



# HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

## 2019 Voluntary National Reviews Synthesis Report

Prepared by the



**United Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs

with the coordination of

DESA's Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development



## Synthesis of Voluntary National Reviews 2019

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## Foreword

I am pleased to share with you the fourth annual Synthesis Report of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).

This report concludes the first four-year cycle of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). It reflects the wealth of national experiences in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We can all be proud of what has been accomplished.

Since 2016, 142 countries have presented their VNRs at the HLPF under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. Some have carried out their second and third VNR, resulting in a total of 158 VNR presentations thus far. At the July 2019 HLPF, 47 countries conducted their VNRs.

Such rapid uptake of the reviews across all regions is a testament to countries' commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The large number of returning presenters, also shows the keen desire of countries to present their national implementation efforts at the HLPF, not only showcasing what they have achieved nationally, but also sharing their lessons learned, along with the challenges they face.

Limited evidence and data disaggregation clearly remain key challenges for many, if not all countries, developed and developing alike. But many have been developing national indicators which, along with the global SDG indicators, demonstrate the progress achieved in those areas where data is available.

This report captures selected actions that countries have undertaken with respect to achieving the 17 SDGs. In many cases, reporting on the Goals has become more in-depth and structured. The report also highlights how countries have addressed the imperative of "leaving no one behind", a core principle of

the 2030 Agenda. It examines how countries have put in place institutional frameworks and policies for guiding and monitoring national implementation efforts. The report further reflects some of the main challenges for accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including on means of implementation, integrated policy-making, and in relation to disaggregated data.

It is evident from this year's reports that the VNRs improve every year. The 47 VNRs presented at the 2019 HLPF are rich in lessons and information on progress achieved, and obstacles encountered. Many countries have been open and candid in acknowledging their challenges, for instance, in examining who is at risk of being left behind and why. They have clearly presented their policies and strategies so that others can learn from their experiences. The lessons from the 2019 VNRs will be important as countries engage in a decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, as decided at the SDG summit in September 2019, and as they review the organization of the work of the HLPF.



**Liu Zhenmin**  
Under-Secretary-General for  
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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

47 countries presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council, held in New York from 9 to 18 July 2019. Since 2016, when the first reviews were presented, a total of 142 countries have reported on their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

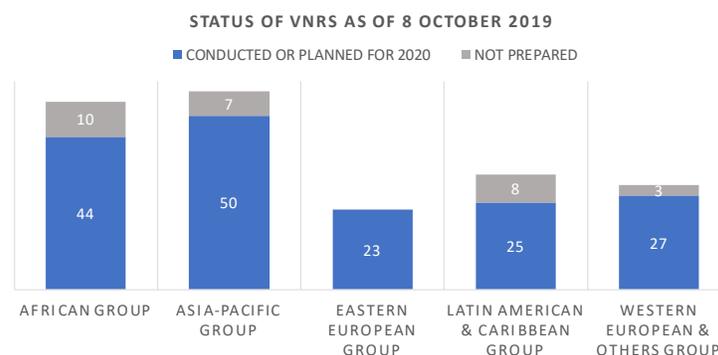
As in previous years, this report provides an overview of the approaches and actions taken by all countries reporting in 2019 and showcases best practices, lessons learned, gaps and challenges encountered in working towards the achievement of the SDGs. Drawing from the VNR reports, key elements pertaining to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda are examined, including institutional arrangements and coordination mechanisms, the principle of leaving no one behind and its application in national contexts, monitoring and data, stakeholder engagement and awareness raising, as well as the means of implementation. In addition, the report outlines actions taken on each of the SDGs. However, the report is not exhaustive with respect to practices and examples. All examples chosen are illustrative and their selection does not imply that the 2019 VNRs do not contain other equally valid and useful examples of country practices.

### Ownership and institutions for implementing the 2030 Agenda

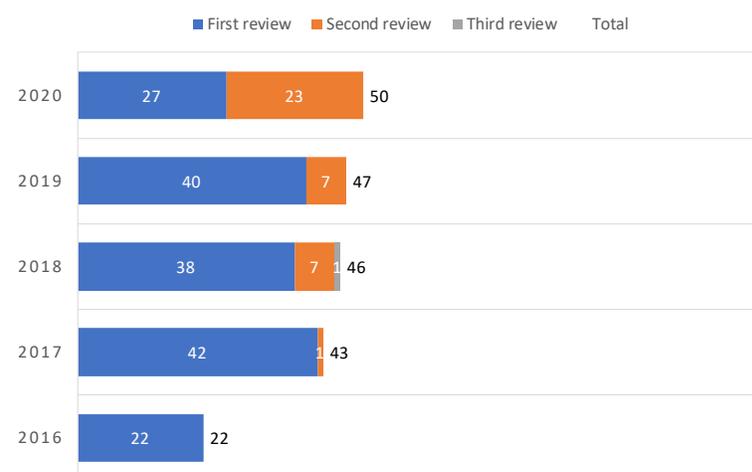
All countries elaborated on steps taken and ongoing processes to align national development plans and strategies with the 2030 Agenda and incorporate the SDGs into national frameworks. The majority of countries reporting in 2019 showcased changes to the institutional arrangements for SDG implementation, including newly established mechanisms for coordination or adjusting existing frameworks. As in previous years, most institutional mechanisms for SDG implementation can be divided into 1) the provision of high-

### Global Status of VNRs (2016-2020)

#### By UN Regional Groups



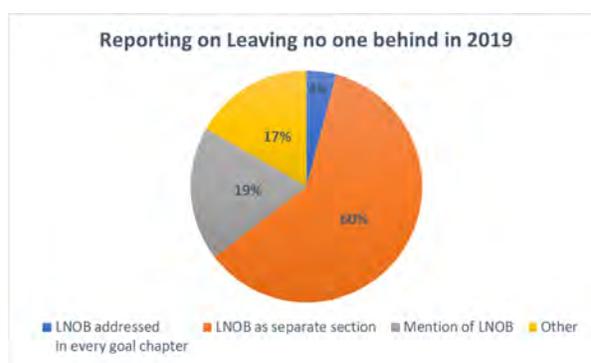
#### First, Second and Third reviews



level strategic policy direction and broad direction 2) coordination among line ministries and government agencies 3) technical working groups and advisory committees. In most cases, non-governmental entities are included in the technical working groups and advisory committees, although many have opened the higher-level coordination bodies for their participation. Many countries highlighted the crucial role that sub-national and local authorities play in implementing the SDGs. Several countries also stressed the contribution of parliaments to SDG implementation and reported on their activities.

### Leaving no one behind

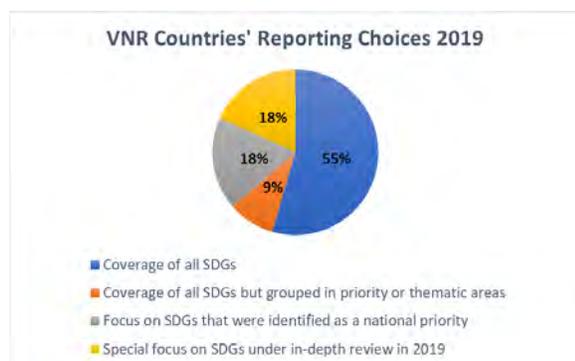
Many VNR reports contain a dedicated section on the 2030 Agenda's principle of "leaving no one behind" (LNOB) and its application in the national context, while a few countries included examples on how the principle is being upheld in their reporting on each of the SDGs. For most countries, LNOB entails a focus on creating an enabling policy environment that supports measures to ensure basic services for all and supports specific vulnerable groups. While the latter vary by country, children and youth, women and girls, migrants, persons with disabilities, older persons, indigenous peoples and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) were considered those most at risk of being left behind. Recognition of the need to strengthen collection and analysis of disaggregated data is growing among many countries, and many VNRs this year reported on national efforts in this regard.



### SDGs

While all countries reported on the SDGs, different approaches were chosen to do so. The majority of countries reported on all 17 SDGs, while a few countries focused on the SDGs under review at the 2019 HLPF (SDGs 4, 8, 10, 13, 16, 17). Some countries identified priority SDGs for reporting or focused on select SDGs in thematic clusters.

Most reviews addressed SDG 1, noting that it is imperative to move away from measuring poverty solely in monetary terms, and recognize its multidimensional nature and the need for a paradigm shift for effective poverty eradication. Fiscal challenges, the effects of climate change, limited administrative capacities, and lack of data are some of the challenges that countries face. Countries cautioned that unexpected shocks of socio-economic or environmental nature can cause vulnerable people to fall back into poverty. Social protection and safety nets were considered critical measures in this regard.



In the context of SDG 2, food insecurity and malnutrition continue to plague numerous countries. Poverty and hunger are predominantly witnessed in rural areas requiring targeted rural development policies. Support for small-scale and family farmers is critical for reducing the recent rise in hunger. Climate change is recognized as a common and serious risk to the realization of SDG 2 and sustainable development overall, calling for urgent measures such as climate-smart agricultural production and practices.

Countries recognized that the achievement of SDG 3 on good health and well-being, serves a central role in building sustainable societies and its interlinkages with a number of health-related targets and indicators in the other SDGs. There was an emphasis on public health as a national asset and the basis for achieving sustainable development. Several countries highlighted the centrality of universal health coverage and reported on a broad range of policy measures to address challenges, such as growing, ageing and diversifying populations, improving the quality of services, treating communicable and non-communicable diseases and the health implications of climate change and natural disasters.

Reporting on SDG 4 on quality education, countries stressed its fundamental role in achieving all SDGs. Persistent challenges in terms of access to and the quality of education and lifelong learning were highlighted, as was the need to more effectively adapt and connect education and learning to the future of work.

On SDG 5, countries stated that gender inequality persists, as women have not achieved full parity with men in any dimension. The reports pointed to women being in less political and leadership roles, not being paid equally for equal work, holding fewer managerial and executive positions, and experiencing higher rates of harassment and gender-based violence. Many barriers to SDG 5 remain in place and challenges persist in terms of data availability, quality and timeliness, with significant gaps in employment statistics.

In the context of SDG 6, countries focused on the progress made in terms of availability, accessibility and quality of water sources. The adverse impacts of climate change, industrialization, waste and inefficient infrastructure were highlighted as key challenges. Countries are taking action through awareness raising campaigns, innovative recycling and purification systems, efficient water management infrastructures, and legislation to address both the availability of water for all and its cost-conscious use.

SDG 7 is considered a critical contributor to economic prosperity, social well-being and security, and sustainable development. Reporting countries recognized the importance of phasing out fossil fuel use and are scaling up efforts to promote energy generation from renewable and sustainable sources to promote energy security and halt climate change. In addition, increasing energy efficiency is a key priority for countries. Legislative frameworks offering incentives to this end are increasingly adopted.

All reviews reported on progress and gaps in implementing SDG 8, recognizing the importance of achieving decent work and economic growth for sustainable development. To achieve SDG 8, countries highlighted measures taken to diversify the economy, support small and medium-sized enterprises, provide decent work for all, create safe working spaces and adapt new technologies for the digital economy. Countries emphasized the importance of achieving economic growth that is environmentally responsible.

On SDG 9, countries reported on the challenge of building and modernizing resilient infrastructure, particularly in light of natural hazards and disasters. Mobile cellular networks overcome some of the

barriers to accessing existing core infrastructure. Many highlighted an increase in the use of cellular networks and Internet coverage, although discrepancies in use continue to emerge based on gender, as well as on urban or rural location.

Countries addressed SDG 10 by linking it to other goals, including poverty eradication, access to quality education, decent work and economic growth, and gender equality. Countries highlighted measures to reduce gender, regional and income inequalities such as minimum wage standards, non-discrimination laws, skills training programmes and regional development plans. Many countries prioritized reducing inequalities for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, older persons, children and youth.

All VNR countries reported on key elements of sustainable communities that provide fair access to basic services, a healthy environment, electricity, housing and transport. Air pollution was considered a key challenge that threatens the sustainability of communities and the achievement of SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities. Reporting countries also demonstrated the interlinked nature of urban planning and development, national plans for reducing environmental risks and preserving cultural heritage.

On SDG 12, countries pointed to a general lack of awareness on sustainable production and consumption patterns and stressed the critical role of stakeholder engagement to mainstream the concept. The VNR reports highlight some solutions, including national legislation and the design of production systems that prohibit the use of hazardous materials and chemicals, the development of a green economy and the use of modern technologies to enhance the outcomes of a circular economy.

All reporting countries addressed SDG 13. Many said that climate change is already impacting their citizens and natural ecosystems, and highlighted climate change as a cross-cutting issue that threatens the implementation of all other SDGs. Numerous countries cited increasing education and awareness of climate change as a policy priority.

In the context of SDG 14 on life below water, countries reported on their national marine legislation, frameworks and integrated management plans and marine spatial planning. Pointing to marine resources under pressure, countries highlighted initiatives taken to support sustainable fisheries, to conserve marine ecosystems and curb marine pollution.

On SDG 15, countries noted challenges in terms of ecosystem and biodiversity management, including limited capacity, increasing urbanization and population growth, pollution and overexploitation of resources. Almost all countries have made significant efforts to halt the decline of biodiversity through establishing protected areas.

In achieving SDG 16, the reviews recognized the importance of reducing all forms of violence, protecting human rights, eliminating corruption, improving the effectiveness and transparency of institutions, ensuring public access to information and upholding the rule of law. Countries elaborated on measures to achieve SDG 16 through conflict resolution, peacebuilding and regional cooperation.

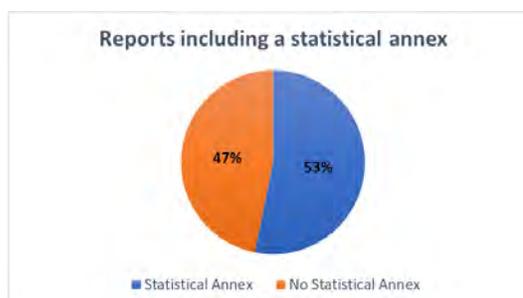
Reporting on SDG 17, countries focused on actions to revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development, including initiatives, challenges and progress in mobilizing the means of implementation

for the 2030 Agenda. Countries also outlined their efforts to mobilize domestic resources and forge partnerships with the private sector.

### Data and monitoring

The reviews demonstrate that the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires not only political support, but also support from the national statistical system. The collection, processing, analysis, and release of reliable, timely, high-quality, and disaggregated data on the indicators are fundamental for evidence-based policymaking. To this end, countries have implemented a series of measures to increase data availability for

policymakers and other users to facilitate SDG implementation follow-up and review. Key challenges, however, persist in terms of data gaps and data collection, disaggregation, and financial and technical support for monitoring and capacity building.



### Stakeholder engagement and awareness raising

The success of the 2030 Agenda depends to a large extent on the meaningful engagement of the whole-of-society. Countries reported on various mechanisms for stakeholder participation, including through involving in and consulting with stakeholders during decision-making processes, providing an enabling environment for stakeholders to contribute to SDG implementation, and using different tools and approaches to engage stakeholders in monitoring and reporting activities. In the 2030 Agenda's fourth year of implementation, countries recognized that there is a critical need to foster awareness-raising among all stakeholders about the SDGs.

### Means of implementation

Reporting countries addressed the means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda, including financial and non-financial resources as well as partnerships, the contribution of science, technology and innovation to the achievement of the SDGs and capacity building needs. Many countries reported on measures they have taken to strengthen domestic resource mobilization and improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection. Reporting countries also stressed the importance of partnerships in the implementation of the SDGs, which pools valuable knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources from partners and complements the revitalized Global Partnership.

Besides a variety of concrete partnerships, many countries outlined measures taken to create a conducive environment for partnerships, from the development of legal and institutional instruments to relevant awareness raising and capacity building activities. Countries expressed a wide variety of capacity development needs, including building the skills of the public sector in policy coordination, especially in inter-ministerial development planning and implementation of programmes and projects; capacity to be able to manage synergies and trade-offs; and strengthening institutional capacity and accountability relationships.

### **Challenges, lessons learned and next steps**

The 47 VNRs presented in 2019 provide a snapshot of the global status of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The reports contain a wealth of good practices and lessons learned shared by countries. Progress can be observed in terms of specifying the principle of “leaving no one behind” in the respective national context, outlining examples that illustrate the interlinked nature of the SDGs, increasing involvement of Parliaments, and fostering partnerships among stakeholders to jointly work towards sustainable development for all. Challenges persist, however, with regard to policy impact on the SDGs, data availability, quality and disaggregation, resource mobilization and budgeting for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as identifying inclusive and effective mechanisms for stakeholder engagement and awareness-raising for the SDGs. While some of the VNR reports contain specific recommendations or actions for follow-up, there is a potential to further elaborate on how the review contributes to the overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Embarking on the second cycle of VNRs, there is merit in building on the lessons learned from the combined reviews presented from 2016 to 2019. As many countries have recognized, conducting a VNR is not an end in itself nor a one-off presentation at the HLPF, but a critical tool to maintain the momentum and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the sub-national, national, regional and global levels.



## I. Introduction

This report synthesizes some of the main issues addressed in the fourth round of VNRs that took place during the 2019 HLPF under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), from 9 to 18 July 2019. 47 countries presented their VNRs: seven countries conducting their second VNR presented on 15 July<sup>1</sup> and 40 countries presenting a VNR for the first time presented during the ministerial segment of the HLPF, from 16 to 18 July.<sup>2</sup>

As in previous years, this synthesis of VNRs provides an overview of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and identifies examples, best practices, lessons learned and challenges from countries conducting reviews. The report therefore examines a range of topics, including ownership, stakeholder involvement, institutional mechanisms, incorporation of the SDGs into national frameworks, means of implementation and partnerships. It also provides an overview of how countries addressed goals and targets, as well as the principle of leaving no one behind, in the VNRs. It attempts to highlight practices from all countries that participated in the 2019 VNR process. However, the report is not exhaustive; the examples included are illustrative and their selection does not imply that the 2019 VNRs do not contain other equally valid and useful examples of country practices. Background information and details concerning the mandate for the VNRs is contained in the Synthesis of Voluntary National Reviews 2016, and it is not repeated in the present report.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Azerbaijan, Chile, Guatemala, Indonesia, Philippines, Sierra Leone and Turkey.

<sup>2</sup> Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Eswatini, Fiji, Ghana, Guyana, Iceland, Iraq, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mongolia, Nauru, New Zealand, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Serbia, South Africa, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, and Vanuatu.

<sup>3</sup> See [UN DESA, Synthesis of the Voluntary National Reviews 2016 \(2016\)](#)

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

*This section briefly examines how countries are addressing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in the context of their broad societal objectives and the steps that are being taken to create ownership. It also outlines different approaches that countries pursue to tap into the interlinkages among the SDGs and build on the co-benefits of some policy actions, while minimizing trade-offs. The section further notes some approaches that countries are taking to incorporate the SDGs into national development plans and strategies.*

### **National context**

All VNRs in 2019 describe ongoing processes and steps taken to align national development policies and plans with the 2030 Agenda. SDG Localization processes were launched in many countries shortly after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, generally through a review of national priorities to determine the degree of alignment of the latter with the SDGs. Several countries are looking to prioritize the SDGs that are immediately relevant to accelerating their national development priorities.

With varying degrees of formal engagement, and in line with country-specific constitutional arrangements, some countries showcased increased involvement of parliaments and executive branches adopting legislation to advance sustainable development, to ensure the alignment of legislation and to oversee monitoring and review of SDG implementation (United Kingdom, Indonesia, Kuwait, Mongolia, Tunisia, Turkey, Pakistan). For example, Indonesia and Turkey note the support of Parliament as crucial in the planning, budgeting and monitoring of SDG implementation. Turkey reported that the government briefs members of Parliament on the national processes and activities related to the SDGs.

Pakistan's National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies constituted SDG Taskforces. These taskforces play a significant role in filling legislative gaps, promulgating new legislative frameworks and amending existing legislation with the aim of facilitating SDG implementation and monitoring progress made. In the United Kingdom, Wales introduced the Well-being of Future Generations Act, which localizes the 17 Goals into domestic legislation. The Act places a duty on public bodies to ensure that for sustainable development is the central organizing principle of government and specified public bodies.

Some countries reported working with UN system partners to advance the localization of the SDGs (Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Guyana, Palau, Tunisia). For instance, Azerbaijan stated that the government partnering with a United Nations Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) Mission identified SDG accelerators. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Tunisia assessed the state of alignment of their national priorities with the SDGs through the UN MAPS' Rapid Integrated Assessment tool. Turkey together with the UN delivered a training programme on the SDGs as part of their awareness raising activities to advance national ownership.

National ownership features prominently in all 2019 VNRs. All countries indicate that the ownership of the 2030 Agenda should reside in the hands of government, as much as it should reside across all stakeholders in society to implement the SDGs in a concerted effort.

Some countries are adopting whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, showcasing ambitious efforts to integrate the work of public administrations at all levels of government ranging from federal line-ministries, to municipal and local governments, to traditional chieftainships. Ghana recognizes the unique role of chieftaincy institutions as a key partner in implementing the national development agenda. Cambodia notes that a final SDG Framework 2016-2030 was approved in 2018 after a broad consultative process on the development of indicators and with participation from line ministries and key partners and stakeholders, providing the basis for its National Strategic Development Plan.

The SDGs represent challenges that require the improvement of existing and the introduction of new, innovative policies and measures. All countries recognize that the achievement of the SDGs requires effective multi-stakeholder partnerships, and some countries (Croatia, Iceland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Eswatini, Palau, Ghana) report integration efforts beyond government partnerships engaging in extensive and continuous consultative processes with a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, academic institutions, media, think-tanks, faith-based organizations, and citizens or individuals in general.

Some countries indicated the crucial role that civil society organizations (CSOs) and academic institutions play in establishing a dialogue on the creation and implementation of sustainable development policies, on devising and implementing innovations, and initiating partner projects. At the same time, these stakeholders contribute to the effective oversight of respect for sustainable development standards and monitoring progress in the country (Croatia, New Zealand, Saint Lucia). The United Republic of Tanzania notes that the private sector is expected to play an instrumental role in leveraging efforts in SDG implementation.

Several governments, including Mauritius, have developed advocacy and citizen engagement strategies central to awareness raising campaigns, sometimes in partnership with academic institutions or UN entities. The importance of citizens' individual actions and ownership of the 2030 Agenda remains a recurring theme throughout the VNRs. Eswatini interpreted the SDGs into the local language to ensure involvement and understanding of all levels of stakeholders in the country. In 2019 Iceland launched an information portal on the SDGs, offering individuals and organizations an opportunity to present projects, facilitating the spread of ideas and approaches that can contribute to implementing the SDGs.

### **Assessing the SDGs for national implementation, inter-linkages and trade-offs**

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs have provided a general framework to support the development of a coordinated and integrated approach towards sustainable development. Several countries performed mappings of the alignment of national priorities with the SDGs, and subsequently drew indicative baselines against which progress can be monitored (Cambodia, Eswatini, Guyana).

Some countries explicitly recognized the interlinkages between the SDGs and the opportunity for government, business and civil society to collaborate in their efforts, contributing to several Goals at once. Some countries highlighted national synergies and trade-offs between the SDGs, often framed within the discussion around policy coherence (Cambodia, Ghana). The United Kingdom identified a selection of interlinkages within its national context described under each of its report's 17 individual goal chapters. Turkey conducted an SDG mapping to identify respective SDGs' gravity centres, which have the highest number of linkages for SDG implementation. Inter-linkages among SDGs; synergies, mutual interactions, or trade-offs; and the direction and level of each interaction were identified based on the respective national context in Turkey.

Ghana's VNR acknowledges the need to take advantage of the synergies among the SDGs and reduce the risks involved in trade-offs. Many policy interventions include a focus on the dimensions of sustainability, but at the same time lack the input-output analytics that are required to identify the scale of impact, as well as that of synergies and trade-offs.

