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VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS



SYNTHESIS REPORT

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HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Synthesis of Voluntary National Reviews

2017

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FOREWORD



In adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States undertook to develop ambitious national responses to the overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They further undertook to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, with the results to be shared, on a voluntary basis, at the annual meetings of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), in a process that has come to be known as the voluntary national reviews (VNRs).

In 2016, 22 countries conducted VNRs and presented their reports to the HLPF. In 2017, the number nearly doubled, with 43 countries undertaking VNRs, providing important, evidence-based information on the status and trend of national implementation. The present report synthesizes the second round of VNRs and provides a snapshot of general characteristics of the early implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and identifies challenges and examples of implementation from the reporting countries. The report is not a statistical profile of progress in implementation, which is contained in the annual progress report of the Secretary-General on sustainable development goals (SDGs); instead it examines a range of actions and policy measures relating to implementation, including ownership and involving stakeholders, institutional mechanisms, incorporation of the SDGs into national frameworks, means of implementation and an overview of how countries addressed goals and targets in the VNRs.

However, of necessity, the report is selective in scope and not exhaustive with respect to the wealth of practices and inspiring examples from the VNRs. All examples chosen are illustrative and meant to give an idea of the actions and measures in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the country level.

As well as offering a brief narrative of actions for the 17 SDGs, the report highlights the ways in which reporting countries have addressed the imperative of “leaving no one behind”, a core principle of the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, the report examines how reporting countries have included SDGs into national development plans and strategies and how they have put in place a robust institutional framework for guiding and monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The report further reflects the challenges facing reporting countries in various areas, including in the collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of reliable, timely, accessible, and sufficiently disaggregated data.

It is a broad consensus among Member States that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires meaningful engagement of “all countries and all people, collaborating in partnership”. Thus, “whole-of-government” and “whole-of-society” concepts were highlighted in many VNRs, as duly reflected in the Synthesis Report.

The 43 VNRs represent an inspiring repertoire of country profiles in action. This synthesis report can hardly do justice to the full range of information in the VNRs. It is hoped that by providing a snapshot of country action, the Synthesis Report can facilitate an enhanced understanding of challenges, as well as opportunities, lessons as well as gaps, in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. As highlighted in the last section of the report, awareness-raising among all stakeholders is crucial to accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda and leaving no one behind. Governments, civil society, business, and the wider public need to learn more about the SDGs to act upon them – to be agents of change for a more sustainable future.

LIU Zhenmin

Under-Secretary-General

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Executive Summary

The 2017 meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) took place from 10 to 19 July. A total of 43 countries presented voluntary national reviews, up from 22 countries that presented inaugural reviews at the 2016 HLPF. With this, more than a third of countries will have conducted a voluntary national review, sharing progress, experiences, lessons learned and challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Looking ahead, at the 2018 HLPF, 47 countries will present their national reviews. Four of these will be conducting their second review at the HLPF (Colombia, Egypt, Mexico, and Switzerland) and one country its third (Togo). This report synthesizes some of the findings of the VNRs, drawing from the written reports. As in the synthesis of the 2016 VNRs, the report uses a theme-based analysis drawn largely from the voluntary common guidelines contained in the Annex to the Secretary-General's report on critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level (A/70/684). This synthesis report examines the efforts of reporting countries to implement the 2030 Agenda, including challenges, gaps, achievements and lessons learned.

The high quality of the national reports reflects the effort that the 2017 VNR countries have invested in the preparations for the HLPF. It is evident that countries have built on the solid foundations of the inaugural reports, while adding new and innovative elements.

Goals and targets

A majority of 2017 VNR countries included SDG-specific analysis and reviews in their reports. About a third of countries addressed all the SDGs. A similar number of countries covered the set of SDGs 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14 and 17 that were subject to in-depth review at the 2017 HLPF. Other countries included a set of goals of their own choosing, based on national priorities. The deep commitment to the integrated nature and indivisibility of the goals is evident from all the reports.



Figure 1 - Voluntary National Reviews – Country Overviews

With two years now having passed since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, a majority of the reporting countries included explicit sections on their implementation efforts regarding specific SDGs. No uniform way of reporting on SDG-specific implementation in the VNRs exists, and countries chose numerous different methods depending on their national circumstances. However, many countries included an analysis of trends or status, outlining policies and national frameworks. Several countries included sections on the challenges they are facing with the implementation of the SDGs.

In their reviews, many countries also elaborated on their “nationalization” of the goals and targets. Some countries organized the SDGs according to nationally-defined focus areas, while others utilized the 2030 Agenda’s “5 Ps”, People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships, to guide their national integration of

the SDGs. Some donor countries structured their reviews of goals according to their national and international implementation efforts, for instance by highlighting sections entitled of “At home” and “Abroad”, or including a section on actions as a “Responsible Global Citizen”.

All reviews addressed SDG 1 on eradicating poverty. Many countries looked beyond traditional income-based measures of poverty, instead viewing poverty from a multidimensional perspective. A number of countries, in particular developed and middle-income countries, examined poverty through the lens of social inequalities, including those arising from the marginalization and exclusion of some groups. Among the challenges countries identified are the underfunding of social programmes, tackling child poverty and single-parent households, and youth unemployment.

Prominent in the coverage of the SDG 2 on food security were the inter-linkages with other SDGs, particularly poverty eradication, as well as job creation and women’s empowerment. Several countries reported on putting legal and policy frameworks in place to ensure the right to food as well as initiatives aimed at ending hunger and food insecurity. Examples ranged from national

VNR COUNTRIES' SDG REPORTING CHOICES



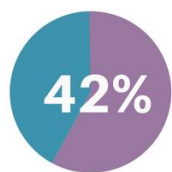
ALL 17 GOALS

Many countries included dedicated sections on each of the 17 SDGs. A few countries addressed all SDGs in a cross-cutting way through their own national frameworks.



GOALS UNDER IN-DEPTH REVIEW AT 2017 HLPF

These countries included specific sections focusing on the set of goals that are under in-depth review at the 2017 HLPF. Some also included a statistical annex covering more goals.



GOALS OF OWN CHOICE

Some countries chose to focus on their priority goals within the 2030 Agenda. Some decided to report on the most relevant ones within the set of goals under in-depth review.

** Indicative and prepared for illustrative purposes only. Not an official representation of country reporting.*

Figure 2 - VNR Countries' SDG Reporting Choices

plans and policies on food security to more specific initiatives such as food security programmes for society’s most vulnerable groups. Many countries reported on challenges as well as initiatives to ensure sustainable food production systems, since ending hunger and malnutrition relies heavily on sustainable

food production systems and resilient agricultural practices. Countries are also concerned about the impact of climate change on agriculture, as well as consequences of natural disasters for agriculture and food security.

Countries highlighted sectoral policies and strategies put in place to ensure affordable, accessible, quality healthcare for all (SDG 3). Some countries have enshrined the right to health in their constitutions. Many countries have achieved universal healthcare coverage, although it remains a major challenge for least developed countries. Countries reported on the various targeted measures being implemented, as well as specific healthcare challenges, including that of major communicable diseases, as well as the rising tide of non-communicable disease. Many countries stressed the importance of health equity for the 2030 Agenda and efforts made to address rural/urban differences, to improve the healthcare of marginalized and vulnerable groups such as the elderly, migrants and refugees, and persons with disabilities. Antibiotic resistance was also highlighted as a growing threat to global health.

Many countries reported progress on SDG 4. Examples range from secondary school attendance being on the increase, to a decrease in school drop-out rates, and an increase in the number of children attending early learning centres. Countries highlighted the link between vocational training and access and return to the labour market. Challenges referred to included financing of public education, inclusion of specific vulnerable groups, and raising education standards.

On SDG 5, countries underlined gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls as a prerequisite to achieving the whole 2030 Agenda. Many countries reported on the legal framework as well as institutional mechanisms and policies in place to end all forms of discrimination and ensure the rights of women and girls. Countries emphasised the importance of gender mainstreaming and taking measures to integrate gender perspective into policy-making, including gender-responsive budgeting. Violence against women and girls was one of the main challenges underscored by countries and several countries reported on measures in place to address the issue. Another challenge countries highlighted was the low participation of women in decision making or leadership positions, both in the public and private sectors. Intensified efforts are needed to overcome gender stereotypes and the negative social norms that perpetuate inequality, violence and discrimination against women and girls.

On SDG 6, countries addressed access to safe drinking water, proper sanitation and hygiene and the sustainable management of water. Numerous countries reported on their progress towards access to safe drinking water, with some referring to their obligations to meet the fundamental human right to water. While most of the countries had made significant progress in this regard they also reported challenges such as rural access. Several countries with currently sufficient water resources noted the potential for water shortages in the future. Competing demands for water resources, together with the impact of climate change, conflict, natural disasters and excessive groundwater consumption were also identified as challenges for water availability. The interconnectedness of water with healthy terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity was also highlighted.

Countries underlined the importance of SDG 7 for sustainable development. To ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, countries elaborated on measures taken such

as diversifying energy sources, developing renewable energy sources, improving energy efficiency, awareness-raising activities for the public on sustainable energy consumption, and connecting more households to the energy grid in rural areas. Among the challenges countries identified were: difficulties in advancing sustainable transport solutions; improving energy efficiency in consumption and production; the high cost and long lead time in the development of modern energy generation projects; and meeting rising energy demands, as well as addressing energy deficits in rural areas.

With regard to inclusive and sustained inclusive growth and decent jobs (SDG 8), countries stressed the importance of having sufficient investment in both capital and human resources, as well as the impact of factors such as climate change and transnational crime. Several countries reported on existing differences in unemployment and job insecurity, due, for example, to levels of education, gender, or immigration status. Specific population segments, especially those of youth and the elderly, face greater barriers to entry or return to employment. Policy approaches to address the challenges in national labour markets included measures to ensure decent work, the promotion of corporate social responsibility, and the establishment of minimum wages. Several countries outlined specific actions they had taken to assist youth in the labour market and measures to improve access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and grassroots economies.

On SDG 9, resilient infrastructure, sustainable industrialization and innovation, countries addressed diversification of business and industrial models, fostering high value-added and innovative products and services, and increasing the productivity and competitiveness of SMEs. Many countries reported on initiatives to improve transportation infrastructure, including airports, roads, harbours and road and rail links. Other infrastructure priorities reported on were irrigation, clean drinking water, and power supply, including expansion of electricity grids. Countries also addressed strengthening of national capabilities in science and innovation, including through enhanced private-public collaboration strategies.

Countries reported on measures taken to reduce inequality within and among countries - SDG 10. Among the measures covered were the use of social protection policies and social security systems to reduce inequalities and ensure that no one is left behind. Countries also noted efforts to combat discrimination in all its forms and to promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

On SDG 11, sustainable cities and human settlements, countries recognized that cities are an important driving force for the economy, but at the same time urbanization, which is occurring very rapidly particularly in developing countries, has downsides that need to be managed. Several countries reported on their aims, challenges and policies for providing adequate housing, which contains numerous inter-linkages to other goals and targets, such as education, health and employment. Numerous countries stressed the importance of sustainable transport and mobility, and reports included examples of policies on enhanced public transport, incentivizing cycling and walking, and investments in rail transport, among others. Additional challenges highlighted by countries were pollution and low air quality, high population growth rate and rapid urbanization, the high cost of financing housing development, segregation in residential areas, suburbanization, and ribbon development.

Countries reported on significant challenges in achieving sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12), and highlighted their aims and policies for achieving circular or green economies. Several countries reported that green economy represents an opportunity for economic growth and improvement in terms of international competitiveness, while also reducing environmental risks. Several countries also highlighted the roles of awareness-raising, stakeholder engagement and access to information, as ways of changing people's consumption patterns. In addition, countries highlighted policies on sustainable or green public procurement, green taxation and incentives, sustainability reporting, recycling schemes, reduction of food waste, and corporate social responsibility.

Countries outlined the consequences of climate change (SDG 13) such as increased variations in rainfall, floods and extreme weather events, as well as sea level rise, ocean acidification and disruption of marine ecosystems. Several policies and actions for both climate mitigation and adaptation were reported on, and countries highlighted examples of ecosystem-based adaptation and carbon-sinks, carbon-pricing, cross-border cooperation on disaster reduction, flood management and weather forecasting. Countries also highlighted the economic benefits that can be derived from transitioning towards low-carbon or no-carbon societies – among them reduced emissions, increased competitiveness and promotion of growth and employment. Several countries also reported on their commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement and on their contributions to numerous funding mechanisms.

Countries that reported on SDG 14 emphasized the importance of the oceans for sustainable development and human well-being. They also listed major threats affecting the oceans, including marine pollution such as in the form of plastics, as well as overfishing and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Among the measures and tools listed by some countries to sustainably manage and use marine and coastal ecosystems, were integrated coastal management, application of an ecosystem approach, and the establishment of marine protected areas. The main challenges noted included inadequate human and financial resources, the lack, or limited availability of, data, the lack of clear institutional arrangements and regulations, and limited resources for monitoring, control and surveillance.

Countries that reported on SDG 15 stressed that ecosystems are of key importance to health and quality of life. Many countries highlighted the challenges they faced, and actions they had taken to preserve biological diversity. One key accelerator for biodiversity loss is destruction of habitats. Several actions taken were outlined, such as integration and mainstreaming of ecosystem and biodiversity conservation into sectoral plans, sustainable forest management, and policies to tackle poaching and trafficking of endangered species and products derived from them. Some of the challenges countries referred to when implementing SDG 15 include: inadequate institutional capacities; lack of participatory coordination frameworks in land and forestry management; illegal logging; and inadequate sewerage coverage and insufficient treatment of effluent. In this regard, as next steps, countries highlighted the importance of development and revision of natural resources and environment-related laws; and broad, multi-stakeholder collaboration.

In reviewing their progress on SDG 16, countries focused on good governance, strong and transparent institutions, the rule of law, protection of human rights, anti-corruption and preventing illicit flows, as well

as access to government and information and strengthening peace and security through strong institutions and good governance. In the context of international cooperation, countries addressed conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, while protecting human rights, personal safety, democracy and the principles of the rule of law, and providing essential services. Some of the challenges that countries identified include; violence in various forms; human trafficking; the threat of terrorism at local, regional and international levels; inadequate delivery of basic services due to weak institutions; and the need for strengthening the rule of law.

On SDG 17, calls to honour commitments made about official development assistance (ODA) were made by many, and several donor countries reported on their ODA contributions. A number of countries also highlighted their support for least developed countries. Numerous countries stressed the significance of data, monitoring and accountability mechanisms; disaggregated data is vital as it enables the formulation of effective policies for targeting specific disadvantaged groups and geographical areas in a country. Many countries addressed ICT and internet services, and it was stressed that internet access can serve as a catalyst for development.

Leaving no one behind

Leaving no one behind, often considered as one of the key principles of the 2030 Agenda, was addressed by several countries, either in dedicated sections, in the description of their development strategies, or in the reporting of progress on specific goals. Some of the groups mentioned as being at risk of being left behind include persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ persons, victims of domestic violence, older persons, and migrants. To leave no one behind, countries reported on approaches that allowed for targeted support measures to the vulnerable groups, or that focussed on achieving universal availability of services. Leaving no one behind will require efforts to reach the “last mile”, and call for countries to re-evaluate their approaches and development interventions. Geographical imbalances play an important role for many of the countries, which highlighted the situation of rural communities. Several countries noted the importance of availability of disaggregated data for ensuring that no one is being left behind.

Monitoring and data

It is widely recognized that effective follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda requires the collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of an unprecedented amount of reliable, timely, accessible, and sufficiently disaggregated data. Considerable progress has been made at the global level, including the adoption of the global indicator framework, the adoption of the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data, and the launch of the Global SDG Indicator Database. Along with this global progress, substantial efforts have been reported at the national level in assessing data availability, sources, methodologies, coverage, and dissemination. While addressing the identified gaps in data and methodology, countries are actively looking for solutions that best fit their national context, including defining national targets and indicators.

Overall, the top three challenges highlighted by reporting countries include the lack of disaggregated data, the lack of capacity in data collection and management, and insufficient financial and technical support. Despite these challenges, countries have, to the best of their abilities, taken various measures to strengthen their statistical systems to meet the needs of follow-up and review, including: the establishment of clear governance structures for data and monitoring; the use of technology to strengthen data collection, analysis and dissemination; branching out to new data sources; involving stakeholders; and mobilizing resources through multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Bringing the SDGs into the national context

Countries reported various ways in which the 2030 Agenda has been integrated into national contexts. While the Agenda is applicable to all countries, its implementation recognises that countries have different national realities, capacities and levels of development, and there is a need to respect national policies and priorities. Countries are addressing the SDGs in the context of broad societal goals, such as the attainment of lower-middle income status, against the varied backdrops of conflict, climate phenomena like El Niño and economic crises. Countries outlined efforts to map ministries and government agencies with responsibility for the implementation of SDG targets.

Countries described steps taken to align development plans and strategies with the SDGs, often based on an assessment of goals and targets that were determined to be national priorities. Such mapping or alignment processes enabled countries to identify areas of strong performance, as well as others requiring redoubled effort. While existing plans and strategies are the main vehicle for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in some cases countries have also prepared framework strategies, including common vision and priority themes where enhanced coordination is needed.

Institutions

All countries reported progress in establishing and/or strengthening existing institutional frameworks, inter-ministerial coordinating offices, committees, or commissions. Important features of these institutional frameworks were the emphasis on coherence, integration, coordination and multi-sectoral involvement. Countries have a variety of different mechanisms and bodies making up their institutional framework, which are multi-faceted in nature, including coordinating mechanisms at the highest level of government. Parliaments have a critical role in SDG implementation through their oversight and legislative functions, including adoption of budget. Many parliaments have established committees on the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, and some countries included Members of Parliament (MPs) in their delegations to the 2017 HLPF.

Numerous challenges persist despite the structures that have been put in place. Achieving progress on the SDGs will require governments to work across policy areas, but policy coherence and multi-sectoral coordination still present a major challenge for the majority of countries. Several countries have also linked the institutional set-up for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with SDG 16.

