hierarchical, siloed and fragmented processes and cultures and are working across institutional boundaries, noting that the real challenges are to coordinate efforts across different sectors and functions. Uganda cited the many gaps in coordinating implementation across all sectors and stakeholders to ensure that they are geared towards realization of the SDGs. Sierra Leone pointed out that increased coordination within and between government agencies and non-state actors to reduce duplication of functions and minimize any wastage of resources was necessary. Countries also noted insufficient harmony between national, provincial and local levels of government, with Togo stating that one of the challenges is decentralization of sustainable development, with lack of capacity at local government level, and Mexico citing unequal development in the different regions as a major barrier.

Many countries highlighted in their reports that while national institutions, strategies, laws and policies as well as planning policies provide a solid foundation for progress, building upon the institutional framework and strengthening national governance is work in progress. Institutions need further strengthening so that they are able to formulate a coherent policy framework that enables different government agencies to work together to implement the strategic priorities. Some countries such as Madagascar face financial and logistical challenges in getting their institutions to function coherently. Montenegro emphasized that institutional coherence and alignment of sectorial policies and responses should be interwoven into the everyday activities of competent bodies and institutions at the local and national level, as well as of the entities outside public administration system. In the Philippines, the government stated that it needed to expand and strengthen existing institutional mechanisms which were used in the MDG implementation to suit the requirements for coordinating and monitoring a much broader agenda for sustainable development.

## 6. Goals and targets

*This section of the report provides information on the ways in which reporting countries addressed the goals and targets. Some countries chose not to address the goals individually; while others targeted specific goals in the light of their national priorities. Some chose to present in-depth reviews of all 17 goals, including efforts that have been taken internationally to achieve them; while others assessed the SDGs by aligning them with their national development plans and other relevant strategies. Some countries addressed interlinkages between the goals, emphasizing the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs.*

A number of the countries reviewed have started, continuing or completed national processes to update their national strategies or other relevant policy frameworks, facilitating alignment with the SDGs. These are designed to assess and align national development plans with the SDGs for strategies, policies and plans to facilitate implementation of the 2030 Agenda. As indicated in chapter 3, many countries have conducted baseline studies and gap analyses in order to assess progress towards the goals and identify priorities for action, including the establishment of baseline levels and national targets for achievement of the SDGs.

Countries such as Egypt, Philippines, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Turkey and Uganda have analysed the alignment of the SDGs with their existing national sustainable development strategies, while Estonia, the Republic of Korea and Sierra Leone have begun to map existing policy measures against the SDGs. Switzerland and Turkey both intend to conduct gap analyses in order to identify priority areas for action. Turkey, Uganda and the Republic of Korea listed national plans and policies corresponding to the 17 goals of the SDGs. In Venezuela, the government found that most of the SDGs are in line with the relevant objectives of the Economic and Social Development Plan (2013-2019). The country is reviewing the plan to make it compatible with the 2030 Agenda and applicable during the period from 2016 to 2030. Many governments have, in sum, taken the opportunity to review and update their existing strategies to fit in as closely as possible with the existing SDG framework. These are discussed in further detail in chapter 3 above.

There has been no uniform way that countries provided information on the progress and status of the goals and targets, and the VNRs show that countries may not provide information on this at all, examine specific goals only, analyse all the goals or examine their national strategies in the light of the SDGs. Finland highlighted its eight objectives in their 'Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development' which was aligned with the 2030 Agenda, as indicated in figure 6.

Figure 6: Correlation of Finland's national sustainable development objectives with Sustainable Development Goals



Source: "National report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – FINLAND", p. 28.

[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10611Finland\\_VNR.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10611Finland_VNR.pdf)

Many countries did not provide reviews of the goals individually, although several referred to each goal in connection with their alignment to development plans, and to statistics and indicators. China, Madagascar, Morocco, the Philippines and Togo did not address the goals. China highlighted nine areas that should be prioritized, including the eradication of poverty, enhancing social security, equity and social justice, protecting the environment and combating climate change.

Some countries analyzed specific goals in the light of their national priorities. Egypt presented three specific goals and provided an in-depth analysis of the implementation progress and the challenges involved in achieving them. It addressed goals 1 (end poverty in all its forms everywhere), goal 11 (make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable), and 13 (take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts). In each of these goals, Egypt examined its various multi-ministerial national initiatives to achieve them, and noted how they assisted in achieving other goals. Colombia provided achievements and challenges on SDGs 1, 3, 8, 13 and 17. Georgia identified targets, indicators, data sources and lead

institutions in charge of the goals, with the exception of goals 6, 14 and 17. Venezuela addressed context, commitments and challenges for goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 17.

Some countries addressed all the goals in their VNRs, and some included the measures and activities that they had adopted to achieve them. France outlined the main initiatives it had undertaken for implementation of the goals, as well as the main challenges in meeting them. Under each goal, it provided a brief description of its international initiatives in partnership with other countries and funding it had provided. Germany's VNR sets out its approach to implementing all 17 SDGs as they are laid out in the draft new National Sustainable Development Strategy. Under each goal it set out the national efforts that have been undertaken, including national challenges, the country's global responsibilities and support that it has provided to other countries. Norway listed its achievements and gaps in relation to all 17 SDGs, highlighting national areas for improvement and outlining some of its activities and achievements internationally in the provision of financial and technical support. Estonia provided information on measures and activities for each of the goals, including international cooperation.

Montenegro examined how each of the SDGs related to the priority areas of its national development strategy and defined national responses to each. Samoa addressed all goals identifying how they aligned to their national strategy. Mexico identified the institutions in charge of coordinating implementation of each of the targets and related each of the SDGs, or clusters thereof, to its reform programmes. Sierra Leone examined each of the goals and targets, then highlighted the equivalent pillars that fulfil them, including the lead actors for implementation. Uganda, Turkey and the Republic of Korea focused on how their own national goals and targets were consistent with the SDGs, including a mapping exercise of their national plans and achievements against the goals.

Countries also addressed interlinkages between the goals. Switzerland clustered together a number of action areas and objectives, showing how they were linked to the SDGs. Natural resources, for example were linked to SDG 2, 6, 14 and 15 in the Swiss VNR. Egypt noted that the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs resulting in efforts exerted towards one goal to have spill-over effects on other goals. For example, in relation to goal 11, efforts to develop informal markets and create job opportunities in slum areas through socioeconomic programs are directly related to SDG 1 to end poverty and SDG 8 to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all. The establishment of water and sanitation systems and of appropriate infrastructure for sewage systems feeds into SDG 6, ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. Germany saw good governance and gender quality as cross-cutting; Uganda included climate change on the list of intersectional issues cutting across all SDGs; Norway highlighted the link between poverty eradication and economic growth through support to education, health services, private sector development, domestic resource mobilisation, peacebuilding in situations of conflict and fragility, and efforts to bridge the humanitarian-development gap; while France pointed that water concerned health, hygiene, nutrition, education, the environment and climate. Germany noted that the integrated strategies for the water, energy and food security nexus needed to be promoted.



Efforts to eradicate poverty and reduce hunger are linked with the realization of other goals, with Germany observing that to achieve SDG 1, it will be crucial to make progress on all the other SDGs. The link with human rights and poverty eradication was acknowledged by France, which noted that human rights form the of a decent life for all, while Norway stated that the causes of poverty are multi-faceted and a holistic and context-sensitive approach to poverty eradication is required. Measures to eradicate poverty involved targeting education (Venezuela); housing (France, Germany and Switzerland); issues affecting women (France and Estonia); single parents (Germany); children, elderly people, people with disabilities and the unemployed (Estonia). A number of multi-faceted strategies to avoid and eradicate poverty were highlighted, including those related to the achievement of other goals and targets, such as the provision of decent wages, pensions and social protection grants and universal access to education (Germany, Norway and Estonia).

## 7. Means of implementation

*This chapter provides information on how countries addressed the means of implementation, both as an element of their implementation strategies and their commitments under SDG17. Countries provided donor and recipient perspectives on international assistance, with both groups emphasizing efforts to ensure coherence and efficiency. Many countries recalled that, beyond the issue of financing and ODA, trade, technology, innovation and capacity-building are critical elements for implementation. Countries are integrating the SDGs into national budgets and enhancing their capacity to mobilize public funds. Both developed and developing countries reported on their approaches to the 2030 Agenda in terms of their international responsibilities, ODA commitments, south-south cooperation, partnership arrangements and regional engagements.*

Countries addressed means of implementation both as a cross-cutting element of their implementation strategies and in regard to their commitments under SDG 17. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda was quoted as a reference for the mobilization of means of implementation by countries including Egypt, Estonia, France, Germany, Mexico, Madagascar, Montenegro, Norway, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, Turkey and Uganda. Countries reported on national and international actions and provided donor and recipient perspectives on international assistance, with both groups emphasizing efforts to ensure coherence and efficiency. Several countries recalled that, beyond the issue of financing and ODA, trade, technology, innovation and capacity-building are critical elements for implementation (such as Egypt, Finland, Georgia, Morocco, Montenegro, Norway, Philippines, Samoa, Uganda). Some countries also addressed the issue of coherence between national and international policy, for instance in regard to trade and sustainable consumption and production (Finland, Germany).