Ensuring policy coherence remains a challenge for many countries. As large

parts of its GDP depends on resources such as oil and gas, Azerbaijan notes challenges in ensuring a coherent approach to the promotion of economic development and combatting environmental degradation. To increase policy coherence, Liechtenstein looks for suitable instruments to ensure

**Table 5. Interaction between SDGs**

	Target Interaction Ratio (Average %)	Number of Goals with Target Interaction Ratio of 40% or Higher	Number of Goals with Target Interaction Ratio of 60% or Higher
<b>SDG 1 (7 targets)</b>			
Impacted	74	15	12
Impacting	40	8	5
<b>SDG 2 (8 targets)</b>			
Impacted	41	8	5
Impacting	35	7	3
<b>SDG 3 (13 targets)</b>			
Impacted	38	3	1
Impacting	13	2	0
<b>SDG 4 (10 targets)</b>			
Impacted	20	3	2
Impacting	39	6	5
<b>SDG 5 (9 targets)</b>			
Impacted	57	10	7
Impacting	23	5	2
<b>SDG 6 (8 targets)</b>			
Impacted	27	4	2
Impacting	27	4	2
<b>SDG 7 (5 targets)</b>			
Impacted	53	11	7
Impacting	26	4	2
<b>SDG 8 (12 targets)</b>			
Impacted	45	9	4
Impacting	52	9	6
<b>SDG 9 (8 targets)</b>			
Impacted	36	9	2
Impacting	48	12	4
<b>SDG 10 (10 targets)</b>			
Impacted	25	4	0
Impacting	25	5	2
<b>SDG 11 (10 targets)</b>			
Impacted	34	5	3
Impacting	35	8	3
<b>SDG 12 (11 targets)</b>			
Impacted	26	3	2
Impacting	36	8	3
<b>SDG 13 (5 targets)</b>			
Impacted	55	15	8
Impacting	53	10	8
<b>SDG 14 (10 targets)</b>			
Impacted	28	4	3
Impacting	21	2	1
<b>SDG 15 (12 targets)</b>			
Impacted	34	8	3
Impacting	24	4	2
<b>SDG 16 (12 targets)</b>			
Impacted	6	1	1
Impacting	43	9	4
<b>SDG 17 (19 targets)</b>			
Impacted	8	1	1
Impacting	76	12	12

Source: 2019 VNR of Turkey

reasonable balance when prioritizing individual SDGs. When policymakers work across ministries and sectors, according to several countries, they are better equipped to recognize and mitigate trade-offs.

In Iceland, analyzing each line-ministry's responsibility for SDG targets and the choice of priority targets reveals which ministries work together on specific issues. In implementing each SDG, other partners would then need to be considered. The government's Climate Action Plan is an example of such a coordinated policy. Seven government ministers presented the first version of the action plan, together with joint work on implementing it, in September 2018.

### ***SDGs in national development plans, strategies, budgets***

Four years since its adoption, countries have significantly progressed with the integration and localization process of the 2030 Agenda. Several countries indicate in their reports how their National Development Plans have been aligned with the SDGs, or how the SDGs have been integrated or mainstreamed into policies, strategies and programmes at national and sub-national levels (Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, Rwanda, Vanuatu, Kazakhstan).

The integration of SDGs into existing national planning and budgeting systems, for instance in Guyana or Cambodia, goes hand in hand with capacity building efforts, developing skills and knowledge of civil servants. Capacity constraints are often identified as a key challenge for local administrations. Mongolia adopted the Law on Development Policy and Planning in 2015, providing the legal basis for establishing an integrated system of development policy and planning. On this legal foundation Mongolia developed its Sustainable Development Vision 2030, ensuring SDG localization and alignment of national policies with the SDGs. In some countries, the integration of the SDGs into planning and policy-making coincides with their inclusion in national monitoring and evaluation frameworks, where the SDGs can provide performance measures of budget outcomes. Ghana developed its SDGs budget tracking system in 2018, which maps SDGs to the national budget using the chart of accounts. With this system, Ghana is now able to prepare cost analysis reports, track budgetary allocation to SDGs targets at national and subnational levels, as well as monitor the different sources of funding for the goals and targets. Indonesia and Sierra Leone indicated their Supreme Audit Institutions play a significant role in the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Some countries have moved, since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, to develop new (often five-year) national development plans. In these cases, for instance in Sierra Leone, the SDGs are integrated from the initial planning onset, ensuring better coherence, logic and effectiveness in their implementation. Croatia has begun preparing their 2030 National Development Strategy (NDS), a key strategic document that will be adopted in the first half of 2020 and shall form the foundation for shaping and implementing all public policies at the national and subnational level.

### III. Institutions for implementing the 2030 Agenda

*This section examines institutional frameworks and arrangements for the implementation and follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, including mechanisms for inter-ministerial and inter-sectorial coordination at different levels of government and the involvement of Parliaments.*

The majority of countries reporting in 2019 showcased changes to the institutional arrangements for SDG implementation, including newly established mechanisms for coordination or adjustments to the existing arrangements. As in previous years, most institutional mechanisms for SDG implementation can be divided into one of the following three tiers: 1) provision of high-level strategic policy direction and broad direction; 2) coordination among line ministries and government agencies; and 3) technical working groups and advisory committees. Some countries, such as Ghana, have established entities in all three tiers, while others only utilize one or two of the levels and functions. In most cases, non-governmental entities are included in the technical working groups and advisory committees, although many have opened the higher-level coordination bodies for their participation.

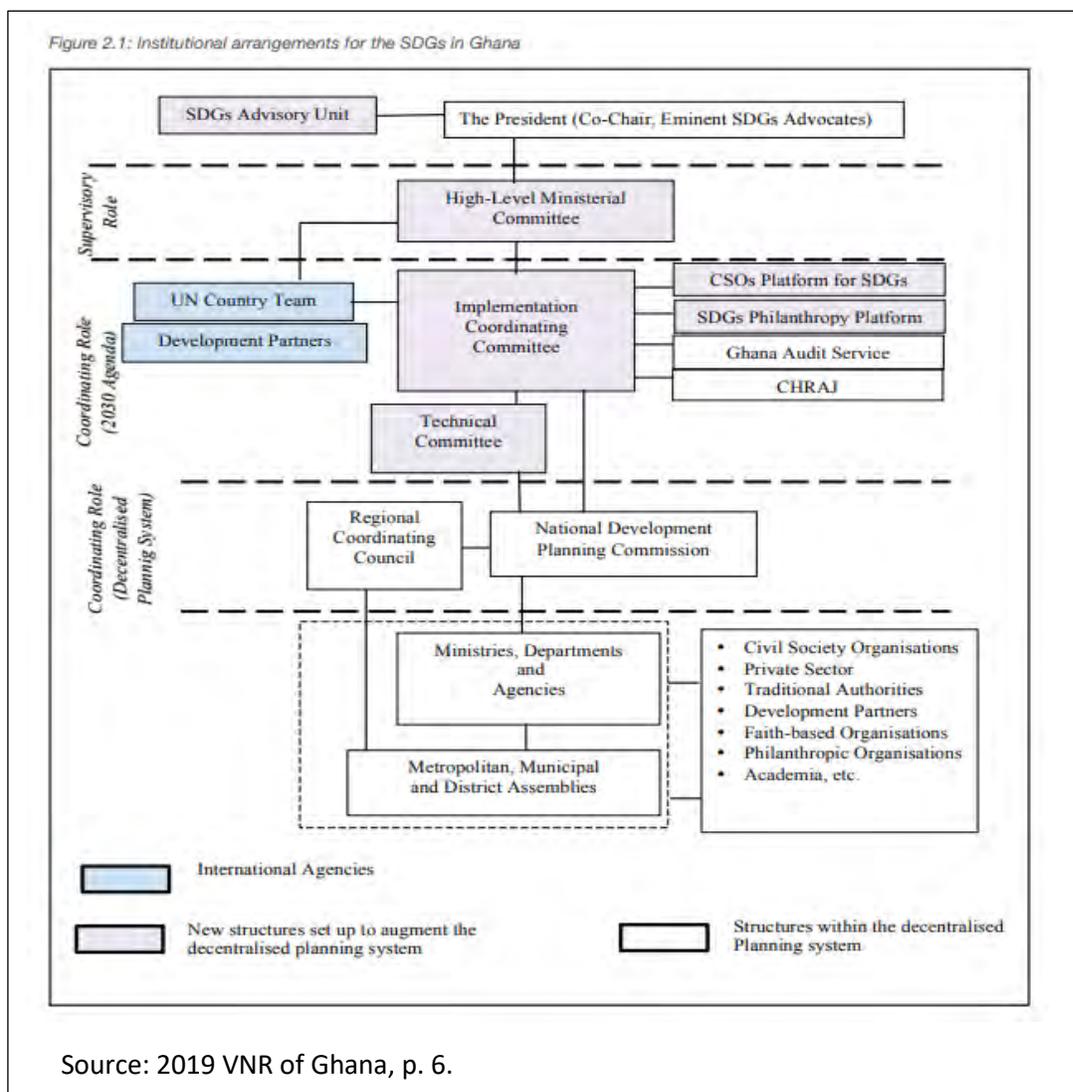
In several 2019 reporting countries, institutional arrangements for SDG implementation enjoy the participation of or the mandate from the highest possible political level. For example, Croatia established its National Council for Sustainable Development in January 2018, which is chaired by the Prime Minister. Lesotho's Prime Minister chairs the country's SDG Coordination structure and mechanism. Azerbaijan's National Coordination Council on Sustainable Development and Kazakhstan's newly established Coordination Board on Sustainable Development Goals are both chaired by the respective Deputy Prime Ministers. Timor-Leste established a working group on SDG implementation, chaired by the Prime Minister's Office, and Tonga's Planning Division in the Office of the Prime Minister coordinates its SDG implementation. In Iceland, a representative of the Prime Minister's Office is the chairman of the government's SDG working group.

#### ***Mechanisms for decision making and coordination on the 2030 Agenda Implementation***

In order to ensure the required level of coordination and coherence of their national SDG implementation, numerous countries have set up new institutional arrangements. Some countries, such as Iceland, described the establishment of a dedicated national coordination body as the first step towards the implementation of the SDGs.

The power of effective institutional mechanisms has been acknowledged in Ghana, where according to its report, progress on MDGs was hampered by weak inter- and intra-sectoral coordination, as well as ineffective collaboration among stakeholders. To tackle this challenge, in addition to its decentralized planning system, Ghana has set up a number of SDG-specific structures, which consist of a High-Level Ministerial Committee (HLMC), an SDGs Implementation Coordination Committee (ICC), a Technical Committee and a CSOs Platform on SDGs. The highest-level body, the High-Level Ministerial Committee, provides strategic direction for the implementation of the SDGs and Agenda 2063. Another tiered approach can be found in Saint Lucia, where the mechanism is comprised of the SDG-Cabinet Sub-

Committee of Ministers (CSC) which provides policy guidance to the Sustainable Development Goals National Coordinating Committee (SDGNCC) - the governing committee tasked to guide the national implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. The inter-ministerial SDGNCC also includes representatives and alternates from the private sector, academia, youth and civil society.



In Croatia, the National Council for Sustainable Development chaired by the Prime Minister includes heads of relevant ministries and agencies, the Office of the President and the Croatian Bureau of Statistics. It is also planned that other stakeholders will participate in the work in an advisory role, namely representatives of regional self-government units, the economic sector, and interested scientific and civil society representatives. South Africa reported that to the extent possible, its coordination mechanisms rely on existing government structures and processes in order to avoid duplication. However, it has established as new structures, partly to obtain high-level guidance from the top political leaders, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Sustainable Development Agendas and the National Development Stakeholders Forum.

Other of cross-ministerial coordination can be found in Algeria where an inter-ministerial committee to monitor the implementation of the SDGs has been set up. This Committee, which meets regularly under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE), brings together the focal points as well as the deputies representing all the ministerial departments. In Turkmenistan, a national coordination mechanism was established in the form of a Working Group comprised of the Deputy Heads of ministries, agencies, public organizations, academic and research institutions, which oversees the issues relating to SDG implementation and monitoring. In Oman, the National Commission for Sustainable Development was formed under the chairmanship of the Deputy Secretary General of the Supreme Planning Council and with the membership of representatives of all development partners, including government, academics, members of the State and Shura Councils, as well as representatives of the private sector and civil society.

As noted earlier, in some countries, arrangements have been made to establish technical advisory committees or working groups, in some cases with very specific tasks. For example, in Liechtenstein, the government established an interdisciplinary working group led by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Justice and Culture that was tasked to perform a gap analysis, review data availability and provide recommendations for action. Based on the results, the government decided to define the SDGs together with the 2017–2021 Government Programme, as one of the strategic guidelines for the government's work.

In Palau, the 17 SDGs have been divided among eight SDG Working Groups, each led by a governmental ministry and including representatives from civil society. They have worked on the national indicators and the VNR, and will continue to refine the National SDG Framework and support the inclusion of the Goals into budget processes. In Rwanda, while strategic orientation and technical coordination are provided by previously existing entities, the Cabinet and Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning respectively, a dedicated SDG Taskforce has been established for provision of technical guidance and quality assurance during VNR preparation. This Taskforce brings together government ministries, development partners, CSOs and the private sector.

Some countries have included a broad array of stakeholders in their multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms. In addition to representatives of civil society and the private sector, countries have included members such as the heads of Trade Unions (Lesotho), the National African Peer Review Mechanism Governing Council (Ghana), youth representatives (Saint Lucia), and members of academia (Eswatini). In some countries, such as Chad, Lesotho and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the United Nations system has also been asked to join the coordination mechanisms either as full members or observers, as in Ghana and Kuwait. More examples of multi-stakeholder participation can be found in Chapter VIII.

A few countries have adjusted existing arrangements to better fit their current needs. In Iceland, the previous SDG working group was re-organized in the autumn of 2018, and now consists of representatives from all ministries, the Association of Local Authorities in Iceland and Statistics Iceland, as well as observers from the Youth Council for the SDGs and the UN Association in Iceland. The representative of the Prime Minister's Office is chairman of the group and the Foreign Ministry's representative is vice-chairman. As a key recommendation of its VNR, Timor-Leste noted the possibility of elevating its current SDG working group to create a National Commission for the SDGs that would review progress against the

Goals and coordinate future VNRs in line with reviews of the government programme. In Mauritius, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade chairs the SDG Steering Committee, a coordination body consisting of representatives from the government, private sector, NGOs and academia. However, Mauritius reported that to ensure an inclusive, transparent and coherent approach, an Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee is envisaged.

While some countries have established some new mechanisms for SDG decision-making and coordination, some 2019 reporting countries have incorporated 2030 Agenda implementation into existing structures. For example, in Sierra Leone, the SDGs have been implemented within the existing framework of implementing and reporting on national and subnational development plans to ensure coherent, harmonized and aligned national development efforts. The Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, reestablished in May 2018, coordinates implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at the national level, as it does for national development plans. The United Kingdom reported that all SDGs are now reflected throughout the government's programme of work and each government department has embedded the Goals in its Single Departmental Plan – an established process to focus government efforts on important issues. It is important that the SDGs become the business of existing institutions across the government and beyond

The Philippines plans to establish a Sub-Committee on the SDGs, which will be subsumed under the Development Budget Coordinating Committee (DBCC), and chaired by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) with the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) as co-chair. This arrangement will provide a platform to link planning and budgeting to ensure that SDG-supportive programs and projects are adequately funded. In Israel, a dedicated government decision on the establishment of a national mechanism is currently being prepared to continue the integration of the SDGs into the government's strategic planning. Turkey has also utilized existing structures, as the Presidency of Strategy and Budget (PSB) is the national focal point for sustainable development. Each of the SDGs has been allocated to a Ministry or an institution that is in charge of their implementation. However, in its report, Turkey notes that there is still a need for a national institutional structure to ensure inter-institutional communication and systematic SDG implementation.

### ***Coordinating mechanisms at multiple levels of government, including local government***

Many countries highlighted the crucial role that sub-national and local authorities play in implementing the SDGs. Iceland has included the national Association of Local Authorities in the government's SDG working group. In Pakistan, the provinces have instituted Technical Committees and Thematic Clusters. The nomination of focal persons at all levels of government, down to the districts, is helping them to align their development priorities with the 2030 Agenda.

Coordination bodies ensuring vertical cooperation reflect the unique governing structures of each country. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the SDGs Rollout Working Group, established in 2018, was comprised of members from the following institutions and organizations: Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Government of Republika Srpska; Government of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Government of Brčko Distric; and the United Nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Final approval of all key

conclusions and the implementation of all decisions are issued at the sub-national government level and that of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Some countries are coordinating SDG implementation at the sub-national level through their regional and local development plans. Mauritania has integrated the 2030 Agenda into an Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity Strategy 2016-2030 (SCAPP). The institutional mechanism in charge of implementing and evaluating this development plan consists of five different committees, one of which is the Regional Committee of Development. This committee is chaired by a regional governor and is composed of regional authorities such as the Coordinator of the Regional Planning Unit, the Regional Statistics Office, elected representatives, and technical and financial partners (PTF) in the provinces. In Burkina Faso, 13 Regional Frameworks for Dialogue are in charge of coordinating the monitoring and evaluation of the National Economic and Social Development Plan (PNDES) and the SDGs in each respective region, through the Regional Development Plan (PRD) and the Municipal Development Plans (PCD).

A similar structure is used in the Philippines, where SDG localization is facilitated through the Regional Development Plans (RDP), which transpose the national development plan to regional strategies and priorities. To this end, in November 2018, the Department of the Interior and Local Government and the National Economic and Development Authority provided the Guidelines on the Localization of the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022 Results Matrices and the Sustainable Development Goals. In Iraq, localization of the SDGs has been initiated in three governorates—Basra, Karbala, and Anbar—which have made progress in integrating the Goals into their local plans and programs and are preparing their first local reports.

### ***Involvement of Parliaments***

Countries such as, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Serbia, Rwanda, Pakistan, Lesotho, Israel, Iraq, Indonesia, Chad, Cameroon, Kuwait, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, United Kingdom, Azerbaijan and Algeria all stressed the role of parliaments for SDG implementation, and reported on their activities. In some countries, parliament have taken the initiative to engage in SDG implementation. In other cases, the government has proactively engaged parliaments. In many countries, parliaments have established dedicated SDG committees and groups. In some countries, such as Algeria, parliamentary representatives are included in the national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation. Furthermore, Azerbaijan reported on organizing a Conference on the role of its parliament, Milli Majlis, in the implementation of the SDGs, while Cameroon noted its parliament's role in the VNR process. In Turkey, members of Parliament are briefed on the process and activities related to the SDGs.

The parliament in Chad has established a special Commission to monitor implementation of the SDGs. Following a self-assessment of their readiness to implement the SDGs using the self-assessment tool of the International Union of Parliamentarians (IPU) and UNDP Chadian parliamentarians developed an action plan for 2019 and 2020. In Sierra Leone, the Parliamentary Committee on SDGs engages particularly with the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation on ensuring effective implementation of the SDGs. The parliament has also been provided with training on the SDGs, followed by training sessions on the role of CSOs and the audit service. In Pakistan, National and Provincial Parliamentary SDG Taskforces play a significant role in filling legislative gaps, promulgating new legislative frameworks and amending existing laws to facilitate SDG implementation. Five Parliamentary Resource Centres, at the national and provincial levels, include SDG Secretariats to support Taskforce members in terms of research and legislation.

#### **Box: Audit institutions**

Many countries recognize the value that audit institutions can bring to the implementation and review of the SDGs. Ghana, Indonesia, Kuwait, Saint Lucia, Sierra Leone, and Tonga all reported actions undertaken in 2019 to work with them. In Saint Lucia, the Office of Audit conducted a performance audit of the country's readiness to implement the SDGs, while in Tonga the performance audit report prepared by the Office of the Auditor General will be tabled in the national parliament for debate. The United Kingdom reported that in Wales, the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 has built in mechanisms for review, which include the role played by the independent Future Generations Commissioner for Wales and the Auditor General for Wales. In Ghana and Kuwait, audit entities are also included in the national SDG coordination committees.

In the United Kingdom, Parliament has carried out a number of inquiries on the SDGs, including the International Development Committee, the Environmental Audit Committee, and the Women and Equalities Committee. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on the United Nations Global Goals for Sustainable Development (APPG) also brings together Members of Parliament to discuss and promote the Goals.

In addition, countries such as Iraq and Israel reported on plans for involving parliament in the next phases of SDG implementation. Israel's parliament, the Knesset, is examining ways in which SDG thinking and terminology can be incorporated in the process of preparing legislation by parliamentary committees.

#### **Challenges**

While the majority of the reporting countries have already established some form of institutional arrangements for coordinating and implementing SDG activities, many are also still reporting challenges in making these institutions as effective as possible. Pakistan observed that a lack of efficient coordination going forward would deter implementation, lead to the duplication of efforts and make it difficult to build synergies. Countries also noted that stakeholders' lack of awareness of SDGs, their interlinkages and different policies also hinders effective collaboration in multi-stakeholder mechanisms. For some countries, such as Tonga, challenges in setting up stronger institutional mechanisms also include geographical diversity and remoteness.

Guyana reported that one of the strong positive outcomes of the VNR process was discussion with and among various sector ministries that allowed for several core issues to be highlighted for further examination. It is expected that this will result in proposals in the upcoming Budget 2020 to support the closing of critical data gaps, institutional strengthening and needed reforms for 2030 Agenda implementation.

#### IV. Leaving no one behind

*This section provides an overview of how countries have addressed the 2030 Agenda's key principle of leaving no one behind (LNOB). Many countries included dedicated sections on the topic in their reviews, while others provided references to ways in which the principle is upheld when discussing progress on the implementation of specific SDGs. For most countries, leaving no one behind entails a focus on creating an enabling policy environment that supports measures to ensure basic services for all and supports specific vulnerable groups.*

Following a rights-based approach to LNOB, a number of countries reported on rights enshrined in their constitutions or in other laws. For example, Rwanda's constitution guarantees representation in parliament for special categories of Rwandans including youth, women, people with disabilities and historically marginalized people, and commits to building a State in which women occupy at least 30 percent of positions in decision-making organs. Lesotho's constitution ensures "the foundation for a non-racist, non-sexist and human right-based society where race, class, gender, sex, religion, diversity, age, social security and protection from harm, among others, are primary considerations". Serbia's review emphasizes that the government has not only improved the framework for protection of rights in the process of accession to the European Union, but also consistently implements the constitutional provisions and a whole set of reform laws that protect and improve human and minority rights.

Several countries included a definition of what the LNOB principle entails in their view, with many placing it at the core of their development framework and other policy strategies, and some also highlighting the need to reach the furthest behind first. Guyana's concept of LNOB is to "take deliberate steps and actions to ensure that all segments of our population count, including our indigenous population, as well as those furthest behind or who currently have the least opportunities, are considered first and prioritized." The LNOB concept has been applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the prism of social inclusion and social protection, and is being explored more deeply through new interventions to help those left behind by providing opportunities to elevate them from their current position, through a more detailed analysis of socioeconomic development at the municipal level. In Azerbaijan, LNOB implies that "targets are met for all citizens and peoples and for all segments of society" and "an endeavor is made to reach the furthest behind first."

Numerous countries dedicated a separate section of their review to the principle of LNOB, most under the assessment of "policy and enabling environment". These included Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Republic of the Congo, Israel, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mongolia, Rwanda, Saint Lucia,

Serbia, South Africa, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Republic of Tanzania and Vanuatu. The United Kingdom’s review includes “LNOB examples” throughout the report with each SDG-specific chapter setting out key challenges and identifying clear and actionable next steps that will inform continued efforts. Many pages in Iceland’s review highlight specific actions across the SDGs targeted at LNOB.

In the Republic of Congo, the implementation of LNOB is reflected in the National Development Plan through the improvement of health and social protection services, inclusive development, and access to decent housing. Free health care has been introduced for children aged 0 to 15 years, pregnant women, indigenous peoples, people with HIV, and people living with disabilities.

In Mauritius, a LNOB perspective is centered within an extensive social protection system as well as a National Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Framework developed in 2016, which serves as an enabler that encourages the private sector to embark on initiatives to leave no one behind. Many private businesses have established Foundations with the aim of addressing issues relating to poverty, while improving the living standards of beneficiaries and enhancing sustainability in their businesses and in the country in general.

Israel’s review includes a section on harnessing innovation to LNOB, which provides numerous examples of initiatives in three key areas to overcome cultural challenges and bridge social gaps: providing employment for all population groups and in all regions of the country, advancing research and development to meet societal goals, and enabling platforms for knowledge and information. In Eswatini, inclusive institutional arrangements involve a technical working team composed of representatives from government, businesses, civil society organizations, academics and experts to ensure that no one is left behind, develop national ownership and implement the SDGs at the national and constituency levels.

Pakistan is developing communication platforms that cater to the country’s cultural, linguistic and geographic diversity, and updating the National Socioeconomic Registry to target the poorest more effectively and ensure that no one is left behind. Their national poverty alleviation program is expanding social protection and safety nets and supporting human capital development, to reduce inequality and lift those furthest behind first in a coordinated and cost-effective manner.

Most reviews highlighted the needs of women, children, refugees, internally displaced persons, migrants, minorities, stateless persons, people living with disabilities, the elderly and populations affected by conflict, natural disasters and health emergencies. Some provided additional distinctions, defining those left behind as widows and widowers, orphans, trafficked and street children, sex workers, the mentally ill, veterans, prison inmates, ex-convicts, pastoralists or herders, and people working in informal sectors. Several countries included special measures for people living with albinism, to ensure that they are not stigmatized or marginalized.

Many reviews provide details on how they identified those parts of their populations left behind (or at risk thereof); Ghana and Mongolia’s reviews are among those that include an annex identifying “groups left behind/not captured” or at risk of being left behind, and define actions being taken to reach them.