Coherence with regional and global frameworks

Countries provided examples of the mainstreaming and integration of SDGs into regional and international policy frameworks. Countries noted that national plans and strategies were being aligned not only with the 2030 Agenda, but also with regional frameworks, for example the African Union Agenda 2063. Countries reported that they had pursued pro-poor policies and mainstreamed global frameworks such as the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs, the Sendai Framework, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. With respect to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), countries outlined the domestic implementation of the Convention at the national level, as well the promotion of the ratification of the Convention and its Optional Protocol. Among the other instruments referred to are the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, as well as other multilateral environmental agreements. Countries also reported on actions by the private sector to integrate the SDGs in their business models, strategies and investments, including by implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and engagement in the UN Global Compact.

Stakeholder engagement

The voluntary reports reflect the broad consensus that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires meaningful engagement of all countries and all people, collaborating in partnership. Recognizing the need for sustaining stakeholder coordination, many countries have incorporated designated stakeholder coordination elements in their overall institutional mechanisms for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The form of stakeholder engagement varies, ranging from stakeholder consultations in decision-making processes, to the establishment of multi-stakeholder partnerships to advance on certain goals and targets,



Figure 3 - Stakeholder Engagement during the VNR process

to involving stakeholders in monitoring and reporting. During the preparations of the VNR reports, many governments invited stakeholder representatives to provide input, or shared draft reports for their comments. Some countries invited stakeholder representatives to join their official national delegations to the HLPF, including sharing the stage during the VNR presentation with stakeholder representatives.

Challenges highlighted by countries include securing the resources required to maintain well-structured, collaborative engagement with stakeholders, to ensure fair representation, and the need to manage high stakeholder expectations.

Awareness-raising

Countries mentioned awareness-raising among all stakeholders as a crucial accelerator for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Many countries highlighted activities to raise awareness and increase ownership of the SDGs among the population. Activities ranged from organising conferences, workshops and festivals to broader communication campaigns, using different kinds of media, including social media. The participation of celebrities and artists in the promotion of the SDGs was seen to help to inspire further action. Many countries reported on awareness-raising initiatives with civil society organisations and highlighted the importance of including youth. Countries also noted that education was a powerful tool to foster awareness of the SDGs and some had started to integrate the SDGs into curriculum and educational programmes.



Figure 4 - Awareness Raising for the 2030 Agenda

Means of implementation

Countries addressed means of implementation as a cross-cutting issue, within their analysis of each of the SDGs and as a separate SDG 17 on global partnership. Many reported on their progress on issues related to means of implementation in their separate section on SDG 17. Several countries reported on their

actions to implement the 2030 Agenda in many international fora: through bilateral cooperation; regional, and other initiatives; the United Nations system; and international financial institutions.

Numerous countries highlighted the importance of policy coherence, noting the interconnectedness of different thematic areas and the potential impact of national actions in other parts of the world.

While the expectations are that financing needs for SDG implementation will be considerable, concrete cost estimates are still lacking in many countries. Several countries, however, referred to the need to prepare needs assessments and cost analysis for SDG implementation. Countries reported on their actions to increase the revenues from all sources and on creating an enabling environment for attracting financing. Several countries noted that the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires the utilisation of all forms of cooperation available and highlighted the roles of South-South and triangular cooperation in this regard, giving examples of best practices and knowledge transfer. Numerous countries highlighted in their reports that the key to success in attaining the SDGs is the willingness and resolve to form partnerships at national and international level.

Science, technology and innovation (STI) can serve as great enablers for SDG implementation and help countries deal with emerging issues. Some of the areas that countries noted as benefitting from STI efforts include: digitalization; increasing productivity; promoting green growth and renewable energy; improving the quality of education and public health and reducing disaster risks; monitoring progress and setting useful parameters; and agriculture and waste treatment. Many countries, particularly least developed countries, highlighted the role of trade as an enabler for SDG implementation and national finance mobilization.

Challenges, lessons learned, and next steps

The presentation of the VNR in the HLPF represents the pinnacle of an intensive process. The VNRs document how the reporting countries are tackling the transformational challenge of the 2030 Agenda. The reports are country-specific and complement the broader thematic review of progress that takes place in the HLPF. While the importance of this global follow-up and review cannot be over emphasised, equally important is the continuous and inclusive follow-up and review of implementation that takes place, as a matter of course, at the national level, including during years that countries are not presenting to the HLPF.

The reports contain a wealth of information and analysis of progress at the country level, with respect to cross-cutting issues such as means of implementation, and specific SDGs. Among the lessons learned are: (a) the pivotal role of strong partnerships for SDGs; (b) means for stakeholder engagement, including the private sector; and (c) the importance of policy coherence and multi-sectoral coordination.

Areas that require additional effort include: (a) achieving real policy coherence and implementing “whole-of-government” approaches; (b) addressing low capacity of many national statistical institutions to meet new challenges, with the attendant risk of poor monitoring; (c) improving the institutional capacity of local governments, who are at the forefront of implementation of many of the goals; (d) promoting greater

coordination between the different spheres of public administration; (e) accelerating the integration of the SDGs into the policies and programmes of all relevant line ministries; and (f) inculcating a “whole-of-society” approach so that the SDGs become a truly national endeavour.

With regard to the review process itself, countries conducting reviews in the future now have two years of reports as reference. Improvements on 2016 VNRs are already evident in a considerable number of 2017 VNRs with respect to the analysis presented in the reports – moving from the description of progress achieved, or challenges encountered, towards examining causes and providing data and information on progress achieved.

I. Introduction

This report synthesises the main issues addressed in the second round of the voluntary national reviews (VNRs) that took place during the ministerial segment of the 2017 Meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), meeting under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) from 10 to 19 July. Forty-three countries presented their voluntary national reviews during the ministerial segment of the HLPF.¹ The report depicts general characteristics of the early implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and identifies challenges and examples from the reporting countries in their implementation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

This report is not a statistical profile of progress in implementation, which is contained in the annual progress report of the Secretary-General on SDGs; rather it examines a range of topics on actions and policy measures relating to implementation, including ownership, and involving stakeholders, institutional mechanisms, incorporation of the SDGs into national frameworks, means of implementation and an overview of how countries addressed goals and targets in the VNRs. This report attempts to highlight practices from all countries that participated in the 2017 VNR process. However, of necessity, the report is selective in scope and not exhaustive with respect to practices and examples. All examples chosen are illustrative and their selection does not imply that the 2017 VNRs do not contain other equally valid and useful examples of country practices.

In preparing their voluntary national reviews, countries had as a reference voluntary common reporting guidelines proposed by the Secretary-General in his 2016 report on follow-up and review at the global level.² It is intended that countries may voluntarily use the components which are presented in the guidelines to help them frame the preparations for their VNRs. The guidelines can foster comparability, while retaining flexibility for countries in conducting reviews. Further background information and information concerning the mandate for the voluntary national reviews is contained in the Synthesis of Voluntary National Reviews 2016, and is not repeated in the present report.³

The 2017 VNRs were presented over three days of the Ministerial Segment of the HLPF, under the auspices of ECOSOC. Each country delivered a presentation, in some cases complemented by videos and power-point presentations. Countries were invited to choose between two formats for their presentations, panel-style presentations or consecutive presentations. The option of proposing a third format was also available. Delegations were composed mostly of government representatives, including the prime ministers of two countries (Monaco, Togo), as well as ministerial-level speakers from 23 countries, among them ministers for foreign affairs (Japan, Thailand), a minister of finance (Denmark), as well as state

¹ List of 2017 VNRs: Afghanistan, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Monaco, Nepal, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Panama, Peru, Portugal, Qatar, Slovenia, Sweden, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Uruguay, and Zimbabwe.

² Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level, Report of the Secretary-General, A/70/684, annex.

³ See UN DESA, Synthesis of the Voluntary National Reviews 2016 (2016).

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/126002016_VNR_Synthesis_Report.pdf

secretaries, vice-ministers/deputy ministers or equivalent, and a special adviser to a president. A large number of countries included in their delegations seated on the podium non-governmental and stakeholder representatives, for instance academia, youth, the private sector, parliamentarians, and local authorities. In a number of cases these representatives spoke during the time allocated for a VNR, for instance during the presentations of Japan, the Kingdom of the Netherlands,⁴ and Thailand.

II. Goals and targets

The vast majority of 2017 VNR countries included SDG-specific analysis and reviews in their reports. No uniform way of reporting on SDG specific implementation in the VNRs exists, and countries chose different methods depending on their national circumstances. This section aims to give an overview of the ways in which countries reported on the SDGs. It will also outline the main findings from the reports regarding each of the 17 SDGs.

With two years since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, a majority of the reporting countries included sections on their implementation efforts regarding specific SDGs. As no uniform way of reporting on SDG specific-implementation in the VNRs exists, countries chose different methods depending on their national circumstances. Countries including Belgium, Denmark, Kenya, the Maldives, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden and Thailand, reviewed progress under each of the 17 goals.

Many other countries, including Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Panama and Togo, reported in depth on progress with respect to the seven SDGs under in-depth review at the 2017 HLPF, namely goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14, and 17.⁵ Some used the HLPF review as a basis, while reflecting national approaches to the set of goals. For example, Afghanistan, Botswana and Nepal reported on the set of goals under in-depth review at the 2017 HLPF, with the exception of SDG 14 on oceans and seas. Nigeria added analysis on SDGs 4 and 16, while Malaysia added SDG 15. Monaco addressed SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 13, 14, and 17, highlighting the importance of goals 4, 13 and 14 nationally.

Other countries, including Belize, Cyprus, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Monaco, and Qatar, covered sets of goals of their own choosing. Belarus, reported on SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 15, and in addition highlighted the interlinkages of these goals with SDGs 8, 13, 14, and 17. The Czech Republic addressed the goals under their national priority areas but also included separate boxes on other goals, namely SDGs 1, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16 and 17. Japan

Several countries in 2017 included a statistical annex of some sort, including Afghanistan, Argentina, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Botswana, Chile, Cyprus, Denmark, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, Panama, Peru, Tajikistan, Thailand and Zimbabwe. Countries used these statistical profiles for various purposes. Benin, for example, showcased its national priority targets under each of the SDGs, together with the related indicators, while another table highlighted the benchmark data and its source for each indicator

⁴ The four countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Aruba, Curaçao, the Netherlands, and St Maarten) reported jointly to the HLPF.

⁵ The General Assembly, in resolution 70/299 of 29 July 2016, decided the sets of SDGs that would be reviewed in depth by the HLPF in 2017, 2018, and 2019.

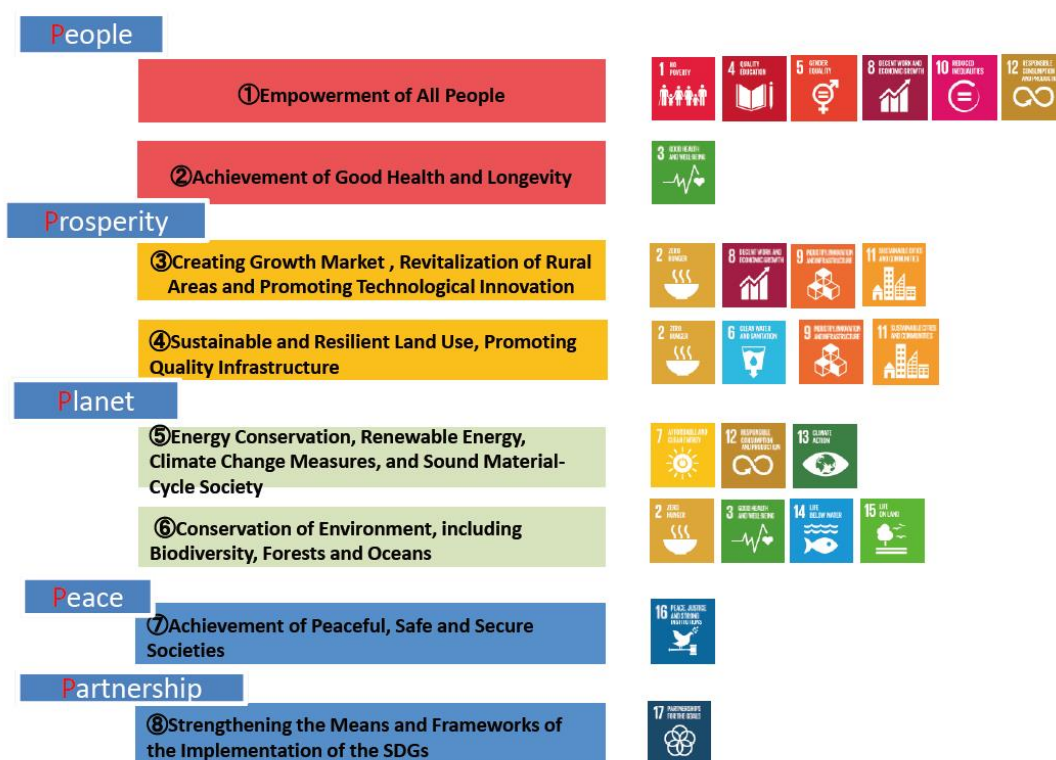
already in use. Thailand similarly showcased descriptions of its indicators, data sources and data for multiple years, where possible, but included also areas where data disaggregation was possible.

Priorities and national focus areas

In their reviews, many countries also elaborated on the integration, or “nationalization”, of the SDGs and targets. Some countries outlined how the goals had been incorporated into national strategic frameworks. Afghanistan, for example, has divided the 17 SDGs into eight socio-economic sectors to simplify the planning and implementation process for the respective line ministries and agencies. Its national consultation process re-shaped the global targets and indicators into 125 national targets and 190 national indicators. The Czech Republic has divided the 17 SDGs into six key areas (People and Society, Economy, Resilient Ecosystems, Regions and Municipalities, Global Development and Good Governance) based on an expert analysis, under its national strategic framework, Czech Republic 2030. Ethiopia configured all 17 SDGs under ten national development priorities.

Italy, Japan, Jordan, Peru, Portugal have utilized the 2030 Agenda’s “5 Ps”, People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships, for their “nationalization” of the SDGs or the structure of the review. The Danish National Action Plan, for example, is centred on the 5 Ps. For each of these, except partnerships, which are crosscutting, the government has formulated a number of targets (37 in total), which in most cases integrate and cut across several SDGs.

Figure 5 - Correlation of Japan's Priority Areas with SDGs



Source: the 2017 Voluntary National Review Report of Japan

Several countries have defined priority targets for national implementation. In Thailand, the National Economic and Social Development Board, which is the lead agency in formulating development plans and policies, has examined the linkages between the 5-year National Economic and Social Development Plan and all 17 SDGs. At this initial stage, Thailand has set 30 priority targets for the country's sustainable development. Argentina has defined national targets and indicators and mapped the baseline data for them. Its report provides select examples of baseline data and targets regarding the cross-cutting and sectoral policies that relate to several SDG targets; an annex contains the corresponding national targets for all SDGs and targets, as well as the relevant ministry charged with their implementation. Zimbabwe has prioritized SDGs 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13 and 17, guided by the country's vision, the need to focus on enabling goals, resource availability, and the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Some countries reported on their plans for prioritisation. In the Maldives, identification of national priorities for the SDGs and targets will be made through a process of consultations with implementing agencies as well as through input from the civil society and the private sector.

Structure and sources

Countries used different structures for showcasing results of their reviews, either using free-flowing analysis of their policies or actions, or following a set structure for each goal analysed. Kenya, Nepal, Qatar, and Zimbabwe structured analysis of goals around sections such as trends and progress, challenges, and lessons learned. Indonesia also included a section on challenges and improvement measures, and reflected on lessons learned and the emerging issues regarding each of the reviewed goals in a forward-looking manner.

Japan, Monaco, and Slovenia structured all or part of their reviews around their national and international implementation efforts. The Kingdom of the Netherlands included under each SDG a section on "At home" and "Abroad", highlighting actions and priorities taken in national implementation and in the country's development cooperation activities.

To support their reviews of progress, countries most often noted using their national inputs from statistical offices, line ministries, national submissions to various international treaties and agreements and other internal sources. Many also noted the use of research carried out by international organisations and think tanks, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the SDG Index developed by the Bertelsmann Stiftung and UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, or used development metrics such as the Human Development Index, Multidimensional Poverty Index, and Global Competitiveness Index as benchmarks.



Goal 1



All 43 VNR reports address SDG 1 in one form or another. Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Botswana, and Tajikistan put elimination and reduction of poverty at the top of their agendas and linked it to a number of other SDGs, in particular goals 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8. Bangladesh, Malaysia, Nepal, and Uruguay underlined the multidimensional nature of poverty. Additionally, Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Panama, and Zimbabwe made use of the multidimensional index of poverty developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. Many countries, among them all reporting developed countries, stressed the importance of social protection systems, inclusion, and reaching the most vulnerable. Brazil, Benin, Guatemala, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and Portugal focused on the link between poverty and environment, access to natural resources, and resilience to natural disasters. Brazil stressed that poverty can be aggravated by environmental problems, such as deforestation, air pollution and water contamination.



Republic of Azerbaijan

Countries provided examples of a range of measures and policies to combat poverty. Azerbaijan has adopted targeted measures designed, among other things, to promote the creation of decent jobs and increase the availability of housing. Bangladesh's development policies and strategies centre on pro-poor growth. Belgium's third federal action plan to fight poverty focuses on ensuring social protection, reducing child poverty, guaranteeing the right to health, and making government services accessible to all.

Countries provided details of steps taken with respect to social protection policies and schemes, including those targeting vulnerable groups. Kenya, for example, has adopted the National Social Safety Net programme, the objective of which is to improve well-being and increase resilience among specific vulnerable groups. Italy has established measures such as Support for Active Inclusion, which introduces a financial benefit for disadvantaged families. Belize has instituted a number of measures to alleviate poverty, including a single national social protection registry, Building Opportunities for Our Social Transformation (BOOST) scheme, which is a World Bank validated co-responsibility cash transfer programme. Cyprus has undertaken a major reform of its welfare system to improve its social governance and make it less fragmented. Nepal provided the example of the important role of cooperatives by providing economic opportunities for their members, empowering weaker members and mediating members' access to credit. Nigeria reported on its Social Investment Programme that targets the poor and the vulnerable, as well as the formulation of a draft National Social Security Policy.