### 7.1 Financing

Reports show recognition of the importance of mobilizing national resources from numerous, public and private, national and international sources, as well as of establishing policy environments favorable to the mobilization of resources. Chapter 2 addresses how countries are integrating the SDGs into national budgets. In parallel, countries are enhancing their capacity to mobilize public funds, for example through tax reforms. Additionally, countries reported on advances in an enabling environment for business, developing the private sector and attracting investment including in Egypt, Montenegro and Togo, the development of capital markets (Egypt) and public-private partnerships, such as in Colombia, Egypt, Madagascar, Mexico, Montenegro, Norway, Republic of Korea, Togo, Uganda. Madagascar reported that it was preparing a medium-term strategy for mobilization of domestic resources and Togo referred to the need to mobilize diaspora funds. The Philippines expressed that it would benefit from information on the experience of other countries in mobilizing financial resources for the SDGs.

Countries also reported on efforts to ensure debt sustainability both at national and local level. Montenegro reported on efforts to strengthen public debt management based on principles of inter-generational balance, and with greater monitoring and reporting, among

other measures. Mexico addressed the issue of fiscal discipline and debt in local and subnational governments, stating that its reform of financial discipline in federative entities and municipalities establishes that debt in these entities will be primarily used to finance investment in infrastructure and productive assets rather than to finance current expenses. The reform also established debt ceilings and norms on transparency. Internationally, France stated that assisting countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability is one of the strategic focuses of its international cooperation programme, and Germany stated that it has participated constructively in recent years in the debate within United Nations forums on a state insolvency mechanism. It advocates for the broader inclusion of contractual wording in government bond issues that permits rapid performance of debt restructuring should this become necessary.

Countries, including Sierra Leone, Montenegro, Morocco, Samoa and Togo noted the importance of continuing ODA. Morocco stated Bretton Woods institutions and regional banks need to be directly involved in achieving the SDGs. While Uganda has made significant progress in funding the national budget from domestic resources up to 80 percent, the ambitious targets of the SDGs presents a financial constraint which requires the country to mobilize additional domestic resources and other means of financing beyond the traditional sources. In Samoa, as in the Pacific region generally, there was limited direct funding to countries to achieve MDG (now SDG) targets and global and regional funding mechanisms were not easy to access. Coordination of donor support was also lacking. Georgia will seek assistance in crucial areas of sectoral, disaggregated data generation and analysis and will work with international donors to finance specific sectoral projects aimed at reaching SDG targets. While demonstrating national ownership and efforts to mobilize national resources, some countries, including Egypt, Montenegro, Morocco, Madagascar, Philippines and Uganda have also emphasized that international assistance and the fulfillment of international commitments in the spirit of common but differentiated responsibilities continues to be critical, even for middle-income countries and economies in transition.

Donor countries have included the issue of national resource mobilization and public finance management in their strategies to support developing countries. Countries such as Germany, Republic of Korea and France stated they are supporting the Addis Tax Initiative, among other initiatives that aim at the mobilization of fiscal resources and reform of tax systems; Switzerland reported on its support to the establishment of taxation systems and efficient financial administrations in developing countries; and the Republic of Korea also mentioned its support to the modernization of tax administration systems, develop stock exchanges and security markets; France stated that it supports the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and that the French Agency for Development works with an array of players, including local government, private sector and non-governmental organizations. Germany was pursuing an integrated approach in order to mobilize all possible stakeholders as well as financial resources and other implementation support from all possible sources (public and private, national and international, including innovative financing and instruments) with a view to supporting sustainable development in developing countries.

## 7.2 International cooperation

In addition to reporting on national implementation, both developed and developing countries reported on their approaches to the 2030 Agenda in terms of their international responsibilities, ODA commitments, south-south cooperation and regional engagement.

Some countries referred to the international components of their implementation strategies. As mentioned above, Germany has adopted a three-pronged strategy whereby each SDG has been assessed under the optic of measures undertaken in Germany and their impacts in the country; measures undertaken in Germany with consequences for other countries and on global public goods; and measures undertaken by Germany in other countries through international cooperation. For example, on SDG 2 (End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture), in addition to its national challenges, Germany is working on correcting and preventing trade barriers and distortions; ensuring that food markets function properly; and preserving genetic diversity and using it sustainably (issues where action in Germany affect other countries and global public goods); and is assisting other countries in their efforts to end hunger, improving the quality of food, addressing property rights and equal access to resources and financial services, agricultural productivity, sustainability and resilience of food systems, soil fertility and building agricultural value chains, sustainable rural services and infrastructure. Similarly, Finland stated that national implementation should include elements which involve both an internal and an external dimension. Domestic policy in areas like the sustainability of consumption and production, trade policy, or actions to combat climate change can have, the country recognized, impacts abroad. Finland also mentioned the importance of enabling the operations of its private companies to have positive development impacts at home and abroad, while France mentioned support to companies in going beyond corporate social responsibility. Switzerland reported on its commitment to ensure coherence between foreign and domestic policies.

International cooperation strategies are being aligned to the SDGs, which help advance both coherence and effectiveness. The Republic of Korea established a coordination mechanism to ensure coherence and alignment of ODA-funded projects with the SDGs. In Germany, following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the political priorities of policy were oriented towards its five core areas (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership). Finland reported that it assesses its activities in support of the SDGs in developing countries at both project and policy level, and that joint assessments at the national level can also support developing countries' own capacity to monitor and assess sustainable development. Finland also reported on plans by the Nordic Council of Ministers, which is the official Inter-Governmental body for cooperation within the Nordic Region (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden as well as the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Aland Islands) to develop a plan to support the 2030 Agenda. Norway stated that there is broad agreement that eradicating extreme poverty by 2030 should be the overall priority for Norway's global engagement to follow up the SDGs. Countries mentioned institutional frameworks to deliver international cooperation in support of the SDGs. These include the Estonian Roundtable for Development Cooperation, Finland's Development Policy Committee (which will review

implementation of Finland's development policy commitments – particularly with regard to SDG-17) and Korea's Committee for International Development Cooperation (CIDC). Whenever possible, Switzerland's international engagement and in particular its future international cooperation was well as sectoral foreign policies will be oriented towards the SDGs. Egypt expressed its commitment to ensuring that all projects implemented through ODA are aligned with the SDGs.

Donor countries reported on their ODA contributions, reaffirming commitments. Norway's ODA, the highest of all reporting countries as a percentage of GNI, is currently at approximately 1% , while Switzerland's is at 0.52%. Finland has undertaken to channel 0.7 percent of its GNI into development cooperation; France's ODA stood at 0.37% of GNI in 2015, and the target was to reach the collective European Union goal of 0.7% by 2030; Germany also remained committed to the goal of dedicating 0.7% of GNI to ODA within the time frame of the 2030 Agenda – it was at 0.52% of GNI in 2015, including costs of providing for refugees in Germany, some of which costs are classified as ODA; Estonia, coming from a situation in which it was itself a recipient of aid has gradually increased ODA and is working to raise it up to 0.33% by 2030 from the current 0.15% the Republic of Korea will aim at increasing ODA to 0.2 percent of GNI by 2020 from the current 0.14 percent. Turkey has increased its ODA and is seen as an emerging donor. In 2014, Turkey's net ODA amounted to USD 3.6 billion, equivalent to 0.45%. Countries also reported on targets for ODA directed at least developed countries.

Estonia's and the Republic of Korea's experiences are interesting as both were recipient countries in the past and have gradually increased their contribution to ODA. Today, Estonia's development cooperation focuses on supporting democracy, advancing peace and stability, introducing good governance practices, guaranteeing human rights, improving the lives of women and children and promoting economic growth. They have also contributed to the quality of education, development of health care and climate change issues. The Republic of Korea mentioned its role of bridging the divide between donors and partner countries. For instance, they have incorporated south-south and trilateral cooperation into development cooperation initiatives as their core elements for attaining the SDGs.

Both donors and recipients have emphasized the need for greater effectiveness and coherence in international assistance, and reported on efforts in that direction. France, Estonia, Germany and Switzerland pledged to ensure coherence between domestic policies, positions in the international arena and cooperation policies. France mentioned in particular that the review of the EU's trade and investment policy would better reflect a changing environment and the commitments made in 2015 (see below). Estonia stated that to help achieve the SDGs, it was necessary to take into account the positive and negative impact on the poorest countries of positions taken in multiple policy arenas. In terms of instruments to ensure coherence in development assistance, Finland mentioned the OECD's Policy Coherence for Development tool. Recipients of aid noted the importance of coordination to ensure effectiveness and donor trust. The Philippines, Sierra Leone and Madagascar mentioned the initiatives arising from the Busan High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness,

including the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC)<sup>10</sup>, and the New Deal for International Engagement in Fragile States.