In South Africa, government efforts have focused on improving the lot of underprivileged, including an expansive social protection mechanism. Post-apartheid inequality remains high, however, and some groups, especially youth, women, people with disabilities and rural dwellers, are particularly disadvantaged. Social protection measures in Eswatini provide support to orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs), the elderly, people living with disabilities, women and youth. Cambodia's National Social Protection Policy Framework and its Health Equity Fund both support LNOB, and a revised National Ageing Policy aims to mainstream ageing into the development planning process through eliminating age-based discrimination, ensuring gender equality among older populations, and promoting sound intergenerational relations.

Some reviews also delved into why various groups are at risk of being left behind. Mongolia identified a number of factors, including: discrimination and exclusion, social and economic status, residential disparities such as between urban and rural areas, shocks and disasters, and weak governance including lack of coherence between national and sectorial policies and limited opportunity for all voices to be heard in decision-making.

Most countries used their reviews to report on targeted support measures for vulnerable groups in order to leave no one behind. Many described detailed initiatives to improve social safety nets and social protection schemes, especially in the areas of poverty eradication, food security, health, education, housing and employment. The following section highlights some of them.

### ***Addressing geographical inequalities***

For many countries, reaching those at risk of being left behind means reaching out to rural areas. As Timor-Leste's review notes, "building human capital and promoting sustainable growth are vital pillars but they will not be possible without consolidating peace and addressing municipal and rural-urban disparities. This will require strengthening institutional capacity and prioritizing and resourcing inclusive interventions to target the furthest behind first. This will also necessitate improvements in data collection and analysis in order to know who has benefited from certain interventions, and who has not, and to identify and address the key problems."

Pakistan's government is working to reach the rural poor in Islamkot, in partnership with non-government stakeholders and the private sector, with a comprehensive plan to localize and implement the SDGs that includes education, healthcare, livelihoods and skills, infrastructure, water, gender equality and disaster management. Tonga's review highlights a key government initiative to cater to populations in remote areas, through major renovations and service delivery improvements in outer island hospitals. The United Republic of Tanzania is committed to projects for lighting rural areas and supporting small-scale rural entrepreneurs through renewable energy.

Iraq highlighted the importance of integrating local levels into the reporting process, because they have a role to play in reaching the categories that should not be left behind. Urban communities should also not be forgotten, and some reviews noted initiatives in this respect; for example, a Green Infrastructure Fund supports projects in some of the most deprived urban communities in Scotland, to make best use of their local environment, help tackle effects of climate change, attract business and boost job opportunities to LNOB.

### ***Hearing everyone's voices***

The importance of inclusion was apparent throughout this year's reviews, and many VNRs were developed with multi-stakeholder input. Ghana held a number of multi-stakeholder consultations in preparing their VNR, including one that focused specifically on the principle of LNOB. In Côte d'Ivoire, civil society groups conducted consultations in a number of regions to contribute to the review, and many contributions placed particular emphasis on the principle of LNOB. Reaching the furthest behind first was emphasized in the reviews of Azerbaijan, Ghana, Guyana, Pakistan, Serbia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Timor-Leste.

Mongolia emphasized the need to create a mechanism for regular discussions on the issue of vulnerable groups so their needs could be addressed in a comprehensive manner, and the challenges faced by their caretakers could also be considered. Azerbaijan and Lesotho reported on the development of e-governance and other electronic service for all citizens.

### ***Role of non-governmental actors***

Most VNRs emphasized the importance of engaging a wide range of different stakeholders in SDG implementation to ensure that no one is left behind. As Lesotho's review emphasized, mobilizing partnerships from various sectors and promoting inclusive engagement and multi-stakeholder consultation and participation is not only critical for prioritization of SDGs, but is also necessary for monitoring of and reporting on progress made on implementing the goals. Indonesia's review observed that LNOB means that the SDGs have become "everybody's business".

National and sub-national government bodies also rely on CSOs, private companies, philanthropic organizations, academia, and numerous other partners to ensure that the principle of LNOB is at the center of data collection, consultation and action. Volunteerism programs promote inclusive education and youth engagement in Cambodia, Lesotho, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste. In Indonesia, efforts to ensure the principle of LNOB in disaster management are carried out by involving persons with disabilities as actors in disaster mitigation.

Stakeholder engagement is covered in more detail in chapter VIII.

***Need for disaggregated data***

Recognition of the need to strengthen collection and analysis of disaggregated data is growing among many countries, and many VNRs this year reported on national efforts in this regard. Burkina Faso has been building a unique registry of vulnerable people at the national level since 2016, making it possible to target vulnerable people in 67 municipalities, this will progressively expand country-wide by 2022 and support the National Vulnerable Persons Program, to provide a social safety net for vulnerable households including universal health insurance, nutrition and other issues. Lesotho has created a single national integrated data platform for targeting and increasing the efficiency and coverage of social protection programmes, improving institutional coordination, harmonizing legal frameworks, and consolidating social assistance programmes across the country. Rwanda has launched the Multidimensional Poverty Index and analyzed child poverty using their Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis, to inform appropriate policy actions. This involves by looking beyond income and providing an understanding of how vulnerable groups are left behind across the three key dimensions of health, education and standard of living.

Pakistan has attempted to make primary data more representative of on-the-ground realities and broaden its scope to include under-represented segments of society, in order to leave no one behind. Azerbaijan's review states that avoiding inequality and discrimination in SDGs requires efforts to be channeled from mid-level layers towards the most marginalized population groups. For this, it is necessary to classify the data according to gender, age, income/welfare, location, ethnicity, and disability, the fact of being a refugee or IDP and other specific socio-economic characteristics. Timor-Leste's review emphasizes that better disaggregated data is essential for knowing as much as possible about key vulnerable groups, to understand who has benefited or not from certain interventions, and to identify key blockages. Surveys may need to be conducted more frequently, with enhanced mapping of geographic areas, to fully understand the situation of vulnerable groups. To gather inputs and data for their review, the Philippines conducted a consultation workshop on the need for greater data granularity to report on the status of vulnerable sectors and the extent of the operationalization of LNOB, highlighting the need to sustain the engagement between government and CSOs after the VNR presentation.

Tunisia underscored that elaborating the collection and analysis of disaggregated data must also ensure that the breakdown of data is done according to a human rights-based approach, especially for sensitive data such as race and ethnicity, migration status and disability.

Data is covered in more detail in Chapter VI.

### ***Upholding the principle in international cooperation***

Several countries reported extremely difficult conditions preventing progress toward achieving the SDGs and LNOB. Instability, inequality and poverty persist in some countries, such as Central African Republic, amid a climate of conflict and political insecurity. Chad is struggling to establish its baseline data in a context of fragile governance. Iraq is faced with deep humanitarian challenges due to the displacement of millions of families. Strengthened measures for immediate bilateral and multilateral cooperation are needed to assist countries whose populations are at risk of being left behind. Some countries, such as Indonesia, emphasized the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation in this regard. Turkey highlighted its policy of promoting regional and global stability evidenced by its support to developing countries, particularly LDCs, and noted that the establishment of the Technology Bank for LDCs as a UN entity in Turkey in June 2018 marked the fulfilment of SDG target 17.8.

International solidarity consisting of development cooperation and humanitarian aid is the central instrument through which some countries, such as Liechtenstein, contribute to LNOB, through financing aid and development projects in developing countries. As a catalyst for mobilizing resources for regions and groups of people most at risk of being left behind, New Zealand has increased their ODA by an additional \$714 million over a four-year budget cycle, to a projected 0.28 percent of Gross National Income, which is targeted to countries most in need, particularly for SIDS. Croatia's review noted advocacy of LNOB through its membership in the UN Human Rights Council and all multilateral fora.

### ***Measures targeted at specific groups***

#### **Children**

A number of reviews focused on children—including orphans, child soldiers, trafficked and street children, among others—and reported on actions being taken to prevent vulnerable groups of children from being left behind as a result of abuse, neglect, poverty, lack of education, malnutrition, or disabilities. Ghana is strengthening child protection through numerous policies and strategies that address child and family welfare, justice for children, ending child marriage, and child labour. The government is developing and operationalizing a Child Protection Management Information System for data capture and monitoring, including of street children and child beggars, and provides vocational training and shelters for street children.

The principle of LNOB was apparent in reporting on education-related initiatives connected to SDG 4 in many VNRs. In Azerbaijan for example, boarding schools serve to prevent exclusion of vulnerable children from education, with outreach to disabled children and equal opportunity for girls and boys. Textbooks in native languages are provided to preserve the cultural heritage of ethnic minority groups.

Iceland's entire review placed a special emphasis on children and included their views, in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## Youth

Countries reported on the situation of youth in the implementation of the SDGs, including Croatia, Iraq, and Mongolia. Cameroon highlighted their national youth policies as a key foundation for achieving the SDGs in relation to youth. Several VNRs emphasized increasing youth employment. Algeria and South Africa presented public sector-led programmes to expand both formal education and vocational training opportunities for young people, while Chile and Croatia used financial incentives to increase recruitment of youth in the private sector. More countries are also expanding youth innovation and entrepreneurship programmes, particularly through targeting disadvantaged youth. Indonesia and Israel have implemented programmes to foster the growth of youth-led start-ups.

Some countries with recent experience of conflict emphasized employment for former youth combatants and youth at risk of participating in armed conflict as key areas of action, acknowledging that this area requires further development assistance to reach all youth at risk. Programmes to support young people in avoiding conflict with the law were also shared in some VNRs, for example from Turkmenistan. Some underscored the need for additional development assistance with regard to primary and secondary education, to improve literacy and numeracy rates in line with SDG 4 indicators.

Chad and New Zealand highlighted progress in realizing human rights, particularly those rights enumerated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Iceland and Kazakhstan also stressed the importance of youth participation in environmental sustainability and climate change.

Some countries consulted their youth in preparing their VNRs. Serbia's review is based on extensive consultations conducted with a wide range of youth, who responded to surveys and provided their views on the implementation of the SDGs in their country.

## Women and girls

Gender equality and women's empowerment is a cross-cutting challenge that is being mainstreamed in policies in many countries, as women and girls are often identified as being left behind or at risk of being left behind due to discrimination and violence; lack of access to education, sanitation, clean water, and financial resources; informal work situations, unequal pay and unfair labour laws.

Ghana's medium-term national development policy framework commits to legislation and enforcement of fair pay, equitable conditions of service and promotions in both the formal and informal sectors, while ensuring that women's access to, participation in and benefits from all occupations are protected. The framework also commits to introducing measures to provide equal access to land for both men and women. The Affirmative Action Bill, seeks to increase women's participation in decision making, specifically targeting a minimum of 40 percent representation of women in politics and public office. Rwanda is a pioneer in promoting gender equality, with the highest number of female parliamentarians in the world (61.3 per cent); financing gender equality and empowering women is a key priority.

## Migrants

Migration remains a significant challenge to many countries. Accommodation, social integration and adaptation, discrimination and registration of migrants are noted as some of the main challenges. The reviews of some countries discussed national measures taken to mitigate the various challenges associated with migration, including the development of social integration policies, creation of effective monitoring and tracking systems for the situation of migrants and inclusion of migration issues into national development plans (Mauritius, Liechtenstein, Turkey, Burkina Faso, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Chad, Lesotho, Turkmenistan, United Kingdom). Chile and Guyana noted that urgent efforts are required to develop migration policies, which are relevant to current-day needs and realities.

Some countries reported on specific actions taken to address the increasing challenges related to the special needs of migrants. Turkey's review describes numerous and detailed measures that have been taken for adapting migrants to economic and social life in country, including social and legal services to migrant groups. Migrant children registered in Turkey may benefit from regular healthcare, education and social protection services provided to all children in addition to those offered specifically to them. Serbia's review highlights the example of a regional housing programme for refugees and IDPs that aims to reach the furthest behind first by providing permanent housing for 26,898 of the most vulnerable refugee families in the region (74,000 persons): 5,400 families in Bosnia and Herzegovina; 3,541 families in the Republic of Croatia; 1,177 families in Montenegro, and 16,780 families in Serbia. Kuwait has used IOM migration governance indicators in order to improve the status of migrants, especially in the area of mobility, family reunification and access to education and health services.

Tunisia's Ministry of Local Affairs and the Environment, with support from IOM, has launched a migration-related SDG prioritization process emphasizing the need to integrate the human dimension of migration, and to consider migration as a shared responsibility that cannot be addressed unilaterally. A newly developed national migration strategy will ensure respect for the human rights of migrants and their families in an approach that seeks to meet their aspirations without distinction, be they Tunisians abroad or foreign migrants in Tunisia. Burkina Faso has adopted a National Plan of Action against Statelessness and issued 37,250 birth certificates and 15,000 nationality certificates to people at risk of statelessness in several regions of the country. Indonesia's Ministry of Manpower has developed a "Program for Productive Rural Migrants" with the central bank to support and assist with financial transfer mechanisms.

## Persons with disabilities

Many reviews outline sector-specific policies, national action plans and laws to promote the rights and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. Twelve VNRs mention either a national strategy on disability or national sector-specific strategy with a priority axis on disability. Cambodia recently launched a National Disability Strategy Plan 2019-2023. Several countries have dedicated national bodies on disability; for example, the United Kingdom established an Inter-Ministerial Group on Disability and Society in 2018. Some VNRs reference the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) as

an important instrument for action. Chad ratified the convention in 2019, while Sierra Leone is finalizing its first country report on the status of the implementation of the CRPD.

Countries have taken a variety of actions to realize the fundamental rights of persons with disabilities. Israel and Turkey are working towards improved access to assistive technologies. In New Zealand, public sector chief executives have committed to signing an accessibility charter in relation to public information. In Saint Lucia, a Housing Assistance Program helps individuals who live in poor housing conditions, with special consideration given to persons with disabilities. In Indonesia, persons with disabilities have been engaged in disaster mitigation.

Several countries are investing in improving the collection of data on disability. Tonga carried out its first National Disability Survey in 2018. Iraq published the results of its first National Disability Survey from 2016.

Many reviews underline action to support inclusive education. Azerbaijan has established a 2018-2024 State Program on Development of Inclusive Education for People with Disabilities. Rwanda has introduced Special Educational Needs Coordinators to help teachers identify children with disabilities and engage in inclusive teaching. In Turkmenistan, amendments have been made to national legislation aimed at introducing inclusive education to all educational establishments.

Promoting the employment of persons with disabilities was highlighted as a priority by at least 17 countries. Several Governments have set national targets (Burkina Faso) or quotas (Mauritania, Turkey) for the employment of persons with disabilities. Israel has established an aid program providing financial incentives to employers hiring persons with disabilities. At least 13 VNRs also stress the importance of dedicated funds, grants, and cash transfers for persons with disabilities to mitigate financial hardships they may face.

In addition, countries are working on several fronts to provide accessible health services, for instance by providing reduced cost or free healthcare services to persons with disabilities (Republic of the Congo, Iceland, and Tunisia) and supporting awareness-raising among medical providers. Timor-Leste launched a disability booklet on the needs of patients with disabilities.

Some countries—Algeria, Croatia, Ghana, Iceland, and Rwanda—reported on policies to increase the accessibility of public transport and infrastructure. Algeria is working to increase accessibility of the metro and tramways in Algiers, notably through a recently created Accessibility Commission.

### **Older Persons**

Many countries have identified ageing and the rights of older persons as an important aspect of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In 2019, the majority of VNRs included references to ageing, many identifying it as a challenge.

Many VNRs feature older persons in the context of LNOB, where older persons are predominantly addressed as a vulnerable group facing economic risks. Social and contributory pensions are proposed as

tools to address poverty, while progress in strengthening social protection systems is reported by countries including the Republic of the Congo, Guyana, Rwanda and the United Kingdom, among others.

Access to healthcare is likewise identified as crucial for the wellbeing of older persons. VNRs from Croatia, Palau and Turkey illustrate efforts to strengthen their healthcare systems, provide economic assistance for affordable health care and support healthy and active ageing.

Whereas ageing-related policies and priorities are still absent in many national plans and development strategies, some countries report significant advances. For instance, the National Ageing Policy 2017-2030 in Cambodia seeks to mainstream ageing into the development planning process, and Tunisia is developing an innovative Legal Code on the Rights of Older Persons.

### **Indigenous peoples**

Eleven VNRs (Cambodia, Cameroon, Chile, the Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Africa, and Timor-Leste) included references to indigenous peoples. However, the extent to which indigenous peoples' issues, programmes, and policies are covered varies greatly. They were often highlighted in reviews of SDGs 1, 10, 15, and 16. In general, indigenous peoples continue to lag behind non-indigenous populations in all areas.

New Zealand, the Republic of the Congo and Chile are implementing targeted programmes aimed at improving the situation of indigenous peoples living in poverty. New Zealand reported on developing new national action plans on cancer and Hepatitis C, both in close cooperation with Maori representatives and considering Maori culture and worldviews, while the Republic of the Congo has introduced free health care for vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples. The Philippines, Chile and New Zealand are implementing inclusive education programmes that pay attention to indigenous peoples' culture and needs. Strengthening the participation of indigenous peoples in decision-making has been a focus of the initiatives in Guyana, the Philippines and Chile. Indigenous peoples are engaged in conservation and biodiversity programmes in Guyana and South Africa. They were mentioned in connection with progress on birth registration initiatives in Philippines and the Republic of the Congo; establishment of new commissions and institutions in Guyana, New Zealand, and Philippines; violence prevention programmes in New Zealand; and recognition of indigenous customary justice systems in Timor-Leste and South Africa. Timor-Leste also referred to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

### **LGBTIQ**

Some countries, including Iceland, Lesotho, Mongolia and Serbia, identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or intersex (LGBTI) people as a social group at risk of being left behind. Reducing discrimination in the provision of services is an overall area of concern for countries such as Serbia, with other countries, such as New Zealand, observing that the education sector is developing guidelines to address discrimination and promote inclusivity. Bosnia and Herzegovina noted the incorporation of LGBTI persons within their Gender Action Plan to address discrimination experienced by this group. The United

Kingdom also has an LGBT Action Plan to mitigate inequalities and discrimination. Violence against LGBTI people was underscored as a concern by Chile, Israel and Timor-Leste. In some cases, data is being collected and disaggregated, but data on violence against LGBTI people are not currently available.

## V. Sustainable Development Goals and targets

*This section provides an overview of the progress reported on the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets. Countries chose different approaches to align the SDGs and national priorities, reflecting different national circumstances and starting points. The section further showcases examples of lessons learned, best practices and challenges encountered in the implementation process.*

### Structure and sources

While all countries reported on the SDGs, different approaches were chosen. The majority of countries reported on all 17 SDGs, while a few countries focused on the SDGs under review at the 2019 HLPF (SDGs 4, 8, 10, 13, 16, and 17). Some countries identified priority SDGs for reporting or focused on select SDGs in thematic clusters. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chad, and Palau grouped the SDGs in the five categories of ‘people’, ‘planet’, ‘prosperity’, ‘peace’ and ‘partnerships’. Timor-Leste chose SDG 16 as the overarching theme of the country’s VNR. Many reporting countries also included statistical data on each of the SDGs, either in the Goal-specific chapter or in a statistical annex. In general, countries are encouraged to report on all 17 SDGs, while highlighting priority areas.

Countries reported on SDG progress by providing a snapshot of actions taken to achieve each goal, identifying challenges and opportunities, and by reporting on achievements, challenges, leaving no one behind and data availability. Mongolia also included a case study on air pollution as a key cross cutting development challenge. Some countries reported on efforts to achieve the SDGs both domestically and around the world.

### SDG 1



To various degrees, poverty continues to plague countries all over the world. As such, most reviews addressed SDG1 and their efforts to eradicate poverty.

Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Eswatini, Ghana, Guyana, Iraq, Israel, Mongolia, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, and Tonga recognized that poverty is a multidimensional problem that affects and cuts across almost all the SDGs. In this respect, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mongolia, Sierra Leone, and Tunisia noted that poverty should be measured not only in monetary terms, but also by the access, or lack thereof, to social protection and the provision of social services (e.g. health, quality education, and access to basic infrastructure etc.). Moreover, Tonga reported on the development and adoption of a robust multidimensional national poverty measure, which is scientifically valid, reliable, and contextually appropriate—the first of its kind in the Pacific region—It can measure both monetary and non-monetary

data. The reviews of the Republic of the Congo, Croatia, and Tunisia also recognize that poverty eradication is closely linked to effective policies to reduce the risk of natural or man-made disasters and their effects.



*Algeria*

A variety of measures and policies have been launched to promote poverty reduction. Algeria has implemented a sustained national social protection policy, with contributory and non-contributory components, including access to basic services for those most at risk of poverty, and social protection for all. Algeria has also made considerable investments in infrastructure that support job creation, economic growth and overall improvement of wellbeing. Iceland's Welfare Watch project aims to assist disadvantaged households, encouraging local authorities to

minimize costs of compulsory school attendance. Iraq referred to the regional multidimensional poverty approach developed in the Arab world with regard to comparability among Arab countries, maintaining equal baselines and considering the individual as an analysis unit. The United Kingdom supports full employment and higher pay as the best long-term route out of poverty and is partway through its biggest welfare reform program. Ghana is implementing eleven social protection programs that have helped to improve social protection spending; increase access to conditional cash transfers nationwide and access to employment and cash earning opportunities for the rural poor during the agricultural off-season; and improve economic and social infrastructure in targeted local communities. Pakistan enhanced public development spending to improve infrastructure and generate employment in the infrastructure sector. For Palau and the Pacific, the cultural tradition of "sharing and caring" is an integral part of social protection. South Africa has prioritized human capital investment and emphasized education to address intergenerational poverty and inequality. Tunisia has a multisectoral social policy to fight poverty through free education, commodity compensation, generalization of health and social coverage, improvement of living conditions especially of disadvantaged groups, and socio-economic integration of vulnerable groups through the creation of income sources. Turkey has also restructured the national social protection system, and introduced the Social Assistance and Solidarity Incentive Fund, among other measures.

Some countries underlined that the fight against poverty is a concerted effort of all stakeholders Mauritius works closely with civil society through the National Corporate Social Responsibility Foundation that allocates funds to NGOs for programs and projects in approved priority areas. In the United Kingdom, the Social Metrics Commission will work with other stakeholders to develop new experimental statistics and publish a new report on the level of poverty in the country. The United Kingdom is also working with a wide range of stakeholders to implement the Resilience Capabilities Program that aims to increase the country's capability to respond to and recover from civil emergencies. . In Israel, the Social Service Departments of local authorities coordinate and connect important bodies to advance poverty eradication at the community level.

The poverty rate has been reduced in several countries. However, numerous countries reported that segments of the population remained vulnerable to small and unexpected or undesirable shocks that could easily cause them to fall back into poverty. Countries identified children and youth as being particularly at risk of living in poverty in both developing and developed countries, along with senior citizens, people with disabilities, minorities, and single-parent households. In this context, Algeria has extended the national protection system to all ages and to different forms of vulnerability. Cambodia has established the People with Disabilities Fund. Ghana is investing in interventions targeting children, especially toddlers. Eswatini introduced a Youth Fund for entrepreneurship. Lesotho has created initiatives and programs related to child protection. In New Zealand, the Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018 creates an on-going focus on child poverty and provides for political accountability.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, the Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and Serbia, among others, noted that poverty is overwhelmingly concentrated in rural areas. Mauritania restructured the rural economic sector for agriculture and livestock, adopted a policy of opening up rural areas most affected by poverty and implementing targeted programmes of poverty alleviation such as the Emel Program.

Eswatini identified challenges of limited dissemination of information on development programs; fiscal challenges that limit budget allocation to poverty reduction initiatives; and the increasing health burden negatively affecting the poverty rate. Eswatini, Indonesia, Mauritius, and Vanuatu underlined the lack of adequate data, especially with regard to monitoring and evaluation. Indonesia also cited long administrative procedures and suboptimal programs as challenges. Kuwait reported outdated regulations for disbursement of aid, budget constraints, and limited marketing outlets, among others. Liechtenstein reported that although poverty is extremely low, the number of households dependent on welfare support shows a long-term upward trend. Reintegrating unemployed persons into the labour market also remains challenging.

Iceland, Israel, Kuwait, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom outlined their support to poverty reduction through international development cooperation. Iceland makes financial contributions to bilateral and multilateral development cooperation, with particular emphasis on programmes aimed at improving the situation of those living in the poorest conditions. Israel helps design national plans to meet the criteria of international development banks, aid organizations and global business communities in order to receive loans for priority projects. Kuwait has launched and implemented 2,018 projects for the poor. New Zealand focuses ODA on vulnerable groups of countries such as LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS, and fragile and conflict-affected states. The United Kingdom's global investment in cash transfers and broader social protection helps developing countries to increase the coverage, quality and sustainability of their social protection systems.