Belgium, Denmark, Slovenia, and Sweden noted that their international development cooperation prioritises the elimination of poverty and social protection and inclusion. Japan prioritises human security in its development cooperation, which includes a focus on reduction in poverty and inclusion of vulnerable groups. The Kingdom of the Netherlands promotes policy coherence for development and the alignment of non-aid policies with the interests of the poor. Portugal focuses on Lusophone countries, prioritising capacity building for stronger institutions in the area of social protection, employment, training and social inclusion.

Numerous challenges emerged in the reports. Belize, Benin and Costa Rica pointed to the underfunding of social programmes and the insufficient impact of social programmes. Botswana noted the challenge of high reliance on government assistance programmes. Japan and Luxembourg underlined the challenges of tackling child poverty and single-parent households, Jordan, Nigeria and Portugal noted youth unemployment and its associated poverty, Nepal and the Kingdom of the Netherlands reported on the challenge of accessing hard-to-reach areas and vulnerable and marginalized groups. Azerbaijan, Jordan, Nigeria and Portugal highlighted tackling unemployment, especially youth unemployment, inequality in income and access to basic services. Qatar noted poor organization and synergy in implementing the social protection strategy and the lack of regular review of social protection legislation. Lastly, Sweden reported on the challenge of increasing the disposable income of certain vulnerable groups.

Goal 2

2 ZERO HUNGER



Almost all countries reported on SDG 2, with Afghanistan, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Indonesia, Tajikistan and Uruguay highlighting the inter-linkages with other SDGs, in particular, its close links with SDG 1. Afghanistan also highlighted the inter-linkage with job creation and women's empowerment. Similarly, El Salvador, Guatemala, Indonesia and Uruguay stressed that an integrated approach is needed to achieve SDG 2.



India

Several countries reported on legal and policy frameworks in place as well as initiatives aiming to end hunger and food insecurity (Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Monaco, Nepal, Nigeria, Panama, Qatar, Slovenia, Togo, Uruguay, Zimbabwe). Examples of these frameworks ranged from national plans and policies on food security (Argentina, Guatemala, Panama, Qatar, and Zimbabwe) to more specific initiatives such as food security programs for society's most vulnerable groups (Ethiopia, India and Indonesia). India reported that its

food security programmes covered more than 800 million people in the country by providing affordable access to grains. Moreover, in recognition of empirical evidence that women pay greater attention than men to food security, ration cards are issued in the name of the senior-most female member of the household. Indonesia reported on initiatives for the empowerment of rural communities to be more self-sufficient in food availability and security, through among others, the Village Food Security Program (Desa Mandiri Pangan). Panama has designed systems for food security surveillance to monitor food security and nutrition, as well as an early warning system to identify current situations of food and nutritional insecurity.

More than half the countries also reported on the issue of malnutrition, especially among children, and several described initiatives in place to end malnutrition and promote healthier eating. Bangladesh, El Salvador, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Uruguay, reported on measures aiming to address the nutritional security of young children, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers. Bangladesh, for example, reported that to assist exclusive breast-feeding of new-born babies up to six months, maternity leave for working mothers has been increased to six months. Botswana, Brazil, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Monaco, Portugal, Slovenia and Togo highlighted the importance of healthy school meals to ensure adequate nutrition and healthy eating habits for children and reported on different kinds of school meal programmes or school fruit programmes. Furthermore, Botswana, Brazil, Costa Rica, and El Salvador noted that their school meal programmes had been developed using produce from family farmers or local agricultural businesses.

Belgium, Costa Rica, Indonesia, El Salvador, Malaysia, Monaco, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Sweden, reported on the challenge of obesity, or the double burden of fighting malnutrition and obesity. In this regard, the Netherlands had encouraged healthy eating by promoting transparency and public awareness through food product labelling and information campaigns, while Belgium reported that the federal action

plan on food and health foresees more comprehensive food labelling and stricter regulations pertaining to marketing towards children.



El Salvador

highly vulnerable to food insecurity and poverty in general. Afghanistan is developing an ambitious program that will enable women to be involved in food production, both at the household level and on a commercial scale.



Guatemala

Azerbaijan, Brazil, Costa Rica, Cyprus, El Salvador, Guatemala, India, Nepal, Nigeria, Thailand and Togo addressed the important role of small-scale food producers, such as family farmers, in the quest to end poverty and ensure food security. Measures had been taken to increase agricultural productivity in these countries to ensure that no one is left behind. Guatemala noted its Family Agriculture Program to Strengthen the Peasant Economy (Paffec), which aims to contribute to the integral well-being of the rural, peasant, indigenous and ladina families which are

Almost half the countries reported on challenges as well as initiatives to ensure sustainable food production systems, noting that ending hunger and malnutrition depends heavily on sustainable food production systems and resilient agricultural practices. Brazil, Cyprus, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Thailand reported on measures to promote and extend organic farming, partly in response to a growing demand for organic products.



Republic of Indonesia

Bangladesh, Cyprus, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Slovenia, Thailand, Uruguay and Zimbabwe, highlighted climate change, including the high impact of disaster and climate change on agriculture and food security. Honduras reported on a national drought response plan to address the humanitarian crisis created by the recent drought. Some countries noted measures they had taken to mitigate the impact of climate change. Nigeria reported on the training of over 500 agricultural extension workers on communicating climate information to

rural farmers. Ethiopia, Indonesia, Italy, Malaysia, the Netherlands, and Portugal reported on the need for more research and innovation to achieve SDG 2.

Agri-PME: digital revolution in agriculture in Togo: an innovation via electronic purse of farmers in Togo (SDG 2 and 9)

This technology is based on farmers using mobile phones as electronic purse enabling them to directly receive government subsidies for the purchase of farm inputs especially fertilizers through mobile money transfer service of the Telcos.

This technology eliminates intermediaries in securing subsidies to farmers and also ensures that farmers' subsidies are used for the intended purpose.

The AgriPME started with the 2016/2017 farming season by the identification of beneficiary farmers of the programme by regional stakeholders.

To this end, 151,143 farmers instead of 150,000 projected were registered; 12 private companies received accreditation for the import and sales of fertilizers nationwide. Once the beneficiaries are identified, the funds are disbursed to the Telco's (Togo cellulaire and Moov) by the government. The Telco's then create an electronic account for the farmers linked to a specific telephone number and the subsidies are paid into the accounts. The subsidies are secured. There is no charges nor loss of the cash.

The implementation of this strategy led to an efficient management of government subsidies as it guarantees a direct access by the beneficiary farmers. It led to:

- the creation of an enabling environment for public private partnership. The number of private operators granted the accreditation for the importation and distribution moved from 12 in 2016 to 21 in 2017;
- an increase in fertilizer stock distributed: 44,196,850 tons representing a 45% yearly average increment on the volume supplied between 2008 and 2015;
- increase in the fertilizer sales points making them closer to the farmers (close to 150 points as against 112 owned by the state);
- the eradication of queues at the sales points and speculations.
- job creation for at least 200 youth.

Source: the 2017 Voluntary National Review Report of Togo

Figure 6 - Agri-PME: digital revolution in agriculture in Togo

Goal 3



Almost all VNR countries this year reported on SDG 3 and shared specific strategies or policies put in place to strengthen health care systems and ensure health and well-being for all.

Belarus, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Japan, Portugal, Sweden, Slovenia and Thailand, reported on the provision of Universal Health Coverage (UHC); ensuring affordable, accessible, quality healthcare for all remains a top priority. Ethiopia, Kenya, Nepal, Portugal, and Zimbabwe reported that their constitutions recognized the right to health. Countries reported on areas ranging from: enhancing essential health services and coverage of health facilities (Guatemala, Maldives); reforming health insurance, especially providing financial protection to the vulnerable (India, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria and Togo); recruitment, training and retention of health workforces (Azerbaijan,

Chile, Indonesia, Kenya, Maldives, Nigeria and Qatar); and ensuring quality and availability of essential medicines and vaccines (Belize, Chile, Indonesia and Thailand).



Zimbabwe

In addition to international cooperation, innovative solutions have also been sought to tackle financing challenges. For example, in Zimbabwe this year, the Government introduced a 5-cent health fund levy for every dollar of airtime and mobile data under the theme “Talk-Surf and Save a Life”, mobilizing funds for the purchase of drugs and equipment for public hospitals and clinics. Countries are also tapping into information technology to improve access to healthcare services (mobile clinics in Belize, Kenya and Nigeria), raise awareness (India’s mDiabetes), and

payment of health workers (India’s ASHA Soft, Kenya’s Mtiba) and record management (Jordan’s EHR, India’s Auxiliary Nurse Midwives Online).

Maternal, neonatal and under-5 mortality rates in some reporting countries remain high. Reported challenges facing reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health include, among others; lack of skilled health personnel (Belize, Nigeria, Zimbabwe); malnutrition (Nigeria); poor economic and social status (Botswana, Benin, Nigeria); low accessibility in rural communities and remote areas (Botswana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe); insufficient transportation (Botswana, Belize, Nigeria); inadequate financing (Zimbabwe); limited access to information on family planning (Guatemala); and traditional or religious barriers (Belize, Zimbabwe).

Tajikistan pointed out that gender-based norms and values impact real access for women to medical services and information, which is directly linked to reproductive health and the health of mothers and children. Indonesia noted that many deaths are preventable through reducing early marriage and improving family planning. Many countries also highlighted efforts needed to prevent teenage pregnancy and strengthen adolescent sexual and reproductive healthcare and education.

Countries reported various efforts underway to improve accessibility and quality of healthcare facilities, train midwives, labour and delivery care personnel, strengthen prenatal, neonatal and post-natal care, providing coverage for all basic vaccinations, and improving access to modern contraceptives. India has launched the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram programme for child health screening and early intervention.

On communicable diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and hepatitis, policy measures reported included: awareness raising and preventive interventions; active surveillance and early detection; the improvement of care and treatment; and protection against discrimination. For example, Kenya established an HIV and AIDS Tribunal in 2009, which has contributed to reducing HIV-related stigma and discrimination through various awards, and presented an alternative avenue for redress for HIV-related human rights violations. Belize attributed progress towards malaria elimination to active surveillance and

community based interventions, inter-sectoral cooperation, and cross-border collaboration with Guatemala and Mexico.

Non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, respiratory disease and cancer, remain a source of concern across the development spectrum. Many countries highlighted the strengthening of preventive measures, for example, targeted screening programmes for early detection of cancer and the promotion of healthy lifestyles such as healthy eating habits and physical activity. For example, to influence individual behavior, Portugal has introduced a special tax on the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages of limited nutritional value and alcoholic beverages to discourage their consumption. Many countries referred to measures for the promotion of mental health and well-being.

Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Belize, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Ethiopia, Portugal and Thailand reported on efforts to reduce the number of deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents. For example, Thailand has revised road safety laws and launched a series of campaigns to create awareness and promote proper behaviours by focusing on eliminating risks such as speeding, drunk driving, failure to wear safety helmets, and safety belts.

Afghanistan, Belize, Chile, Cyprus, Denmark and Thailand noted the health implications of hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination. One example of efforts to control industrial air pollution is in Cyprus, where an integrated system of prevention and control has been established. As an emerging health challenge, the Netherlands and Sweden specifically underlined the growing threat posed by antibiotic resistance. Emphasis was placed on resistance surveillance and the importance of combatting the challenge in a cross-sectoral manner. Concerns about health equity are also reflected in the reports, including regional or urban/rural differences, healthcare of the elderly, migrants and refugees, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and the LGBTIQ population.

Goal 4



Many countries reported progress on SDG 4. Examples vary from secondary school attendance being on the increase (Zimbabwe), improvements in access to girl-child training (Nigeria), increasing the number of higher education institutions (Jordan), a decrease in drop-out rate (Luxembourg), an upward trend of school age children enrolling in 12-year basic education (Thailand), and an increase in the number of children attending early learning centres (Kenya).

El Salvador, Jordan, Thailand and Zimbabwe, indicated that education was a priority area for the government. Countries also reported on the development of national education plans or policies, setting priorities for the education sector and aligning them with SDG 4 (Honduras, Maldives, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Maldives, Portugal, Thailand and Qatar). Honduras reported on the elaboration of its strategic plan for the education sector, which seeks to incorporate sustainable development into the curriculum.



Federal Republic of Nigeria

Belgium, Cyprus, Maldives, Nigeria and Portugal reported initiatives regarding education and vocational training and highlighted the link between vocational training and access and return to the job market. Nigeria is working with Google, through its Digital Skills for Africa program, to train 125,000 youths across the country. Several countries emphasized initiatives that target the most vulnerable, including underprivileged children, children with disabilities or special needs, children in marginalised groups, refugees or foreign pupils (Cyprus, Japan, Luxembourg, Maldives, Monaco,

Nigeria, Portugal, Sweden and Thailand).

Countries reported on challenges in the implementation of SDG 4, ranging from financing of public education (Kenya, and Zimbabwe), increasing the number of qualified teachers (Sweden), preventing drop-outs (Benin, Kenya and Tajikistan), the lack of sufficient numbers of early childhood education and development services (Jordan), the inclusion of specific vulnerable groups given the high educational inequality related to socio-economic and migration status (Belgium), and how to raise education standards and create a culture that is conducive to learning (Thailand).

As good practices, Slovenia and Portugal reported on the initiatives of a Children's Parliament and Youth Parliament respectively, both of which aim to promote civic participation and understanding of democratic institutions, and enable children and youth to acquire knowledge on human and civil rights. In Costa Rica, measures are being taken to assess the integration of the 2030 Agenda in the national plan for university higher education (2021-2026), which is formulated every five years by the Council of Rectors of State Universities.

Goal 5



Azerbaijan, India and Sweden among others noted that gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls were a prerequisite to achieve sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda.

Many countries reported on legal frameworks in place to promote gender equality and end all forms of discrimination. Azerbaijan, Belarus, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Thailand and Zimbabwe referred to gender equality and non-discrimination provisions in their constitution. Countries also highlighted the revision of existing laws or the enactment of new ones, for example regarding domestic violence or gender based violence (Belarus, Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jordan and Uruguay), elimination of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation (Costa Rica), gender equality acts (Maldives, Nigeria and Thailand), and laws improving working conditions (Chile, Jordan, Qatar and Uruguay) such as a new law on flexible work (Belgium), or amendments to the maternity protection law (Cyprus). Several countries noted the challenge of implementing or enforcing the laws (Belize, Botswana, Brazil, Guatemala, and Zimbabwe).



Belarus

Countries also reported on institutional mechanisms and policies that had been put in place to enhance gender equality and women's and girls' rights. At the institutional level, Afghanistan, Chile, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kenya, Malaysia, Nepal, Nigeria, Panama, Thailand, Uruguay and Zimbabwe noted the work of their Ministries of Women's Affairs or Gender Equality Commissions. Chile mentioned the establishment of the Ministry of Women and Gender Equality as one of the main advances with regard to the promotion of women's rights. Similarly, Ethiopia reported on the establishment of an office with ministerial rank for guiding and implementing women's affairs.

A large number of countries reported on other measures, including national gender equality strategies or gender action plans. For example, Belarus adopted its 5th National Plan on promoting gender equality for 2017 - 2020 and planned activities that were informed by national gender priorities, CEDAW and SDG 5.

Many countries emphasised the importance of gender mainstreaming and measures taken to integrate gender perspective into each policy area and each phase of the policy-making process, including gender responsive budgeting. Indonesia reported on the enactment of special regulations on gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive planning and budgeting, while the Maldives had appointed gender focal points in line ministries and agencies to promote gender mainstreaming. Guatemala noted a special spending mechanism, which aims to contribute to the visibility of budgetary resources to promote gender equity and, in particular, to identify allocations that benefit women and girls.

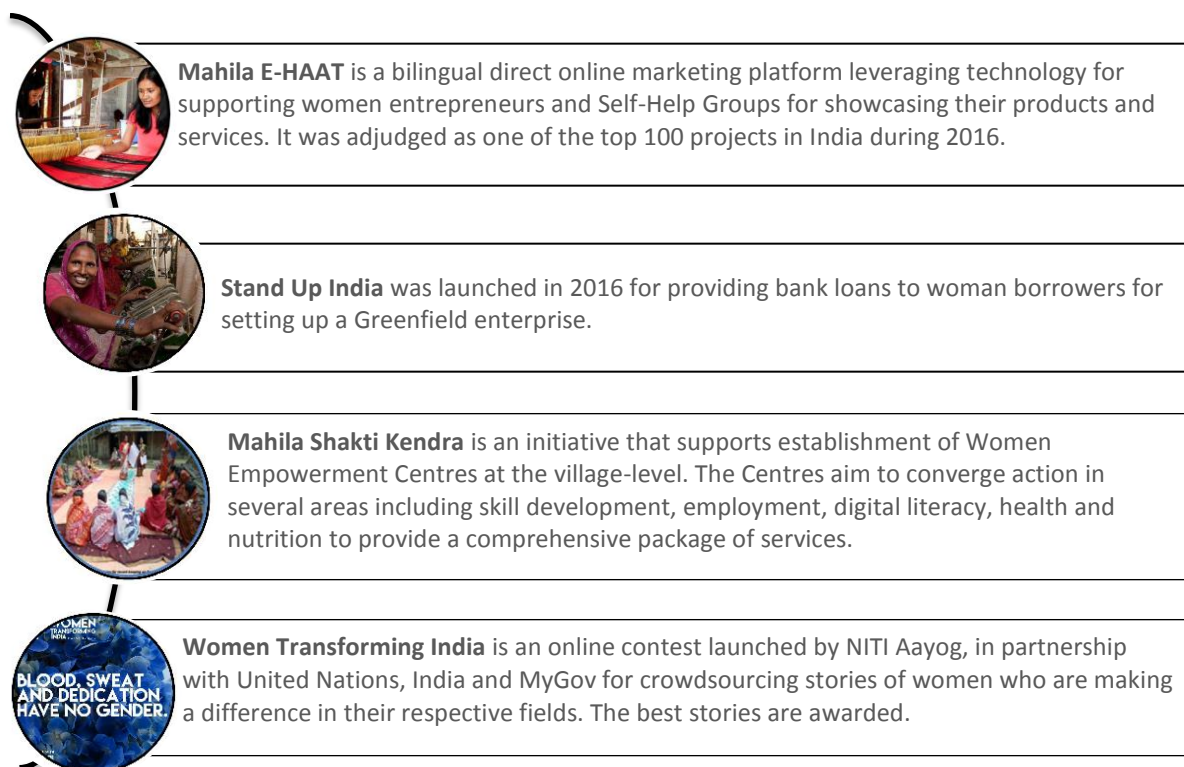
Violence against women and girls was one of the main challenges noted, and a large number of countries reported on measures in place to address the issue. For example, Costa Rica reported that an important step forward had been the establishment of the "local committees for the immediate attention of high risk cases for violence against women" in parts of the country, which had representatives of the Judiciary, the Ministry of Public Security and INAMU (the National institute for Women).

Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Guatemala, Indonesia, and Zimbabwe reported on the issue of child marriage and noted that it affected their ability to achieve the SDGs. Bangladesh and Zimbabwe highlighted the legal measures taken to prevent child marriage, such as the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017 and a constitutional court ruling to outlaw child marriage, respectively. Both countries had also developed national action plans to eradicate child marriage.

Another challenge emphasised by countries was the low participation of women in decision making or leadership positions, both in public and in private, and more than half the VNR countries reported on measures taken to address it. To increase political participation, Indonesia, Jordan, Panama, Slovenia, Uruguay and Zimbabwe, had adopted quota systems or quota laws, while Belize and Kenya reported capacity building for women running for elective office. Likewise, Chile described its electoral reform involving an inclusive and proportional system, and incorporating the criterion of gender parity in the lists of candidates for congress.

Countries also reported other SDG 5 challenges including the gender pay gap (Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Sweden) and gender-based differences regarding access and control of resources, such as access to land or financial assets (Kenya and Tajikistan). India reported on several measures to increase levels of female labour force participation, as seen below.

Figure 7 - Initiatives for Improving Female Labour Force Participation in India



Source: the 2017 Voluntary National Review Report of India

Goal 6



SDG 6 reflects a joint vision of the global community that holistic management of the water cycle is required to ensure access to safe drinking water, proper sanitation and hygiene and sustainable management of water. Numerous countries reported on their progress towards access to safe drinking water, with Belgium and Slovenia referring to their obligations to meet the fundamental human right to water. Kenya reported that the Nairobi sub-national government had installed public water dispensing machines enabling city residents living in informal settlements to access affordable quality water which residents pay for using mobile technology.

While most of the reporting countries have made significant progress towards access to safe drinking water, challenges such as rural access (Thailand), service in remote islands (Maldives), cost (Belgium), proper application of user pays principle (Portugal), low groundwater levels (Sweden), and drought-time supply (Portugal) exist in many VNR countries.

Many countries reported on access to sanitation and hygiene. Portugal reported that improved access to sanitation facilities and services by marginalised or vulnerable groups such as Roma communities, homeless people, populations without a fixed address, persons with disabilities or those living in residential areas without adequate infrastructure/facilities still represents a challenge. El Salvador also noted challenges in servicing vulnerable groups.



Kingdom of the Netherlands

Belgium, Qatar, Sweden, and Thailand highlighted advances in wastewater management treatment. In its report the Kingdom of the Netherlands noted that St Maarten considers proper water distribution and sanitation a basic human need and right and that efforts were underway to overcome wastewater and sewage treatment challenges. In Cyprus, recycled water is a growing and stable resource, and increasing quantities of tertiary treated urban wastewater under strict quality standards and controls are used for irrigation and recharge of aquifers to manage sea water

intrusion or for later abstraction for irrigation use. Several countries reported also on their efforts to enhance water use efficiency (Belarus, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Portugal, Qatar and Thailand).

At the same time, challenges in ensuring wastewater treatment and water quality in general were reported by many. Belgium, Kenya, Slovenia and Sweden noted the need for enhanced efforts to reduce pollution, particularly due to chemicals, medicines and nutrients (Sweden), agricultural eutrophication (Belgium), including from phosphorous and nitrogen fertilizers (the Czech Republic), pesticides (Belgium, and Cyprus), and contamination by POPs (Cyprus, and the Czech Republic) and toxic metal in water sediments (the Czech Republic), particularly mercury (Belgium).

Several countries with currently sufficient water resources noted the potential for water shortages in the future. Competing demands for water resources, for households, manufacturing, energy, agriculture and food production, together with the consequences of climate change, conflict, natural disasters and excessive groundwater consumption, give rise to challenges for water availability. Qatar noted the harmful environmental impact of groundwater depletion, as well as higher CO₂ emissions from desalination. The interconnectedness of water with healthy terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity was also highlighted. Thailand noted its efforts to conserve and restore deteriorated upstream forests and prevent soil erosion, to promote water management.

Several countries reported on their aims, existing laws, mechanisms and plans for ensuring integrated water resource management. Belgium, Portugal and Slovenia highlighted their transboundary initiatives with other countries. Specific challenges for such management include weak data collection (Kenya and Thailand) and insufficient institutional, human, financial and technological capacity (Kenya).

Goal 7

7 AFFORDABLE AND
CLEAN ENERGY



Several countries reported on SDG 7 and noted its importance for sustainable development. To ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, countries elaborated on measures taken such as diversifying energy sources, developing renewable energy sources, improving energy efficiency, awareness-raising activities for the public on sustainable energy consumption, and connecting more households to the energy grid in rural areas.



Qatar

Countries reported on their national action plans for renewable energy to promote its use. Belgium, Cyprus, Jordan, Maldives, the Netherlands, Portugal, Qatar and Thailand highlighted measures to increase solar power. For example, Qatar described how Qatar Solar Technologies generated solar energy through an annual production of eight thousand tons of high-quality polysilicon to meet the increasing global demand for solar energy sources. Regarding wind power, Kenya reported that it was currently building the largest wind farm in Africa, the Lake Turkana Wind

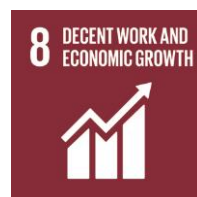
Power Consortium (LTWP). It aims to provide 300 MW of low-cost electrical power. The report of the Kingdom of the Netherlands notes that Aruba has set itself the ambitious goal of becoming fully reliant on renewable energy by 2020.

Countries also reported on measures taken to increase energy efficiency. Cyprus, Belgium, Jordan, Luxembourg, Qatar, and Slovenia noted initiatives to optimize the energy efficiency of buildings. This included the issuing of a green building manual to promote green buildings in Jordan and energy performance certificates for new buildings in Cyprus. To achieve SDG 7, Belgium, Japan, Luxembourg, and Portugal noted the importance of clean energy research and fostering technological innovations.

To encourage investments in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology, countries had established funds, loans or grants, to both businesses and individuals. For example, Maldives launched a “Green Loan” facility in collaboration with the Bank of Maldives in 2016, which provides loans to customers at concessional rates. In Thailand, incentives and financial benefits such as low interest loans, investments support, and saving subsidies were provided for suppliers to increase investments in high-performance energy-saving machinery.

A major challenge regarding the use of renewable energy in Belgium and Sweden was reported to be the transport sector. Other challenges to achieve SDG 7 included improving energy efficiency in consumption and production (the Czech Republic); the high cost and long lead time in the development of energy generation projects (Kenya); and meeting the rising energy demand (Thailand) while also addressing the energy deficit in rural areas (Zimbabwe).

Goal 8



Countries that reported on SDG 8 focused on their economic and employment situations and highlighted a number of challenges. Among the internal factors impacting economic development, the need for sufficient investment in both capital and human resources was stressed. Thailand specifically mentioned the necessity to upgrade workers' skills in technological fields. External factors impacting economic growth were also addressed.

For example, Kenya reported that the effects of climate change had affected its agricultural and manufacturing sector. The country's tourism sector was also negatively affected by transnational crimes and global terrorism.

As regards the labour market, Slovenia noted demographic changes as a factor that requires policy adjustments. Belgium highlighted the transformation of industrial production system to an automated and digital type of industry as one priority. Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and Thailand reported on existing differences in unemployment and job insecurity, differences that vary according to region, age group, level of educational attainment, gender or immigration status. Belgium, Portugal and Slovenia underlined the fact that specific segments of the populations, in particular youth and the elderly, are faced with greater barriers to entry or return to employment. Maldives stressed the need to address the increase in its expatriate labour force. Access to finance was also mentioned, with Belgium discussing the difficulties faced by micro-enterprises and start-ups in obtaining bank loans.

When presenting their solutions to the challenges in the national labour markets, countries reported on several policy approaches, including measures to ensure decent work (Maldives, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden), the promotion of corporate social responsibility (Belgium, and Thailand), the establishment of a minimum wage (Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal and Thailand) and the fight against social fraud and social dumping (Belgium).

Several countries reported on specific actions they are taking to implement SDG 8. In the fight against youth unemployment, Belgium has established a mentoring programme and works with the country's youth council; Slovenia and Portugal provide youth-tailored career counselling; and Kenya and Thailand provide vocational training opportunities. Other reported actions include measures to improve access to finance for small- and medium-sized enterprises and grassroots economies (Belgium, Maldives, Portugal and Thailand). Kenya has established a youth enterprise fund to empower youth to start and grow their own businesses.

Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Sweden also stressed their actions in the context of international cooperation in support of SDG 8.

Goal 9



Reporting countries addressed the diversification of business and industrial models, fostering high value-added, and innovative products and services, and increasing the productivity and competitiveness of small and medium enterprises. Many countries reported on initiatives to improve transportation infrastructure, including airports, roads, harbours, road and rail links (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Chile, India, Panama, and Togo). Other infrastructure priorities reported on were irrigation (Afghanistan and

Bangladesh), clean drinking water (Azerbaijan) power supply, including expansion of electricity grids (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Brazil and Togo), and information and communication technologies (Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Botswana, India, and Indonesia). India has set an investment target of INR 25 trillion (USD 390 billion) for infrastructure development over a period of three years (2016-19). In its development plan for 2015-2019, Indonesia has prioritised infrastructure development acceleration to strengthen national connectivity, developing urban mass transportation, and improving effective and efficient financing. Costa Rica noted that it is in the process of updating its guidelines for public investment projects to incorporate risk management and adaptation to climate change throughout the cycle to promote sustainability and resilience. Bangladesh noted its commitment to upgrade its highway and transport networks to facilitate trade and cross-border movement of vehicles, including through regional initiatives such as the SAARC Highway Corridor.

Belgium noted that the number of private cars in the country is slowly declining but remains very high, and it reported on efforts to realize a modal shift in favour of public transport. Bangladesh stated that the proper implementation of its country's proposed infrastructure strategies will require significant institutional and regulatory reforms.

A number of countries reported on actions to advance sustainable and inclusive industrialisation, including the proportion of manufacturing in the economy (Chile, India and Indonesia). To accelerate the implementation of the Third Industrial Development Decade for Africa (IDDA III), and in response to industrialisation challenges, Togo, in collaboration with UNIDO and other development partners, is seeking to achieve a structural and sustainable transformation of the economy.



Brazil

In relation to support for small-scale enterprises, Brazil reported on the National Programme Start-up Industry Connection, which aims to identify industry needs and map out start-ups that can supply them. In Afghanistan, where small-scale enterprises outnumber medium-scale ones, the Central Bank is working on a scheme to ease access to credit access for small- and medium-sized businesses.

Belgium, Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, Panama and Uruguay were among the countries that addressed the strengthening of national capabilities in science and innovation. Belgium and Chile reported on their intention to enhance private-public collaboration strategies such as better linking scientific strengths to the economic strengths of international companies. Costa Rica reported that actions are being taken to promote the incorporation of women in the fields of science and technology. India noted that the India Innovation Index Framework has been launched for tracking and identifying promising innovations in the country.

Goal 10



Countries reported on measures taken to reduce inequality within and among countries, in particular the use of social protection policies and social security systems to reduce inequalities and ensure that no one is left behind (Belgium, Czech Republic, Kenya, Maldives, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and Thailand). Portugal noted support mechanisms to guarantee the minimum social standards for its most vulnerable citizens such as the Social Integration Income and the Senior Citizens Pension Supplement. Similarly, the Maldives highlighted that its disability act, social security act, and social protection act created the necessary framework to support and give special assistance to vulnerable populations.

Countries also noted efforts to combat discrimination, which are further covered in the chapter on leaving no one behind (Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden). In Sweden for example, national strategies to ensure equal rights and opportunities had been produced for, inter alia, disability policy, LGBTIQ persons, Roma inclusion and against racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crimes. An overarching strategy had also been produced for the national work on human rights.

Belgium, Kenya, Maldives, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden highlighted the issue of migration. Kenya reported that it had produced a Migration Profile and a draft Migration Policy. Belgium, Portugal, and Slovenia noted the importance of integrating newcomers and highlighted the country's efforts in combatting language barriers and promoting participation in education and the labour market.

To promote enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in international organisations, Belgium noted that it had actively supported the process of governance review within the IMF, inter alia through approving the last quota revision (2010), giving up its own seat in the Executive Board and sharing one with the Netherlands henceforth.

Goal 11



Cities are an important driving force for the economy, but at the same time urbanisation, often at rapid speed, particularly in developing countries, also has downsides that need to be managed, specifically through integrated spatial and urban planning. In this regard, several countries reported on their objectives, challenges and policies for providing adequate housing (Belgium, Kenya, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden) with interlinkages to other goals. In Portugal the right to adequate housing, constitutionally enshrined, is recognised as the basis for a stable and cohesive society and also as the foundation for access to other rights, such as education, health and employment.

Maldives, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, and Sweden were among the countries that stressed the importance of sustainable transport and mobility. In Portugal, transport accounts for 15 per cent of household budgets, being the largest expenditure after housing. Transport is key for providing access to employment, education and public service and enhanced public transport can tackle isolation, promote inclusion and increase disposable income of households. As noted by Slovenia, in addition to this, sustainable mobility reduces negative impacts on the environment and improves both the quality of habitat and traffic safety; hence public transport, cycling and walking need to be incentivized. Similar challenges have been tackled in Kenya with the establishment of a mass transit system for the Greater

Nairobi area in the form of bus rapid transit corridors, and the development of the standard gauge rail, which will move a significant amount of freight from road to rail.

Kenya, Portugal, Sweden, and St. Maarten highlighted policies to ensure safe, green and/or accessible public places. Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden noted challenges related to urban air quality, and in Belgium projects are underway to measure air quality with the help of citizens using mobile devices, while simultaneously raising awareness with the public.



Portugal

Some of the challenges noted by reporting countries include: high population growth rate and rapid urbanization (Kenya); high cost of financing housing development (Kenya); segregation in residential areas (Sweden); and suburbanization and ribbon development (Belgium). The Czech Republic noted that suburbanization is causing an increase in automobile transport and commuting distances, resulting in smog situations and over-limit noise levels. Other issues highlighted by countries include: safeguarding cultural heritage (Kenya, Portugal and Slovenia); waste management (Portugal, Sweden and Thailand);

development of smart cities (Belgium, Portugal and Thailand); and the role of cities in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and climate adaptation (the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden).

Several countries referenced the New Urban Agenda adopted at the HABITAT III Conference (the Netherlands, Portugal and Thailand), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden), and the Paris Agreement (the Netherlands).

Goal 12



Countries reported facing significant challenges in achieving sustainable consumption and production. To address these challenges, many stressed their aims to achieve circular (Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden) or green economies (Kenya and Slovenia). Belgium, Kenya and Slovenia also highlighted the economic benefits that could be derived from more sustainable consumption and production patterns. Slovenia noted that a green economy represents an opportunity for economic growth and improvement in terms of international competitiveness, while also reducing environmental risks.



Slovenia

Portugal, Sweden, and Thailand mentioned sustainable or green public procurement to promote more sustainable products and services. In Slovenia, a forthcoming decree will make green public procurement mandatory for a wider array of areas, including road rehabilitation, street lighting, textiles, and fittings.

Green taxation and incentives are some of the policy tools used in Belgium and Portugal. In Belgium, the region of Flanders uses economic instruments such as taxes on landfill and incineration, alongside legal

instruments such as a must-sort policy and extended producer responsibility.

Sustainability reporting was seen as one good way for engaging the private sector in sustainable consumption and production (SCP) (Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and Thailand). In Sweden, all companies of a certain size are required to submit a sustainability report, while in the Netherlands, similar requirements apply and all companies are encouraged to apply the OECD Guidelines for responsible business conduct. The Stock Exchange of Thailand has formulated the Corporate Governance Code as a guideline to integrate the concept of sustainability into the business sector. One prong of Luxembourg's Climate Finance Strategy is the initiative of the Luxembourg Stock Exchange in launching the Luxembourg Green Exchange, the first platform dedicated exclusively to green securities.

Belgium, Portugal, Slovenia, and Thailand were among the countries that highlighted the role of awareness-raising, stakeholder engagement and access to information to change people's consumption patterns. Thailand, for example, has created school curricula on environment and resource conservation and promoted eco-schools.

Belgium, Sweden, and Thailand noted the importance of sound management of chemicals and waste, and the role of the Stockholm, Rotterdam, Basel and Minamata Conventions was mentioned in this regard. The Netherlands and Sweden referred to the 10-year-framework on SCP. Japan reported that discussions at the Regional 3R Forum in Asia and the Pacific had facilitated bilateral cooperation for waste treatment and the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, and recycle) and information-sharing in Asia and the Pacific region to mitigate waste-related problems.