### 7.3 South-south cooperation

Some developing countries stated their commitment to further south-south cooperation. Egypt committed to capacity building and technical support in least developed countries, particularly on climate change. China reported on its strengthened commitment to south-south cooperation and in particular to providing financing, technology and capacity building to developing countries; implementing the Assistance Fund for South-South Cooperation; and initiating the programmes of the Academy of South-South Cooperation and Development which will provide developing countries with opportunities for doctor's degree and master's degree education and short-term training, among other initiatives. Venezuela reported on its engagement in south-south cooperation through projects and initiatives towards greater inclusion, trade and the exchange of best practices in the context of regional frameworks. Samoa mentioned peer-review and peer learning processes, capacity-building initiatives within the Pacific island states on public finance management reforms, the use of country systems and governance processes such as the conduct of fair elections. The Republic of Korea noted its unique role in bridging the divide between donors and recipients, having had experiences as both. It has incorporated south-south and trilateral cooperation into development cooperation initiatives as core elements for attaining the Sustainable Development Goals. Togo considered the need to expand cooperation with emerging economies. Turkey has further reinforced long-standing cooperation with countries in the Balkans, Caucasus, Central Asia, Middle East and Africa.

Countries also reported on regional and cross-border initiatives that will assist implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Egypt is working with other countries to tackle the challenges of water security, energy security, terrorism, forced displacement and illegal immigration. Venezuela and Mexico mentioned collaboration with other Latin American and Caribbean countries (including a programme to strengthen the capacity of Latin American governments to implement SDGs, through Mexico's Amexcid). Venezuela stressed the importance of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) as a mechanism for dialogue and political agreement. Uganda reported that regional partnerships provide a platform for knowledge sharing, innovations, and capacity development. Uganda stated its commitment to the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU). Uganda is also part of the Tripartite Free Trade Area comprised of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, - East African Community and Southern African Development Cooperation. Samoa noted that for small island states, regional engagement, mutual support and coordination is critical, as is regional action on transboundary issues. It cited its experience with the Pacific SDGs Roadmap, the Pacific Forum Compact, the SAMOA Pathway and the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. Sierra Leone stated that the cross-border infection with the Ebola virus cements the fact

---

<sup>10</sup> The Busan Partnership Agreement, adopted at the Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan, Korea, in 2011, established a Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation which is an open and inclusive platform for the exchange of knowledge and regular review of progress.

that regional and global dimension to a country's sustainable development cannot be overemphasized.

#### 7.4 Capacity building needs



Some countries pointed out specific areas in which they would benefit from international cooperation and capacity building. Georgia indicated that it would welcome discussion regarding the design of inclusive coordination process to develop and track the implementation of the nationally adjusted SDGs, and use of public-private partnerships in achieving SDG targets. In Togo, some of the main issues in ensuring that the SDGs can be

implemented include the need to move away from fragility and least developed country status; development of capacity of the private sector to play a dominant role as an engine of economic growth, structural transformation and accelerating economic growth; the need to articulate a fiscal policy that reflects Togo's sustainable development goals; and the need to accelerate industrialization and diversification and improve competitiveness. Madagascar noted that then international community and the private sector needed to be provide assistance in the areas of peacebuilding and political stability, respect for human rights and the rule of law, eradicating extreme poverty and reducing inequalities, creating jobs for young people and women, protecting the rights of the child, access to health and education services and protection of the environment. Issues raised in community consultations on the SDGs were strategies for eliminating poverty and leaving no one behind; a communication plan for the SDGs; governance of the implementation of the Agenda; mobilization of internal and external resources; articulation of the 2030 Agenda with local development plans; integration of the SDGs in policies and development strategies; and how to ensure continuity between MDGs and SDGs.



According to Uganda's VNR, the inter-linked and multi-sectoral nature of the SDGs presented an additional planning challenge. There was need for strengthening implementation planning to coordinate relevant stakeholders around a particular SDG to effectively plan and ensure coordinated implementation that will lead to the realization of the targeted results. The National Planning Authority needed to

strengthen its capacity to facilitate integrated development planning across the SDGs, and strengthen inter-sector collaboration mechanisms. While Uganda has an institutionalized coordination mechanism, there were evident gaps in coordinating implementation across government, civil society, private sector, and development partners and human resource capacity gaps in government, soft and hard skills at different levels, constraining innovation and effective implementation. It is thus necessary to build capacity of the current staff and to support recruitment of new staff to fill these gaps in order to realize the SDG targets.



Montenegro's VNR states that it is looking for ways in which to increase efficiency and effectiveness on national implementation of 2030 Agenda through enhancing the governance system for sustainable development and evaluation and reporting on implementation of its strategic plan until 2030; and to strengthen the capacities of the Statistical Office of Montenegro and other producers of statistical data to effectively

monitor the indicators for sustainable development. Egypt noted the main challenges for implementation of the Agenda lie in the participation of all stakeholders (private, civil, and academia), financing and resource mobilization, as well as capacity building. It stated that the risks of climate change and reduction of greenhouse gases, major challenges in that country, would require twinning programmes with similar entities in developed countries as one of the required support mechanisms in the field of capacity building.



Countries also need assistance in capacity building for local government entities. For the Philippines, this included local governance along the areas of development planning, monitoring and evaluation, fiscal administration, accountability, and service delivery. Funding and technical assistance at the local level were also required in producing data and/or developing methodology for data collection for Tiers 2 and 3 indicators;

improving data generation especially at the local level; enhancing survey questionnaires for local level monitoring; conducting poverty-related studies to improve definitions and measurements; and institutionalization of surveys. Montenegro noted that the institutional framework and integrated planning should also be improved, and the capacities (human, technical and financial) of public sector (especially in local government and institutions) should be raised to a much higher level.



In Mexico, the national government is supporting institutional capacity-building and reform of public finances and debt management in subnational and local governments. Uganda points out that while progress has been made, financial and technical gaps at the national level are augmented at the local government levels. Local governments still face a number of challenges in delivering services mainly

related to financing and revenue mobilization, human resource capacity gaps, and



inadequate community mobilization. As a means of implementation, empowering local governments will involve increasing their functionality in terms of building technical capacity and increasing financing, promoting local economic development and community mobilization, and improving planned urban development, among others, in a bid to effectively deliver services. France's international partnership programme directly assists local government bodies, and private sector engagement in development policies is also encouraged.

### **7.5 Partnerships, including with the UN**

Several countries reported on partnerships that they had entered into and the effects on their sustainable development agendas. Beyond partnerships between donors and recipient countries, others refer to multi-stakeholder partnerships. Samoa, for example, has accessed the SIDS Partnerships Framework and is working to renew commitment to the implementation of the 17 partnerships that would apply at country level as well as over 30 at regional level. The government of Uganda has benefitted from different partnerships in the design and implementation of development policies and programs from a number of development partners. These partners have played a key role in facilitating the integration of the SDGs into the Planning, Legal, and Policy frameworks, popularizing, creating ownership and financing of the 2030 Agenda. Through partnerships, the civil society, private sector, youth, academia and development partners provided technical input into the strategy planning processes and successfully advocated for key cross-cutting issues pertinent to the 2030 Agenda to be mainstreamed, such as youth, gender, human rights and climate change.

Many of the countries reported good cooperation with UN agencies, including UNDESA, UNDP and the UN Country Team, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in the process of preparation of the VNR and in implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Georgia reported that cooperation with the United Nations Country Team in Georgia has been crucial. They reported that a 'genuine partnership and collaboration of the host government and the agencies of the UN family represented in a given country should in our mind be considered a good practice, worthy of replication.' Madagascar and Mexico have been supported by the UN system. Madagascar receives support from the UN for their statistics development strategy. Mexico calls for more efforts from UNDP and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to address interregional inequalities, including definition of regional indicators. Montenegro's strategy recognizes the importance of partnerships between the government and UNDP.

In the Philippines, the UN country team supported the UN Civil Society Advisory Committee (UNCSAC) with its information and advocacy campaign to national and subnational CSOs and CSO networks in the country. Togo was one of the countries in which the United Nations DESA supported in integrating sustainable development. After the adoption of the SDGs, capacity-building efforts were undertaken involving national and sub-national actors on the tools and methodologies for the integration of the SDGs and their targets into planning. In Togo, together with the UNDP and DESA, a national programme on how to strengthen the capacities of the state and modernize it for sustainable development was developed. Capacity-building on tools for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda included training on a sustainable development analysis matrix, public procurement, and regional planning based

on the SDGs. In Uganda, development partners, including UNDP, have supported the government in the development of their national strategy including integration of SDGs into national and local strategies. The government of Uganda, with support from the UN, conducted validation workshops in all districts and sectors in January 2015 to validate their national strategy and further popularize the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. They are, also with the support of the UN, in the process of developing a Communication Strategy for the SDGs.