## SDG 2



VNR countries reported on policies and measures to fight food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition. Cambodia reviewed its National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition (NSFSN) in 2017 to incorporate the National Action Plan for Zero Hunger Challenge (2016-2025) and inform the preparation of the NSFSN (2019-2023). Chad and Ghana have joined the Scaling-Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, which brings various stakeholders together to improve nutrition. Côte d'Ivoire undertook a "Zero Hunger" strategic advisory review in 2018, which identified legal and policy instruments likely to advance national food security and nutrition. Eswatini undertook a Zero Hunger Strategic Review in 2018 to analyze the current food and nutrition situation and identify strategies and programs for ending hunger by 2030. In Lesotho, the Food and Nutrition Security Policy, the Food and Nutrition Strategy and the Zero Strategic Review Report address the multi-dimensional causes and consequences of malnutrition. Other examples of policies include: an agriculture sector strategy on sustaining economic and social prosperity (Guyana), monitoring and controlling the quality and safety of locally-produced and imported food products (Kazakhstan), enabling development through agri-business promotion and encouraging the population to consume healthily by promoting organic and bio-farming practices (Mauritius), and Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analyses to assess food security and vulnerability (Rwanda).



To reduce the prevalence of poverty and hunger in rural areas, some countries devised strategic plans for rural development. Bosnia and Herzegovina's plan focuses on sustainable planning, management, conservation and utilization of agricultural land in order to expand the discourse from standard land planning to more complex long-term and sustainable programming. Côte d'Ivoire reprofiled the entire national territory of dirt roads and rural tracks to reinvigorate the control of transport costs on foodstuffs to help facilitate transport of agricultural products to urban centers. Croatia adopted an Agriculture Act defining measures of agricultural policy and rural development, direct support measures and market regulation, which also ensures sustainable development of agriculture, promotes general food safety and conservation of natural agricultural resources, enhances and increases competition as well as strengthens the social, economic and ecological role of agriculture. Turkey has passed a law on agriculture aiming to increase income levels in rural areas, support small and medium-sized enterprises, introduce practices to improve animal and plant health, prevent rural migration, promote good practices in agriculture, as well as regulate and improve organic agricultural production and marketing to increase agricultural productivity and promote resilient agricultural practices.

Some countries have focused interventions against undernourishment and malnutrition among students. For example, Côte d'Ivoire introduced a 'school canteen' strategy to provide hot meals to primary school students to fight malnutrition and absenteeism. Kazakhstan adopted uniform standards for schoolchildren's diets, provides free and reduced-price in-school meals to certain categories of students, and is modernizing school canteens. The sale of sweet and carbonated drinks has been banned in schools and measures are underway to iodize edible salt and fortify flour and other foods with minerals and vitamins.

In addition, countries reported on the challenges they face in fighting hunger and malnutrition. Bosnia and Herzegovina notes that the large number of agricultural holdings and the consequent small size of such holdings and their economic and production power, combined with the fragmentation of agricultural land and dual production is a serious challenge. Burkina Faso reported low access to agricultural credit, parasite pressure, poor water management, as well as limited financial resources, capacities and skills of farmers. Cambodia's population growth, socio-economic conditions, urbanization, and migration are challenging. Cameroon noted biodiversity loss, post-harvest losses, and the need to improve the conservation and processing of agricultural and fishery products and modernize production processes. The Central African Republic discussed exogenous factors (the falling price of agricultural products and the decline of global demand) and endogenous (lack of a law regulating rural land, insufficient supervision of producers, advanced degradation of rural roads and widespread insecurity in production areas). Recurring crises have also caused massive displacement of the agricultural workforce. Guyana reported on its lack of adequate and predictable financing, competitiveness of domestic agriculture products and efficient and adequate data systems. Indonesia's challenges include the conversion of agricultural land for other uses while expansion of agricultural land remains limited, the degradation of the quality of water resources and competition of water use for other purposes, and the need to provide training and support for small-scale farmers. Kuwait noted the lack of sufficient natural freshwater resources or arable lands.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Guyana, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Liechtenstein, Mauritania, Mauritius, New Zealand, Palau, Tunisia, and Turkey highlighted that climate change threatens the realization of SDG 2 and sustainable development overall. To address this issue, Côte d'Ivoire, for example, is promoting the adoption of technologies and good practices of climate-smart agriculture through projects and major programs, to improve the resilience of agricultural areas suffering the impacts of climate change. Liechtenstein adopted an adaptation strategy to climate change identifying potential risks especially for the agricultural sector and formulating specific adaptation measures. Tunisia has adapted agricultural practices to make agricultural production systems resilient to climate change.

### SDG 3



Almost all VNR countries reported on SDG 3 on good health and well-being. Countries recognized that SDG 3 is interwoven throughout the 2030 Agenda, with its targets directly linking to targets in other Goals. These interlinkages highlighted that progress in health outcomes can be achieved with progress in other related sectors.

Countries showed their commitment to improving health and wellbeing across populations. Croatia, for example, emphasized the right to health. Countries underscored that a key component for achieving sustainable development is a healthy population. Health was seen as a precondition, indicator and outcome of sustainable development that requires inter-sectoral solutions to advance the implementation of SDG 3 and the 2030 Agenda as a whole. Countries emphasized that “leaving no one behind” requires addressing health inequalities. Emerging technologies were seen as having the potential to make a positive impact on health promotion, protection and treatment.

Many countries reported progress towards a large number of SDG 3 targets at the aggregate level (Vanuatu, United Republic of Tanzania, United Kingdom, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Tonga, Timor-Leste, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Palau, New Zealand, Mongolia, Lichtenstein, Indonesia, Guyana, Ghana, Fiji, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina). For example, Rwanda highlighted that its steady decline in maternal mortality, from 1,071/100,000 (2000) to 210 (2014/15), and its experience as one of the few countries in Africa to have achieved the MDG health targets, were due primarily to the Government’s concerted investments in building a comprehensive health system.

Countries shared specific strategies or policies enacted to strengthen their health care systems and ensure health and well-being for all (Croatia, Indonesia, Kuwait, Pakistan, Rwanda, Serbia, Timor-Leste). For example, the Republic of Croatia National Healthcare Development Strategy 2012-2020 has improved health through expansion and increased coverage of medical facilities, together with an improved social health protection system and measures to increase financing of the sector. Developments within the health sector as well as areas with direct effects on health, such as infrastructure, economic growth and poverty reduction, all play major roles in improving life expectancy and living conditions. Guyana’s “Health Vision 2020” guides the public health sector, drawing on various target strategies on nutrition and maternal, neonatal, adolescent and family health and on disability prevention and management.



In Pakistan, a new universal health coverage initiative has been launched to provide health insurance coverage for those in need. Health Sector reforms are underway, entailing a centralized integrated disease surveillance system and strong inter-provincial information sharing mechanism. Mauritius provides primary, secondary and specialized health services through a network of five regional, two district and six specialized hospitals. These services are free to the population and to non-residents visiting Mauritian hospitals. In addition, the public service employs 51.7 per cent of the total registered doctors in the

country. South Africa has the biggest anti-retroviral treatment programme in the world, covering over 4.5 million people.

Prevention was seen as better than a cure. For example, the National Strategy for Public Health of the Republic of Serbia 2018-2026 sets among its priority objectives the prevention of smoking and exposure to tobacco smoke. The United Kingdom includes a crucial focus on the prevention of illness and encouragement to choose healthy options as the key to longer and healthier lives for all. The United Kingdom is also tackling inequalities to improve the health of the poorest.

Public health sector strategies are also envisaged to incorporate the dimensions of resilience and climate change responsiveness. For example, Saint Lucia faces challenges in the form of natural disasters and climate change, which have health implications. Climate change leads to rising temperatures, changes in rainfall patterns, and more and longer periods of extreme weather, with implications for water-borne and vector-borne diseases and food security.

Concerns and challenges identified by the VNR countries include: (i) growing, ageing and diversifying populations; (ii) recent slow economic growth; (iii) increasing the quality of services; (iv) financial and technical capacities; (v) non-communicable and communicable diseases; (vi) the health implications of climate change and natural disasters; (vii) the lack of medical personnel, including a gap between the number of medical personnel in urban and rural areas; (viii) violence, including from terrorist attacks, as a leading cause of death; and (ix) the significant number of deaths caused by traffic accidents.

## SDG 4



Almost all VNR countries reported progress on SDG 4 and noted its importance for national development and its integration into strategic development frameworks for education. Several countries also cited the UNESCO Education 2030 Framework for Action to guide education policies in line with the implementation of SDG 4 (New Zealand, Kazakhstan, Israel, Eswatini). Some countries highlighted holistic and inclusive international development cooperation in education-related disciplines while recognizing the sensitivities that influence education such as

cultural diversity, social norms, and religious beliefs (Cameroon, Israel, Philippines, Iraq, United Kingdom, Iceland).

Azerbaijan, Vanuatu and Tonga reported progress in early-childhood and preschool education, while other countries highlighted advances in primary and secondary education (Cambodia, Croatia, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Philippines, New Zealand, Iraq, Indonesia, Iceland, Guyana, Ghana). Many countries focused on all stages of education and types of learning (United Kingdom, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Serbia, Saint Lucia, Rwanda, Palau, Mongolia, Mauritius, Liechtenstein, Lesotho, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Israel, Guatemala, Fiji). Several countries also reported on international cooperation initiatives for education and academic opportunities (United Kingdom, Turkey, United Republic of Tanzania, Kuwait, Indonesia).

**Box: Reforming secondary education: linking skills for life to the SDGs in Timor-Leste**

In recognition of the importance of equipping young learners with practical skills and competencies needed to engage in a dynamic economy, the Minister of Education, Youth and Sport (MEJD) is reforming the curriculum of both pre-secondary and secondary school (years 7 to 9 and 10 to 12). This curriculum will emphasize communication skills, languages, mathematics. In secondary level it will aim to frame both natural sciences and social sciences within the framework of the SDGs as they apply to Timor-Leste. For the first time all senior students will learn biology, chemistry, physics, history, economics and sociology through the prism of health, food and nutrition, renewable energy, inclusion policy, decent work and other topics covered in the SDGs. This will help them apply their skills to the context and environment of Timor-Leste and support them to make better career choices.

Source: 2019 VNR of Timor-Leste, p. 66

Croatia, the United Kingdom, Vanuatu, Turkmenistan, Tanzania, Kazakhstan, Iceland, Ghana, and Eswatini reported increased focus on vocational education and promoting apprenticeship. In this regard, Cambodia, Croatia, United Kingdom, Vanuatu, Turkey, Palau, Kuwait, Israel, and Iceland emphasized the challenge of quality assurances in higher education and promoting life-long learning, which is key to life-long employment and allows people to adapt skills and knowledge to structural changes in the economy. Philippines, Kazakhstan, and Israel reported on multi-stakeholder partnership programmes on educational development.

Some countries highlighted significant progress in achieving gender parity in the education sector, including Cambodia, Turkmenistan, Timor-Leste, Sierra Leone, Saint Lucia, Rwanda, Palau, New Zealand, Israel, Indonesia, Guyana, Fiji and Ghana. For example, Israel specially advances female students in mathematics, technology, and the sciences in collaboration with a variety of entities, including science museums and the Council for the Advancement of Women in Science and Technology. The programme aims to achieve, amongst others,

broadening the circles of influence reaching female students at decision-making junctures, to encourage and inspire them to choose careers in mathematics, science, and technology.

Some countries reported national initiatives to provide institutionalized in-service training for teachers to be in line with the monitoring mechanism and improve skills over time (Cambodia, United Kingdom, Vanuatu, Turkmenistan, Timor-Leste, United Republic of Tanzania, Israel, Indonesia). For example, the United Kingdom reported on its policy of supporting early career teachers to ease the declining rate of their retention.

On a general level, some of the challenges that countries reported include inequitable access and resulting attainment gaps for all levels of education and training due to socio-economic inequalities (Cambodia, United Kingdom, South Africa, Indonesia); lack of financial support to meet the required standards of educational facilities (Mongolia, Eswatini), the increasing pressure on teacher supply in certain locations, subjects and parts of the sector (New Zealand), ensuring up-to-date and high-quality teaching in the long term (Liechtenstein).

To accelerate educational development and to keep pace with technological progress, some reviews outlined systematic policies and actions. For instance, Croatia implemented a comprehensive curricular reform and digitalization of the education system (e-Schools) to include modern technology in promoting autonomy and evaluation-based learning and teaching.

Several VNR countries emphasized the critical importance of inclusion in education policy to reach marginalized groups and to leave no one behind which, in turn, can help to achieve progress on other SDGs, particularly poverty eradication (United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Mauritius, Iraq). Several countries also highlighted the interlinkages between SDG 4 and other goals (United Kingdom, Turkmenistan).

## SDG 5



Gender inequality still persists in most countries. Women are underrepresented in political roles, have fewer employment and educational opportunities, experience higher rates of discrimination and gender-based violence, and earn lower wages than their male counterparts. Many countries are taking concrete actions towards gender equality, such as establishing standalone ministries dedicated to upholding gender equality (Chile), adopting legislation which promotes gender equality (Iceland, Tunisia, Kuwait, United Republic of Tanzania, Burkina Faso), developing action plans and policies for gender equality (Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan) and empowering women socially and economically through targeted skills programmes (Turkey).

VNR countries agreed that improving outcomes for all women and girls, giving them freedom, choice, support and protection, is essential to help women realize their potential and ensure a society where no one is left behind. Achieving gender equality is also contingent on making progress across many of the 17 Goals.

Countries referred to legislative and constitutional guarantees of equality before the law. Many reported on legal frameworks in place to promote gender equality and end all forms of discrimination. Countries also unanimously highlighted the revisions of existing laws or the enactment of new ones.

At the same time, there were concerns that hard-won global norms protecting girls and women need to be safeguarded. One country expressed their perception that in many countries across the globe there continues to be opposition to women's rights, including women's and girls' access to sexual and reproductive health rights, education and the prevention of violence against women and girls.

Many countries reported on measures in place to address violence against women and girls, which was one of the main challenges mentioned (Cambodia, Croatia, Ghana, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lichtenstein, Mauritius, Pakistan, Palau, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Serbia, South-Africa, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Turkey, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu). Countries recognized that gender-based violence and harmful practices are pervasive, dangerous and must be eliminated. Much more needs to be done to prevent the high levels of violence that women and girls experience every day around the world.



*United Kingdom*

Countries also reported on the challenge of the gender pay gap and equal pay for equal work.. For example, the United Kingdom is urging employers to develop an action plan to identify and tackle the causes of their gender pay gap. Evidence-based guidance has been published to support employers to take the most effective action. The United Kingdom is also investing in a number of programmes that aim to increase girls' engagement in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

Another challenge emphasized by countries was the low participation of women in decision-making or leadership positions, both in public and private. They reported that women continue to be underrepresented at all levels. They lag in political life, hold fewer managerial and executive positions, and experience higher rates of harassment. Timor-Leste shared that women hold 38 percent of parliamentary seats, one of the highest rates in the world and the highest in Asia and the Pacific. The Electoral Law for the National Parliament states that the lists of actual and alternate candidates must include at least one woman for each set of three candidates. Countries also reported on initiatives taken to increase women's representation on the boards of state-owned entities and companies and publicly listed companies.

Several countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, reported on the measures they were undertaking to promote gender equality, including national gender equality strategies and gender action plans. A number of countries reported progress in implementing gender-responsive budgeting. For example, Serbia introduced gender responsive budgeting (GRB) to its public finance in 2015, obliging all budget beneficiaries to implement GRB principles by the end of 2020. GRB has become an integral part of its Budget System Law, and institutions at national, provincial and local levels are subject to its implementation. The Government of Rwanda, in partnership with other stakeholders, has institutionalized a GRB programme that requires all budget agencies to attach a gender budget statement to the budget framework paper, to be submitted annually to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and the Parliament for budget negotiations and approval. This has enabled public institutions to use public resources in a manner that benefits both men and women and boys and girls.

Many countries reported that challenges of data availability, quality and timeliness remain a major hurdle in programme targeting and policy formulation for gender-related issues. Key among the data gaps is employment statistics, which are crucial to inform policy and the design and evaluation of programme effectiveness.

## SDG 6



Most countries emphasized national progress achieved in terms of availability, accessibility and quality of water sources, making considerable use of national and international statistical data. New Zealand highlighted the essential cultural, social and economic role that freshwater plays for indigenous peoples and the benefits of partnership projects around the restoration of the health of rivers, streams and wetlands. The United Kingdom noted

Scotland's commitment to be a 'Hydro Nation' where Scotland's water environment is managed to its best advantage and its knowledge and expertise is applied both at home and internationally. Some countries stressed achievements in terms of water availability due to the implementation of various national regulations to reduce the price of water (Croatia and Cambodia, among others).

Many countries outline how water scarcity, due to both the uncertainty of seasonal water sources (Cambodia, Mauritius) and progressive urbanization, population growth and industrialization (Turkey), can be contained with the help of innovative systems. Among these, the reports mentioned constructing new and more efficient water supply systems (Ghana, Guyana, Turkey), increasing use of modern technologies for water purification (Croatia, Mauritius, Tonga) and desalination (Kuwait, Mauritius, Palau, South Africa, amongst others).

Several countries highlighted, however, discrepancies between urban and rural areas in terms of water availability.

Challenges in rural areas are aggravated by limited access to basic sanitation. Ghana reported on national programmes, along with widespread cooperation with the private sector and civil society organizations, with the aim to implement an innovative methodology for mobilizing communities to eliminate open defecation and promote handwashing with soap. Lesotho stated the importance of implementing programmes effectively and correctly and to empower social mobilization in order to reduce various serious health deprivations that mainly affect children. Furthermore, Guyana pointed out that the mobilization of society and its adequate education are the key to a proper waste management, which is essential to limit pollution of the aquifer system. Water quality can be adversely affected by: toxic substances penetrating landfills (Croatia, Guyana), the sewage system (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guyana,

**Box: Water and Leave No One Behind**

- All water companies in England and Wales now offer Social Tariffs. The economic regulator of the water sector in England and Wales, Ofwat, carried out a price review in 2019 and all water companies must now set out a detailed business plan outlining how they will meet the needs of their customers from 2020 to 2025 and beyond. At least two water companies have committed to eradicate water poverty in their regions. The government-mandated WaterSure tariff also caps customer bills at the regional average for qualifying customers. Water UK's summary reveals that by 2025, 1.4 million customers will receive help with their bills.
- The Scottish Government is committed to average water charges rising by less than inflation in the period 2015-21. For low income households, help is available with up to 25% reduction in water and sewerage bills, linked to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Source: 2019 VNR of the United Kingdom, p. 86

Mongolia, Turkey), and mining activities (Guyana, South Africa). Almost all VNR countries placed emphasis on the regulations and methodologies adopted to control the quality of water offered to consumers. Kuwait reported that its Ministry of Electricity and Water is implementing several programmes in order to achieve the targets under SDG 6, such as enhancing both the water and wastewater networks, undertaking research on water resources and water pollutants, making better use of all treated wastewater, conducting community awareness raising activities starting from schools, enforcing the law, including applying fines for wasting water, and building water tanks and drilling of wells to ensure long-term water reservation.



Almost all countries noted that the effects of climate change are posing challenges to the achievement of SDG 6. To this end, and due to the prognosis of a future reduction in the availability of water, some countries have reduced water use thanks to increased public awareness (Liechtenstein, Kuwait). In Liechtenstein, the initiative launched by the “Drink & Donate” association and the “LIFE Klimastiftung Liechtenstein” foundation produced a campaign with the principle of “Drink tap water. Donate drinking water”. In terms of capacity building,

Tonga highlighted how a training manual on Sustainable Rainwater Harvesting (SRH) has been developed and adapted to local needs, in addition to preparing for training conducted on SRH, targeting women participants and aimed at improving the understanding of rainwater collection methods, raising water quality standards and promoting the sustainable use of rainwater.

Some of the VNR reports pointed to the need to make progress on SDG 6 to address other objectives closely related to the availability and quality of water. Countries also stressed the interlinkages between SDG 6 and other SDGs, such as SDG 4 – Quality education (Lesotho), SDG 7 – Affordable and clean energy (United Kingdom), SDG 11 – Sustainable cities and communities (United Kingdom), SDG 12 – Responsible consumption and production, SDG 15 – Life on land (Palau), and SDG 13 – Climate action, as discussed above.

Although almost all VNR countries declared that the main provider, control and purification agent is the national or local government, some countries have shown how involvement of private actors is essential to mobilize more resources: Mauritius pointed to the example of Eco-Friendly luxury hotels which practice desalination with innovative techniques, as well as Public Private Partnerships (PPP) or Built Operate Transfer (BOT) projects capable of mobilizing finance for new strategic dam construction. Some countries, particularly those that base the availability and quality of water on non-national sources (Kazakhstan and Kuwait), underlined the important role that transnational water regulatory treaties play. In this context, international cooperation with regard to mobilizing financing, sharing of statistical data and effective management of groundwater and surface water sources, was considered fundamental for safe, clean, reliable and affordable water supply everywhere, at any time (Cambodia, Guyana, Kazakhstan, New Zealand, Palau, Tonga, Turkey, United Kingdom, among others). The majority of the countries that

presented their reports outlined a series of concrete plans for the future development, legislation and implementation of projects that will help to achieve the targets under SDG 6.

## SDG 7



Achieving SDG 7 was high on the agenda of many countries, as it contributes to economic prosperity, social well-being and security, and sustainable development. Measures to expand access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all include expanding access to the existing energy grids as well as creating local micro grids, developing domestic renewable energy sources as well as diversifying them, improving energy efficiency, and raising awareness among the public on the benefits of sustainable energy consumption.

The importance of guaranteeing access to energy to the entire population was underlined throughout the reports. Cambodia reported developing regional sub-stations to enhance power generation capacity and expand the national network of distribution of high voltage electricity to all cities and provinces. Chad has set up a roadmap, accompanied by legislative measures, to promote the progressive liberalization of the energy sector. The Republic of the Congo is implementing priority investment programs in electricity infrastructure. Croatia witnessed a decrease of electricity prices and improved access to electricity for all users through the reduction of the VAT rate for electricity from 25 per cent to an affordable 13 per cent. Turkey integrated newly installed renewable energy power plants to the electricity distribution system and offered an electricity consumption subsidy program to low-income citizens to meet their electric consumption needs.

Ensuring security of energy supply is a matter of concern for many countries. Specific challenges in this regard include land insecurity in terms of accessing land for power plant construction (Burkina Faso, Israel), ensuring minimum requirements throughout the country (Iceland), the need for ongoing investments in infrastructure development (New Zealand), and difficulty in maintaining solar installations due to shortage of spare parts and skilled technicians (Palau). Israel also highlighted the inability of solar systems alone to provide stable energy 24 hours a day, since the country is an electricity island without grid connections to neighboring countries.

The introduction of new laws and the creation of new legislative frameworks in some countries has led to the promotion of electricity generation from renewable sources of energy. For example, Algeria adapted the legal framework of the energy sector relating to electricity, hydrocarbons, the control of energy and renewable energies. Bosnia and Herzegovina approved the Framework Energy Strategy until 2035, which implement reforms to improve energy efficiency, and improve security of the energy supply and responsibility toward the environment. Ghana is implementing a Renewable Energy Act that provides the necessary legal and regulatory framework for developing and expanding the country's renewable energy sub-sector. Guyana has set up a Public-Private Partnership Policy Framework, which will benefit infrastructure projects such as hydropower plants and energy farms. Liechtenstein has put in place

numerous measures such as financial subsidies for renewable energy sources and improved building insulation to promote the use of renewable energy sources. Due to the impact of enhanced legislation and incentive mechanisms, a significant increase has been achieved in Turkey in the share of non-hydro resources such as wind and solar in total energy supply.



In this context, and in an effort to promote clean sustainable energy to help fight climate change, many countries reported on their initiatives to promote cleaner energy for all. In Ghana, several CSOs and private sector organizations are actively engaged in the energy sector providing innovative solutions to help increase access to clean energy, particularly in the area of clean cooking stove and roof top solar panels. Kuwait is firmly moving towards a cleaner and greener energy sector.

#### *Ghana*

South Africa has implemented strong regulatory provisions to curb emissions and promote cleaner energy production. Innovative programs include the financing of research to encourage clean energy production, undertaking research on waste to energy, and developing a national bioenergy atlas to support bioenergy development. The UK government is investing over £2.5 billion between 2015 and 2021 in energy innovation, covering technologies including Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage, low carbon heating, and hydrogen.