Countries also highlighted issues such as sustainable tourism (Maldives), de-carbonization of the economy (Portugal), greenhouse gas emissions related to imported goods (Sweden), recycling schemes (Belgium and Portugal), sustainable transport (Slovenia and Thailand), eco-labelling (Thailand), and reduction of food waste (Maldives and the Netherlands). In Japan, food-related businesses are working toward achieving numerical targets concerning reduction of food loss and waste and food recycling, in accordance with a law on food recycling.



Republic of Maldives

Goal 13



Countries highlighted impacts of climate change such as increased rainfall, floods and extreme weather events, and sea level rise, ocean acidification and disruption of marine ecosystems (Maldives, the Netherlands, Portugal and Slovenia). Maldives noted that salt-water intrusion from extreme weather events affects freshwater lenses, with a negative impact on water security.

Several policies and actions for both climate mitigation and adaptation were highlighted. Thailand provides knowledge and capacity training to local actors in pilot areas on the creation of provincial and municipal adaptation action plans. Slovenia highlighted the importance of cross-border cooperation for risk management, such as improved and harmonised cross-border mapping of flood risks and flood forecasting, since these risks do not follow national borders. Belgium and the Netherlands were among the countries that noted the potential of carbon pricing for mitigation. Belgium, Monaco, Portugal, and Slovenia also highlighted the economic benefits that can be derived from transitioning towards low-carbon or no-carbon societies.

Kenya, Portugal, Slovenia, and Thailand were among the countries that underlined the importance of awareness-raising and education among citizens, particularly youth. Belgium launched My2050, a simplified educational calculation tool that helps secondary school students and citizens reflect on possibilities for involvement in a transition towards a low-carbon economy.



Luxembourg

Some of the sectors contributing to emissions were targeted with specific policies, including housing (Belgium), energy intensive industry (Belgium), waste management (Slovenia), energy (Portugal), and the transport sector (Slovenia, and Portugal). Sweden also noted the increase in its consumption-based emissions, which originate in producer countries, but are caused by consumption in Sweden. Some of the other specific challenges noted include lack of measurable and verifiable data collection systems (Thailand), and low investments in climate research (Kenya). Luxembourg

reported on the Climate Pact, an agreement between municipalities and the State, designed to guide municipalities in the implementation of their energy and climate policies, by implementing the quality management system known as the European Energy Award. The Czech Republic noted that an important precondition for achieving the sustainable development of regions and municipalities is their adaptation to climate change.

Several countries reported on their commitments under the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement and on their contributions to numerous funding mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environmental Facility, the Least Developed Countries Fund, the Adaptation Fund, and to projects implemented by the World Bank and various UN entities such as UNDP.

Goal 14



Countries that reported on SDG 14 emphasised the importance of the oceans for sustainable development and human well-being. They also listed major threats affecting the oceans, including marine pollution, such as in the form of plastics, ocean acidification, overfishing, and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. In addition, many countries cited climate change as an important threat and underscored the importance of the Paris Agreement in this regard. Other issues, such as coastal erosion, maritime safety and piracy were also reported.



Monaco

Among the main challenges mentioned with regard to implementing SDG 14 were the lack of human and financial resources, the lack of, or limited, data availability, gaps in data management, the lack of clear institutional arrangements and regulations, limited resources for monitoring, control and surveillance, and the lack of interagency coordination. Bangladesh, Kenya, the Netherlands, and Togo referred to the blue economy based on sectors such as shipping and shipbuilding, ports, fisheries, coastal tourism, marine biotechnology and renewable marine energy.

Countries reported on the actions undertaken at the national level to achieve SDG 14 with many highlighting the integration of SDG 14 targets into national policies and strategies. Azerbaijan, Belize, Malaysia, Nigeria, Togo, and Uruguay reported on changes to, or the strengthening of, their legal, institutional and policy frameworks. Many countries put an emphasis on interagency and inter-ministerial coordination, and emphasised the importance of regional and international cooperation. A number of countries indicated that they were part of regional and international conventions, agreements, treaties and instruments. Belgium, Cyprus, Monaco, and the Netherlands made reference to the ongoing negotiations on biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ).



Uruguay

The decrease of land- and sea-based pollution was listed as an important measure by many countries including through the reduction of plastic use, the ban of plastic bags, waste management plans and wastewater facilities. Achieving sustainable fisheries was one of the main national priorities for many countries. In this regard, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, Malaysia, Panama, Portugal, Togo, and Uruguay noted the use of monitoring, control and surveillance systems, including satellite navigation and tracking. Among the measures and tools listed by some countries to

sustainably manage and use marine and coastal ecosystems were: integrated coastal management; marine spatial planning; and environmental impact assessments. Many countries referred to or reported on the establishment of marine protected areas.

Italy and Panama noted the importance of addressing ocean acidification. Azerbaijan, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Indonesia, and Thailand reported on providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets. Many countries are supporting science and research, while some noted they had ocean observation systems in place. Belize reported on measures to improve data management and Malaysia highlighted data collection and sharing.

Many countries emphasised the need for stakeholder participation, including through multi-stakeholder consultations, the strengthening and empowerment of local communities and the provision of alternative livelihoods. Belgium, Chile, Ethiopia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Thailand, and Uruguay listed education and awareness-raising activities, with Belgium and Portugal focussing on marine litter. Means of implementation were emphasised, including human resources development, capacity-building, and technology transfer.

Several countries made voluntary commitments, including in the areas of marine pollution (Bangladesh and Cyprus), marine protected areas (Bangladesh, and Belize), sustainable fisheries (Bangladesh and Belize), integrated coastal zone management (Belize) and marine research (the Netherlands).

Goal 15



Countries reporting on SDG 15 stressed that ecosystems and their services are of key importance for our health and quality of life. Belarus, Belgium, Cyprus, Kenya, the Netherlands, Maldives, Portugal, Slovenia, and Thailand reported on their challenges and actions to preserve biodiversity. One key accelerator for biodiversity loss indicated in the reports is the loss of habitats, due to issues such as urbanisation and urban sprawl, wetlands clearance, and harbour dredging. Several countries reported on their actions to tackle invasive alien species.



Thailand

Policies to tackle poaching and trafficking of endangered species and products derived from them were outlined by many countries, including registrations systems for ivory traders, legal possession and confiscated ivory and reformed laws (Thailand), ivory stockpile crush and training (Belgium), increased inspections and patrolling by authorities, and active participation in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) activities (Portugal).

Belgium, Cyprus, Portugal, Sweden and Thailand, reported on actions related to the 2010 Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing. Cyprus noted the challenge of the lack of expertise and knowledge on such a complex issue, necessary for the design and implementation of a national legislative framework, in line with the protocol.

Several other challenges and actions taken were highlighted, such as integration and mainstreaming of ecosystem and biodiversity conservation into sectoral plans (Maldives and Slovenia), sustainable forest management (Belgium, Cyprus, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden and Portugal), land degradation (Belgium, Cyprus, Kenya, Portugal and Thailand), mountain ecosystems (Cyprus), and pollinators (Belgium).

Some of the other challenges that countries referred to when implementing SDG 15 include: inadequate institutional capacities; lack of participatory coordination frameworks in land and forestry management; illegal logging; and inadequate sewerage coverage and insufficient treatment of effluent. As for next steps, they referred to the development and revision of natural resources and environment-related laws and broad, multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Goal 16



In addressing SDG 16, reporting countries, among them Belgium, Denmark, Kenya, Maldives, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden and Thailand, focused on good governance, strong and transparent institutions, rule of law, protection of human rights, anti-corruption, and preventing illicit flows. They also reported on delivery of public services and government accountability, access to government and information, as well as on strengthening peace and security through strong institutions and good governance. A number of countries, among them Costa Rica, El Salvador, Indonesia, Peru, Uruguay, underlined the importance of strong, accountable and responsive institutions, as a prerequisite for achieving the SDGs and its related targets.

By way of example, Belgium focused on thematic areas and cross-cutting themes within SDG 16, among them, violent extremism and terrorism, violent crime, with special attention to society's vulnerable groups, environmental crime, and illegal migration. Kenya noted the establishment of its National Human Rights and Equality Commissions, independent national human rights institutions, enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya to safeguard human rights and promote peace. In its report, Afghanistan highlighted the impact

of the conflict on the capability of institutions, with negative consequences for economic performance, employment, and public service delivery.



Belgium

Belgium, Portugal, and Sweden were among the countries that underlined the significance of SDG 16 in the context of international cooperation. Portugal highlighted peace building and state building, including institutional strengthening in key areas such as governance, rule of law, security and provision of essential services.

Among other challenges identified were: occurrences of violence in various forms as well as human trafficking (Sweden and Thailand); local, regional and international terrorism threats (Belgium, and Slovenia);

the high number of refugees due to regional conflicts; youth radicalization; cyber-crime; transnational and trans-border crime (Afghanistan and Kenya); and the inadequate delivery of basic services due to weak institutions (Benin). As next steps, countries stressed the need for the development of effective and inclusive governance institutions and processes, consolidation of the rule of law, strengthening of the justice sector and the evolution of an informed civil society.

Goal 17



Compared to the 2016 VNR reports, a larger number of countries included a separate section on SDG 17 in their reviews (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Denmark, Kenya, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Monaco, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Panama, Portugal, Qatar, Slovenia, Sweden, Thailand and Togo). Some of the countries also reported on means

of implementation as a cross-cutting issue, and more information on this can be found in Chapter 10. Due to overlapping thematic areas, some of the issues raised by countries in their review of SDG 17 have been included in the section on means of implementation.

Most countries reporting on SDG 17 did not address individual targets or progress towards them but rather highlighted issues of national relevance covered by that goal.

A number of countries called for official development assistance commitments to be honoured. Belgium, Cyprus, Portugal, Slovenia, and Sweden were among the countries that provided details of their ODA contributions, as did Qatar, although it is not an OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) member. Many countries also highlighted their aid to and aims with regard to the least developed countries. Sweden's aid to the least developed countries amounted to 0.29 per cent of GNI in 2015. Belgium's aim is to dedicate at least 50 per cent of its ODA to least developed countries and fragile states by mid-2019. LDCs are already the main beneficiaries of the Portuguese support, accounting for 53 per cent of the country's ODA.

In relation to the SDG 17 targets on data, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, India, Indonesia, Kenya, and Portugal were among the countries that highlighted data, monitoring, and accountability. India

noted that tracking the SDGs effectively requires mechanisms for generating a set of data that is broader, more disaggregated and available at shorter intervals of time as compared to the data that is currently utilised for reviewing development efforts. The issue of capacity development to strengthen national statistical systems was raised by a number of countries and is addressed in Chapter 4 of this report.

Many countries highlighted the need for transparency and access to information. India noted that there is a need for setting clear eligibility standards and ensuring greater transparency with respect to ODA. The Belgian Development Cooperation is in the process of setting up a transparency portal where governmental and non-state actors of development cooperation will be able to upload their expenditures and results. The Netherlands also reported on its advocacy for the free dissemination of information on aid activities and on the results of research financed from aid funds. In Nigeria, the National Action Plan articulates strategies to promote fiscal transparency, including through more citizen participation in the budget-making process.

Afghanistan, Belgium, Brazil, Japan, Jordan, and Maldives noted activities undertaken in cooperation with international financial institutions (IFIs). Sweden stressed that the IFIs have an important role in relation to, among other things, low-interest financing of projects contributing to sustainable development, the mobilisation of funds for projects from the private sector, and providing member countries with consultation and technical assistance. Brazil highlighted the agreement for the creation of the New Development Bank (NDB) by the BRICS member countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). Cyprus, India, and Togo reported on their objectives of reaching or maintaining debt sustainability.

Thailand noted that internet access can serve as a catalyst for development and reduces inequality between people living in urban and rural areas. In this context, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kenya, Maldives, Nigeria, Thailand, and Togo reported on their efforts to enhance access to modern ICTs. In Maldives, given the connectivity challenge that geography presents, internet access and mobile cellular subscriptions provide an important entry point to reach communities and mobile tele-density is among the highest in the world.

III. Leaving no one behind

This section highlights the ways in which countries have addressed the notion of “leaving no one behind”, one of the 2030 Agenda’s key principles. Some countries included dedicated sections on the topic in their reviews, while others included references to ways in which the principle is upheld in implementation throughout their reports. In principle, countries are aiming at ensuring that no one is being left behind either by providing targeted support measures to specific vulnerable groups or by ensuring that services are available universally to all.

Leaving no one behind, often considered one of the key principles of the 2030 Agenda, was addressed by several countries. Ethiopia, Kenya, the Netherlands, and Nigeria included a specific section on the topic, or dealt with it in an appendix, as in the case of Bangladesh. Japan and Thailand included references to the principle in the descriptions of their development strategies, while other countries addressed it in reporting on progress on specific goals. Some of the groups mentioned in the reports as at risk of being left behind include persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ persons, the homeless, orphans, former convicts, women experiencing domestic violence, children and youth, older persons, ethnic minorities, migrants,

persons living with HIV/AIDS, sex workers, drug users, persons with mental health problems, and children and adults in families living in straitened socio-economic circumstances or in particularly vulnerable areas. Women's rights and gender equality were also often referred to in these contexts.

To leave no one behind, countries reported approaches that provided targeted support measures to vulnerable groups, or that focussed on achieving universal availability of services. Azerbaijan noted that leaving no one behind will require efforts to reach the "last mile", and the need for countries to re-evaluate their approaches and development interventions.

Several countries noted their aim of ensuring access for all to services such as health care (Kenya), education (Cyprus and Malaysia) and safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (Qatar). India noted that efforts are underway to universalise access to basic services, including through the provision of direct financial assistance to poor households to achieve the goal of housing for all by 2022.

Bangladesh, Belgium, Cyprus, Ethiopia, and Jordan were among the countries that highlighted their actions to tackle discrimination, with many referring to legal and constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination based on a variety of grounds. Sweden mentioned legislation to counter discrimination and to support national minorities.

The notion of leaving no one behind is strongly linked with the rights-based approach, and countries reported on the rights enshrined in their constitutions or in other laws. Kenya's 2010 Constitution contains a comprehensive Bill of Rights, which sets out both the rights extending to all individuals and those of specific groups, including children, youth and persons with disabilities. The right to the highest attainable standard of health, education, accessible and adequate housing, and water and sanitation, as well as the right to food, are all guaranteed in the Kenyan Constitution as enforceable rights.

Many countries reported on specific policies developed to ensure that poverty eradication and efforts to reduce multidimensional poverty reach the most vulnerable. In this regard, frequent references were made to enhanced social security and job creation. Nigeria noted that its 'Unconditional Cash Transfer' programme (UCT) provides social security allowance for physically disabled people and the elderly. In India, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act has generated over 2 billion person-days of employment during 2016-17 alone, largely for the disadvantaged sections of society. In Belarus, the Government provides targeted vocational training and guarantees employment assistance to vulnerable groups and citizens particularly in need of social protection.

Addressing geographical inequalities

Geographical imbalances play an important role for many countries when ensuring that no one is left behind. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Botswana, India, and Tajikistan highlighted the need to consider rural communities in this context. For some island states, geography poses similar challenges. Maldives noted that due to its population dispersion, additional efforts must be made to reach everyone. Indonesia referred to the challenge of implementing the "no one left behind" principle in the largest archipelagic country characterized by cultural, ethnic and religious diversity.

Bangladesh noted activities taken to decentralise the delivery of public services, including through over four thousand one-stop information and service delivery outlets known as Union Digital Centres. These centres provide citizens with both free and fee-based access to public services (land records, birth

registration, telemedicine, etc.) and private services (mobile financial services, insurance, various types of computer and vocational training, etc.). In Botswana, the Rural Telecommunications Development Program has aimed at integrating the rural population into the economic and social development of the country by providing access to telecommunications services for 197 villages around the country.

Hearing everyone's voices

Some countries included the concept of reaching the furthest behind in their VNR preparations. Costa Rica held consultations with some of the most excluded groups in the country, and included a section for each goal under review on the challenges identified by the older persons, LGBTIQ persons, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples. Chile, in cooperation with UNDP, designed focal groups that sought to prioritise the voice and participation of populations such as street people, persons with disabilities, immigrants, and indigenous peoples, all of whom would otherwise be prone to being marginalised from decision-making processes and consultations on the country's development. Stakeholder engagement in general is covered in more detail in Chapter 8.

Need for disaggregated data



Republic of Tajikistan

Azerbaijan, Denmark, Nepal, and Tajikistan noted the importance of the availability of disaggregated data for ensuring that no one is left behind. Azerbaijan and Nepal noted that progress should be tracked at a highly disaggregated level to show disparities by age, sex, location, ethnicity, disability, income groups, and other categories. In this regard, Nepal noted its need for new surveys, or for existing surveys to be adapted to fill data gaps and gather baseline data for a number of targets. Chile highlighted as its main findings of review of SDG 3 the lack of indicators of inclusion of its LGBTIQ

population. Despite robust statistical mechanisms, without concerted effort, some population groups can slip through the cracks of national monitoring. Sweden, for example, reported that national statistics that appear in reports are often based on records covering Sweden's officially registered population, which leads to both potential over-representation of certain groups, as well as under-representation of others, for instance asylum seekers, who are not included in the registered population. Data needs for the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda are addressed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Role of non-governmental actors

Several countries referred to the positive impact that non-governmental organizations can make in ensuring that no one is left behind. For example, in its report, Malaysia named as one of its key success factors for SDG 3 the partnership with NGOs to serve people with special needs, for example those living with HIV/AIDS, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Slovenia co-finances programmes for its most vulnerable groups with higher risks of social exclusion; these programmes are delivered by NGOs, and complement social security services provided by the public service.

Upholding the principle in international cooperation

Some countries also highlighted the role of the principle of leaving no one behind in their international efforts. Belgium noted its aim of “leaving no country behind” and “reaching out to those countries farthest behind” by committing to spend by mid-2019 at least 50 per cent of ODA in LDCs and fragile states. Similarly, the Netherlands noted that 11 of its 15 partner countries are LDCs. Japan highlighted its efforts for the realization of human security, focusing on individuals who are most likely to be in vulnerable situations, including children, persons with disabilities, and older persons.