## 7.6 Trade



Several countries recognized that the multilateral trading system needs to be strengthened. China said that the international community needs to provide sound support to, among others, building a balanced, win-win and inclusive multilateral trading system. Egypt stated that there is a pressing need for enhancing an equitable, fair and transparent multilateral trading system to overcome trade barriers that hinder

sustainable and inclusive economic growth, as well as an urgent need for the rational use of property rights that does not hinder sustainable development in developing countries. Countries mentioned the importance of the Doha Development Agenda, Aid for Trade Initiatives, the Cotonou agreement and EU trade policy. In regard to the latter, France was fully committed to the review of the EU's trade and investment policy to better reflect a changing environment and ensure the implementation of the commitments made in 2015. Germany stated it continued to advocate for the dismantling of trade-distorting subsidies at the level of EU agricultural and trade policy. Montenegro mentioned the importance of strengthening regional trade and interconnectivity and also of enabling companies, including micro, small and medium ones, to integrate into regional and global supply chains.



Germany addressed trade issues as part of the global component of its implementation of specific SDGs. For example, as part of the global component of its implementation of SDG 2, it had included among its priorities that of correcting and preventing trade barriers and distortions by endeavouring, within the framework of the WTO, to reduce trade distorting subsidies in the agricultural sector. It was also supporting moves within the WTO

to regulate export restrictions more robustly, since these magnify undesirable price volatility on agricultural markets. In regard to SDG 10, it advocated pro-active trade policies which lower tariffs and non-tariff barriers to trade, non-discriminatory trade policy instruments and the mainstreaming of high environmental, labour, social and human rights standards in free trade agreements, trade policy transparency, and the participation of civil society stakeholders (and vulnerable groups in particular) in their development. The German government is in favour of impact assessments – human rights, economic, social and

environmental – being carried out early on in the context of free trade agreements; it also supports timely monitoring. Norway also related a well-functioning trade system to SDG 2, and mentioned the importance of better integrating LDCs into world trade.

In Samoa the cost of compliance versus the benefits received from trade agreements was questioned for the Pacific.

## 7.7 Technology

Both developed and developing countries stressed the importance of technology and mentioned initiatives to develop technology at the national level and to cooperate with partners. Countries including Colombia, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines and Madagascar, mentioned the importance of science, technology and innovation, and the links between these areas and the productive sector (Colombia, Republic of Korea) and universities (Madagascar). Uganda referred to its efforts to strengthen technological capacity and R&D. Egypt noted that the commitment to leave no one behind requires that account be taken of technological barriers, and it mentioned efforts to enhance capabilities of citizens, particularly outside the major cities, to use appropriate technology. Estonia and Norway referred to the development of green technology and the role of technology in ensuring environmentally sound and climate-friendly solutions, respectively.

In terms of international cooperation, Estonia referred to its efforts in the development of green technology and to cooperation to increase accessibility of information and communications technology in partner countries. France referred to its involvement in the Technology Facilitation Mechanism and advocacy work at the first annual Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals in June 2016. Germany promotes partnerships that enhance the transfer of environmentally sound and pro-development technologies and social and environmental innovations to developing countries. Germany supports the process to establish a technology facilitation mechanism and a technology bank for least developed countries. Norway called for fair and equitable access to technologies that can spur green growth and stated that it contributes by supporting the technology mechanism under the Paris Agreement and the Climate Change Convention, which facilitates the pursuit of new and innovative low-carbon and climate-resilient solutions based on the demands of developing countries. Norwegian expertise in aquaculture, energy, the maritime sectors and the ‘blue’ economy would continue to trigger partnerships for the further realization of the SDGs. The Republic of Korea referred to its STI for Better Life Initiative, which aims to establish and develop an appropriate innovations system by supporting science and technology education, in order to strengthen the R&D capacity in developing countries. The Initiative addresses the SDGs, such as Goal 4 (quality education), Goal 9 (infrastructure), and Goal 17 (global partnerships).

## 8. Monitoring, reporting and review

*This chapter examines monitoring, reporting and review under the 2030 Agenda. In order to monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, efforts are being made to develop statistical capacity, to contribute to the definition of global indicators and to identify indicators that best reflect national challenges. Countries have established or are in the process of establishing mechanisms for reporting, follow-up and review. National and international efforts are under way to define indicators, to assess and improve the availability of data and statistics, and to put in place transparent monitoring systems. Many countries reported significant human resource and financial constraints to improve the quality of data, noting this area as one in which they require capacity building assistance. Governance structures are being created or adapted to ensure transparency and accountability in the development and monitoring of indicators, as well as inclusiveness of multiple stakeholders and multiple areas of government.*



There is general recognition of the importance of following up on and monitoring the implementation of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda at the national level. In many countries, this was an important lesson from the experience with the MDGs, for example in the Philippines and Morocco. Substantial efforts are being made to develop statistical capacity and to contribute to the definition of global indicators as well as to identify

indicators that best reflect national challenges. Countries have established or are in the process of establishing mechanisms for reporting, follow-up and review, in the context of the institutional frameworks described in chapter 5. Multi-stakeholder participation has been recognized as an important feature of follow-up and review mechanisms in several countries.

### 8.1 Data, statistics and indicators

At the time of reporting, national and international efforts were under way to define the international and national indicators that will enable monitoring of Agenda 2030 implementation, to assess and improve the availability of data and statistics, and to put in place transparent monitoring systems. There was acknowledgment by many countries that the SDGs will require a set of data and statistics that is broader, more disaggregated, with greater frequency and shorter lags than those used to monitor development efforts to date. There is also recognition of the opportunity to increase the use of non-traditional data, including big data (Uganda, for example, mentioned analysis of social media and SMS messages) and geospatial data. In addition to assessing implementation and providing inputs to the global follow-up and review process, particularly through the HLPF, systematic follow-up and review based on quality data is reported as critical to inform policy action.

On data disaggregation, Norway stated that disaggregated data derived from validated statistics would be an important part of follow-up of efforts to leave no one behind,

nationally and internationally. Venezuela reported on efforts of its national statistics institute to reflect the situation of women, persons with disabilities, African descendants, children and youth and indigenous peoples. One of the measures involves including these dimensions into the census questions. In Egypt, data on persons with disabilities will be included for the first time in the national census to be implemented in 2016. Colombia stressed the need for local statistics in the context of poverty.

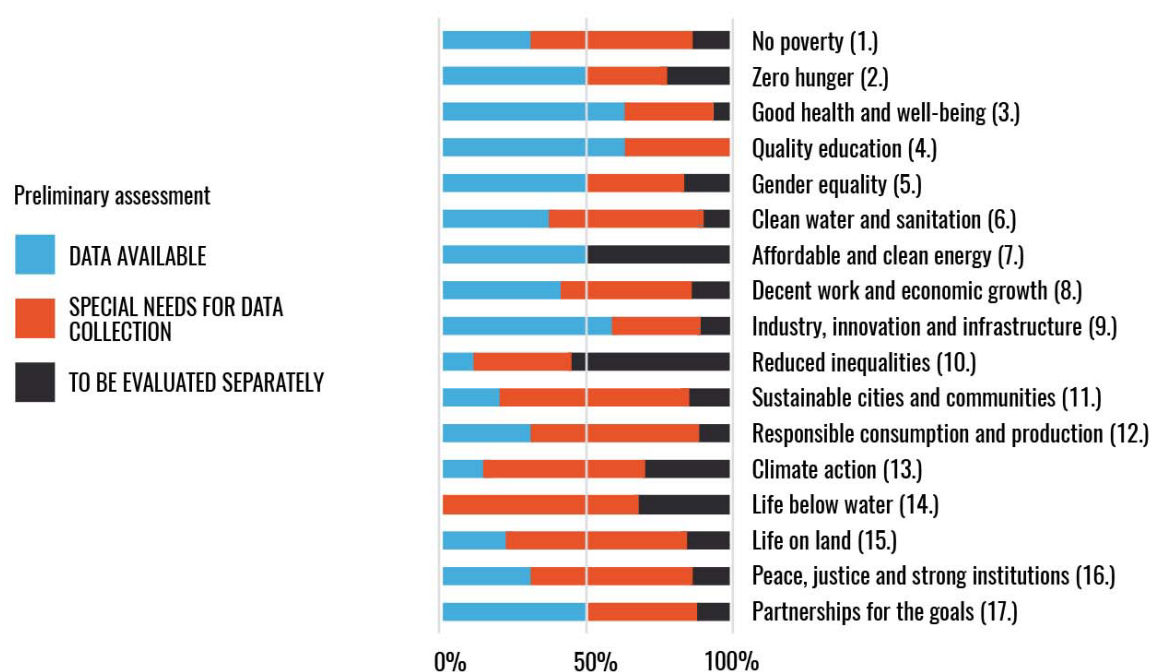


However, countries also reported significant human resource and financial constraints to improve the quality of data (including Georgia, Turkey, Morocco, Samoa, Uganda and Venezuela). Countries such as Uganda, Philippines and Turkey noted the need to improve capacity in registry systems and management of administrative records, while Venezuela noted a particular challenge in producing statistics to enable policy to be geared to disadvantaged groups. Colombia stressed challenges in data production at the local level. Countries including Georgia, Madagascar, the Philippines, Samoa, Uganda and Venezuela noted this area as one in which they require assistance. The Philippines in particular reported demand for technical support on producing data and developing methodology for data collection, improving data generation especially at the local level, conducting poverty-related studies to improve definitions and measurements; monitoring and evaluation. Venezuela reported the need for assistance to strengthen capacity in producing disaggregated data that would enable policies targeting the more disadvantaged groups and areas. Togo stated that the process of defining national indicators has already mobilized capacity-building initiatives by development actors and raised awareness on the SDGs. The Republic of Korea stated this as an area in which they expect to provide assistance.