Energy efficiency is another priority of many countries. Guyana introduced initiatives such as training in energy audits and energy efficiency management, demonstration projects and the conduct of a national energy efficiency workshop as well as VAT and import duty exemptions for energy efficient lighting, renewable electricity equipment, solar appliances, water heaters and fruit dryers, and solar and other energy efficient cookstoves. Mauritius introduced measures such as energy efficiency labelling of electrical appliances, mandatory energy audits in government buildings and energy intensive private enterprises, Solar Photovoltaic Rebate Scheme for Cooperative Societies and a Home Solar Project targeting 10,000 low-income households. The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority in New Zealand works with the government on a joint action plan called Process Heat in New Zealand, with the aim to understand the opportunities for increasing process heat efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from its use. Pakistan has established a National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority to identify energy efficiency and conservation opportunities. The 'energy benchmarking' of public buildings is also underway, with a view to enabling energy conservation, conversion to solar energy, and improving energy productivity and efficiency. Turkey has adopted various regulations that offer incentives for increasing energy efficiency in industry, buildings and transport.

Recognizing the importance of international cooperation for the promotion of SDG 7, some countries have established partnerships in this regard. Iceland contributes to a number of organizations and funds involved in various ways with energy projects in poorer countries and takes part in bilateral cooperation in the field of renewable energy with East African states. New Zealand also has an on-going commitment to facilitate access to clean energy, energy efficiency and related infrastructure and technologies through development cooperation, with a particular focus on the Pacific region and Small Island Developing States.

## SDG 8



All reviews reported on progress and gaps in implementing SDG 8, recognizing the importance of achieving decent work and economic growth for sustainable development. While many reviews recorded steady economic growth, some discussed obstacles in realizing SDG 8 due to national circumstances, lack of diversification and lasting effects of the 2008 economic crisis.

The overall unemployment rate has improved in many countries; however, some groups still experience high rates of unemployment. Most countries expressed that unemployment of youth and persons with disabilities remains a challenge. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Indonesia, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mongolia, Oman and Pakistan noted that a lack of harmony between the education system and the demands of the labour market are causing skills mismatch and, consequently, high rates of youth unemployment. Several countries have adopted measures to reduce the unemployment rate for youth and persons with disabilities. Mauritius and Indonesia have implemented programmes to ease the transition of youth from education to employment. To increase the participation of persons with disabilities in the workforce, some countries have set quotas on the percentage of employees who must be persons with disabilities (Republic of the Congo, Croatia, Kuwait), developed aid programmes which encourage and incentivize companies to hire persons with disabilities (Israel) and adopted legislation that encourages the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workforce (Chile).

Several countries indicated a high prevalence of employment in the informal sector (Cameroon, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Ghana, Guyana, Indonesia, Lesotho, Mongolia, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Turkey). Low remuneration, lack of safety nets, low job security and exploitation of workers were cited as negative aspects of employment in the informal sector. In Cameroon, the Government created municipal offices of crafts in 2014, which allow business promoters to register free of charge for the first three months of the year and begin the process of moving from the informal sector to the craft sector.

Working conditions have improved in some countries, as demonstrated through declining rates of occupational injuries (Azerbaijan, Guyana, Kazakhstan) and child labour (Azerbaijan, Mauritania, Pakistan, Sierra Leone), as well as increasing cooperation with trade unions (Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Turkmenistan, Vanuatu). Some countries have put in place measures to prevent occupational injuries, such as risk management and assessment systems, as well as labor inspection systems (Iceland, Kazakhstan, Oman). The fight against the elimination of child labor has been institutionalized in some countries through laws,

policies, strategic roadmaps and national plans of action (Cameroon, Algeria, Chile, Guyana, Turkey, Ghana, Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Serbia, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Iceland).



Many countries are diversifying and restructuring their national economies, in order to reduce dependency on certain sectors and protect their economies from external shocks (Mauritius, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Iceland, Guyana, Cambodia, Lesotho, Algeria, Republic of the Congo, Chile, Mauritania, Oman, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Rwanda). Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Iraq, Timor-Leste, Algeria, Republic of the Congo and Oman noted that they are heavily dependent on the oil sector for economic growth, leaving them vulnerable to

external shocks, such as changes in the price of oil. As a result, Kuwait has undertaken several plans aimed at structurally diversifying the economy away from the oil sector, including the creation of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority to attract local and foreign direct investment and diversify the sources of national income.

While some countries reported that tourism is already a major driver of economic growth (Palau, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu, New Zealand, Mauritius, Iceland), several countries have adopted new policies and plans aimed at increasing the contribution of the tourism sector to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and job creation (Algeria, Cameroon, Chile, Republic of the Congo, Croatia, Lesotho, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Turkey). In response to a recent surge in mass tourism, Palau adopted a Responsible Tourism Policy, which shifts the tourism industry away from low-end, high-volume tourism toward high-end, low-volume tourism that is respectful of the Palauan people and their environment. Moreover, Iceland has defined sustainability indicators, which will be used to assess the impact of the tourism industry on the economy, environment, infrastructure and society to establish Iceland's overall tourism carrying capacity. Several countries expressed concern for the impact of climate change on the tourism sector, and consequently GDP, in coming years.

Many countries highlighted the importance of economic growth that is environmentally sustainable. Measures taken toward green economic growth include increasing the share of renewable energy (Chad), reducing emissions (New Zealand), conducting environmental impact assessments (Croatia, Iceland, Turkmenistan) and creating green jobs (Philippines, Tunisia). In Côte d'Ivoire, a flagship programme was launched to support and empower women in shea production to obtain organic certification, enabling the creation of green jobs for women in agriculture.



Israel

Most reviews showed a strong commitment to fostering entrepreneurship and offering support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by improving the business environment and ease of access to the factors of production for SMEs. Recognizing the growing online market, Israel developed a Small and Mid-Sized Enterprises E-commerce Promotion Plan which maps individual businesses, provides the business with online marketing consulting services, provides training in digital services and provides grants to the business to establish an e-commerce and online marketing

platform.

Several countries are taking steps to digitalize their national economies in light of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In the past few years, many countries have adopted digital agendas, roadmaps and programmes to adapt to the changing market (Cambodia, Chile, Indonesia, Israel, Liechtenstein, Mauritius, Turkey). Some goals outlined by these plans included exploring new technologies such as blockchain and Artificial Intelligence, developing e-commerce and moving toward branchless banking. Benefits of developing the digital economy that were highlighted by the reviews included cost efficiency, more convenient transactions, job creation, higher productivity of workers and increased international competitiveness.

## SDG 9



The 2019 VNR Reports predominantly focused on infrastructure and how physical or technological developments in this sector led to strengthening industries and sparking innovation. Many VNRs noted that progress in the manufacturing industry in recent years has been slow (Algeria, Cameroon, Chile, Ghana, Iraq, Mauritius, South Africa), whereas there has been growth in the construction sector (Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa).

Infrastructure is key to a country's competitiveness, both in terms of the competitiveness of the economy, the development of local communities and the general social wellbeing of citizens (Iceland). Yet, the rapid urbanization rate in some countries has placed new pressures on infrastructure development (South Africa). Several VNRs outlined possible solutions. Moving large industries from dense urban centers to rural areas could relieve the burden on urban infrastructure while also placing industries closer to the labour source (Cambodia, Turkey). Relocating centers in rural areas can also bring together solutions for training, technology and access to credit (Central African Republic). Similar principles apply to industrial parks and special economic zones (Cameroon, Republic of the Congo, Israel, Rwanda, Tunisia). The United Kingdom highlighted its 'Stronger Towns Fund', launched in 2019 to tackle inequalities in the spread of prosperity. In addition to creating jobs, training local people and boosting economic activity, communities are given a say on how the Fund is spent.

The challenge of building resilient infrastructure (Indonesia, Guyana) and modernizing it (Algeria) was highlighted, particularly in light of extreme natural events (Tonga). While some VNR reports cited that they had a good national infrastructure base (Liechtenstein, New Zealand), most noted significant infrastructure projects to develop road, rail, air and sea transport. Many countries highlighted the importance of constructing, improving or maintaining rural roads and the connections with rural hinterland (Indonesia, Guyana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Rwanda, Algeria). The theme of inclusive transport was shared by some VNRs with efforts towards increasing accessibility for persons with disabilities (Eswatini, United Kingdom), and allowing young children to travel for free, as well as providing discounted travel tickets for persons living on islands (Croatia).

From the international perspective, a large number of VNR reports identified cross-border infrastructure projects with their neighboring countries as important ventures (Algeria, Chile, Burkina Faso, Kazakhstan). Transport infrastructure development is important for economic and social growth, as well

as international connectivity (Croatia) and cross-border infrastructure supports trade and mobilizes populations between countries (Republic of the Congo). Some countries however, stated that potential economic synergies with neighbouring countries have not been explored due to the lack of infrastructure to connect economies (Guyana). Mobile cellular networks overcome some of the barriers to accessing existing core infrastructure (Algeria). Many VNRs cited a marked improvement in the use of cellular networks and internet coverage in recent years (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Indonesia, Rwanda, Turkey). Certain countries however, identified that there were gaps between the percentage of men and women who possessed mobile telephones (Iraq, Timor-Leste).

Gaps also exist between urban and rural populations (Cameroon, Kazakhstan, Mongolia). Some countries acknowledged that historically legislative constraints have restrained the pace of modernization of the telecommunications sector, as services have remained under the monopoly control of a single corporation (Guyana). Conversely, governments have also been intervening in the

**Box:** Guyana's First Green Expo

Guyana's inaugural Green Expo and International Small Business Summit was held in Georgetown in October 2018 under the theme Sustainable economic growth through small business innovation, entrepreneurship and transformative government policies. The Green Business Expo provided opportunities for small-scale entrepreneurs to showcase their green and innovative products and also for the Government to highlight its efforts to support them. Public initiatives like the small business procurement programme, the assistance offered by the Small Business Bureau, and the small business tax procedures, all strengthen the enabling environment and help small businesses thrive. At the International Small Business Summit, the connection between small business and green economy was also in focus. In his keynote address, the Minister of Finance, noted that small and medium-sized businesses have a vital role to play in the transformation of Guyana into a green economy. The Summit provided the platform for experts, entrepreneurs, academia, politicians and other representatives from 16 countries to exchange information and experiences in green economy initiatives.

Source: 2019 VNR of Guyana / Partnership for Action on Green Economy

mobile and broadband coverage market where the terrain, combined with low population numbers, makes it uneconomic for commercial companies to invest in infrastructure (New Zealand)

Several VNRs highlighted eco-friendly projects such as sustainable land transport (Mauritius and Guyana), increased investment in low-cost renewable energy (Sierra Leone), popularizing eco-friendly technologies (Turkey), and reducing CO2 emissions (Algeria, Croatia, Ghana, and Iceland).

## SDG 10



Recognizing the importance of SDG 10, all but three reviews addressed SDG 10 as a standalone goal. Many reviews discussed SDG 10 in terms of interlinkages with other goals, most commonly SDG 1 (end poverty in all its forms everywhere), SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) and SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals). One country, Palau, reviewed progress made on SDG 10 and SDG 1 together.

While some countries reported that income inequality remains a challenge (Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Liechtenstein, Ghana, Kazakhstan, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania and Lesotho), some also reported positive progress in income distribution (Iceland, Mauritius, Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Turkey, United Kingdom, Burkina Faso and Chile). Some countries have set new minimum wage standards, or raised previously existing standards in some sectors (Azerbaijan, Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Guyana, Israel, Mauritius, and United Kingdom), which, in the instance of the Republic of the Congo has improved the standard of living and access to quality social services for individuals.



Some countries have implemented programmes aimed at improving the situation of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, older persons, and children and youth. Algeria, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, and Bosnia and Herzegovina discussed different mechanisms which seek to ease the integration of youth into the professional workforce, including skills training, targeted employment policies and job creation.

Many countries have implemented programmes and adopted legislation related to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society. Chile's "Labor Inclusion Law" and the Philippines' "Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities" encourage the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market by mandating that persons with disabilities account for a specific proportion of a company's workforce. New Zealand noted that it has developed a disability strategy, which prioritizes the education, economic situation, health and wellbeing and safety of persons with disabilities. Some countries provide financial support in the form of allowances, pensions and

subsidies to persons with disabilities and their families (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Kuwait, Mauritania and Turkmenistan) (See also section IV above).

As an overarching goal and driver to reduce inequalities, some reviews discussed the various ways in which the principle of non-discrimination was being exercised in their countries (Algeria, Chile, Turkey, Mauritius, Iceland and United Kingdom). While Mauritius set up an institutional measure to combat discrimination, the Equal Opportunities Commission, Iceland adopted two laws in 2018 which prohibit all forms of discrimination, mandating the equal treatment of individuals regardless of race, nationality, religion or non-religious conviction, disability, restricted work capacity, age, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Many reviews discussed disparities between rural and urban areas. In most instances, it was noted that rural areas experience greater rates of poverty and lower accessibility to social services, educational facilities and electricity. Some countries have taken action in rural areas to combat these regional disparities, including, the creation of regional development plans (Chile, Tunisia) and investments in quality infrastructure and electricity (Guyana, United Republic of Tanzania). Urbanization in Côte d'Ivoire has led to better opportunities for employment, access to healthcare and education, and increased life expectancy of the population.

Migrant labor remains a significant challenge to countries. In Kuwait foreign labour enjoys equal rights as domestic workers except right to maternal leave and pension.

Some countries stressed the importance of partnerships in order to achieve SDG 10 and its targets (Azerbaijan, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Guyana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Philippines, Turkey, United Republic of Tanzania). The United Republic of Tanzania noted the instrumental role that civil society organizations have played in supporting government efforts toward ensuring social protection and gender equality through awareness raising, data collection and policy advocacy. Chile noted that achieving SDG 10, given its complexity, is only possible through the involvement of various stakeholders, including vulnerable groups.

## SDG 11



Rapid change in global economic conditions, exponential population growth, development of new technologies and digitization, along with growing urbanization contribute to a substantial change in the role of cities and their ability to create sustainable and inclusive communities. VNRs pointed to challenges such as air pollution, increasing waste, environmental degradation, poor sanitation, housing shortages and traffic jams, amongst others. This leads countries to focus on sustainable national development strategies that take into account local conditions. All VNR countries reported on key elements of sustainable communities considered as communities that provide fair access to basic services, a healthy environment, electricity, housing and transport.

Fragile living conditions due to environmental disasters are aggravated in some contexts by scarce financial resources of the most disadvantaged groups. Many countries have taken action on affordable housing, either through legislation or in national strategic plans. National plans include considerable incentives for families with a critical income and support for the most vulnerable social groups (Guyana, Croatia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, South Africa, New Zealand, Tonga). Kuwait outlined how the Public Authority for Housing Welfare strategy and projects introduced a higher level of public-private interaction and partnerships, encouraging real estate developers to further interact with its plans and projects. In the context of disaster risk reduction and demographic needs for the construction of new homes, Iceland stressed the need to develop civil engineering projects that reduce environmental impacts. This consideration led to the notion of ‘smart cities planning’, which envisages the construction of sustainable buildings, an effective transport system and widespread accessibility for all social groups (Serbia, Turkey, United Kingdom).



Guyana’s VNR emphasizes that the key prerequisite for sustainable development and achievement of sustainable cities and communities is ensuring that a strong planning architecture and operational frameworks are in place to guide national and regional development. Mauritius notes the benefits of the creation of a land database for better development planning. The Government set up a Cadastre Unit in 2012 under the Land Administration Valuation and Information Management System (LAVIMS)

project to improve planning, land valuation and environmental monitoring. The whole land transaction process has now been computerized in an integrated system. The VNR of the United Kingdom highlights an initiative by the Scottish Government that has begun developing a vision for how Scotland’s homes and communities should look and function in 2040 and exploring feasible options and choices to get there. An initial period of stakeholder engagement took place in 2018 and further consultations are planned for autumn 2019. Fiji notes the country’s potential to develop a special Smart City Programme for Towns and Cities to ensure that the towns and cities adapt to global modern urban management practices, including green energy, effective and environmentally friendly transport systems, security for inhabitants, green building construction, technology enhancement and new techniques for solid waste management.

Numerous countries identified air pollution as a key challenge that threatens the sustainability of their communities (Ghana, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Mongolia, United Kingdom). Cambodia stressed that the government was undertaking various measures to prevent and control the level of air pollution, introducing important measures of monitoring, inspecting, and reporting systems. Some countries highlighted the impacts of climate change, particularly the risks that floods, landslides, wind, rainstorm and fires pose to domestic security, potentially resulting in damages to the economy, agriculture, forestry, roads, utility infrastructure and housing stock (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ghana, amongst others). New

Zealand, in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, has developed the framework for a National Disaster Resilience Strategy, with the objective to strengthen the resilience of New Zealand. The United Kingdom highlights the example of a new coastal defense scheme in West Rhyll, which has reduced the risk of coastal flooding to around 2,700 properties, including 560 businesses, and provided additional benefits by securing land for retail redevelopment.

Almost all countries reported that a Disaster Risk Reduction Plan has been incorporated into the national legislative system. Numerous international partnerships have been strengthened in order to facilitate sharing of experiences, mobilizing resources and implementation of common projects (Croatia, Ghana, Guyana, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Mauritius, New Zealand, Serbia, Turkey, United Kingdom, among others). The United Kingdom emphasized its experiences of cooperation with Pakistan in assisting local communities in mitigating and preparing for disasters through improvements to early warning systems, risk information, community-level response systems, and linkages with disaster management authorities.

Many reports point to public transport planning, highlighting the current implementation of urban planning in order to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, allow better accessibility in urban areas and reduce traffic in the most congested cities (Guyana, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom). In order to address the transport needs of the country, Guyana is developing a new infrastructure strategic plan, covering urban and sub-urban transport development, Hinterland roads and bridges, sea defense, stellingings and ports, aerodromes, energy and expansion of urban administration outside Georgetown. Croatia notes that, in order to make cities and settlements inclusive, safe, adaptable and sustainable, many projects are carried out in the transport sector, especially in the rail passenger transport. Despite these urban planning initiatives, several countries highlight challenges, including excessive use of private cars, noise pollution and smog (Croatia, Kuwait, United Kingdom). Some countries also underline challenges in terms of spatial inequities that hamper inclusion (South Africa, Tonga).

Many countries also discussed the sustainability of communities in terms of the preservation of cultural heritage: VNR reports point to the designation of cultural sites, the preservation of indigenous languages and teaching elements such as the history of cooperation and the relationship between a community and its surrounding environment (Iceland, Kazakhstan, Mauritius, Palau, Philippines, Turkey, United Kingdom, Vanuatu). Palau, the Philippines and Vanuatu showcase programmes embedded in the respective school systems that promote the teaching of indigenous languages with the aim of developing a culture and collective identities that strengthen these societies. Furthermore, Fiji highlighted the contribution of sports to sustainable communities.

#### **Box: Rural sports complexes in Fiji**

Community buildings are an important contributor to and component of a community's quality of life. As such, recreational amenities have an important part to play in bolstering quality of life, retaining residents and businesses, and supporting rural economic development. In an effort to improve rural community life, the government is funding the building of Rural Sports Complexes. This and similar initiatives in future are expected to lower out-migration rates of young people.

Source: 2019 VNR of Fiji, p. 51

## SDG 12



Many countries pointed to the importance of directing national policies towards a new system and culture of production and consumption that is sustainable in the long term. Designing a sustainable development path that includes fundamental prerequisites such as a rational and effective management of natural resources and waste, along with the creation of awareness and respect for the environment was considered critical. Challenges encountered in relation to guiding sustainable production and consumption were found to be context-specific.

Some countries, in addressing the achievement of sustainable consumption and production patterns underscored the environmentally sound management of chemicals and hazardous waste (Cambodia, Iceland, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, New Zealand, Turkey). Kuwait reported the establishment of an Environmental Monitoring Information System, with the aim of developing the country's capacities in monitoring national environmental sites and activities, supporting evidence-based decision-making (using the geographic information system) and addressing environmental issues. In some contexts, illegal landfills further exacerbate environmental pollution (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guyana, Kazakhstan). Guyana pointed out that despite having directed its national planning towards waste recycling, the quality of landfills in the country remained below environmental safety and human health standards. While the regulatory standards of landfills still present a key challenge connected with excessive production and consumption, some countries are pursuing a series of national policies that prohibit the disposal of certain materials and harmful substances (Cambodia, Guyana, Kazakhstan, Kuwait), penalize with taxation or require specific polluting enterprises to keep and submit green accounts (Iceland).

Other measures that countries considered essential to reduce excessive production and over-consumption, in addition to adequate environmental protection, include: national laws banning the use of plastic bags (New Zealand, Palau, Fiji) or introducing charges to limit the use of the latter (Turkey, United Kingdom); incentives to increase the social and sustainability reporting by industries (Indonesia, Mongolia, Sierra Leone, United Kingdom); various initiatives aimed at increasing resource use efficiency and adequate recycling (Ghana, New Zealand, Palau, Turkey). New Zealand highlighted its national zero waste strategy, which embraces Māori perspectives and aligns with the tradition of "kaitiakitanga" to sustain and restore collective resources. South Africa's VNR points to the challenge to find the triggers that would encourage consumers to start recycling and then implement measures to support continuous recycling behavior. Some countries have launched national programs with the aim of changing consumer and production habits within society. For instance, Guyana has commercialized a high-value cosmeceutical from non-traditional forest products, providing economic incentives for avoided logging and also promulgates techniques and approaches, which are related to the leveraging of indigenous knowledge. The United Kingdom indicated that public consultations are being planned in Scotland by the end of 2019 on the possibility of mandatory food waste reporting. South Africa noted that its 2017 Operation Phasika Lab on the Chemical and Waste Economy aims to support the South African economy and create jobs while reducing its environmental footprint.

Shifting towards a sustainable development path, some countries have shown themselves inclined to adopt new economic models based on a circular economy enhanced by innovative solutions within companies. Facing large distances to markets, companies in New Zealand have developed innovative ways to keep food fresh, and of high quality, for longer. Turkey adopted a new and efficient system of packaging, transportation, storage and retail sales standards of wholesale food markets combining it with practices of waste prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse to prevent the adverse impacts of chemicals and waste on human health and the environment. In the United Kingdom, Scotland established a Circular Economy Investment Fund that offers grant funding to small and medium-sized enterprises that are helping to create a more circular economy. Ghana promotes roof top solar energy panels and establishes electronic waste recycling facilities. Serbia organized a series of learning sessions and creative workshops to start building a circular culture among the younger generation. In Vanuatu, traditional ‘aelan kakae’, the cuisine of Vanuatu, is promoted as a key part of a sustainable and nutritionally balanced diet. In addition, several countries are implementing plans to introduce the concept of a ‘green economy’ as a tool both to increase the local economy by offering new jobs, and to create a symbiosis with national natural resources (Guyana, South Africa, United Kingdom). Kazakhstan reported on the role played by its Council on Transition to a Green Economy, which reviews the monitored results on the progress made in implementing modern methods and technologies for the utilization and recycling of municipal solid waste in the regions.

Many countries stressed the critical role of stakeholder participation to mainstream the concept of sustainable consumption and production (Cambodia, Guyana, Indonesia, Mauritius, Palau, Serbia, South Africa). Vanuatu stressed that 30 per cent of national programs that provide training in the area of food storage, food production and preservation are held jointly with local NGOs.

### SDG 13



All countries addressed SDG 13 in their VNRs, and many highlighted climate change as a cross-cutting issue that threatens the implementation of all other SDGs.

Many countries reported that climate change is already impacting their citizens and natural ecosystems. Chad noted that climate change has already exacerbated the degradation of its natural resources, harming the economy and leading to the periodic displacement of populations. Similarly, the United Republic of Tanzania reported on the melting of glaciers on Mount Kilimanjaro and the submergence of small islands.

Turkmenistan’s review referred to climate change as a “threat multiplier” that undermines the socio-economic development and stability of the country. Bosnia and Herzegovina reported that an unprecedented 2014 flood event affected approximately 27 per cent of the population with total damage estimated at USD 1.7 billion, causing a five-year setback in achieving the goals of increased gender equality, decreased poverty rates, and decreased marginalization of minority groups and persons with disabilities.

Most countries highlighted achievements in the integration of international climate change policies into national and sectoral plans, and many highlighted strategic policies and projects for climate change

mitigation and adaptation (Algeria, Azerbaijan, Central African Republic, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Indonesia, Lesotho, Mauritius, Palau, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkey, United Kingdom, and United Republic of Tanzania). On mitigation, which refers to actions that aim to slow climate change by the reduction or sequestration of greenhouse gas emissions, countries reported actions largely focused on energy efficiency, renewable energy, and transport. In Indonesia, where the forestry and peat lands sectors comprise the majority of greenhouse gas emissions, mitigation policies aim to control forest fires, decrease deforestation, and restore peat lands.

On adaptation, which refers to actions to reduce the impact of climate change on the well-being and livelihoods of humans, a number of reviews detailed projects concerning the resilience of water resources and the agricultural sector. For example, Israel has established water desalinization plants as well as plans to reduce the country's dependence on scarce natural water resources. In addition, countries identified the need to ensure food security by adapting agriculture and irrigation systems and the challenges associated with these efforts (Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, New Zealand, Rwanda).