Measures targeted at specific groups

Many countries outlined policies and interventions that are aimed at ensuring that specific groups are not being left behind. Some of these include:

Persons with disabilities

Cyprus, Japan, Sweden, Thailand, and Zimbabwe were among the countries that noted the need for accessible infrastructure and transport. Japan reported that its government has promoted the adoption of barrier-free design of transportation facilities and vehicles, based on the concept of universal design. The Czech Republic and Denmark noted that persons with disabilities have lower levels of participation in the workforce in many countries and several (Bangladesh, Belgium, Denmark, Japan, and Thailand) outlined efforts made to increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. Thailand promotes employment and provides funding sources for occupations for persons with disabilities, in addition to making available special loans for persons with disabilities and their caretakers. Several countries referred to their targeted cash transfers or allowances for persons with disabilities.

Older Persons

A number of countries outlined the specific challenges facing older persons, particularly in relation to poverty eradication, health care and employment. Thailand reported on community-based centres for promoting quality of life and occupations and schools for the elderly, as well access to loans through a dedicated fund for older people. Denmark referred to a national action plan for elderly medical patients, together with regional initiatives with a focus on preventing unnecessary hospitalisations and increasing coherence across the health care sector.

LGBTIQ

Belgium, Costa Rica, Nepal and Sweden addressed measures and policies related to LGBTIQ people. In Belgium, the Flemish government makes available an assistance package to school boards and teachers to foster an education system that is more gender-aware and LGBTIQ-friendly. Regarding international cooperation, the gender strategy and action plan for the Belgian Development Cooperation contains four priorities, one of which is the protection of LGBTIQ rights and a stand against gender-based violence in all its forms. Costa Rica stated that although progress had been made in recent years, the LGBTIQ population nonetheless identified major obstacles to the adequate and real implementation of relevant policies and regulations by the institutional apparatus. Specialised units with a human rights approach have been established, with a view to providing dignified health care for LGBTIQ people. Nepal reported that LGBTIQ is one of the 23 identified constituencies of the SDGs Discussion Forum of civil society.

Indigenous peoples



Malaysia

In their reports, countries consider indigenous peoples both as a group in need of concerted support, and as actors engaged in enhanced implementation of the SDGs. In Nepal, the amended Civil Service Act reserves a percentage of public service positions for women and marginalised groups, including dalits, indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities. In its reporting on SDG 15, Malaysia noted as one of its future aims leveraging Indigenous and local communities in the management of natural resources, as well as empowering them to give or withhold consent to proposed projects that may affect their lands. Chile

reported on the specific challenges that its indigenous population is facing, including high multidimensional poverty rates. In terms of participation and institutional strengthening, the results of a consultation process for indigenous peoples were considered in the preparation of draft legislation for a Ministry of Indigenous Peoples and Council of Indigenous people.

Migrants

Several countries reported on the specific vulnerabilities of migrants, particularly in the labour, education and healthcare sectors. In Sweden, many of those born abroad are currently outside the labour market, especially women born abroad, and are thus at risk of being affected by relative poverty. Under its review of progress towards SDG 1, Malaysia highlighted the inadequate coverage of social protection programmes for foreign migrant workers and those working in the informal economy. Related to fair pay, Jordan reported that a sector-wide collective bargaining agreement (CBA) was signed in the garment sector in 2013 and renewed in 2015; a sector in which 80 per cent of all workers are migrants. Slovenia has published a dictionary aimed at facilitating communication between immigrants and medical staff. Thailand reported that it provides health insurance for both documented and undocumented migrant workers including their dependents, along with a migrant health volunteer program. With respect to education, all children in Thailand, including the children of documented and undocumented migrant workers, are entitled to enrol in any educational institution, at any level, and in any subject or area of education, regardless of their nationality or legal status.

Women and girls

Many countries reported on specific challenges faced by women and girls (see section on SDG 5) and some noted measures to reach the most disadvantaged or marginalised (Nigeria and Portugal). In Portugal, the National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Communities recognises the particular vulnerability of Roma women and girls to multiple discriminations. Nigeria referenced the initiative Educating Nigerian Girls in Nigerian Enterprise (ENGINE), a vocational training programme that aims to empower educationally and economically disadvantaged girls in five local government areas of Lagos.

Children

The rights of children and adolescents have been emphasised (Uruguay and Zimbabwe). Bangladesh, Guatemala, Indonesia, Nepal, and Zimbabwe specifically stressed the importance of ending child marriage. Countries also shared various policies and tools to ensure children's access to quality healthcare and education. For example, India has established a legal framework through the Right to Education Act entitling all children (6-14 years old) to free and compulsory education based on principles of equity and non-discrimination. Thanks to mobile clinics, Kenya has brought healthcare services to mothers and children who would otherwise have to walk miles to seek treatment. Many countries also highlighted challenges such as malnutrition and stunting, which could be life-threatening to children in poverty. Concrete measures have been taken in these countries to reduce infant and under-5 mortality rates, some with considerable achievements (see section on SDG 3). Guatemala noted the importance of consulting with children and youth and included a specific section under each goal dedicated to children and youth's perception and views about SDG-related challenges. In this context, Guatemala used U-report, a social messaging tool promoted by UNICEF.

IV. Monitoring and data

It is widely recognized that effective follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda requires not only a robust institutional framework but also the collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of an unprecedented amount of reliable, timely, accessible, and sufficiently disaggregated data. Countries have taken a range of measures to inform decision-making and enhance accountability, contributing to more robust follow-up and review in the long term.

Data, statistics and indicators

At the time of reporting, much progress had been made at the global level on sustainable development data and statistics, particularly on the global SDG indicators. The global indicator framework⁶ was agreed upon at the 48th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2017, and subsequently adopted by the General Assembly in July 2017. The Global SDG Indicator Database⁷ was also launched in July 2017, and presents country-level data as well as global and regional aggregates compiled through the UN system and other international organizations.

Along with the global process, substantial efforts have been reported at the national level in assessing data availability, sources, methodologies, coverage and dissemination, as well as in identifying data gaps to be addressed. There is varying data availability for the global indicators, and among the countries that provided information in this regard are Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Denmark, Guatemala, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, and the Netherlands. By way of example, Belarus has full information available for only 38 per cent of the indicators, partial information is available for 22 per cent, and no data or calculation methodology is available for almost 40 per cent of the indicators.

⁶ The revised global indicator list endorsed in 2017 includes 244 global SDG indicators, or 232 if repetitions are considered. See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/>

⁷ See <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/>

Mirroring the process of integrating SDGs into national plans and strategies, countries are actively looking for solutions that best fit their national context and aspirations for national level monitoring and evaluation. In Belarus, the process of creating a national system of sustainable development indicators is ongoing. Once completed, the indicators will be incorporated into the national monitoring and planning system. Similarly, Tajikistan also plans to prioritise the integration of related SDG indicators into its monitoring and evaluation system for the next five years. Replicating the method used in the global indicators discussions, Brazil has established 17 thematic groups to advance the definition of its national indicators and their methodologies, with each group associated with one specific SDG.

Countries also reported on their establishment of national targets and indicators. The Czech Republic's planned biannual analytical Report on the Quality of Life and its Sustainability will build on 192 indicators of the Czech Republic 2030 designed to operationalise its 97 specific goals and parallel set of indicators measuring progress on wellbeing. Denmark has formulated 37 concrete national targets covering the 5Ps (prosperity, people, planet, peace and partnerships) featured in its Action Plan and will publish annual progress reports on these targets, which will be sent to the Danish Parliament.

Key challenges

Top challenges highlighted by VNR countries in their efforts to meet the demands of the 2030 Agenda include the following:

- **Data disaggregation.** Bangladesh, Benin, Botswana, Kenya, Maldives, Nepal, and Zimbabwe were among the countries that highlighted inadequate disaggregation of data, which hinders countries' abilities to design targeted programmes. Tajikistan emphasised the need for data disaggregation with respect to the status of women, children, elderly people, rural communities, and persons with disabilities. Meanwhile, it was also pointed out that in some countries collection of data related to religion or ethnicity is not permitted for statistical production.
- **Data collection and management.** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Belize, Maldives and Tajikistan all noted the challenge of data collection, processing and dissemination. Maldives further drew attention to the fact that lack of technical expertise, compounded by the lack of trained staff and necessary equipment for data collection, remains a major hurdle.
- **Mobilizing financial and technical support for data and monitoring.** Bangladesh, Maldives and Nigeria were among the countries that highlighted the need for financial and technical support. India stressed the importance of global technical support in areas such as developing methodologies for data collection, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

Measures taken to strengthen national statistical capacity

- **Clarification of institutional ownership on data and monitoring for SDGs.** Many countries underscored the essential role of national statistical systems (NSS) in monitoring the progress of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. And more importantly, they clarified how NSS fit in the overall national institution for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In Ethiopia, for example, the Central Statistics Agency (CSA) generates and disseminates to users socio-economic data pertaining to national development needs through sample surveys, studies and censuses. The



Argentina

Ethiopian Mapping Agency (EMA) generates and disseminates geospatial data. Both CSA and EMA have been made legally accountable to the National Planning Commission (NPC), which is directly accountable to the prime minister. Argentina's National Institute of Statistics and Censuses is a member of one of the working committees under the inter-institutional mechanism for implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda, in addition to providing ongoing statistical expertise.

Bangladesh's SDG Tracker

The Access to Information (a2i) Programme of the Prime Minister's Office, with technical support from UNDP and USAID—in collaboration with General Economics Division (GED) of Planning Commission, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and other government and private stakeholders, designed and developed SDG Tracker (www.sdg.gov.bd).

Two major components of SDG Tracker are:

- SDG Portal - enables policy makers, government agencies, private sector, Civil Society Organizations, International organizations, academia, researchers and the citizens to track year on year progress against each target and to create required visualizations.
- SDG Dashboards - facilitate individual Ministries/Divisions and Agencies to consolidate available data for each SDG and compare it visually against performance thresholds. The resulting dashboards highlight areas where a Ministry needs to make the greatest progress towards achieving the Goals by 2030.

Source: the 2017 Voluntary National Review Report of Bangladesh

Figure 8 - Bangladesh's SDG Tracker

- Use of technology to improve data collection, analysis, and accessibility.** One challenge highlighted in the 2016 VNR reports was the existence of multiple monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems across government entities that requires coordination and consolidation. Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belize, Jordan, and Qatar were among the countries that reported their initial steps in tackling this challenge using ICT, for example, by building web-based central applications to facilitate data collection, analysis, progress tracking, and reporting. Japan noted the potential for collecting data on a global scale, covering even remote areas of the land and oceans, with a view to addressing challenges in fields such as health, disaster management, climate change, and biodiversity. In this regard, Japan is working, through the intergovernmental framework of the Group on Earth Observation (GEO), on research on global climate change, while promoting the use and sharing of earth observation data.
- Involving stakeholders in data collection.** Belarus and Ethiopia, among others, noted that national statistical systems would have a central role, but their efforts could be supplemented with data and analysis produced by other stakeholders. In Nigeria, over 200 young people were trained on open data and collection of data on the state of infrastructure and budget administration in the country and mobilised towards improving the living conditions of people in slum areas through data collection as a tool for advocacy.
- Identification of new data sources to guide SDG implementation.** To meet growing data requirements, official statistical offices are tapping into new data sources. India is considering using space technology for household surveys. In its report the Kingdom of the Netherlands noted that St Maarten has conducted a national household budget survey, focusing on social needs to provide useful statistics to better target future poverty eradication initiatives to the population.
- Mobilising support through partnerships.** Many efforts at the national level are closely linked to support through partnerships. For example, Belize's plan to transform the existing Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB) to a National Statistical System (NSS) involves relevant institutional reforms and capacity building partially supported through partnerships between the government and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the United Nations System. The implementation of the Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics in Qatar, which was announced on 30 April 2017, was carried out in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division and regional and Arab organisations.



People's Republic of Bangladesh



Belize

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

This section of the report examines how countries have incorporated the SDGs into national development plans and strategies, essential for them to be reflected in the allocation of budgets and institutional resources. It highlights information on the context in which countries are implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and the overarching challenges they face.

The reports prepared by countries conducting VNRs at the 2017 HLPF reflect various ways in which the 2030 Agenda has been integrated into national contexts. While the Agenda is applicable to all countries, its implementation recognises that countries have different national realities, capacities and levels of development; respecting national policies and priorities is essential to progress in achieving the SDGs.

National contexts



Peru

Countries are addressing the SDGs in the context of broad societal goals, such as the attainment of lower-middle-income status (Ethiopia), transformation into a middle-income (and subsequently developed) country (Bangladesh), against the backdrop of conflict (Afghanistan), or climate phenomena like El Nino (Peru), and steps taken to emerge from a recent economic crisis and the consequent decision to rein in expenditures, while maintaining constitutionally-mandated spending on education and health (Brazil). Thailand has been guided by the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP), which was adopted as the core principle of National Economic and Social Development Plan in 2002. SEP will continue to be the guiding principle in completing the unfinished business of the MDGs and in achieving the SDGs.

Countries reported that principles of sustainable development are incorporated into their national legal frameworks, including at the constitutional level. Since 2007, sustainable development has been anchored at the federal level in the Belgian Constitution as a general policy objective, while various sub-national governments have developed their own laws in the field of sustainable development. The Kenyan Constitution of 2010 contains the rights to the highest attainable standard of health, education, accessible and adequate housing and water and sanitation, as well as the right to food.

Bangladesh reported that initiatives were underway to assess whether regulations and laws needed to be updated to facilitate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Chile has recently adopted a range of laws – in the areas of education, labour, and taxation – that are supportive of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. As part of its action plan, the Danish government will henceforth assess the impact of new legislation and major initiatives on the SDGs, when considered relevant in a Danish context and where the impact is significant.

Assessing the SDGs for national implementation, interlinkages and trade-offs

Countries conducted a range of exercises to assess readiness for implementation and identify priorities. Wide-ranging consultations were held with stakeholders from many sectors of society, in some countries drawing on the expertise from the UN system, and stakeholder consultations, and awareness-raising with sub-national levels of government (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, and Benin). In Azerbaijan, among the tasks of the National Coordinating Council on Sustainable Development are activities to identify national priorities and gaps in sustainable development, promote coherence among development partners, and provide links to regional and global reviews. In Chile, the commissions and working groups established under the national council included not only a range of government agencies, but also other organs of state and independent entities, such as the Senate of the Republic, the Chamber of Deputies, the Supreme Court, Comptroller General, and the National Institute for Human Rights.

The nationalization process has involved a number of institutions and stakeholders, such as ministries, experts, and institutions in the public sector, local governments, legislatures, academia, civil society organizations, and the business community. Preparatory work has also included data gap analyses, to assess the availability of data to monitor the global SDG indicators. In Botswana, the national statistics office has mapped all the SDG indicators relevant and measurable in the country, and aligned them with the country's Vision 2036, a national development plan, and the African Union Agenda 2063. In Benin, thematic groups were created to address the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, clustered according to social (SDGs 1-6), economic (SDGs 7-11), environmental (SDGs 12-15), and governance (SDG 16) issues, while the group plenary and the lead agency took steps to address negative externalities and promote intersectoral synergies.

Countries outlined efforts to map ministries and government agencies with responsibility for the implementation of SDG targets (Bangladesh, Belgium and India), as well as relevant measures and policies (Luxembourg). For instance, a mapping exercise was carried out in Belgium, and all federal ministers were asked to articulate the ways in which their policies contributed to the implementation of SDGs. This initiative provided the basis for a gap analysis. In India, the results of the mapping exercise were circulated to the Central Ministries and placed on the NITI Aayog website to facilitate better awareness, common understanding and faster implementation of the SDGs.

SDGs in national development plans, strategies, budgets

Countries described steps to align development plans and strategies with the SDGs, often based on an assessment of goals and targets that were determined to be national priorities. Such mapping or alignment processes enabled countries to identify areas of strong performance, as well as others requiring redoubled effort. Such alignment exercises also saw some countries highlight the need for inter-sectoral and holistic approaches, for instance addressing poverty through a multi-dimensional perspective. In Brazil, the multi-year plan (PPA) is the main instrument for medium-term planning, and the first step in the internalisation of the 2030 Agenda was to check the correspondence of the SDG targets with the attributes – programmes, goals, targets and initiatives – of the 2016-19 PPA. Under a multidimensional approach, Costa Rica performed a first phase of alignment between the national development plan (PND, 2015-2018) and the 2030 Agenda, which included an analysis of the linkage of programmes and projects with the SDG targets and indicators. In order to translate the SDGs into concrete actions, the national

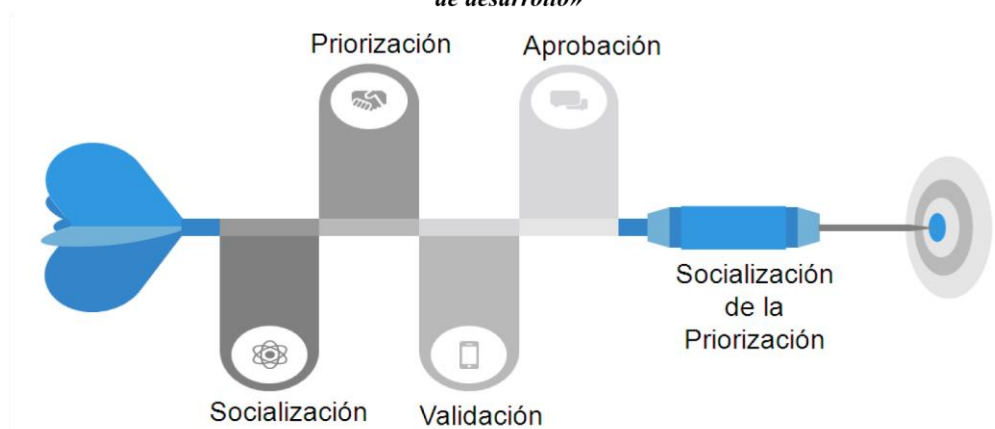
council established as entry points three priorities for Costa Rica: combating poverty; sustainable consumption and production; and sustainable infrastructure and communities.