Uganda identified numerous challenges that need to be addressed in regard to data, statistics and indicators. These include differences/absence in statistics standards, concepts and definitions; limited appreciation of statistics and its role in economic and social development; inadequate appropriation of resources for statistical activities; lack of baseline data on a majority of indicators and limited disaggregation on available data; absence of appropriate methodologies and technologies for measuring some indicators; weak coordination among data producers as well as statistical programmes and activities; underdeveloped administrative data and civil registration systems; irregularity of data collection programmes; and that the national statistics system relies mainly on surveys and censuses for the production of statistics, but these are not often conducted regularly due to resource constraints, leading to time lags in many baselines and the absence of information for others.

In regard to the indicators proposed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG<sup>11</sup>), many countries (including Colombia, Egypt, Estonia, Finland – see figure 7, France, Mexico, Morocco, Philippines, Samoa, Uganda, Venezuela) indicated significant gaps in the availability of data and that collecting additional data would imply significant resources (Estonia, Finland, Montenegro). Some countries noted that the proposed indicators would not necessarily reflect their national situations, including the Republic of Korea, Samoa and Uganda. Turkey pointed out the issues of uncertainty in the indicator list itself, inadequacy of metadata and absence of data flow procedures. Finland pointed out that many SDGs and targets are difficult to monitor on the basis of the selected indicators only, and that the indicators do not clearly reveal the links between the implementation and impacts of various goals and targets. Norway saw the IAEG proposal as a good starting point, and the production of a high-quality indicator framework as an effort that would need to continue over time. It would start to adapt the indicators that are most relevant for Norway to the national context.

Figure 7: Data availability for UN indicators in Finland



Source: "National report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – FINLAND", p. 58

[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10611Finland\\_VNR.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10611Finland_VNR.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> The Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators was created in March 2015 by the United Nations Statistical Commission to elaborate a proposal for a global indicator framework and associated global and universal indicators. It is composed of Member States and includes regional and international agencies as observers.

The process of integrating national development plans and strategies, regional programmes of action and the 2030 Agenda is mirrored in the selection of indicators, with countries looking for solutions that best fit their national realities within their regional and international context, without overburdening their statistical and monitoring systems. In parallel to international indicators, countries are developing or adapting national indicators. In some cases, development of national indicators has been done with the involvement of different sectors of government or multiple stakeholders. Among other initiatives, Egypt established a sustainable development unit within the national statistics agency to review national indicators, identify gaps and facilitate the collection of data to monitor the SDGs and Egypt's sustainable development strategy. Estonia is revising a previous list of sustainable development indicators to reflect the SDGs. The list of indicators being monitored was agreed upon between the Estonian Commission on Sustainable Development, the Intra-Ministerial Sustainable Development Working Group and the Government Office and Statistics Estonia. In Finland, a network of organizations that has been responsible for long-term indicators to monitor sustainable development will update the indicators as part of the national implementation plan for Agenda 2030. Germany is in the process of developing national level indicators and objectives, based on the analysis by each ministry of the action that would be necessary. The present draft of the National Sustainable Development Strategy 2016 envisages focus areas and their respective indicators under each of the SDGs.

Mexico has emphasized the need to develop national indicators reflecting regional inequalities within the country. This may imply different indicators in different regions. At the time of reporting, inter-institutional and multi-stakeholder dialogues on national indicators were planned. In the Republic of Korea, Statistics Korea, in collaboration with Seoul National University, began a feasibility study on the establishment of the national indicators corresponding with the global indicators for the SDGs. The study aims at analyzing the definitions and meanings of the global indicators and comparing them with the existing official statistics and National Indicator System, including the Sustainable Development Indicators. Switzerland uses a comprehensive sustainable development monitoring system (MONET) in place since 2003. With its approximately 75 regularly updated indicators it is observed whether, as well as in what context and areas, Switzerland is on the path to sustainable development. In May 2016, the system's reference framework was amended in order to be ready to take into account the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Turkey has, since 2002, developed a national sustainable development indicator set composed of 132 indicators under 10 categories. Turkey is going to further develop its current set by taking into account the results of UN process on a global framework for common monitoring and the national priority lists of SDGs. In Colombia, the High-Level Commission for Effective Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, created in February 2015, has a working group on indicators which enables multi-stakeholder participation.

## **8.2 Mechanisms for reporting, follow-up and review**

Governance structures are being created or adapted to ensure transparency and accountability in the development and monitoring of indicators, as well as inclusiveness of multiple stakeholders and multiple areas of government. These structures reflect the

interlinked nature of the sustainable development goals and are, for the most part, embedded in the institutional structures for implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

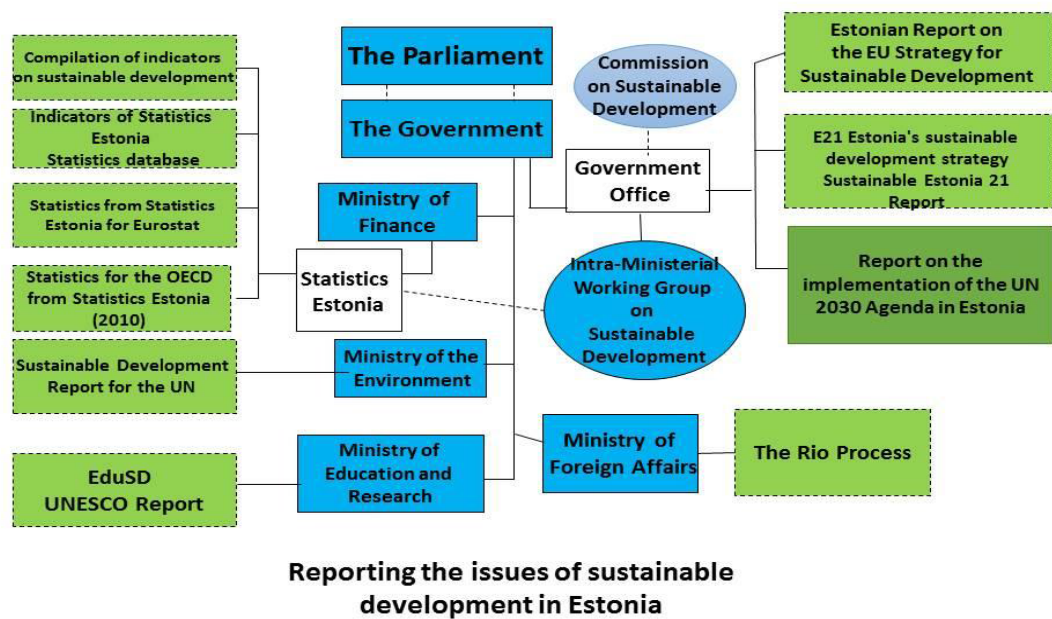
Among the experiences reported in the VNRs on monitoring and reporting were the following:

- In Egypt, at the time of the VNR, the Ministry of Planning was in the process of designing a structure for reviewing and following up on the SDGs goals, targets and indicators for Egypt, to ensure transparency and accountability to citizens. The proposed monitoring structure proposed includes civil society and the private sector. It would consist of an independent unit for monitoring and follow-up and reporting to the Presidency, Cabinet, and Parliament, as well as an inter-ministerial National Committee for following up on the implementation of the SDGs, of which the Ministry of International Cooperation is the rapporteur.
- In Estonia, monitoring of sustainable development is done based on country-specific indicators and through a regularly published review, compiled by Statistics Estonia in co-operation with the Government Office and various ministries. The last review was published in 2015. The list of indicators being monitored was agreed on in collaboration with the Estonian Commission for Sustainable Development, the Intra-Ministerial Sustainable Development Working Group and the Government Office and Statistics Estonia. They were to be adapted to reflect the SDGs. The graph below shows the relationship between statistics, indicators and reports to the relevant institutions that compose the monitoring mechanism.





Figure 8: Reporting sustainable development in Estonia



Source: “Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Estonia”, 2016, p.11  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10647estonia.pdf>

- In Finland, the National Commission on Sustainable Development and the Development Policy Committee have the task of monitoring and assessing the implementation of Agenda 2030, but definitive monitoring mechanisms were to be defined in the national implementation plan for Agenda 2030. An annual high-level on ‘The state of sustainable development in Finland’ was being planned, where progress, challenges and successes in national implementation will be discussed. Such an event would support global reporting to the United Nations every fourth year.