Other adaptation measures include the prevention and management of hydro-meteorological disasters, especially in coastal areas. In Tonga, for example, measures such as the construction of offshore breakwaters, beach replenishment, and coastal planting have been implemented to provide people that reside in coastal areas with protection from storms and storm surges. The review of the United Kingdom designated nature-based solutions as crucial for mitigation and adaptation, as well as the prevention of biodiversity loss. Similarly, Indonesia's review featured its Building with Nature program, which combines a nature-based technical approach (i.e. mangrove restoration) with hard engineering (i.e. seawalls) to defend against coastal erosion.



In combination with national adaptation plans, many reviews indicated that disaster risk preparedness is a priority and noted disaster risk reduction and management strategies. A number of countries, including Burkina Faso, Eswatini, and Vanuatu, have developed early warning systems for natural disasters. Cameroon's review also reported on the implementation of disaster risk reduction and emergency response planning at the local level.

Numerous countries cited increasing education and awareness of climate change as a policy priority. Actions taken to achieve this objective include: integrating climate change into mandatory curricula (Chile, Kazakhstan, Palau); developing a School Outreach Programme (Guyana); introducing extra-curricular activities focused on environmental education (Serbia); and preparing pedagogical manuals and booklets (Côte d'Ivoire, Tonga). Several reviews also stressed the importance of engaging with civil society more

broadly, with the review of Algeria highlighting the use of audiovisual media and short films on climate change to introduce community network members to the issue.

Many countries are reducing greenhouse gas emissions by transitioning to renewable energy sources, implementing carbon taxes (Iceland, South Africa), and engaging in carbon sequestration efforts through reforestation (Algeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo). However, the reviews indicated that many countries view the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as a challenge, with Liechtenstein noting that fossil fuel dependence is difficult to break.

Countries reported challenges in the areas of capacity building, data availability, and financing for climate change policies. A number of countries noted that the lack of data, including spatial information, and evidence on how climate change will impact various vulnerable groups is a barrier to risk mitigation and adaptation (Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire). With regard to capacity building, the absence of human, equipment, and technical resources, particularly at the local level, represents a significant challenge in some countries (Chad, Guyana, Kuwait, Tunisia). Financing for sustainable development and climate change mitigation efforts remains challenging for many developing countries. Thus, overall, the reviews of several countries reflected the need for strong international cooperation to achieve SDG 13.

## SDG 14



Almost all VNR countries reported on their national development strategies on marine legislation, frameworks and integrated management plan in this area as well as on marine spatial planning. Some countries highlighted the continued focus on conservation and facilitation of marine and coastal environmental systems recovery (Croatia, Iceland, Israel, Kuwait), outlining activities to reduce carbon dioxide and to monitor the acidification of the ocean (Iceland, New Zealand), noting the importance of marine resources for poverty reduction (Iceland, Vanuatu), recreation (Cambodia, Croatia), employment and national economic development (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Croatia, Iceland, Israel, Ghana, Guyana, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Mauritius, New Zealand, Palau, Tonga, United Kingdom, Serbia, Fiji).

At the same time, countries pointed to the pressure on marine ecosystems caused by mariculture (Croatia, Kuwait), maritime transport and infrastructure (Croatia, Mauritius), leisure and tourism activities (Cambodia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, Mauritius, Palau), deep-sea gas drilling, laying of communication and energy lines (Israel), as well as proposals for marine renewable energy infrastructure and artificial islands (Israel). Fiji highlighted the importance of ensuring that Environmental Impact Assessments are carried out before major tourism developments take place.

Some of the challenges noted in the reviews include the lack of data and the adoption of scientific knowledge and skills in marine resources, research and infrastructure (Cambodia, Guyana, Mauritius, Tonga, Turkey). Applying some of the SDG 14 targets and indicators to the Aral Sea and the Caspian Sea, Kazakhstan pointed to a decrease in sea level with potential implications for the ecosystem and rendering

economic activities in the coastal and shallow areas more difficult. Countries further reported challenges such as climate change (Cambodia, Iceland, Kuwait, Mauritius), institutional balancing among economic development, marine habitats and the implementation of marine-related laws as well as international treaties (Guyana, Israel), ocean acidification and impact on marine biota (Iceland, Mauritius, New Zealand, Palau, United Kingdom), lack of monitoring capability and facilities for the marine ecosystem and species on remote Outer Islands (Mauritius), overfishing (Iceland, Croatia, Indonesia, Israel, Guyana, Kuwait, Tonga), and the introduction of invasive species. The loss of biodiversity through tourism and fishing activities was also highlighted, including in the marine basin of the Mediterranean Sea and the coastal area of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

VNR countries also reported their progresses in the conservation of marine protected areas (Croatia, Indonesia, Kuwait, Mauritius, New Zealand, Palau, United Kingdom), through various measures including: an action plan for seabob fishery (Guyana), building a comprehensive environmental Geo-database and web portals for the public to raise social awareness and to support evidence-based decision making (Kuwait), the application of strict fishing regulations for certain fish species and the number of fishing boats and vessels (Mauritius), and long-term national adaptation actions and capacity building support for sustainable fisheries management, aquaculture and tourism (New Zealand). The United Kingdom notes that fish stocks now show signs of recovery following historic over-exploitation as a result of introducing sustainable fisheries measures, including landing obligations, geared subsidies and incentives, accreditation schemes, and area-based management measures.

Addressing the reduction of excessive marine pollution, many VNR countries emphasized their national strategic plans or policies for preventing and controlling all aspects of marine pollution. Several countries like Cambodia stressed the challenges of marine debris and nutrient pollution. Countries reported on the adoption of a waste prevention policy with a special emphasis on reducing plastic usage and increasing its recycling rate, as well as a research project on the extent of plastic pollution and awareness-raising (Iceland), , adoption of a circular economy programme to identify changes in the supply chain to reduce waste and the banning of single-use plastic bags and the sale of products containing plastic microbeads (New Zealand), and actions in line with the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Ghana).



The surveillance and responsible management of fish stocks is now being reviewed as a prerequisite for the sustainable use of the sea and marine resources, with actions being gradually undertaken, several countries highlighted that the implementation of digital technology greatly helps in monitoring the territorial sea and the ecological-fishing industry. For example, Croatia's fishery monitoring center has been using drones for the surveillance and control of fishing.

Several countries reported progress in preventing illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing. In Iceland, based on scientific advice and both fishing and reporting of catches, success is increasingly achieved through the adoption of Fisheries Management Plans with long term precautionary Harvest Control Rules for commercially harvested fish stocks in Icelandic waters.

Many countries reported on progress and challenges in effectively preserving marine biodiversity. Some countries underlined the stress on coral reefs (Kuwait, Mauritius, Israel, Palau), with Guyana reporting the establishment of a shell beach protected area for sustaining the future existence and population recovery of marine turtles as well as its birds' diversity. Mauritius started a long-term public-private partnership to propagate mangroves to mitigate their drastic decline and sensitize the public on the contribution of mangroves in the preservation of the marine ecosystem. Several reviews highlighted the importance of engaging stakeholders to design interdisciplinary processes and form partnerships (Iceland, Guyana, Israel, Mauritius, New Zealand).

Many countries value international development cooperation in solving international and local challenges in the field of fisheries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Iceland, Israel, Guyana, Ghana, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Mauritius, New Zealand, Serbia). Numerous countries stated their determination to ensure the full implementation of, or their strong support to, international legally binding instruments, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Basel Convention, the Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance, the UN Convention on Straddling and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and numerous others. Several countries highlighted their compliance with European Union regulations in this field.

**Box:** Community Led project in Coral Reef Restoration in Mauritius

The deterioration of coral reefs around the world is due to many factors, including climate change. To rehabilitate degraded coral reefs, Mauritius is implementing a three-year community based coral culture project that aims to build capacity of the coastal communities in reef rehabilitation techniques. This helps empower artisanal fishermen to engage in alternate economic activities such as coral farming.

Source: 2019 VNR of Mauritius, p. 94

## SDG 15



Almost all VNR countries reported on developing and implementing policies, strategies and regulations for ecosystem services. Common challenges pertaining to ecosystem and biodiversity management include limited capacity for implementing and coordinating activities related to land, water and forest protection; climate change; invasive non-native species; changes in land use; urbanization and industrialization; population growth; fragmentation and degradation; pollution; forest and land fires, and overexploitation of resources such as illegal logging, illegal mining and non-procedural forest exploitation.

Some countries also report a lack of available funding, institutional capacity, and expertise for implementing activities related to climate change, green growth and biodiversity protection (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Guyana). Others highlight domestic resource mobilization and/or their international support to projects aimed at the conservation and restoration of ecosystems (Indonesia, Iceland, Israel, United Kingdom, Kuwait, New Zealand). Several countries also emphasized cultural values and their influence on social wellbeing with regard to SDG 15, and Guyana reported overlapping function, legislation and authority conflicts between separate units and institutions with respect to land use planning as obstacles to integrated land management.

All VNR countries reported on SDG 15, outlining respective national biodiversity management legislations and plans to prevent further deterioration of endangered habitats and threatened species. Some countries reported progress on the implementation of constitutional legislation on specific initiatives. For example, in Guyana, legislation addresses mining on forestlands since gold mining is the largest driver of deforestation, yet a high-earning industry in the country.

Many countries highlighted continuing degradation and desertification challenges due to the growing proportion of conversion of natural areas into other land uses (Israel, Guyana, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia). Some reported taking action on promoting fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources (Guyana, Mauritius). Numerous reviews specified national actions on invasive alien species, including policies on eradicating invasive plants and animals (United Kingdom, Croatia, Tonga), and preventing the import of certain invasive plant species to protect local agriculture (Israel).

**Box:** Bosnia and Herzegovina: an example of environmental protection.

The Environmental Protection Fund of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund of Republika Srpska carry out activities related to fund raising, financing the purchase of equipment, implementing and developing programs and projects in the areas of conservation, sustainable usage, improved protection of the environment and energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. The approved projects were implemented mainly at the local level by the municipalities and local institutions, private businesses and civil society organizations. Of the 71 projects approved by the Environmental Protection Fund of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the end of 2018 a total of eight projects were devoted to raising awareness about the conservation of nature and were implemented by privately owned media outlets and non-governmental organizations. As of the end of 2017, the Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency Fund of Republika Srpska had signed a total of 107 contracts on investment in programs, projects and other activities related to the development of the system of integrated management of packaging waste in local self-government units and utility companies as well as on the protection of water sources, watercourses and coastal areas.

Source: 2019 VNR of Bosnia and Herzegovina p. 77

Several specific initiatives that link SDG 15 to other SDGs were also reported. The United Kingdom implemented flood management schemes in which Natural Flood Management measures are included

and play a key role in risk reduction. Croatia reported its programme for the development of green infrastructure to attain the ecological, economic and social benefits of sustainable development. The programme particularly aims at stimulating the development of planned green and water areas in cities and municipalities (green buildings, parks, and recreational areas, green spaces in the vicinity of grey infrastructure). Several countries specifically reported their progress in tackling illegal poaching and trade of wildlife (Israel, Kazakhstan, South Africa).

Almost all countries have made significant efforts to halt the decline of biological diversity and enhance its sustainable use through establishing protected areas (United Kingdom, Cambodia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ghana, Guyana, Iceland, Kuwait, Mauritius, New Zealand, South Africa). Several countries made systematic efforts in classifying the country's natural habitats, thereby creating a knowledge base to organize the necessary protection actions to further prevent deterioration of biological diversity (Iceland, United Kingdom).



Regarding deforestation and sustainable forest management, many countries emphasized increasing forest cover through afforestation and conservation activities as well as to rehabilitate genetic resources of trees and wildlife in the protected areas and biodiversity conservation corridors (Cambodia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Fiji, Ghana, Guyana, Iceland, Indonesia, Liechtenstein, Mauritius, New Zealand, Palau, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Turkey). Some countries also reported allocating significant funds for forest fire

protection and wildfire suppression (Croatia). Guyana commenced work on a National Forest Inventory, which will provide updated information on forestry resources and ensure that empirical evidence is collected and reported for Guyana's forests so that the quantity and quality of forests can be determined prior to allocation for use. Several countries reported increased progress on afforestation with the broader objective of sustainable development, especially due to carbon sequestration and localized value creation (Iceland). Iraq outlined a nationwide tree planting campaign in collaboration with stakeholders to spread the culture of afforestation and raise awareness on the importance of the tree and its outputs to preserve the environment and mitigate the effects of climate change. Similarly, Fiji highlighted its "4 million trees in 4 years" initiative.

Several VNRs reported their contribution to and participation in international development cooperation for effectively promoting ecosystem and biodiversity management (United Kingdom, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guyana, Iceland, Kuwait, Mauritius, Mongolia, New Zealand, Palau, South Africa, Turkey). Some VNR countries reported of funding projects supporting biodiversity in developing countries, tackling illegal wildlife trade and supporting countries to respond to the challenges of climate change (United Kingdom), and highlighted international cooperation through projects and initiatives of intergovernmental organizations, including the United Nations University, UNDP, and regional

mechanisms such as the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Kuwait, Israel, Palau). Other countries are implementing national scale action on REDD+ with financial support to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and regulate global climate through the conservation of forests and biodiversity and sustainable management of forests (Guyana). Some countries specifically refer to their obligations to implement the provisions of international conventions through national legislation, including the Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the UNFCCC, the CBD, UNCCD, and the Ramsar Convention (Guyana, Iceland, Kuwait, Mauritius, Mongolia, New Zealand, Turkey). South Africa acknowledged the importance of data to monitor changes in land resources and biodiversity.

## SDG 16



Almost all reviews addressed SDG 16 as a standalone goal. In achieving SDG 16, overall, the reviews recognized the importance of reducing all forms of violence, protecting human rights, eliminating corruption, improving the effectiveness and transparency of institutions, ensuring public access to information and upholding the rule of law.

Several countries elaborated on measures to promote the protection of human rights and eradication of violence, and many others highlighted actions being taken to protect and promote the rights of vulnerable populations, including children and youth, women, LGBTI persons, and persons with disabilities (Croatia, Chile, Chad, Burkina Faso, Mauritius, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Algeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Serbia, Indonesia, Iceland, Israel, Lesotho, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Oman, Palau, Timor-Leste, Eswatini). As a result of various measures, some countries have seen an increase in the representation of women in political life (Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Indonesia, Philippines, Tonga, Turkmenistan) and many countries reported significant progress in birth registration (Algeria, Azerbaijan, Chad, Chile, Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Iraq, Indonesia, Mauritania, Palau, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, United Republic of Tanzania). Furthermore, Israel, for example, established a National Child Online Protection Bureau in 2016 which operates as a civilian police unit aimed at preventing online violence and crimes against children and youth, including the prostitution of minors, blackmail, harassment, bullying and shaming.



Algeria, Azerbaijan, the Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Israel and the Philippines reported an overall decrease in the rate of intentional homicide. While the proportion of persons held in detention who have not been sentenced yet is overall in decline, this still remains a significant challenge for many countries. Backlogs of cases in the court system are cited as one of the main obstacles to reduce the number of detainees. In response, some countries have undertaken penitentiary reform initiatives and explored alternative options to imprisonment, such as probation for non-violent offenders (Côte d'Ivoire, Guyana, Indonesia, New Zealand). Indonesia noted its plans to revitalize its correctional system from 2019 to 2023 by undertaking policy reform to support alternative measures to reduce the number of people being detained.

Many countries reported on their efforts to combat corruption and bribery. Chile, for example, discussed its UNCAC Anti-Corruption Alliance, which brings together 26 institutions from the public, private and civil society sectors with the objective of implementing the principles of the United Nations Convention against Corruption by taking action in four main areas: promoting integrity, training and dissemination, legal initiatives and good practices, and standards review. While most countries have experienced overall improvements, some countries report that they still require heightened efforts to combat corruption (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Mongolia, Serbia, Timor-Leste, Lesotho, Eswatini). Challenges to the elimination of corruption include the lack of budget to enforce anti-corruption laws, lack of understanding of anti-corruption laws, inadequate means to disseminate anti-corruption laws and weakness of judicial systems.



*Timor-Leste*

Ensuring trust in public officials and institutions remains a challenge to achieving SDG 16 for some countries (Cameroon, Chile, Israel, Mongolia, South Africa). Corruption, weak accountability and lack of transparency of institutions are highlighted as reasons for distrust. Timor-Leste has implemented community-policing approaches, which have proven to reduce crime by building trust and fostering partnership and cooperation between the community and police.

Countries highlighted the importance of ensuring access to justice, as well as to information. In promoting access to justice, some measures that have been taken include the granting of legal aid (Algeria, Burkina Faso, Indonesia, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, Turkey) and the modernization and computerization of the judicial system (Algeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon,

Kazakhstan, Mauritius, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Eswatini). In computerizing the judicial system, Rwanda developed an Integrated Electronic Case Management System, which records judicial case information and efficiently shares it among all relevant institutions. Challenges to individuals in accessing justice include long journeys to the nearest court, financial restraints and lack of capacity to understand and engage in the legal system. Many countries noted that the right to access information has been institutionalized in legislation or the national constitution. Croatia and Ghana noted the importance of open data and have, respectively, adopted an Open Data Policy in 2018 and signed onto the Open Government Partnership in 2011. Challenges persist in providing access to information, such as limited access to Internet and low compliance with access to information laws.

Achieving SDG 16 through conflict resolution, peacebuilding and regional cooperation was emphasized by many reporting countries. Terrorism continues to pose a significant threat to the national security and peace of some countries. Many countries reported taking part in regional actions to combat terrorism and promote regional peace and security (Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Croatia, Israel, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, South Africa, Mauritius, United Republic of Tanzania). In addition, many countries have adopted measures to combat terrorism financing, illicit financial flows and money laundering (Croatia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Mauritius, Oman, New Zealand, Kuwait, Israel, Guyana, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Eswatini).

To achieve SDG 16, the reviews highlight that accelerated action must be taken to strengthen the accountability and transparency of existing institutions, enhance public-private cooperation and trust, improve dissemination of information held by public institutions, reduce corruption among elected officials and combat terrorism.

## SDG 17



Reporting on the progress made in the implementation of SDG 17, countries focused on actions to revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development, including initiatives, challenges and progress in mobilizing the means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda. Due to the overlap of thematic issues, however, countries provided more detail in the chapter on means of implementation (see chapter X).

National ownership sets the ground for real changes in the long run. The reports highlighted that national plans should be based on countries' priorities and realities. Serbia stated that the principle of "leaving no one behind" is the underlying foundation of SDG 17. Vanuatu reflected on the importance of the principles of ownership and leaving no one behind.

Some countries, such as Cambodia and Cameroon, recognized the resource constraints to meet the ambitious requirements to implement the 2030 Agenda. Saint Lucia, as a Middle Income Countries, pointed out that securing adequate financial resources to implement national priorities remained challenging.

Some MICs concurred that their status has negatively impacted efforts to mobilize financing, resulting in the inability to access some loans at favorable conditions. Concessional financing has become difficult to access and its volume has declined. Countries claimed that graduation criteria must not be based solely on per capita GDP, which can present an unrealistic picture of people's lives given the multi-dimensional nature of development and inequality.



*Mauritania*

On domestic resources mobilization, some countries noted that reforms were needed to increase resources. Lesotho is developing a fiscal adjustment reform programme to regain sustainability. Mauritania undertook an ambitious program of tax reforms, which consisted of a series of measures aimed at the broadening of the tax base and on strengthening of tax administration controls. Pakistan's initiatives included a reform roadmap for the Federal Bureau of Revenue to create an efficient interface between taxpayers and tax collectors. It aims to

evoke revenue acceleration through reforms, revamped tax policy, the separation of policy and administration functions, and the digitization of processes.

Countries also reported on their collaboration with the private sector in the implementation of the SDGs. The United Republic of Tanzania noted that private sector financing would need to be addressed in a comprehensive way to capacitate the sector to take a lead in SDG implementation. In Ghana, private sector organizations are taking advantage of the policy environment conducive to promoting innovative schemes to increase access to financial services, particularly for rural and peri-urban communities and those in the informal economy. The provision of mobile money services by major mobile network companies has evolved from being only a money transfer service to a mix of other financial services such as payments and saving services. The private sector in Rwanda is still small and predominantly dominated by micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises. The Government is considering partnerships as an effective vehicle to appeal to foreign investors and boost the private sector and is leveraging various other financing mechanisms to raise additional public and private finance, such as green finance and climate change finance, remittances and blended finance.

Cameroon, Chile, Eswatini, Indonesia, Iraq, Côte d'Ivoire and Tunisia highlighted the relevance of international development cooperation, South-South and triangular cooperation. The United Kingdom reported to have met the UN target to allocate 0.7 per cent GNI to ODA since 2013. Kazakhstan highlighted international cooperation and the promotion of partnerships based on the principles of open and fair trade. New Zealand recognized that trade is a powerful catalyst for development. South Africa noted that South-South Cooperation holds the key to leapfrogging development transformation.

Chad and the Central African Republic noted the need for greater caution regarding the use of indebtedness.



Mongolia reported on challenges to develop an Integrated Financing Strategy on resource mobilization due to lack of coherence between medium-term planning and budgeting of sectorial ministries and the practice of defining the Mid-term Fiscal Framework Statement on short-term sectorial policy targets. Sierra Leone is building the Development Finance Assessment to develop an Integrated National Financing Framework to serve as a roadmap for delivering the domestic revenue mobilization agenda. Complementary to these

revenue mobilization efforts, the government is working to control fiscal outlays and efficiently manage expenditures.

Iceland has placed strong emphasis on linking the SDGs to the targets set for various policy areas in drafting the government's five-year fiscal strategy. The country has issued guidelines on how to connect the targets of the government's fiscal strategy with the SDGs. Local authorities are increasingly linking their policies and plans to the SDGs.

Countries underscored the imperative of strengthening institutional capacity, especially data collection systems. Lesotho pointed to the availability of quality data, which is fundamental for monitoring progress towards the attainment of the SDGs.

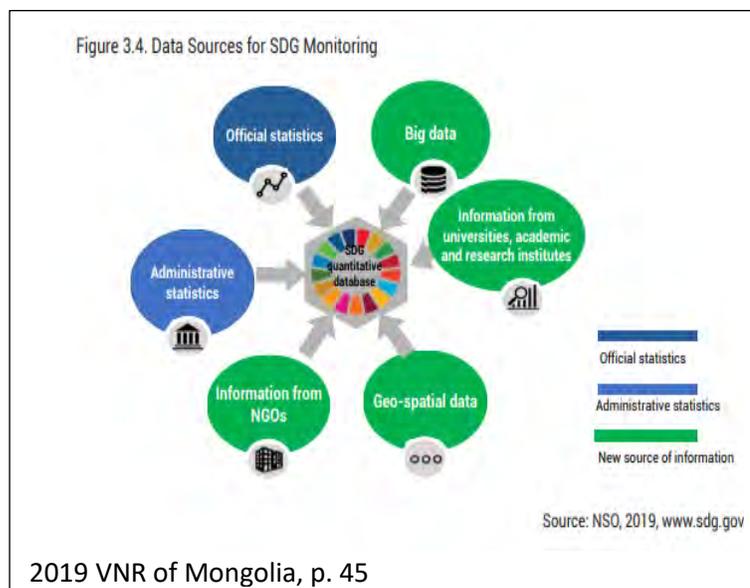
## VI. Monitoring and data

*There is consensus that the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs requires the support of the national statistical system. The collection, processing, analysis, and release of reliable, timely, available, high-quality, and disaggregated data on the indicators are fundamental for evidence-based policymaking. To this end, countries have launched a series of measures to increase data availability for policymakers and other users so as to facilitate SDG implementation and follow-up and review.*

### **Data, statistics and indicators**

The United Nations has established a global indicator framework for the SDGs in order to facilitate internationally comparable and standardized indicators that can be used across countries. The SDG indicators database provides transparency of the data used for global reporting and the indicators can be openly accessed using electronic means (through the OpenAPI specification). In addition, the United Nations Open SDG Data Hub promotes the exploration, analysis and use of SDG data sources for evidence-based decision-making by giving users a variety of different ways to interact with SDG data including data visualizations, maps, infographics and charts.

The 2019 VNRs demonstrate that countries are taking important steps to address issues like data availability, gaps, disaggregation and collection. They also show that many countries are incorporating data into their reviews, with over half of all VNRs in 2019 including a Statistical Annex (Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Republic of the Congo, Guyana, Iceland, Indonesia, Israel, Kazakhstan, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mongolia, Palau, Philippines, Rwanda, Serbia, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Turkey, Turkmenistan, the United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania). Countries also included information on data availability for the global indicators in their reports. Guyana estimated that for approximately 30 per cent of the indicators for which data was not available, survey information might be needed to calculate the indicator. “Statistics South Africa” released South Africa’s SDG Indicator Baseline Report in 2017, covering Tier I and Tier II indicators on which reliable data were available. At the time of publication, 156 of 230 indicators could be measured according to agreed standards and methods; South Africa was able to report on 63 per cent of these indicators.