Where existing plans and strategies are the main vehicle for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in some cases countries have also prepared framework strategies, including a common vision and priority themes where enhanced coordination is needed (Belgium). Some national strategies envisage national 2030 Agenda implementation reports to be prepared periodically, including to parliament (Belgium). Kenya developed an SDGs road map covering seven broad areas that will guide the transition process from MDGs to SDGs, including mapping of stakeholders and establishing partnerships, advocacy and sensitization, and localisation of the SDGs. In the context of performance contracting, all Kenyan public institutions are expected to mainstream SDGs into their plans, programmes and policies and consequently report to the Ministry of Devolution and Planning on the progress of implementation.

Denmark has formulated an action plan for the achievement of the SDGs nationally, and the government will publish annual progress reports on the plan's 37 targets which will be sent to the Danish Parliament. Jordan has developed a roadmap for implementation, which consists of a number of components, including mapping the SDGs, targets and indicators with those in the Jordan 2025 document, mainstreaming the SDGs into national and sub-national plans, and SDG costing and financing through internal and external sources. Planning, budgetary and monitoring frameworks and institutional mechanisms have been put in place to secure the coordination of SDG realisation. In Qatar, the 2030 Agenda was incorporated into the Second National Development Strategy (2017-2022). Guatemala outlined the steps taken to align and integrate the SDGs and targets into their national development plan "K'atun: Nuestra Guatemala 2032", which was carried out in five phases, including a variety of stakeholders and government officials at various levels in the process.

Figure 9 - Stages of integrating the 2030 Agenda into the national plan in Guatemala

Etapas de la «Estrategia de articulación para la apropiación y seguimiento de la Agenda ODS al Plan nacional de desarrollo»



Fuente: Elaboración de Segeplán

Source: the 2017 Voluntary National Review Report of Guatemala

In Benin, both the 2030 Agenda, and the document for its implementation, the programme for growth and sustainable development, have been incorporated into the national development plan (2018-2025). In Ethiopia, ratification of the Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTP II) by parliament and the Council of Ministers were important steps in integrating the SDGs with national development frameworks. The SDGs are integrated according to the 10 development priority areas contained in the GTP II. A long-term development plan, with a 15-year horizon, is currently under development, and this will fully embrace the SDGs. In Bangladesh, the government is preparing an action for the implementation of the SDGs in



Benin

alignment with the 7th five-year-plan. The Peruvian Strategic Plan of National Development (PEDN) has validity until 2021, and it has been decided to incorporate the 2030 Agenda into the update of the Strategic Plan. In this regard, two main mechanisms for implementation have been proposed: (i) the preparation of the concerted vision of the country's future by 2030; and (ii) the updating of policies and plans, which is focused on the welfare of the people taking into account the circumstances in their territories.



Nepal

Afghanistan has decided that the national SDG targets and indicators will be incorporated into the budget planning process at the national and sub-national levels, and to this end the relevant line ministries are requested to submit an account for the SDGs in their budget proposals. Countries reported on the efforts to complement and reinforce SDG implementation strategies, such as programme budgeting, resource mobilization strategies, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks (for more on monitoring see Chapter 4). In

Belize, the Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS), which is the main instrument for achieving the SDGs, has incorporated programme budgeting as a key mechanism to inform the national allocation of resources. Line ministries will align budgets to the GSDS, which contains the national SDG priorities. In Nepal, the government has started to mainstream the SDGs into national planning and budgeting systems. The annual programmes and budgets of 2016/17 and 2017/18 have been aligned with the SDGs by introducing SDGs coding to each programme. Honduras mentioned actions taken to link budgeting with the SDGs. This includes a pilot project which establishes guidelines helping identify how resources in the annual budget plans can be oriented to achieve the SDGs across the National Planning System. As noted in the report of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the government of Curaçao is using the SDGs, and particularly the SDG indicators, to enhance cooperation between ministries in drawing up multi-year budgets for policy programmes on youth, safety and economic growth.

Countries reported on making use of tools such as the Mainstreaming and Accelerating Policy Support (MAPS) and the Rapid Integrated Assessment (Benin), as well as the regulatory impact assessment (the Czech Republic). The report of the Kingdom of the Netherlands notes that Aruba and St Maarten, are using the MAPS approach to ensure full engagement with the 2030 Agenda. Togo used an SDG target prioritization grid (TPG) as a tool to determine which targets should be treated as a priority in a country or region based on the order of importance of the target and its expected performance. Several countries reported on using the OECD study entitled “Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets” in the preparation of their reviews (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Slovenia and Sweden).

Experiences gained from the MDGs

Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, and Maldives were among the countries that noted that the experience of integrating the MDGs into national development strategies, including through national indicators and targets, could contribute to the implementation of the SDGs. Benin reported that one of the primary lessons learnt from the MDG implementation related to the governance of the process, which included the standard of activities covering coordination, spending, and monitoring and evaluation. Costa Rica reported that national priority issues identified during national consultations on the post-2015 development agenda, complemented by lessons learnt during the implementation of the MDGs, served as a preparatory process for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Jordan reported that the successes in building on national planning and institutional frameworks achieved during the MDG implementation should continue and be further elaborated upon to realise the SDGs. Peru described the open and inclusive character of national consultations in the context of the post-2015 development, which prioritized the voices of people traditionally excluded from decision-making processes, including indigenous Amazonian and high-Andean women, people with disabilities, and people living with HIV/AIDS.

Kenya highlighted that the experience with the implementation of the MDGs in the country showed that progress in the implementation of such commitments depends on effective partnerships with the active engagement of all stakeholders including government, civil society, parliament, the private sector, and the United Nations system, among others. Nepal noted that partnerships between the government, the private sector, cooperatives, civil society, and development partners during the period covering the MDGs were instrumental in reducing poverty and improving social indicators. Nigeria, in building on the experience of the MDGs, developed and disseminated an MDGs End-point Report (2015) as a national case-study of remarkable progress that will be further consolidated, deepened and built upon for sustainability. Reflecting on the experience of implementing the MDGs, Guatemala noted the absence of long-term vision for national development, inadequate coordination and follow-up mechanisms, and weaknesses in the system of monitoring and evaluation.

VI. Institutions for implementing the 2030 Agenda

This section examines institutions and mechanisms put in place to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. All countries reported progress in establishing and/or strengthening existing institutional frameworks, inter-ministerial coordinating offices, committees, or commissions. Important features of these institutional frameworks were the emphasis on coherence, integration, coordination and

multi-sectoral involvement. Many countries are also using these structures for monitoring and tracking progress of the implementation of the SDGs.

Countries have a variety of different mechanisms and bodies making up their institutional frameworks, multi-faceted in nature, including coordinating mechanisms at the highest level of government, and coordination of implementation by specific ministries. The involvement of parliaments, sub-national, and local governments can also be observed. Many countries have also put in place multi-stakeholder mechanisms, in line with whole-of-society approaches.

Countries addressed the institutional dimension of the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda at the national level. One aspect that was covered relates to structures at the high political level, which are typically concerned with broad vision and strategic policy direction, national priorities, and the integration of global commitments and frameworks. Here countries are either using existing structures, such as commissions and cabinet committees, or establishing new ones. The establishment of mechanisms to coordinate the technical work of different parts of government, as well as with stakeholders outside the government, can also be observed. Secondly, countries have also reported on measures to strengthen line ministries, enhancing their capacity for delivery, as well as for coordination and cooperation with other government agencies.

Mechanisms for decision making on the 2030 Agenda implementation



Afghanistan

The VNR reports indicate that countries generally have some form of high-level entity that makes political decisions on the country's vision, priorities and development frameworks through which the 2030 Agenda is to be implemented. In most cases, these entities already existed prior to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Thus, for example Afghanistan has the High Council of Ministers that was already in place as part of the country's government structure. The council oversees and supervises the "nationalisation", alignment and implementation process of the SDGs in

the country and ensures that all budget entities have fully included SDG targets and indicators in their development strategies and policies. In Argentina, the National Council for Coordination of Social Policies (Consejo Nacional de Coordinación de Políticas Sociales) has been in existence since 2003, dating from the implementation period of the MDGs, but was strengthened by a decree of the present government, by which the Council is entrusted with coordination of implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda.

Among the countries which have established new entities is Costa Rica, in the form of a High-level Sustainable Development Goals Council, which is chaired jointly by the President, Minister of Planning, Minister of Environment and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Nigeria has established the Presidential Committee on SDGs and a post of a Senior Special Assistant to the President on the SDGs, which acts as a link between the committee and coordination mechanisms in other parts of government and other branches, as well as with stakeholders.

Mechanisms for inter-ministerial and multi-sectoral coordination and coherence



Republic of Botswana

All VNR countries are using either existing mechanisms or have created new mechanisms to achieve coherence and coordination in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Most of them have two tiers. One is a decision-making one which defines how to achieve coherence in implementation, usually coordinated either by a President's or Prime Minister's Office, a coordinating ministry or a coordinating body and directly responsible to the President, Prime Minister or a high-level council; and the other one is technical, where experts provide advice and evidence

on different aspects and areas of implementation to inform the decision-making of the first tier. The latter often has working groups to deal with sectoral issues.

Thus, in Bangladesh, the Prime Minister formed an inter-ministerial SDG monitoring and implementation committee comprised of Secretaries from 21 Ministries. To head the committee, a high-level position, that of Principal Coordinator (SDG Affairs) was created in the Prime Minister's Office, with a part of the Planning Commission serving as Secretariat. In Belarus, the President has established the post of a National Coordinator for the Achievement of the SDGs, who chairs the National Council for Sustainable Development, which consists of 30 relevant national and regional government bodies. In Belize, implementation of the national framework is coordinated jointly by the Ministry of Sustainable Development and the Ministry of Economic Development through five technical inter-ministerial committees. Botswana has a National Steering Committee (NSC), which is co-chaired by the government and the United Nations, with members including government departments, the private sector, development partners, youth groups, the national assembly, and trade unions. Japan established a new cabinet body, the SDGs Promotion Headquarters, headed by the Prime Minister, which is intended to foster close cooperation among relevant governmental agencies and lead effective implementation measures.

Institutional structure for sustainable development in the Czech Republic

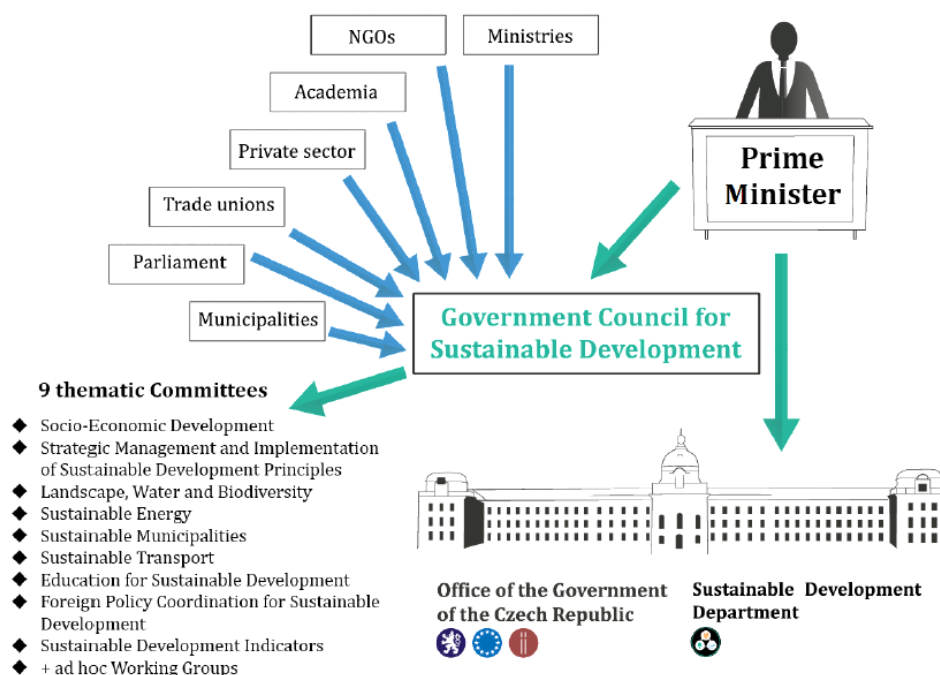


Figure 10 - Institutional structure for sustainable development in the Czech Republic

Source: the 2017 Voluntary National Review Report of the Czech Republic

Some donor countries reported on their implementation arrangements in two parts, outlining institutions concerned with domestic implementation, as well as addressing the dimension of international cooperation. For example, Denmark reported that national implementation is coordinated by the Ministry of Finance through an inter-ministerial SDG working group and bilaterally between the Ministry of Finance and the line ministries, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for the SDGs in the context of the United Nations and other international fora.

Coordinating mechanisms at multiple levels of government, including local government

The VNR reports reflect the recognition that effective vertical integration promotes the achievement of the SDGs across all parts of country and facilitates implementation at all levels of local government.

Furthermore, a number of countries noted the importance of decentralisation, which enables levels of government closest to communities to take charge of their development priorities and assume ownership of initiatives.

Reporting countries have established structures to link national with sub-national, regional and local governments to strengthen their capacity to implement the 2030 Agenda. Such structures assume added importance in countries with a federal system. Brazil, for example, in 2016, established the National Commission for the Sustainable Development Goals as the main institutional mechanism for the

implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The National Commission is a body of an advisory nature, responsible for conducting the process of integration, engagement and dialogue with federal entities and civil society, aiming to internalize, disseminate and confer transparency to the 2030 Agenda. It is composed of 16 representatives from federal, state, district and municipal governments and civil society. (See below figure 11). Belgium has put in place the Inter-Ministerial Conference for Sustainable Development, composed of federal, regional and community ministers responsible for sustainable development and development cooperation. It is the central coordination mechanism for dialogue between the various federal and federated authorities implementing the 2030 Agenda. In India, the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog), with the Prime Minister as its chairperson, provides overall coordination and leadership.

Structure for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in Brazil

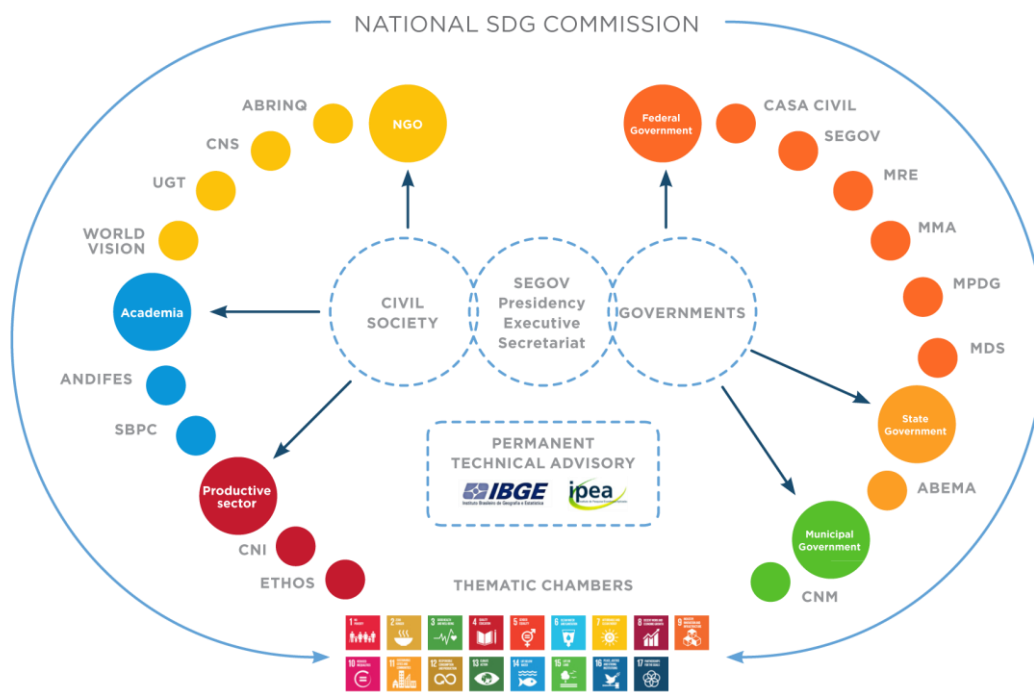


Figure 11 - Structure for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in Brazil

Source: the 2017 Voluntary National Review Report of Brazil

Managing for results – pilot municipalities in Honduras

Within the framework of the Country Vision (2010-2038) and national plan (2010-2022), Honduras has committed to promoting a modern, efficient and decentralized State, with goal of achieving a level of decentralization of public investment at the municipal level of 40 per cent. The implementation of the Country Vision has faced the challenge of strengthening the capacity of municipal governments for efficient planning and management of public resources. In this context, the Inter-American Development Bank is providing technical assistance designed to improve the public finance management systems of the participating municipalities (Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, and Santa Rosa de Copan) through the development and implementation of planning, monitoring and evaluation instruments aimed at managing for results. In this framework, actions have been taken to align guidelines so that all planning by the three municipalities is linked to the 2030 Agenda. To this end, during the first quarter of 2017 the following actions were carried out:

- Socialization workshop with technical personnel and authorities regarding the scope of the 2030 Agenda.
- Preparation of a strategy proposal for linking municipal planning with the 2030 Agenda.
- Preliminary diagnosis for the conceptual and functional design of a monitoring system and evaluation of municipal development plans, with a focus on results.

Source: adapted from the 2017 Voluntary National Review Report of Honduras

Figure 12 -Pilot municipalities in Honduras

Countries recognized that local governments are at the frontline of delivering services and have critical role in achieving the SDGs. Local governments are closer to citizens and rooted in local practice and realities. Several countries, among them Belgium, Denmark, and Sweden underlined that decentralization meant that local governments were responsible for a large share of service delivery and public spending. Indonesia noted that local authorities had a degree of flexibility that enabled them to serve as sites for innovation and experimentation.