- Montenegro highlighted its experience with monitoring its national strategy for sustainable development between 2007 and 2012. During that period, there was a lack of comprehensive indicators and of a system for processing data and linking databases that could have informed policy-making towards the targeted outcomes. In order to avoid the shortcomings of the past, the country is investing in a strong, efficient, data and indicator system with guidelines for reporting, while avoiding the possibility that the system become a burden and a bottleneck for implementation and ensuring citizen participation. A first pilot report on implementation of the current sustainable development strategy is planned for 2019. Morocco stated that insufficient systematic follow-up of policy in the past limited effectiveness. The country has identified the need to strengthen and adapt the operational mechanisms for follow-up and review established during the MDG period, mitigating the risk of lack of coordination by the multiple institutions involved in implementation. The country highlighted the importance of institutionalizing follow-up and of having access to a technical modelling instrument that would enable analysis of the coherence of policy and strategies in the general context of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The country would conduct a review within the next two years, which would be followed by periodical reports on the implementation of the 17 SDGs.
- The Philippines was considering the creation of a dedicated oversight committee and technical secretariat, proposed under the Board of the National Economic and Development Authority.
- Samoa referred to a regional initiative - the Pacific SDGs Roadmap – intended to outline the steps to set regional priorities and indicators. This builds on the experience with the MDGs, when regional monitoring in the Pacific helped overcome some of the limitations of tracking progress by countries individually.
- Sierra Leone’s monitoring of the SDGs is to be embedded in the monitoring and evaluation arrangement for its Agenda for Prosperity
- Switzerland reported on how the federal offices are required to include sustainable development in their own periodic reports on items of business or areas covered by their sectoral policies. In international cooperation, Switzerland would align the monitoring system for its 2017–20 strategy with SDG targets and indicators.
- In Uganda, implementation of the national development plan, to which the SDGs are being aligned, contains an integrated multi-layer monitoring and reporting framework. The country produces annual and periodic reports, including reports on national strategies and those to international and regional organizations.



Some countries addressed the issue of making statistics and indicators available to the general public. The Philippines, for example, plans on implementing an online platform for access to SDG indicators, SDG Watch, building on the MDG Watch that was implemented for the MDGs. The Republic of Korea had also established the framework for an online platform

on SDGs. Other countries referred to peer reviews. Samoa noted the importance of peer review and peer learning processes in order to exchange information, experiences and expertise among countries on key development issues. Germany referred to peer reviews of its sustainable development strategies prior to the 2030 Agenda. Independent peer reviews of the German Government were conducted in 2009 and 2013.

### 8.3 Challenges

Coordination of multiple government sectors in monitoring, evaluation and reporting is still a challenge. Georgia identified the involvement of multiple areas of government in the development and tracking of indicators an area in which it would welcome discussion; Montenegro stressed the importance of clarity in the distribution of institutional responsibilities in monitoring; and Uganda noted that there are still multiple monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems across government entities requiring the development of a coordinated monitoring, evaluation and reporting system. In response to these challenges, the Philippines is developing a web-based application that aims to facilitate coordination between data producers and planners and to manage the data demands for the monitoring of the SDGs.

## 9. Thematic analysis: Ensuring that no-one is left behind

*This chapter examines the principle and the theme of the HLPF in 2016, 'ensuring that no-one is left behind' which underpins the policies and initiatives to implement the SDGs. Some countries in their VNRs chose to explicitly address the theme, where other countries addressed similar issues in their analysis of the goals. Cross-cutting efforts have been taken, including laws, policies and programmes, as well as ratification of international treaties, for leaving no-one behind. These include measures to reduce poverty, and eradicate discrimination and promote equality on a number of grounds, including race, gender, pregnancy, disability, age and religion. Many countries reported on measures they had taken to address specific groups, and some countries have included the pledge to leave no-one behind as a focus of their cooperation strategies with other countries.*

In their VNRs, some countries chose to explicitly address the theme of the HLPF in 2016, 'ensuring that no-one is left behind.' In addition, because most of the goals and targets are directly related to the achievement of the theme, other countries addressed similar issues in their analysis of the goals. As noted by the Republic of Korea, all government policies and plans have been designed and implemented with attention to the principle of universal application of benefits to all and the principle of leaving no one behind underpins all policies and initiatives to implement the SDGs.

Commitment to the overarching goal of reducing poverty in all its forms was affirmed by most countries, and several reported on poverty reduction strategies, legal frameworks, social policies and social protection programmes and in addressing the structural causes of poverty, inequality, hunger and malnutrition. Countries reported on initiatives generally on the eradication of discrimination against all groups, and efforts at addressing issues related to specific groups such as children and youth, older persons, persons with disabilities,

indigenous peoples, women and girls, refugees and internally displaced persons. Many countries reported on efforts to address regional inequalities. Some countries have included the pledge to leave no one behind as a focus of their cooperation strategies in other countries.

The human rights-based approach is highlighted by, among others, Finland, France, Germany, Norway and Samoa in their national as well as international efforts in leaving no one behind. According to Finland, promoting human rights is a key objective, alongside enabling people and the authorities to promote human rights themselves and ensure that development cooperation is non-discriminatory and provides the possibility to participate in decision-making. Ratification of international human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the obligations those imposed on them, were also reported by some countries.

### **9.1 Cross-cutting efforts**

Many countries noted their cross-cutting efforts to leave no-one behind, and listed a number of initiatives taken to address issues related to vulnerable groups. Many countries listed constitutional and legislative provisions prohibiting discrimination on a number of grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, disability, age and religion. In Estonia, the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia prohibits discrimination on the basis of nationality, race, colour, sex, language, origin, religion, political or other views, property or social status, or on other grounds. Incitement to ethnic, racial, religious or political hatred, violence or discrimination is prohibited and punishable by law. Some countries include not only the right to non-discrimination, but also include the duty on the state to actively take measures to promote equality. Finland's gender equality policy includes measures for the promotion of equality, which is seen as an integral element within all policy sectors, including the elimination of gender-based discrimination.

Finland referred to its social insurance, social security benefits and social welfare and health care services available to all. The core idea behind the system is to ensure that everyone residing or working in Finland is insured against social risks such as old age, incapacity for work, unemployment, sickness and loss due to the death of a breadwinner. Everyone is entitled to basic security, including those who have not paid insurance contributions based on earned income. The system is financed from central government transfers, municipal tax revenues and, in some cases, client payments. Basic education, vocational education, universities and other higher education institutions are free. Other countries also focus on the provision of services to all. France has achieved a high standard of living and quality of life driven by inclusive social security systems (unemployment benefits, supplementary benefits and redistributive policy) and access for all to healthcare and basic goods and services (water, energy, quality food and education). In Germany, equal opportunities are promoted by facilitating access to and improving the quality of services in a number of sectors, including health, education, water, social welfare and energy, as well as promoting gender equality directly and indirectly.



The Republic of Korea highlighted its national development plans, in particular the Three Year Plan for Economic Innovation and the Third Plan, to address a wide range of issues related to economic, social and environmental development and governance issues with specific focus on the poor and marginalized. When they are effectively implemented, these plans and policies are expected to contribute to achieving targets of Goal 8, related to

sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; of Goal 10, related to the reduction of inequality within country; and of Goal 16, related to peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Madagascar has adopted measures in support of vulnerable groups, including commitments specifically addressed at the southern regions most affected by cyclical droughts, and a national policy on social protection. Mexico emphasized the spatial component of 'ensuring that no one is left behind'. Rural areas have significantly higher poverty rates than urban areas, and whereas some states have human development levels comparable to developed countries (Ciudad de México, Nuevo León and Baja California Sur), others (Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero) are comparable to the world's poorest countries. The government's main strategy is to bring the 2030 Agenda to the local, municipal level, and efforts have been made to strengthen local capacities and to promote economic development in the most backward regions.

Togo focused on institutional strengthening to be able to deliver on the 2030 Agenda and leave no-one behind. Priority areas in Togo's strategy include creating an enabling environment for the development of the private sector and civil society; inclusive governance in line with the needs of citizens and the strengthening of citizen participation in development, the peace process, national reconciliation, decentralization and local democracy; employment generation linked to sustainable development and drawing on the dynamism of youth, the opportunities of decentralization, new careers linked to the environment and green economy and the development of trade and services.

## 9.2 Measures targeted at specific groups

Many countries reported on the measures they had taken to eliminate discrimination and promote equality for specific groups. The following are some examples of those efforts.

### (i) Children and youth

In Egypt, youth empowerment and participation in shaping the future have become primary concerns of the current leadership. Egypt's central bank is implementing an initiative to support young entrepreneurs through a low-interest credit line. In the Republic of Korea, the government is reforming the vocational training and education system at the upper

secondary level and above, and has adopted a Comprehensive Policy Response to the Young Adults' Employment Cliff (2015), which aims at creating regular and part-time jobs in the public sector and in partnership with the private sector. Mexico has a national system to protect children and teenagers from violence and a strategy to prevent teenage pregnancy.