Countries are also taking steps to modify and adapt the global indicator framework to fit national contexts, conditions and priorities. In this regard, many countries have developed and launched online SDG data reporting platforms to make disaggregated data easily accessible, and some are also developing and implementing national data quality assurance frameworks to ensure the integrity of official statistics. In the United Kingdom, Single Departmental Plans were initiated, which provide a framework to focus the government’s efforts on important issues, and through which individual government departments have embedded the SDGs; they are also a major data source for the country’s SDG statistics. The National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda launched an online SDGs portal containing latest data available on Rwanda SDG indicators. Algeria organized a technical workshop about the statistical needs for SDG follow-up and introduction of new indicators.

### **Key challenges**

Major challenges faced by VNR countries to monitor the progress of the 2030 Agenda in their reports are as follows:

**Data gaps and data collection challenges.** Azerbaijan, Eswatini, Mongolia, Saint Lucia, and Sierra Leone highlighted challenges in data collection. In terms of data availability, countries such as Cambodia, Chile, Eswatini, Ghana, Guyana, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Mauritius, Mongolia, Palau, Philippines, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, South Africa, Timor-Leste, Tonga, and Turkey stressed that data gaps and insufficient data present major challenges in monitoring progress towards the SDGs.



**Data disaggregation.** While most countries acknowledge the importance of data disaggregation in order to leave no one behind, many of them highlight the difficulties they are facing in producing disaggregated data. Algeria, Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Chile, Ghana, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Lesotho, Tonga, Turkey and the United Republic of Tanzania all discussed the challenges of producing disaggregated data. Algeria mentioned that disaggregated data are only available for one-third of available indicators

(27 out of 71), while Mongolia stressed that disaggregation of data by regions, urban-rural, gender, and other population groups, will help identify and better include disadvantaged groups, and ensure their participation so that no one is left behind.

**Need for financial and technical support for monitoring and capacity building.** Cambodia, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Turkey, Rwanda, among others, expressed the limitations of their financial resources to meet the need of monitoring SDGs with statistics and surveys. The report of Rwanda emphasized that the gap between the ambition of the SDGs and available resources (both financial and human) calls for more consolidated efforts among stakeholders to increase resource mobilization and capacity development. Eswatini highlighted that financial resources are limited, yet studies or surveys that need to be undertaken are expensive and compete for resources with other priorities, resulting in time lags for availability of much-needed and critical data.

#### ***Measures taken to strengthen national statistical capacity***

**Creating ownership for data collection and reporting.** A number of countries noted the central role the national statistical system plays in SDG monitoring, and in particular, the coordinating role of the national statistical office. These countries mentioned that there is a need for line ministries to provide increased data in their thematic areas for monitoring progress on the SDGs. For example, in Cambodia, data for targets 1.4, 2.3, and 2.4 came from the Ministry of Agriculture Fishery and Forestry; Goal 3 data came from the Ministry of Health; Goal 7 data from the Ministry of Mining and Energy; and Goal 11 and 12 data from the Ministry of Environment.

**Use of technology to improve data collection, analysis and accessibility.** VNR countries benefited from new technology to improve data management, collection and analysis. The Statistics Department in Tonga has begun using 'small area estimation' techniques to disaggregate data not just on the main island, but on all rural islands and has included this information in their Multi-dimensional Poverty Report. Several countries also highlighted how they have worked to improve their dissemination platforms for SDG indicators. For example, the Croatian Bureau of Statistics has designed an internet portal modelled after the UN portal Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform.



### **Mobilization and assistance from partnerships and other stakeholders.**

Countries are seeking partnerships and other types of support to boost national efforts on SDGs. For instance, the State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan continues cooperation on statistics with the UN and its regional organizations, European Union, IMF, ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, OECD, OIC, Eurostat,

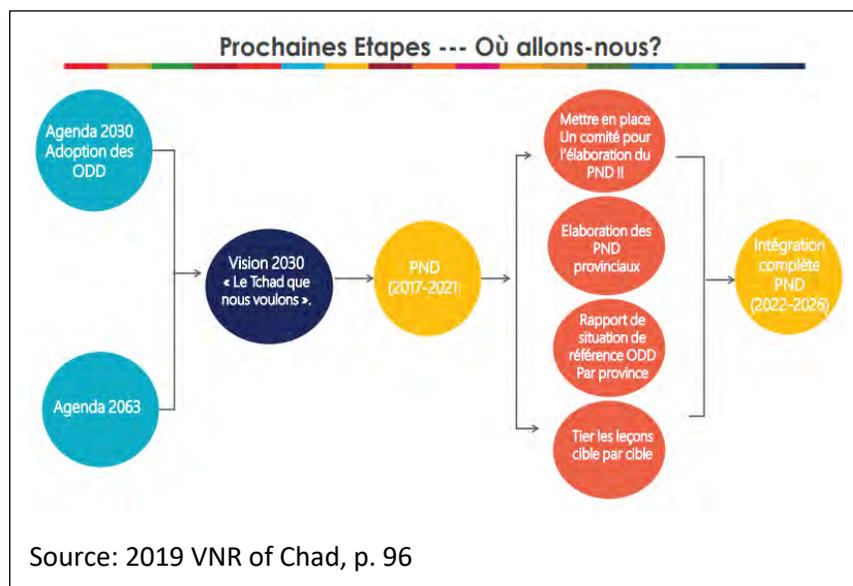
CIS Interstate Statistical Committee and a number of other international organizations, in an effort to improve the statistics system, strengthen the national statistical capacity, and apply the best practices in statistical monitoring of sustainable development. Meanwhile, Mauritius is establishing a National Recommendations Tracking Database in collaboration with the OHCHR. The system will facilitate the recording, tracking and reporting on the implementation of human rights recommendations and hence easier to provide human rights related data. In addition, the United Kingdom developed an Open SDG reporting platform to disseminate SDG information in collaboration with the United States. This platform is fully open source and the United Kingdom is providing assistance to some countries that would like to use this platform to disseminate their SDG data and statistics.

**Identification of non-traditional data sources to keep SDG on the right track.** Traditional statistical data sources are unable to meet the increased data requirements of the SDGs. As a result, official statistical offices are incorporating new data sources such as big data, geospatial information, and non-official data into their official reporting. For example, in Indonesia, the development of the information and communications technology sector has also made it possible for data to be produced by sources other than Statistics Indonesia with specific purposes and variations. Cambodia, among other countries, has incorporated geospatial information into their SDG reporting, especially when disaggregating by rural/urban or geographic location.

## **VII. Coherence with regional and global frameworks**

Countries are integrating international agreements into their sustainable development strategies as regional and global agreements and frameworks also play important roles in the implementation of the overall 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this regard, the most commonly recognized frameworks in conjunction with the 2030 Agenda are: the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

Countries included references to international and regional instruments, as well as plans and measures. For instance, in addressing SDG 5, many countries (Cameroon, Chile, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania) referred to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), while some (Croatia, Iceland, Turkey) also drew attention to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), and The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo



Protocol) (Cameroon). In addressing SDG 6, some countries specified that certain wetlands were protected under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance of 1971 (Iceland). The Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 (Nagoya Protocol) was also mentioned by several countries (Algeria, Croatia, United Kingdom, Mongolia) in terms of developing national strategies and legal frameworks on access

to genetic resources, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits from their use and traditional knowledge for the implementation of SDG 15.

Countries noted that national plans and strategies were being aligned not only with the 2030 Agenda and other international agreements, but also with regional frameworks, for instance the African Union Agenda 2063 (Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini, Ghana, Mauritius), which aims for “a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development” and which resonates with the 2030 Agenda. The approach chosen by African countries for the adoption of the 2030 Agenda has been conditioned by the finalization of the African Union Agenda 2063, the adoption of which in 2015, served as a basis for positioning the continent in terms of its sustainable development. Other regional and sub-regional policy frameworks for sustainable development referred to include the ECOWAS Vision 2020 (Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Sierra-Leone). Several countries also noted actions taken to implement European Union policies and laws (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Iceland).



Countries discussed the significance that their region or status may have on their development and approach to localizing the SDGs. SIDS univocally highlighted their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, and their concern about its implications for their sustainable development in the long term. They noted that SIDS are constrained in meeting the goals in all three dimensions of sustainable development due to their unique nature, inherent vulnerabilities, and limited financial resources.

The SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway calls for urgent and concrete actions to address the vulnerabilities of SIDS in a concerted manner. Some countries (Fiji, Mauritius, Saint Lucia,

Tonga, and Vanuatu) reported that the SAMOA Pathway is the main determinant of their national development policy. The SAMOA Pathway and the Sustainable Development Goals are intrinsically linked. It helps the countries to integrate the relevant frameworks into their national development policy and planning by prioritizing in accordance with national priorities and needs. For example, Saint Lucia mentioned that their national programme for mitigation against vulnerability and building resilience prioritized the SAMOA pathway and corresponding SDGs in developing policies and strategies. Mauritius noted that sustainable management of water resources remains a major challenge, and that national strategies and policies are aligned with both the SAMOA Pathway and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Countries also highlighted other avenues for integrated approaches such as: the United Nations Anti-Corruption Action Plan (Istanbul Action Plan) (Kazakhstan), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Mauritius), the Addis Tax Initiative (United Kingdom), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) (Guyana and Santa Lucia), and the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children (United Kingdom).

## VIII. Stakeholder Engagement

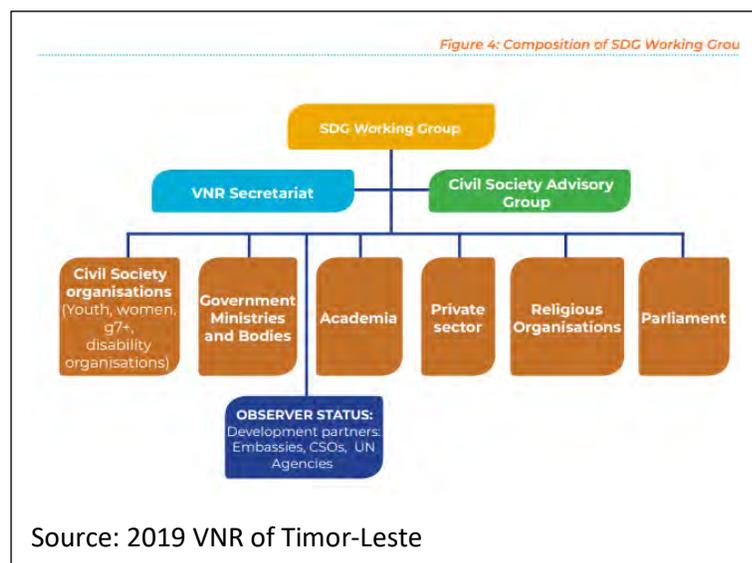
*This section outlines how VNRs reflect one of the key principles of the 2030 Agenda, the “whole-of-society” approach to SDG implementation. The success of the 2030 Agenda depends to a large extent on the meaningful engagement of all stakeholders. This has occurred through institutionalizing mechanisms for stakeholder participation, involving and consulting with stakeholders during decision-making processes, providing an enabling environment for stakeholders to contribute to SDG implementation, and using different tools and approaches to engage stakeholders in monitoring and reporting activities, including when preparing VNRs. As in previous synthesis reports, the involvement of parliaments is covered in section III on institutions for implementing the 2030 Agenda.*

### ***Institutions for stakeholder engagement***

Many countries underlined the importance of a whole-of-society approach and highlighted how stakeholders were included in the main SDG coordination mechanism of the government, tasked to guide the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. The level at which stakeholders were engaged varied, from inclusion in the national coordination committee as members or observers, to being included in the technical committees or thematic working groups one or two levels below the inter-ministerial coordination mechanism. Most countries had included stakeholders in their institutional structure for SDG coordination.

Chad created its national coordination mechanism for the implementation of SDGs by Ministerial Decree on 13 March 2018. The inter-ministerial and multi-sectoral structure under the supervision of the Ministry of Economy and Development Planning is composed of government representatives, members of parliament, civil society, the private sector, academic and research institutions, and the National Institute of Statistics, Economic and Demographic Studies. In Indonesia, members of the Implementation Team, Technical Working Group and Sub-Working Group consist of representatives from the government,

philanthropy and the private sector, civil society organizations, academics and experts. The selection of non-government representatives in the National Coordination Team is fully determined by the non-governmental coalition itself. In Timor-Leste, a CSO advisory group was established, in addition to civil society being represented in the SDG Working Group. The purpose of this group is to advise the VNR Secretariat on how to effectively engage excluded groups in the consultation process (see figure below).



While stakeholders are included in many of the government-led coordination mechanisms, countries also reported on separate stakeholder bodies, such as umbrella organizations, CSO forums or youth councils, which function as advisory bodies or mechanisms to coordinate and combine efforts by stakeholders themselves. In Iceland and Croatia, the Youth Councils provide the government with supervision and advice on the implementation of the goals. In Côte d'Ivoire, CSOs have developed a platform called the Civil Society Initiative

for the SDGs. Ghana reported a CSOs Platform on SDGs while the United Republic of Tanzania noted the Tanzania Sustainable Development Platform, for coordinating involvement and contribution towards the implementation and follow-up of the SDGs.

### ***Stakeholder participation in SDG-related decision-making processes***

Countries reported on different ways to engage stakeholders in SDG-related decision-making processes and noted the importance of inclusive and participatory approaches to localize the SDGs, adopt national policies and plans, and implement SDG programmes, making sure no one is left behind. Some countries highlighted awareness-raising and outreach efforts, informing stakeholders about government plans related to the 2030 Agenda while other countries consulted with stakeholders on national SDG-related plans through national consultations, seminars and workshops.

Ghana, Saint Lucia and Sierra Leone highlighted how stakeholders were consulted when formulating their medium-term development plans. Ghana's medium-term national development policy framework (2018-2021) was prepared through participatory processes, mainly through the engagement of Cross-Sectoral Planning Groups (CSPGs) comprising representatives of the public sector, private sector, civil society, academia, the media, think-tanks, faith-based organizations and other identifiable groups. Likewise, in Saint Lucia the government embarked on an inclusive and strategic process to develop the country's Medium-Term Development Strategy (MTDS) 2019-2022. The Prime Minister and his Cabinet produced outputs which formed the basis of the work programme of consultative economic and social labs. The

labs, which functioned as idea incubators, facilitated interactive discussions, between participants from 134 organizations representing the full spectrum of relevant stakeholders from the public and private sectors and civil society.

In addition to consultations on overarching national development priorities, countries have also set up multi-stakeholder mechanisms to coordinate around specific issues, such as climate, water, health and gender equality. For instance, Palau reported on the country's whole-of-society approach to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) prevention as Executive Order No. 379 established a multi-sectoral National Coordinating Mechanism on NCDs that includes civil society. Similarly, South Africa noted that, following the National Presidential Summit on Gender-based Violence (GBV) and Femicide in November 2018, an Interim Steering Committee, led by the Presidency and in partnership with NGOs, is currently embarking upon establishing a multi-sectoral stakeholder council to address the issue of GBV and femicide and the development of a national strategic plan to eradicate GBV.

Countries also mentioned different web-based solutions to promote participation and contribution of stakeholders, such as online portals, platforms or electronic consultations. The latter were featured in the reviews of countries such as Chile, Ghana, Iceland, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Philippines, Turkey, and Tunisia. In the Philippines, the SDG website [sdg.neda.gov.ph] aims to provide an online platform to engage different stakeholders on the SDGs and intends to serve as a tool for policy coordination. In Pakistan, the 'SDG Pakistan Pulse', a web-based data reporting portal, is being developed for online reporting needs against the targets set at the national and provincial levels. This centralized dashboard will offer tools for researchers, while improving transparency and informed policy- and decision-making. Likewise, Turkey has developed an online National SDG Best Practices Database, which will be active throughout the period covering the 2030 Agenda. In the first phase, 400 practices by public and private sectors, academia, NGOs and municipalities were collected. SDG efforts will be monitored and activities that are contributing to the SDGs the most will be identified.

### ***Stakeholder engagement in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda***

It was widely noted that governments alone could not implement the SDGs and that tackling big societal challenges required concerted efforts of all stakeholders. Several countries reported on stakeholders' direct contribution to national implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including civil society, the private sector, academia, youth, volunteers, and local authorities. Some countries recognized the leading role of local governments in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, particularly when localizing the SDGs. Efforts to build the capacity of local authorities were also noted.

Civil society contributions varied from awareness-raising, progress review, direct implementation and working in partnership with the government on different projects. Cameroon reported that civil society organizations have taken several actions to strengthen national ownership of the SDGs. Such actions include the translation of the SDGs into local languages, the creation of sustainable development clubs in high schools and colleges to facilitate learning by high school students, the creation of a comic book on the SDGs to facilitate understanding by young people, and the establishment of a common platform of

civil society-led collaborative work to build the capacity of SDG actors. Some countries, including Cameroon, Chile, Ghana, Kazakhstan, Mauritius, Pakistan, Tonga, Tunisia, and the United Kingdom showcased youth organizations' contribution to the SDGs, featuring youth as actors of change. In Kazakhstan, youth volunteer movements are developing, and Kazakhstani youth are actively involved in projects that help vulnerable populations and people facing hardship. In Tonga, the Tonga National Youth Congress (TNYC) has also actively been implementing projects, including: awareness camps, youth green dialogues, development of a green code of conduct, outreach activities at primary schools, and a 'no plastic' campaign that has attracted more than 500 members across Tonga.

#### Activity snapshot:

**Plan International UK** have reached more than 500,000 young people in 7 countries through the Young Health Programme, a partnership with AstraZeneca. The programme tackles the significant threat of non-communicable diseases by aiming to prevent or reduce the practice of associated risk behaviours among young people such as use of tobacco, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity.

Source: 2019 VNR of the United Kingdom

Algeria, Chile, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mauritius, New Zealand, and Pakistan report on the contribution of academia to SDG implementation. In Indonesia, 'The Academic Platform' established nine SDGs Centers in prominent national universities, and several others are currently in preparation. In Pakistan, academia increasingly participates in activities related to SDG localization, research, advocacy and implementation. Plans are underway to engage universities in research and implementation of the SDGs, particularly in terms of monitoring and evaluation.

Various countries reported on the increased interest by the private sector to contribute to the SDGs, from promoting private sector engagement, to cases of businesses taking the lead in creating initiatives. In Chile,

#### Case study 4: Private Sector Efforts in Reducing Inequalities

##### *Empowering Women Farmers' Networks*

Women farmers in Tanzania produce 30% less of their estimated target yield due to a lack of financial access to purchase modern inputs. Vodacom Foundation Tanzania, in collaboration with an implementing partner, provided access to start-up capital and capacity building for women and marginalized cooperatives' groups to engage in agriculture. Through capacity building, access to markets and financial inclusion, women have been enabled to engage in economic empowerment activities. The outcomes are promising as the ability of the target group to participate in income generating activities has been significantly enhanced.

Source: 2019 VNR of the United Republic of Tanzania

a private sector initiative called "Sumando Valor" aims to highlight the concrete contribution of the national business sector to the 2030 Agenda. Through a digital platform ([www.sumandovalor.cl](http://www.sumandovalor.cl)), cases of business practices that seek to contribute to the fulfillment of the SDGs are presented. A relevant criterion is the inclusion of practices that do not respond to current

regulations or obligations that companies must comply with, highlighting those that involve a specific effort to go beyond the norm. Croatia Airlines adopted the ISO 14001/50001 standard and thereby started

measuring and reporting its water consumption. The objective is to reduce annual water consumption to approx. 40 tons per aircraft in flight operations and by 1 per cent in all other sectors (administration and technical operations). In the Philippines, there have been increasing private sector initiatives exploring new business models and livelihood support programmes that focus on empowering disadvantaged groups and lifting communities out of poverty. For instance, Messy Bessy, a producer of home and personal care products, has been providing education, employment, and rehabilitation to at-risk-youth.

### ***Stakeholder engagement in monitoring and reporting, including VNRs***

Most countries reported on how stakeholders had been consulted in the VNR process to make it more inclusive and participatory, generally through broad consultations, conferences, round table discussions, community dialogues, and validation workshops. In some cases, the reviews outlined how governments had been collaborating with stakeholders in all steps of the VNR process such as setting up the roadmap, prioritizing goals, collecting data, engaging in various multi-stakeholder consultations and drafting the report.

Mauritius developed a Stakeholder Engagement Plan as well as an SDG Communications Strategy to ensure inclusiveness and multi-stakeholder participation in the VNR process. To this end, Mauritius sent out an SDG Questionnaire with specific questions and rigorous criteria to gather information. This constituted a solid basis for the development of each SDG chapter. Broad and wide national consultations and workshops as well as one-to-one dialogues were held from November 2018 to June 2019 involving both public and private stakeholders, civil society, NGOs, academia, and human rights organizations in mainland Mauritius as well as in Rodrigues and the Outer Islands. Sierra Leone reports that CSOs deserve special recognition for taking the lead in data collection and holding consultations across the 16 districts. Furthermore, civil society organizations in Sierra Leone led town and radio consultations with grassroots communities. In Eswatini, a tool for primary data collection was developed for stakeholders' contribution on the progress made in SDG implementation, and in Liechtenstein, a broad-based survey of actors from the private sector and civil society was conducted in the course of drafting the VNR report.

Some countries, including Ghana, Lesotho, Pakistan, the Philippines, Serbia, Sierra Leone, and Timor-Leste noted special efforts to reach out to vulnerable groups including youth, minorities, migrants and indigenous people. In Serbia, a consultative workshop on SDGs reporting, organized by UNICEF, collected positions of the 100 young men and women who participated. Additionally, positions were collected from children in conflict with the law and young Roma women in eastern Serbia through two separately conducted focus groups. In Lesotho, the National VNR Validation Conference discussions were boosted by live-stream coverage through a social media platform supported

**Box:** Lesotho – Youth raising issues of their concern at a consultation workshop



Youth raising issues of their concern at the consultation workshop

Source: 2019 VNR of Lesotho

by Vodacom Lesotho, reaching more than 2,000 people across the country. The Conference was preceded by district consultations with the support of the UN Lesotho Youth Advisory Panel (UNYAP), engaging with citizens including youth, adults, the elderly, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups on the VNR and Lesotho's progress towards the implementation of SDGs (see photo).

Chile, Croatia, Lichtenstein, Serbia and Turkey were amongst the countries showcasing stakeholders' input in special sections in their report, while Cameroon, Israel, Mauritania and Sierra Leone included annexes with either CSOs position papers or complementary reports.

### **Challenges**

Some countries reported on challenges regarding stakeholder engagement, generally related to more effective collaboration and coordination between and amongst stakeholders and the government. Issues mentioned include ensuring that all stakeholders are reached and included (Azerbaijan, Chad, Serbia), the need for stronger coordination (Saint Lucia, South Africa), lack of involvement of non-state actors (Tunisia, Mongolia), strengthening partnership between CSOs and the government (Mauritania, Tonga), and challenges in involving the private sector (Congo, Eswatini). Some countries mentioned next steps to be taken in order to include stakeholders and improve partnerships and cross-sector collaboration. For instance, in the United Kingdom, an effective mechanism will be established to enhance stakeholder engagement and cooperation with government in the domestic sphere. Additionally, Serbia will undertake a comprehensive public campaign to inform the entire population about the main finding of their report and planned next steps, while South Africa notes that new platforms and fora are necessary to support greater involvement of the private sector in achieving the goals.

## **IX. Awareness-raising**

*There is recognition that it is critical to foster awareness-raising on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs among all stakeholders. The section below briefly outlines some of the initiatives that countries reported to this end.*



Without broad awareness of the public and various actors, the set of complex goals and indicators cannot be reviewed, and progress cannot be traced. Therefore, campaigns were and are to be carried out in numerous countries (Cambodia, Croatia, Israel, Mongolia, Saint Lucia) at both national and subnational levels, with the goal of raising awareness, mobilizing resources, building partnerships, and bringing together all sectors of society. Palau created SDG Working Groups to monitor and evaluate the

implementation of the SDGs, which were led by a government ministry with representatives from civil

society. The United Republic of Tanzania conducted awareness workshops on SDGs for regional secretariats and local governments to empower and capacitate them to mainstream and incorporate SDGs into their plans and budgets. Several countries use media campaigns to reach large population masses. Ghana established the SDGs Media Network. Iceland launched a promotional campaign about the SDGs in the form of short videos on television, social media, and in cinemas, and online advertising banners and full-page advertisements on newspapers.