**(ii) Older persons**

The Korean government has established a series of laws and policy proposals to respond to the ageing population, with special attention to structural issues like the relationship between ageing and fertility, as well as the welfare of the elderly. Efforts are being made to expand home care for the elderly, increase in the number of social workers for those with Alzheimer's disease, increase public care facilities for the elderly and better infrastructure to cater to the needs of the elderly. Egypt provides unconditional financial support programs to the elderly as well as to persons with disabilities, in order to eliminate absolute poverty and cover the basic needs in these groups.

**(iii) Persons with disabilities**

A declaration by the Platform of Persons with Disabilities of Madagascar on the SDGs is included as an annex to Madagascar's VNR, and among other issues stressed that the concerns of persons with disabilities must be mainstreamed in 2030 implementation and that persons with disabilities must be able to participate meaningfully in processes for SDG implementation. The Republic of Korea's Anti-Discrimination Act puts emphasis on the rights of women and children with disabilities by setting separate articles regarding these groups. The Republic of Korea has put in place measures which have been implemented to improve service delivery, housing, employment and infrastructure for persons with disabilities. Measures are also in place to prevent discrimination and ensure equal treatment of persons with disabilities in employment, education, the provision and use of goods and services, judicial and administrative procedures, services and political rights and other aspects. In Germany, a development policy action plan on the inclusion of persons with disabilities is to help ensure that all individuals contribute to the common good in line with their individual abilities, and that they can obtain the services provided by society on an equal basis. In Finland, changes in the social security system are expected to promote the employment of people with partial working ability or disabilities.

**(iv) Indigenous peoples**

In Norway, the indigenous peoples' assembly, the Sámeddigi (Sami Parliament) will be involved in the follow-up and review of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, through dialogue with line ministries and formal consultation mechanisms. Norway reported that consultations to date have strengthened the Sámeddigi's role as a representative voice for the Sami people and increased the awareness of Sami issues within the government. Norway also takes into account Sami culture in their policies for fisheries and ecosystems protection, restoration and sustainable use.

**(v) Women and girls/gender equality**

Countries have many laws, policies and strategies as well as institutions to ensure women's equality with men. Finland has a general anti-discrimination law, but the Act on Equality between Women and Men also promotes equality between women and men. The Republic of Korea initiated the Framework Act on Gender Equality (2015), which strengthens policies for gender equality, such as implementing quotas for administrative positions in public organizations and promoting the participation of women in decision making processes and in public, political and economic activities. The Republic of Korea focuses on cross-cutting programmes in linking gender equality with education and good health, such as 'The Better Life for Girls Initiative' that focuses on girls' education and health in developing countries and builds on the fact that education and health are inherently connected for girls' empowerment.

In France, the High Council for Gender Equality reports directly to the Prime Minister and has since 2013 been holding discussions with stakeholders to define and improve public policy guidelines on rolling back stereotypes, gender equality, reproductive rights and gender violence. Georgia reported on technical thematic working groups which are set up to deal with gender equality technical working groups.

Egypt reported on the Equal Opportunities Units within different ministries, which directly follow the ministers' offices and their main function is to focus on the constitutional equality between men and women in the workplace and address any discriminatory employment practices against women.

A second German Gender Equality Report is being elaborated in Germany which is to be published in 2017, which will examine a number of issues including finding a first job, careers, founding a family, and caring for family members at home. The report will show the way forward for the German government's gender equality policy.

**(vi) Refugees**

The government of Egypt has been cooperating with development partners and civil society partners on developing and implementing a holistic and resilience-based approach to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis under the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) for Egypt. Among the areas supported by the plan is the access of refugees to Egyptian school systems. The government's Integrating Estonia 2020 plan aims to reduce the number of people with undetermined citizenship and create equal opportunities for people with nationalities and native languages other than Estonian.

**9.3 Policies to address regional inequalities**

Some countries highlighted the importance of addressing geographical inequality and reported efforts specifically target lagging regions where the incidence of poverty is high. Egypt stated that regional disparities require broadening the scope of investment to ensure sustainability and reduce unequal access to resources. In that regard, the government is expanding the scope of investment in regions outside the major cities (greater Cairo and

Alexandria). This will reduce the internal rates of migration from the countryside to the cities and minimize expansion of urban settlement over the agricultural area. France is undertaking an effort to identify the main factors of regional inequalities (both at neighbourhood and regional level) and reduce them, mostly through education and training. In Madagascar the government has put in place a National Social Protection Policy and 12 commitments directed at the southern regions which are affected by cyclical droughts.

#### 9.4 Leaving no one behind in international development policies



Eliminating poverty features as a main goal of international development policies in several countries, including Estonia, Finland, France, Germany and Switzerland. Finland and Germany mentioned the human rights-based approach for their international development programme. The main goal of Finland's development policy is to eliminate extreme poverty and reduce poverty and inequality in general. It seeks to promote human rights and

the principles of decent work, as well as to ensure that development cooperation is non-discriminatory and provides the possibility to participate in decision-making. Finland's development policy covers the rights of women, girls and children, and those of people in the weakest positions, particularly those with disabilities. The share of Finland's official development assistance targeted at the least developed countries is above international recommendations.

Germany's development cooperation policy contains human rights and equal opportunities strategies, and action plans on gender equality and the rights of children and youth. Germany is supporting programmes that aim to reduce inequality through, for example, employment promotion activities that target the bottom 40% of the income scale. Other areas include support for fiscal policy and social security systems, gender equality and equal access to health, education, water, social welfare and energy services.

Norway aims to increase Official Development Assistance for education, with a special focus on girls' education, education in emergencies and education quality; to maintain a high level of investments in global health, in particular efforts to improve maternal health and reduce child mortality; and to continue to work in partnerships with different actors to advance gender equality and health. The Republic of Korea referred to humanitarian assistance as part of efforts to leave no one behind globally.

#### 9.5 Challenges

Several countries pointed out the importance of data disaggregation to inform policy-making that effectively addresses the needs of the most vulnerable groups and the least developed regions. Germany noted that the impacts of the SDG targets on all sections of the population can only be identified if the implementation of the goals and targets in all relevant spheres can be verified with the help of convincing and disaggregated indicators. Disaggregated data provide the necessary information on how measures affect different



people to a different degree and in a different way, providing a basis for well-founded decisions.

Countries reported that despite the efforts they had made in relation to leaving no-one behind, several challenges remained. These included extreme poverty (Egypt); violence against women and children (Egypt and Finland); gender inequality (Egypt, Finland, France, Germany and Norway); gaps in wellbeing and health between genders and across regions (Finland); youth and long-term unemployment (Finland, Egypt, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone); social and educational differences among members of society (France); the needs of communities subject to climate change risks (Sierra Leone); and addressing the needs of an ageing population (Republic of Korea). Mexico noted that in addition to regional inequalities, it faces challenges in bringing women, indigenous peoples and communities, children and youth, the LGBTTTI population, older persons, migrants, persons with disabilities and African descendants, among others into the efforts to implement the Agenda.

## **Annex 1: Proposal for voluntary common reporting guidelines for voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum**

(as presented in the annex to the Secretary-General's report on critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level, A/70/684)

In the 2030 Agenda, Member States decided that the high-level political forum, when it meets under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, shall carry out regular voluntary reviews. As stipulated in paragraph 84 of the Agenda, those reviews will include developed and developing countries as well as relevant United Nations entities and other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector. They shall be State-led, involving ministerial and other relevant high-level participants. They shall provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders. In paragraph 84 of the Agenda, Member States are also encouraged to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and subnational levels which are country-led and country-driven. Voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum will likely build on such reviews.

The following components are suggested as a way to help countries to frame the preparations for voluntary national reviews at the high-level political forum, 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 expectation is that each country being reviewed may present a focused report to the high-level political forum and make brief presentations during its meeting.

1. **Opening statement.** An opening statement by the Head of State or Government, a Minister or other high-ranking Government official could highlight the key messages from the review and touch on critical issues in implementation of sustainable development that the country wishes to highlight.
2. **Summary.** A one-to-two page synthesis of the process and findings of the review highlighting two or three good practices the country wishes to share, two or three lessons it has learned in trying to accelerate implementation, two or three challenges on which it wishes to hear about other countries' good practices and two or three areas where it would need support in terms of finance, capacity-building, technology, partnerships etc.
3. **Introduction.** The context and objectives of the review could be presented here. The introduction may briefly describe key features of the country context as it pertains to the 2030 Agenda, with a discussion of national priorities and targets for sustainable development and their relation to the Sustainable Development Goals, and a discussion of critical challenges.
4. **Methodology and process for preparation of the review.** This section may discuss the methodology that was adopted for the review, including its scope, depth and limitations. Information on the process for preparation of the national review may be presented, including, for example, how different levels and sectors of Government contributed to the review, whether parliaments were engaged, whether

national evaluation/oversight institutions contributed, how stakeholders from civil society, academia and the business sector were involved, which consultations took place, and possibly whether another Member State or institutions contributed to the review, etc. Lastly, the country may indicate what support it received. The sources used for the review may be discussed. This could include, as per paragraph 74 (f) of the 2030 Agenda, how existing platforms and processes have been built on, as well as how existing national reports have been used in the process.

## 5. Policy and enabling environment.

(a) **Creating ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals.** The review could outline efforts made towards all stakeholders to inform them on and involve them in the Goals and targets, including national and local government, legislative bodies, the public, civil society and the private sector. It could indicate how it is planned to keep the Goals under review at the national level and, including the possible dissemination of reviews and their findings.

(b) **Incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals in national frameworks.** The review could outline critical initiatives that the country has undertaken to adapt the Sustainable Development Goals and targets to its national circumstances, and to advance their implementation. It may describe national efforts made to integrate the Goals into the country's legislation, policies, plans and programmes, including the sustainable development strategy, if there is one. The review could indicate the main challenges and difficulties experienced in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals as a whole. It could also highlight additional goals, beyond the Goals, which are national priorities. Countries could consider referring to major efforts undertaken by local authorities and non-State actors to implement the Goals, including partnerships.

(c) **Integration of the three dimensions.** The review might discuss how the three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) are being integrated and how sustainable development policies are being designed and implemented to reflect such integration. The review could also assess how other principles of the 2030 Agenda, for example, leaving no one behind, have been mainstreamed in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

(d) **Goals and targets.** The review may provide brief information on progress and the status of all Sustainable Development Goals, and critical difficulties encountered in reaching them, making reference, when appropriate, to data provided in the statistical annex (see sect. 8 below). The review may indicate whether a baseline for the Goals has been defined and remaining obstacles to doing so. The review may also provide a more in-depth analysis on a few selected Goals and targets. Those may be chosen by the country in the light of its priorities but also because they were tackled through innovative policies, are relevant to other Member States, and can be addressed in an international context. The discussion could focus on trends, successes, challenges, emerging issues, and lessons learned, and describe what actions have been taken to address existing gaps and challenges. It could support the identification of gaps, solutions, best practices and areas requiring advice and support. The review may examine the agreed global indicators for those goals and targets identified as priorities. Countries may choose to refer to complementary national and regional indicators.

(e) **Thematic analysis.** As appropriate for the country, the review could include an analysis of progress and initiatives related to the high-level political forum's thematic focus for that year.

(f) **Institutional mechanisms.** The review could provide information on how the country has adapted its institutional framework in order to implement the 2030 Agenda. This could include information on how the views of different ministries, agencies, levels of government and non-governmental stakeholders are taken into account and on the institution in charge of coordination and integration. The review could consider highlighting efforts to mobilize institutions around the Sustainable Development Goals, improve their functioning, and promote change. Information may also be provided on how responsibility is allocated among various levels of Government (national, subnational and local) for coherent implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda. It would be useful to highlight how the country intends to review progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, including possible plans regarding the conduct of national reviews.

6. **Means of implementation.** Based on the above challenges and trends highlighted, the review may discuss how means of implementation are mobilized, what difficulties this process faces, and what additional resources are needed to implement the 2030 Agenda, including in terms of financing, capacity development needs, including for data and statistics knowledge-sharing, technology and partnerships.

7. **Next steps.** The review could outline what steps the country is taking or planning to take to enhance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

8. **Statistical annex.** Countries may include an annex with data, using the global Sustainable Development Goal indicators to be proposed by the Statistical Commission as a starting point and adding priority indicators identified at the regional and national levels. They may highlight whether statistics were collected from the national statistical system and pinpoint major gaps in official statistics on indicators.

9. **Conclusion.** The section may present a summary of the analysis, findings and policy implications. It may discuss new or emerging issues identified by the review. Lastly, the country may indicate what lessons it has learned from the review process, what support it would need in the future for preparing such reviews and any adjustment it believes should be made to the guidelines to ensure that they are useful.

10. The report could have a link to more in-depth national reports and reviews through the dedicated United Nations Secretariat website.

## **Annex 2: Summary analysis of the questionnaire responses**

Following the 2016 HLPF, the Secretariat shared a questionnaire with the 22 volunteering countries, in order to gather lessons learnt and feedback, in line with GA resolution 70/299. Based on the 14 questionnaire responses received,<sup>12</sup> this note summarizes feedback and recommendations concerning the main challenges, the guidelines, preparatory meetings as well as the format of the VNRs at the HLPF.

### **Main challenges in the preparation of the VNRs**

Many responses cited time constraints as an overall challenge in the preparation of the voluntary national reviews. In this regard, coordination and consultation with stakeholders were also singled out as areas requiring extra attention during the VNR process. For instance, one country mentioned the time pressure combined with the national objective of involving the “whole-of-government” and all relevant stakeholders in the preparatory process.

With respect to the preparation of written reports for the VNR, reference was made to the time available for drafting the report, the complexity of the process, and coordination with stakeholders. The integration of cross-cutting themes, as well as the translation of the report, were also identified as specific challenges. One country stated that the preparation of the report ought not to be outsourced to a consultant, but government staff should write or rather compile the report themselves. Other lessons learned included utilizing a coordination council for engagement with civil society, benefiting from the experience of MDG reporting, and promoting an open dialogue.

The process of preparing the VNRs also involved other challenges, such as translating the SDGs from the global to the national level, reviewing existing policies, the mapping and availability of indicators and high quality data, as well as ensuring an accountable and transparent review process. The need to align the national implementation process with the HLPF was also mentioned.

### **Secretary-General’s voluntary common reporting guidelines**

The responses indicated that most countries found the guidelines clear and used them to structure their reports. The guidelines were considered beneficial in promoting a common structure for reports and as contributing to a minimum level of comparability and uniformity. One country stated that they created a level playing field about what could be expected of all countries. Another country stated that the guidelines were useful with respect to the coordination with NGOs, academia, and the private sector. Several countries, while emphasising the importance of comparability, noted the importance of maintaining a degree of flexibility.

As regards areas for improvement, they included the following (i) highlighting the top three to four priorities; (ii) scope for inclusion of good practices; (iii) making available systematized examples of

---

<sup>12</sup> Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Madagascar, Mexico, Montenegro, Norway, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, Turkey and Venezuela.

good practices in order to improve the content of the VNRs; (iv) ensuring a focus on the entire Agenda rather than the HLPF thematic focus; (v) and clarity on how international commitments from contributing partners are relevant to the VNRs. One country stated that the current version of the guidelines does not provide comprehensive support on key implementation issues countries are struggling with, including integration, translating goals and targets into a national framework, and the global indicator framework vs. national indicators. On the question of revising the guidelines, there were different views, with a number of countries stating that they were sufficient for present purposes, another favoured frequent updates, and one country preferred annual revisions.

### **Preparatory meetings**

Countries found the preparatory meetings of the 22 volunteering countries useful, citing the opportunity for mutual learning, sharing experiences, helping to define reporting expectations, and a useful exchange on practical issues related conducting the VNRs. It was mentioned that exchanges on the status of implementation built trust and also contributed to raising the level of ambition. The majority of countries also participated in preparatory meetings at the regional level, organized in conjunction with the relevant regional economic commissions' regional high-level forums on sustainable development. The meetings were similarly considered useful for the purpose of; exchanging experiences and best-practices; providing peer-to-peer support; preparation; identification of strategies; guidance and planning; providing clarity on the expectations from DESA. One suggestion related the importance of ensuring synergies between non-UN regional platforms and UN regional platforms.

### **Presentation of the VNRs at the HLPF**

Countries stated that overall they were satisfied with the organization of the VNR presentations at the HLPF. Several countries referred to the inclusive and participatory character of the VNR sessions. Two countries encouraged improvements to the format, so as to promote greater interaction and mutual learning. One country stated that mutual exchange and learning through recommendations should be encouraged.

Countries particularly praised the quality of the panels, their interactive style, and the use of video presentations. While there were suggestions to allow more time for the VNR presentation, others stated that the time was adequate. A number of countries highlighted the quality of the chairpersons and moderators. One country stated that the non-panel format worked better, as the quality of moderators varied greatly and, overall, their comments did not improve the VNRs. Other suggestions covered: (i) providing clear and timely guidance relating to the presentations at the HLPF; (ii) maintaining regional balance of presenting countries; (iii) organizing round tables during the first week, thus ensuring sufficient time for the President of ECOSOC to prepare a high-quality summary of the VNR presentations; (iv) improving the logistics and scheduling of events; (v) and maintaining the emphasis on the involvement of all stakeholders.

### **Lessons learned and preparations for future VNRs**

Following their respective reviews, most countries are carrying out assessments, identifying best practices and lessons learnt. Several developing countries drew on support from the UN system in the form of policy, programme or financial assistance from UNDP country offices. Expectations from the UN system at the country level include continuation of providing well-coordinated and efficient technical support to countries requesting it. Some developed countries mentioned the contribution of think tanks and academia. Two countries specifically mentioned that dialogue with civil society delivered valuable input to guide the finalization of its report.

Countries supported the organization by the Secretariat of preparatory meetings for the purposes of sharing experiences and providing information on the VNR process. There was support for the compilation of lessons learnt from the 2016 VNRs.