The majority of VNR countries stressed the importance of including children and youth in the implementation efforts. In Indonesia, youth and disability organizations are among the most active CSOs in engagement and dissemination of SDGs awareness to their peers and communities. Lesotho developed a special policy called Lesotho National Youth Policy of 2017, which aims to stimulate awareness amongst the youth and their responsibilities towards a sustainable environment and the reduction of poverty. Tunisia, in collaboration with the UN, launched Young SDGs Camps in 2016. In 2018, the number of participants reached 800, of which 49 per cent were women. Mauritius organized a Youth Conference on Sustainable Development during which 100 students from ten secondary schools, with the support of their teachers and mentors, examined the different SDGs to identify four priority themes per SDG and then were asked to work together to suggest solutions for each issue. A total of 107 clear, precise and realistic solutions were proposed ranging from the problem of drugs abuse, road accidents, poverty, to education for all and pollution. The Icelandic Youth Council for the SDGs was established to ensure the formal participation of young people in the promotion and realization of the goals. Some countries have included the SDGs in their curricula (Sierra Leone, Liechtenstein). Sierra Leone made significant efforts to integrate the SDGs into university study programmes. The University of Sierra Leone and Njala University run master's degree programmes in development studies that integrate knowledge of SDGs into their curricula.

## X. Means of implementation

*This section outlines how countries' voluntary national reviews addressed the means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda, including financial and non-financial resources as well as partnerships, science, technology and innovation and capacity building.*

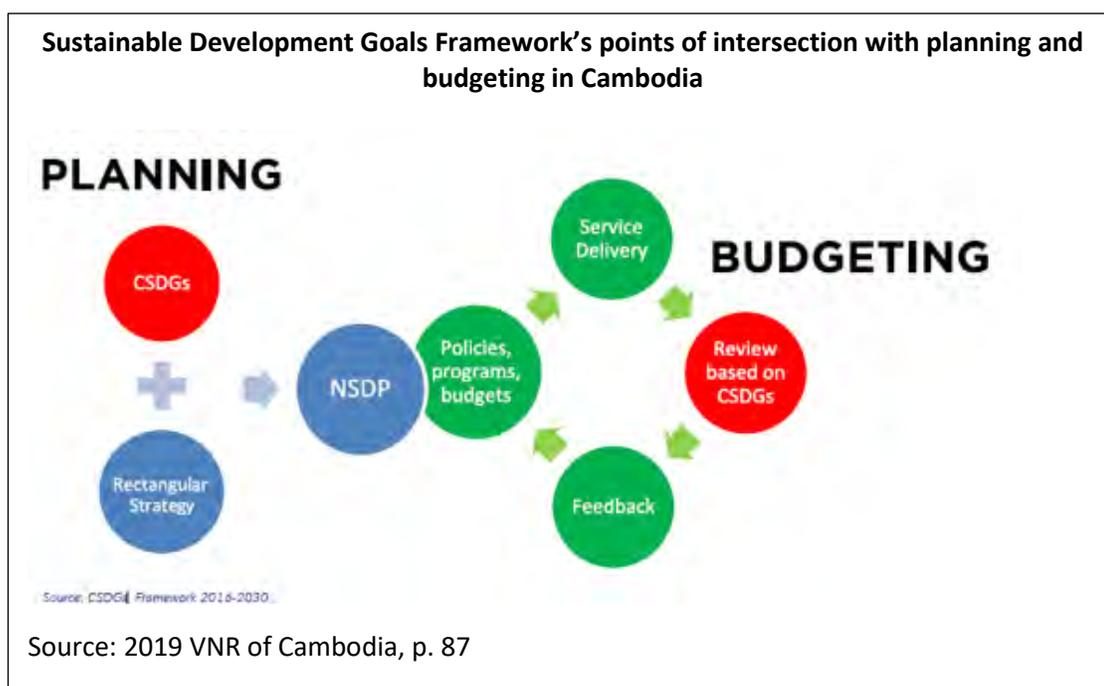
### ***Resources and financing***

Countries highlighted the importance of mobilizing resources and financing to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The reports recognized the role of International Development Cooperation and stressed the importance of meeting the 0.7 per cent GNI target of ODA. The VNRs noted some of the actions taken to strengthen domestic resource mobilization including tax or fiscal reforms. Countries expressed the importance of establishing multilateral and bilateral partnerships, access to concessional financing, debt relief and restructuring, and prudent fiscal policies crucial to achieve sustainable development. The role of trade and investment was recognized as powerful catalyst for sustainable development.



Budget issues, limited and untimely availability of resources feature prominently in several reports as a major challenge, forcing countries to prioritize certain SDGs, giving due attention and consideration to domestic contextual realities and future development potential. Eswatini, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone and Guyana reported that tight fiscal space and related challenges result in limited resources available for the implementation of programmes, regular and timely data collection and reporting. Faced with

limited resources, there is strong need to identify areas of highest priority among the SDGs that will yield high returns at the shortest turn-around time with multiplier effects on other goals for visible change in development to attain maximum results in a cost-effective manner.



Several countries seek to adopt an economic policy mix rooted in economic growth maximization and the promotion of structural change, while reporting to also promote sustainability and inclusion (Cambodia, South Africa, Kazakhstan, Palau). Some countries reported on piloting new techniques and ambitious approaches (Cambodia, Pakistan) as managing and anticipating fiscal pressures remains a key challenge. Pakistan for instance, is exploring innovative financing, developing a Responsible Business Framework and engaging local universities in devising local solutions for local problems.

### ***Domestic resources and financing***

Many countries reported on measures they have taken to strengthen domestic resource mobilization and improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection. This included fiscal reforms (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Palau, Rwanda, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu), strengthening audit and enhancing efficiency of tax administrations (Cameroon, Guyana, Rwanda), tax enforcement (Philippines, Sierra Leone), and promotion of modern means of payment (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Guyana). Additionally, some countries mentioned developing a results-based budgeting mechanism as a reform aimed at greater control over public spending.

### ***International development assistance***

Some countries also noted declining support for development in terms of ODA, or inadequate financing available given a limited tax base. Chile, Croatia, Iceland, Israel, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, among others, noted that their ODA contributed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, with some referencing priority goals. Chad, the Republic of the Congo, and Lesotho stated that most of the resources used to finance the SDGs come from international partners.

Eswatini, Ghana, and Saint Lucia reported the challenge of declining ODA and other resources due to the countries' attainment of middle-income status or expected graduation from LDC status (Cambodia and Timor-Leste). The change of status has resulted in the inability to access some loans.

### ***Other sources of financing***

Countries reported on progress in mobilizing additional resources to finance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. A number of countries (Algeria, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Congo, Ghana, Iceland, , Timor-Leste, the United Kingdom and the United Republic of Tanzania) highlighted contributions from the private sector as a critical source of financing.

In order to mobilize private sources of financing, countries stressed the importance of bolstering the domestic business climate (among them Algeria, Cambodia, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Lesotho, the Philippines, Saint Lucia, United Republic of Tanzania and Timor-Leste), including by taking targeted policy action such as simplifying procedures to obtain business licenses and permits (Bosnia and Hercegovina, Kazakhstan). Countries also pointed to the need to advance financial market reform to increase private investment (Algeria, Cambodia, Côte d'Ivoire).

Public private partnerships (PPP) were noted to play key roles in supporting infrastructure investments by numerous countries (Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Mauritania, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tunisia and Turkey). Several countries reported on steps taken at the legislative level to strengthen the transparency and efficiency of PPP frameworks (Pakistan, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mauritania).



Countries also pointed to the importance of private sector commitments to doing business sustainably and responsibly (Croatia Mauritius). New Zealand, Philippines and Pakistan highlighted steps to promote sustainability reporting guidelines and frameworks. Ghana has established a CEOs Advisory Group on the SDGs, which champions the private sector's engagement on sustainable development.

The reviews of numerous countries (Algeria, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chad, Eswatini, Indonesia, Israel, Kazakhstan, Serbia, Turkey, United Kingdom and Vanuatu) highlighted expanding access to finance, including to micro-, small- and medium-size enterprises (MSMEs), as critical to unlock resources for sustainable development. Several countries also reported on strategies to support start-ups through business development services and funding, especially for the youth (Ghana, Guyana, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania) and women (Kazakhstan, Israel, Mauritania, Rwanda, Tunisia, United Republic of Tanzania).

Several countries noted efforts to promote investment, including foreign direct investment (FDI), as important drivers for the mobilization of additional resources for sustainable development (Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lesotho and Turkey). A number of countries (Algeria, Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Indonesia, Mauritius, Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste, Tunisia) pointed to the role of remittances and contributions of diaspora in providing resources for sustainable development.

The reviews of Pakistan and Indonesia reported on innovative instruments for SDG financing. Cambodia, Ghana, Mauritius and Tunisia highlighted efforts to enhance the mobilization of resources for climate-smart investments.

### *Trade*

Many VNRs recognized the role of trade as an engine for achieving sustainable development and as an important component of the means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda. Countries reported on efforts to promote trade, including by strengthening trade conditions (Guyana, Cambodia). Some countries (Israel, Lesotho, Tunisia, Turkmenistan) noted efforts to promote exports; Guyana and Iraq highlighted steps to diversify exports. Guyana stressed the importance of export earnings for the country's overall macroeconomic stability.



The important role of a rules-based, transparent, nondiscriminatory, open and inclusive multilateral trading system was also recognized. Some countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, and South Africa) reported on their commitment to promote a universal, rules-based, open, nondiscriminatory and equitable trading system under the World Trade Organization (WTO). The United Kingdom highlighted the need to take due consideration of the concerns of developing countries in adopting new global rules

on trade. Turkey highlighted efforts to implement special and differentiated treatment for developing countries, particularly for LDCs. Iceland noted the importance of reducing trade barriers for developing countries to enable market access. Iceland also stressed the importance of considering sustainability and social responsibility in the context of trade.

### **Partnerships**

*Building on what has already been covered in the earlier chapters (stakeholder engagement and different sources of financing), this section mainly focuses on synthesizing those concrete partnerships that are contributing to SDG implementation on the ground.*

Reporting countries all stressed the importance of partnerships in the implementation of the SDGs, which pools valuable knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources from partners and complements the revitalized Global Partnership. Partnerships with the private sector, civil society and academia were broadly underscored as indispensable for the SDGs. Many countries also highlighted partnerships involving the UN system and other partners, such as Philanthropy (Ghana, the United Republic of Tanzania, Indonesia, Liechtenstein) and volunteers (Ghana, Cameroon, Timor-Leste).



A number of countries also underscored the need to build partnerships in a more focused and targeted manner, in alignment with national priorities (Azerbaijan, Cambodia). For example, Cambodia reported that its Development Cooperation and Partnerships Strategy (DCPS) establishes principles, sets objectives and identifies tools to promote effective cooperation, so that resources are maximized and aligned with national development priorities to achieve the best possible results.

Reporting countries shared numerous examples of concrete partnerships that are contributing to SDG implementation, both domestically and internationally, covering areas such as ending poverty (Mauritius),

ending child poverty (Chile), agriculture (United Republic of Tanzania, New Zealand), ending child marriage (Indonesia), non-communicable diseases (United Kingdom, New Zealand, Tonga), nutrition (Chad, Kuwait, Pakistan, Rwanda, Timor-Leste), neonatal care and maternal mortality (Israel, Pakistan), education (Azerbaijan, Sierra Leone, Croatia, Guyana, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, United Republic of Tanzania, Lesotho, Mauritius, South Africa, Timor-Leste, Tonga), empowering women (Algeria, United Republic of Tanzania), empowering migrant workers (Indonesia), empowering refugees and IDPs (Serbia), rural and vulnerable communities (Chile, Côte d'Ivoire), persons with disability (Tonga), people with diverse sexual orientation (Tonga), improving the welfare of people with disabilities (Indonesia, Israel), job creation (Algeria), youth development (Ghana, Israel, New Zealand), social welfare (Iceland), ending violence against women (Ghana, Mauritania), ending open defecation (Burkina Faso), improving water supply (Eswatini, Guyana, Mauritius), improving freshwater quality (New Zealand), waste-water management (Cambodia, Croatia), energy access (Central African Republic), renewable energy (South Africa), waste recovery (Ghana), e-waste management (Rwanda), recycling plastic waste (Côte d'Ivoire), public transportation (Bosnia and Herzegovina), strengthening data capacity (Ghana, Iraq, the United Republic of Tanzania), promoting sustainable banking principles (Ghana), improving financial inclusion (Ghana, Tunisia), biodiversity (Kuwait, Mauritius), propagating mangroves (Mauritius), building adaptive capacity to climate change (United Republic of Tanzania, Iceland), promoting ICT (Cambodia, Croatia), peace-building or conflict prevention (Iraq, Kuwait, Timor-Leste), ending human trafficking (Kuwait, Liechtenstein), evidence-based policy-making (Kuwait), local governance (Sierra Leone) and public service delivery (South Africa, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu).

Some donor countries (such as Iceland, Israel, Kuwait, New Zealand, United Kingdom) highlighted the critical role of partnerships in development cooperation with many concrete examples. Recipient countries on the other hand all emphasized the importance of partnerships and strong relationships with development partners for its SDG implementation. Some specifically acknowledged that through partnering with development agencies, NGOs, and the private sector, they were able to address some of the gaps and challenges in SDG implementation (Eswatini).

Several countries also highlighted areas where partnerships need to be strengthened. For example, Guyana mentioned the need for Public-Private Partnerships in improving education quality, in providing critical health care services and sanitation, in resilient housing, transport, and in eco-tourism. Iceland highlighted the need to address the large environmental footprint of modern lifestyles, human economic and social well-being, as well as the protection of the natural environment and wildlife. Lesotho mentioned the need for continued support and partnerships to effectively combat climate change and to build effective community and household resilience, including capacity to build early warning systems, relevant technologies and capacity building on the development of proposals for bankable projects for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Pakistan seeks partnerships and networking with partners for sharpening and strengthening programmes and initiatives that promote gender parity at all levels. Rwanda mentioned the need for more partnerships to further develop capacities to produce required data for effective monitoring of SDGs. Timor-Leste underlined the areas of renewable energy (i.e. solar power) and water resources management.

Many countries reported on measures taken to create a conducive environment for partnerships, from the development of legal and institutional instruments to relevant awareness raising and capacity building activities. Some countries have put in place national Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Frameworks/policies to promote private sector engagement (Guyana, Cambodia, Guyana, Indonesia, United Republic of Tanzania, Rwanda, Mongolia, Sierra Leone), especially in relation to big infrastructure projects. New Zealand has established the New Zealand Infrastructure Commission, Te Waihanga, which aims to foster partnerships across central and local government, private infrastructure owners, and the market. Indonesia has developed Guidelines for Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships to implement the SDGs. Mongolia is in the process of reviewing its current PPP State Policy and developing a new law to further improve the investment climate for PPPs. Lesotho is in the process of reviewing its Partnership Policy (2013) and developing a national partnership and coordination strategic plan.

#### Climate Box

The Climate Box, a set of educational and play materials for schoolchildren, is now widely used in climate education. The project was developed by the UNDP, the Government of Russia and the Coca-Cola Company.

The materials have been adapted for Kazakhstan and are released in Kazakh, Russian and English. This learning tool is used in many schools throughout the country. The project also encourages participation by holding regional, national and international competitions around topics such as GHG emissions reduction and efficient water use.

In 2019, 62 students from 17 regions in Kazakhstan took part in the national round of the competition. 10 children were given the opportunity to promote their projects at international sessions in the 'Orlyonok' and 'Smena' children's health centres. The best projects were awarded a grant for their practical implementation in schools. On 25-27 April 2019, the International Children's Environmental Projects Competition was held in Almaty, where more than 100 participants from 9 countries presented their best projects, including on topics such as water saving and carbon footprint reduction. These practice-oriented youth initiatives demonstrate the high level of interest of schoolchildren in both adaptation and efficient resource saving.

Source: Voluntary National Review of Kazakhstan 2019

Countries also shared their activities to raise awareness and create opportunities to build partnerships, such as partnership campaigns (Cambodia), forums and meetings (Mauritius, Timor-Leste), workshops (Azerbaijan), Public-Private Partnership (PPP) cells (Pakistan), and working groups (Iceland, Mauritius, Serbia). The review of Ghana reported that the President of Ghana hosted a breakfast meeting with selected CEOs to foster partnerships. The review of Israel mentioned the biennial International Conference and Exhibition WATEC, where newly developed technologies in the water and environment sectors are presented, fostering cooperation and partnerships in the area of water. Some countries highlighted platforms or coordination mechanisms established to facilitate partnership building with various stakeholders (Ghana, Turkey). Some partnership-facilitation efforts are more sector-specific than others. For example, the review of New Zealand reported on the Freshwater Improvement Fund, which committed \$100 million over ten years from 2017 to facilitate partnerships that generate on-the-ground action for the management of New Zealand's lakes, rivers, streams, groundwater, and wetlands. Some reported efforts are at the sub-national level, such as the Sindh Development Forum in Pakistan, which has developed a framework of cooperation in the province of Sindh for the next ten years and prioritizes partnerships across nine themes in key socio-economic sectors.



On effectiveness, Sierra Leone highlighted an inclusive local governance model of a local NGO, Fambull Tok Sierra Leone (FT-SL) in partnership with an US-based NGO, Catalyst for Peace (CfP), which successfully achieved impact at the community level. Guyana stressed the importance of partnerships being data-driven to design programmes more effectively. South Africa emphasized that in order for a partnership to have a lasting impact, it requires long-term stakeholder commitments, sustained funding,

ongoing resourcing and consistency of personnel to help ensure their success. Vanuatu emphasized the importance of a robust governance framework for effective partnership. A number of countries also mentioned activities to build partnership capacity (Indonesia, United Republic of Tanzania, Serbia). For example, the Government of Tanzania has trained more than 800 officials from various ministries, independent departments and agencies on PPP concepts and practices.

The Cambodia SDG Framework (CSDG) offers an interesting example. First, it considers the opportunities for, and challenges faced, in successfully integrating the SDGs within Cambodia's policy planning system. Second, it addresses resourcing issues and practical enabling actions. Third, it reviews the monitoring and evaluation arrangements, and how wider feedback (outside of government) can be secured. Fourth, it discusses why awareness-raising is important for CSDG implementation. Fifth, it examines what kind of the capacity building is needed for effective CSDG implementation. Lastly, the section concludes with a discussion of multi-stakeholder partnerships.

### ***Science, technology and innovation (STI)***

Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) have greatly shaped society and the environment. Countries noted that applying science and technology to sustainable development challenges can play a transformative role in alleviating poverty, advancing human rights, and accelerating inclusive economic growth. In this regard, countries noted that the global Technology Facilitation Mechanism is key to enhancing scientific cooperation, reducing the technology gap between developed and developing countries, and building local capacity in science, technology and industry.

Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Guyana, Iceland, Kazakhstan, Mauritius, New Zealand and the Philippines have called for concerted actions to accelerate international technology transfer to accelerate the empowerment of vulnerable sectors. They note that many SDG targets can only be achieved through transformative technological innovations. Many of such technologies are already available, but need to be applied at scale, adapted to the country and regional realities. Therefore, there is need to strengthen international cooperation and knowledge sharing between developed and developing countries (Iceland). There is also a need to increase investments in STI particularly in developing countries (Kazakhstan).

The reviews of Croatia, Iceland, Lesotho, Palau, United Republic of Tanzania, Saint Lucia, South Africa and the United Kingdom highlighted science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills as key elements for developing STI capacity. There is a significant shortfall in both developed and developing countries in the STEM skills. A gender imbalance is particularly evident in STEM subjects (United Republic of Tanzania). The international partnership is important to develop a coherent approach to STEM education standards for graduate attributes and professional competencies that are internationally recognized and supported. In many societies, there are still barriers that prevent girls and women from receiving STI-focused education. Many women in STI-related careers also do not advance as much as their male counterparts. There is therefore a need for gender mainstreaming to be a key part of STI interventions such as capacity building programs (Lesotho).

At the same time, countries also reported that building capacity for STI is crucial for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda but is a long-term process. Apart from capacity for STEM skills, countries noted other aspects that would require capacity development related to STI policy making, with enhanced inclusiveness through a multi-stakeholder approach. Effective implementation of measures to achieve the SDGs requires stronger global partnerships to garner increased resources and improve access to technology and good practices (South Africa).

Countries emphasized the need to enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on, and access to, science, technology and innovation (Azerbaijan). Countries also stressed the need to enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the UN level, and through the global technology facilitation mechanism. Iceland stated that knowledge sharing and the distribution of environmentally friendly technologies to developing countries must be promoted.

## Capacity building

Capacity building for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda continues to pose a number of challenges. Rwanda articulated the gap, expressed by many countries, between the ambition of the SDGs and available financial and human resources and called for more consolidated efforts among stakeholders to increase resource mobilization and capacity development.



Lesotho

Reporting countries expressed a wide variety of capacity development needs including building the skills of the public sector in coordination, especially in inter-ministerial development planning and implementation of programmes and projects (Ghana); capacity to be able to manage synergies and trade-offs (South Africa); and strengthening institutional accountability relationships (Timor-Leste, Iraq and Lesotho).

Building national capacity for achieving policy coherence was a priority for some countries such as Guyana, Mauritius, Mongolia, Pakistan and Vanuatu. The vast majority of countries

highlighted as a capacity constraint the ability to collect, manage and analyze data (among these, Cambodia, Guyana, Iraq, Palau, St Lucia, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu). Several countries called for technical support in monitoring the implementation of the SDGs, including Eswatini, Ghana, Guyana, Iraq and Pakistan.

Countries also highlighted capacity needs amongst different stakeholders such as local government administration and intergovernmental systems (Cambodia, Ghana and South Africa) and members of Parliament (Ghana). Several countries mentioned the need to enhance the capacity of civil society, including Tonga, which expressed its need for improved collaboration between civil society, community groups and government.

Capacity building training in specific sectors was articulated, such as small business and entrepreneurship training (Guyana); or violence and human trafficking (Lesotho) or construction sector (New Zealand). Vanuatu seeks further technical training support on a range of issues including training on human rights with all relevant stakeholders such as the police. Timor-Leste highlighted peer learning and country exchanges as a primary source of capacity building, and highlighted several areas where they wish to learn from experiences in other countries including in the areas of justice, education and decent jobs.

Several countries gave examples of their capacity building efforts including the United Republic of Tanzania which highlighted its LoCAL/Decentralized Climate Finance project (2016–2018), financed by UK Aid investments under which 35 climate-resilient and adaptation projects have been implemented, and which train women and traditional leaders. The Sierra Leonean Government is building human capacity and ensuring professionalism through the establishment of a National Civil Service Capacity Enhancement scheme and Performance Management. Liechtenstein is working to strengthen its capacity to for innovation and broad diversification of the economy because of the small domestic market.



International and domestic partnerships, including with the UN, were highlighted by several countries including The Philippines, South Africa and Tonga, with some including Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste calling for the expansion of partnerships. Sierra Leone called for a strategic shift in development cooperation to move domestic implementation forward. Several donor countries gave an account of how capacity building plays a role in international development cooperation (Croatia, New Zealand, United Kingdom). This included programmes to strengthen professional expertise and capacity in the fields of geothermal energy, fisheries, land restoration and gender equality in developing countries (Iceland); programmes to combat poverty and promote education and vocational training (Liechtenstein); data (United Kingdom) and support to countries in the Pacific in initiatives to combat climate change (New Zealand). Emerging donors such as Turkey outlined the efforts undertaken to build capacity, including through the establishment of vocational training schools, faculties and laboratories to contribute to the education of qualified people in partner countries. Kazakhstan through its Green Bridge Partnership Programme, as an interregional mechanism, builds capacity for balanced use and equitable distribution of energy and thus assists in promoting cooperation between the countries.

## XI. Conclusion

The 47 VNRs presented in 2019 conclude the first cycle of the HLPF and demonstrate the continuous commitment of countries to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In line with national ownership of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and countries different starting points and priorities, the approaches to the VNRs vary, and reflect multifaceted processes. The reports showcase not only a wealth of examples, best practices and lessons learned, but also persistent challenges, capacity building needs and opportunities for partnerships to strengthen SDG implementation efforts.

Reporting countries also increasingly strive to unpack the meaning of the principle of leaving no one behind in their respective national contexts. Many countries included a statistical annex to the VNR report, stressing the evidence-based nature of the reviews, and outlining the capacity constraints of their statistical offices to monitor progress on the SDGs and national priority areas. Many countries showcased how they engaged stakeholders in the VNR process and highlighted their contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda including by reflecting their perspective in the VNR report. A few countries also specified the contributions of the private sector. While reporting countries outlined next steps or recommendations, few reports define specific follow-up actions. There is thus potential to further

strengthen the follow-up to the Voluntary National Reviews to maximize the benefits of the review process.

Embarking on the second cycle of VNRs, there is merit in building on the lessons learned from the combined reviews presented from 2016-2019. It will be important, as more countries come to present their second and third VNRs, to evaluate the impact of actions for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. As many countries have recognized, conducting a VNR is not an end in itself nor a one-off presentation at the HLPF, but a critical tool to maintain the momentum and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the sub-national, national, regional and global levels.