Several countries reported that steps are underway to integrate the SDGs into plans at the local and city level, among them Denmark, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, the Maldives, Nepal, the Netherlands, and Sweden. For instance, the Local Government Authority of the Maldives has aligned its five-year Development Plan (2017-2021), to be implemented by island councils, with the SDGs. In Nepal, the government has started SDG mainstreaming at the central level, but noted that carrying this process through at the provincial and local levels will be a major challenge, since planning and budgeting mechanisms remain to be established. The Czech Republic noted that the inclusiveness of local policy-making can be enhanced by increasing the number of municipalities adopting Local Agenda 21 and community-led development methods, which help to legitimize decisions made by democratically elected representatives.

National associations of local governments are helping municipalities to implement the 2030 Agenda by raising awareness and providing information about the goals, developing methods for implementation, and promoting knowledge-sharing, as well as facilitating cross-sectoral partnerships. For example, Local Government Denmark (KL), is establishing an internal initiative to ensure proactive implementation of the SDGs. Moreover, local governments have a long tradition of engaging in capacity development and peer-

to-peer projects across the globe, as was noted by, among others, Belgium, Denmark, and the Netherlands. For instance, in the Netherlands this occurs through the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), which represents all municipalities in the Netherlands in international policy dialogues, including on the SDGs, through United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). Individual local governments also participate in international networks to exchange experiences with sustainable development.

Involvement of Parliaments

Parliaments have a critical role in SDG implementation through their oversight and legislative functions, including adoption of budget and many countries emphasised the importance of meaningfully engaging them. Many parliaments have established committees on the 2030 Agenda and SDGs and many countries have the executive part of government organise regular dialogues and briefings for the parliamentarians. Some also included members of parliament (MPs) in their delegations when they came to present the country's VNR at the 2017 HLPF.

Bangladesh reported that the government held several consultations with MPs to seek their guidance in localising the goals and targets of the SDGs. The Lower House of the Parliament of India, for example, has organised several discussions on the SDGs with parliamentarians from both Houses as part of the Speaker's Research Initiative. In Argentina, the legislative branch of Government has been involved in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs through aligning the legislation and budget with national priorities for implementation. In Belgium, parliaments at the federal and sub-national levels are engaged in 2030 Agenda implementation. It is intended that, starting in autumn 2017, each federal parliamentary committee will integrate into its work the SDGs relevant for its substantive policy area. In Ethiopia, the Growth and Transformation Plan, which is a national framework for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, was adopted by the Parliament and the MPs were present at all national consultations. The Standing Committee of Parliament also receives annual monitoring reports on the implementation.

Challenges

Achieving progress on the SDGs will require governments to work across policy areas; however, several countries emphasised that policy coherence and multi-sectoral coordination still presents a major challenge for many countries.

Some countries have also linked the institutional set-up for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with SDG 16. For example, Benin reported on its initiative of stepping up transparency and anti-corruption laws. Chile is strengthening its institutions as a matter of priority to reduce poverty and increase inclusion. El Salvador has made transparency of institutions and effective security for citizens one of its three priorities. The Czech Republic noted that transparency, accountability and effectiveness of public institution are at the core of its vision aimed at achieving a robust and resilient governance structure that is democratic and efficient in the long-term.

VII. Coherence with regional and global frameworks

Countries are mainstreaming and integrating the 2030 Agenda in conjunction with regional and international policy frameworks.

Countries reported that they had pursued pro-poor policies and mainstreamed global frameworks such as the Istanbul Programme of Action for LDCs, the Sendai Framework, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. With respect to CEDAW, countries noted the implementation of the Convention at the national level, as well as promotion of the ratification of the Convention and its Optional Protocol at the international level. Among the other instruments referred to are the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, and other multilateral environmental agreements.



Republic of Cyprus

Countries noted that national plans and strategies were being aligned not only with the 2030 Agenda, but also with regional frameworks, for example the African Union Agenda 2063. With regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda within the European Union, Portugal referred to a communication of the European Commission entitled “Next steps for a sustainable European future”, which sets out how the Agenda is to be implemented within the Union. Countries highlighted the changes the SDGs are making at the level of regional cooperation. Cyprus, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, and Slovenia were among the countries that reported on their work to ensure that European Union policies and actions support the implementation of the SDGs. It was noted that the revised New European Consensus on Development, adopted in May 2017, is adapted to the 2030 Agenda and reflects its key themes.

Sweden highlighted the need to work with international financial institutions, including the World Bank Group, the International Monetary Fund and with regional investment and development banks, so that their operations will contribute to the 2030 Agenda in accordance with their respective mandates.

Countries referred to other international bodies that have undertaken efforts to align their policies and instruments with the 2030 Agenda – for example Portugal has established a contact network on partnerships and experience-sharing among the Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries). Countries also highlighted other avenues for partnerships such as the Arctic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers (Denmark); SIDS regional partnerships facilitated by the EU’s Overseas Countries and Territories Association; the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) (the Netherlands); multi-stakeholder coalitions such as the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) and the Scaling Up Nutrition initiative (SUN); and the Global Partnership on Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) (the Netherlands). Thailand noted that in its capacity as the Coordinator of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), it promotes complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the 2030 Agenda.

Countries also reported on actions by the private sector to integrate the SDGs in their business models, strategies and investments, including by implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and engagement in the UN Global Compact.

VIII. Stakeholder Engagement

There is a broad consensus that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires meaningful engagement of “all countries and all people, collaborating in partnership”. Thus, “whole-of-government” and “whole-of-society” concepts have been referred to in various forums. There are institutionalised mechanisms established for stakeholder engagement, as well as ad-hoc arrangements ranging from stakeholder consultations during decision-making processes, to the establishment of multi-stakeholder partnerships for targeted goals, to stakeholder contributions in monitoring and reporting, including during the preparations of VNR reports themselves. As in the 2016 Synthesis report, the involvement of parliaments is dealt with in the section on institutions.

Institutions for stakeholder engagement

As outlined in Chapter 6 on Institutions to implement the 2030 Agenda, all countries have either adapted existing institutions or created new ones for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national level. Many of them (for example, Afghanistan, Argentina, Bangladesh, Belize, Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Honduras, Kenya, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, Peru, Thailand, and Zimbabwe) have explicitly incorporated stakeholder engagement in their SDG-related institutions. These institutions will help governments treat stakeholder engagement as a continuous process, which tends to be more effective for building trust and fostering collaborative relationships.

One variant of stakeholder platforms that is observed in the reports consists of two levels - a level that is dedicated to overall strategic guidance, coupled with a second one for technical or thematic coordination, in which stakeholders are represented. Kenya provides an example of this approach, where the Ministry of Devolution and Planning is mandated to coordinate the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. The SDGs Coordinating Department has been established within the Ministry, supported by an Inter-Agency Technical Committee (IATC), comprising of officers from key government ministries, departments, agencies, civil society organizations and the private sector. For ownership and ease of follow-up, entry points for the private sector, CSOs, sub-national governments, youth and persons with disabilities are typically their umbrella bodies, such as Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA), SDGs Kenya Forum, the Council of Governors (CoG), National Youth Council and the Association of Persons Living with Disabilities. Similar arrangements can also be seen in Argentina, Maldives, Nepal, and Zimbabwe. In Peru, monitoring of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda has been organized in three complementary levels; the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics (INEI) monitoring the global level indicators; the National Centre for Strategic Planning (CEPLAN) guiding the process of construction of the concerted vision of the country's future by 2030; and thirdly the concerted follow-up carried out jointly by the State and civil society, through the Round Table to Combat Poverty (MCLCP).



Honduras

A slightly different institutional arrangement was established in Honduras, with representation of stakeholders in both the high-level commission and the technical commission. Both commissions are made up of key actors from the public sector, the private sector, workers' and campesinos' organizations, academia, organised civil society, and municipal governments. However, the main challenge reported is to ensure sustained involvement of all actors.

A number of reporting countries (Afghanistan, Benin, Brazil, Botswana and Thailand) describe a third category, where a central mechanism is established, directly chaired by high-level officials for strategic guidance and simultaneously provides a platform for stakeholder engagement. Botswana established a National Steering Committee (NSC), which drives policy agenda and is co-chaired by the government and the United Nations. Its membership is derived from government, private sector, development partners, youth groups, the National Assembly, Ntlo ya Dikgosi (formerly House of Chiefs) and civil society organizations.

Costa Rica is a relatively unique case where a more flatly organized “National Pact” for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda has been signed by the three branches of government, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, public universities, local governments and the business sector. The United Nations system and the National Office of the Ombudsman are included as honorary witnesses.

Stakeholder participation in SDG-related decision-making processes



Italy

A large number of countries from all regions reported that stakeholder consultation is the most common form of stakeholder engagement adopted in the course of national efforts in assessing SDGs for national implementation and in formulating national strategies and plans for the implementation of the SDGs. Many such consultations were conducted through the institutional platform mentioned above. Approaches used included roundtables, seminars, workshops, bilateral discussions and online channels; consultations were held involving various stakeholder

groups, such as NGOs, CSOs, private sector, academia, youth organisations, labour associations, local authorities, gender related entities, and parliament. (See below for an example from Italy's stakeholder consultation process leading up to its national strategy).

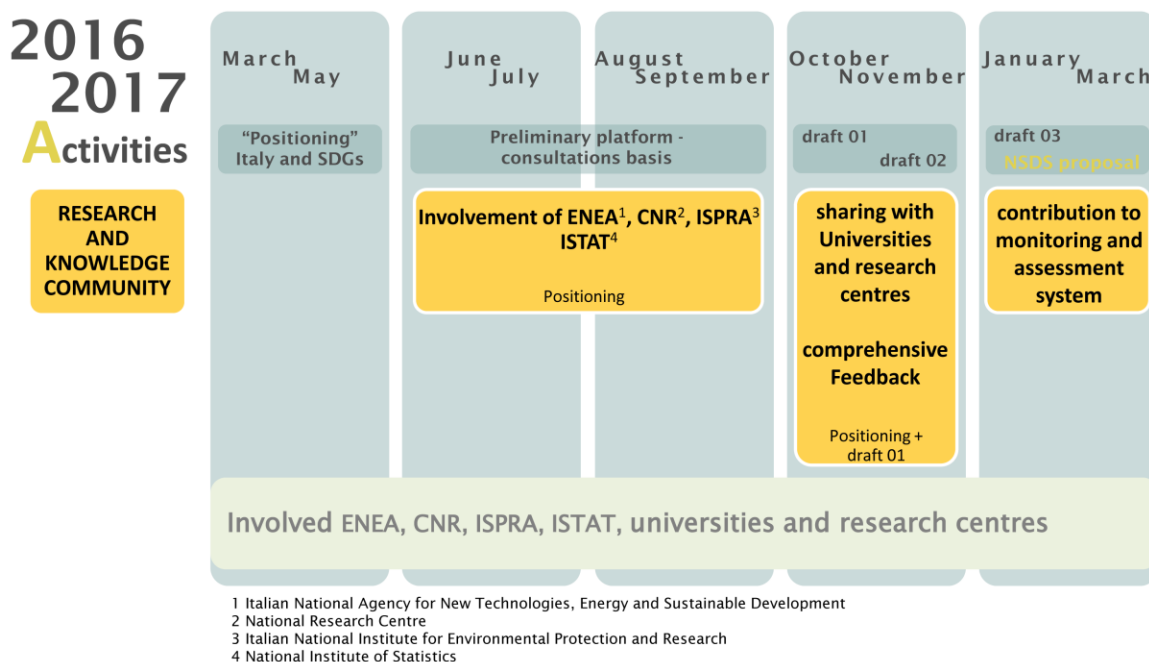


Figure 13 - Italy 2016-17 Research and Knowledge Community

Source: the 2017 Voluntary National Review Report of Italy

In many countries, stakeholder consultations were carried out through stakeholder networks which are typically self-organised. For example, in Brazil, networks have been created in the form of coalitions of organisations of civil society, private sector, governments and academia to broaden, democratise and enhance the debate on the SDGs in the country and to mobilise, discuss and propose effective means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda. In Belgium, various advisory councils bring together different societal groups, including social partners (trade unions and employers' organisations), as well as environmental, development cooperation-related, consumers, women, youth, and academic, organisations. In Italy, in May 2017, the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS) gathered over 150 organisations in the economic and social field and launched the first Sustainable Development Festival, a large-scale awareness-raising campaign to foster cultural-political reflections on the issue across the country. The festival is expected to turn into an annual event and a point of reference for all SDG-linked initiatives.



The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Many countries also reported on special efforts during these consultations to reach out to marginalised groups to ensure that no one is left behind. For example, Azerbaijan made special efforts to hear voices of women, youth and disadvantaged groups, particularly refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). In Jordan, special attention was dedicated to ensuring the inclusion of women, youth, children, and people with disabilities. Representatives of Syrian and other refugees were also involved in the workshops and discussions. Bangladesh has started systematic consultations with high school and university students as well as wide consultations with ethnic minorities and other marginalised groups to include their ideas and address their needs in SDGs' policies, plans and implementation. Further information on measures targeting marginalised groups is contained in Chapter 3 on leaving no one behind.

Stakeholder engagement in SDGs implementation



Japan

Thanks to awareness-raising activities (see Chapter 9), individuals, organisations and businesses have started voluntarily incorporating sustainability considerations into their day-to-day decision-making, directly contributing to much-needed behavioural changes for the achievement of the SDGs. As highlighted in Chapter 10 on the means of implementation and in the section on SDG 17, there is more and more emphasis on multi-stakeholder partnerships involving a wide range of stakeholders such as NGOs, CSOs, academia, local government, the private sector, scientists, innovators, youth, and parliamentarians. This section highlights

some concrete measures of a more cross-cutting nature reported by countries to enable, scale up, or guide targeted groups of stakeholders to meaningfully contribute to the implementation of the SDGs. For more goal-specific stakeholder engagement initiatives, please refer to Chapter 2 on Goals and Targets as well as to the multi-stakeholder partnerships section in Chapter 10 on Means of Implementation.

Countries reported on a range of rules, regulations, standards, and incentives to mainstream sustainability into business practices. The Botswana Stock Exchange has signed up for the UN Sustainable Stock Exchange (SSE) Initiative, introducing Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reporting in the capital markets landscape. The Jakarta Stock Exchange has launched the Sri Kehati Index, consisting of listed companies that meet sustainable and responsible investment criteria. Japan's Corporate Governance Code (JCGC), formulated by the TSE in June 2015, provides that listed companies should take appropriate measures to address sustainability issues, including social and environmental matters. Various tools and initiatives have also been developed to improve companies' environmental performance and energy efficiency (e.g. EMAS, EU Ecolabel, grant schemes for the use of renewable energy sources).

Cyprus, Denmark, and Thailand reported on the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, with Cyprus highlighting specific tools such as certifications of good business practices against gender discrimination, competitions for good practices regarding safety and health at work, codes of good practice regarding disability discrimination in employment and occupation, the prevention of sexual harassment and harassment in employment, and the fight against racism.

Innovative methods to gather innovative solutions for concrete sustainable development challenges were also described. For example, Brazil's SDGs Lab is a laboratory dedicated to solving public problems with the help of multiple protagonists for the co-production of solutions, alternatives and partnerships to overcome the challenges involved in the implementation of SDGs in the country. Initiatives were also reported that link stakeholders to community-based contributions. In Nigeria, the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Sustainable Development Goals (OSSAP-SDGs) has entered into partnership with the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) to train graduating youths to become SDGs champions in their local communities and areas of national service where they are deployed upon graduation.

Stakeholder engagement in monitoring and reporting, including VNRs



Czech Republic

For countries participating in the Voluntary National Reviews at the global level, stakeholder engagement in the preparation process is well-recognised as a must-have element by all, although the actual level of participation varies due to capacity and resource limitations. Through similar channels mentioned above, various representative stakeholder groups were generally consulted, online or offline, or given opportunities to provide input to the VNR reports in all VNR countries. Argentina, Bangladesh, Belgium, Belize, Costa Rica, Denmark, and Ethiopia, shared draft

reports with stakeholders for their feedback and comments. Denmark and Sweden went a step further to include an annex based on stakeholder-generated content. Some countries either included stakeholder representatives in the delegation sitting on the podium during the VNR presentation (Azerbaijan, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Jordan and Uruguay), or assigned them specific speaking roles (Argentina, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Italy, Japan, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Nigeria, Slovenia, Sweden and Thailand) during their VNR presentations at the HLPF.

Some countries addressed so-called shadow or complementary reports prepared by civil society. In Portugal, NGOs, with the support of the Camões Institute for Cooperation and Language and the United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe, are planning on preparing periodic sectoral shadow reports.



Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Besides the contribution in reporting, as mentioned in Chapter 4 on monitoring and data, Belarus, Ethiopia, and Nigeria are among the countries that have also mobilised stakeholders to contribute to data collection to meet the sizeable data needs of the 2030 Agenda. Stakeholders also helped with the development of tools for data collection. For example, in Denmark, the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) has contributed to the development of "the Indigenous Navigator", a community-based tool for collecting disaggregated data to monitor the

implementation of Indigenous Peoples' Rights in relation to the SDGs.

Challenges

Meaningful stakeholder engagement should build on the foundation of openness, transparency, access to information, fair representation, respect, and trust. Jordan highlighted difficulties reaching the most marginalised, the tendency to involve larger non-governmental organizations (NGOs) rather than smaller, community-based organizations (CBOs) and individuals. Argentina, Bangladesh and El Salvador also acknowledged that ensuring meaningful stakeholder participation and maintaining collaborative relationships remained a major challenge. Honduras pointed out the difficulty in designing and implementing an effective awareness and communication strategy while lacking sustainable and sufficient institutional and financial resources. Kenya pointed to high stakeholder expectations as a challenge, as creating synergies and maintaining strong collaborative relationships with stakeholders involves renegotiating the roles, responsibilities and relationships between different stakeholders. Jordan also pointed to time constraints posed by external deadlines as a major challenge influencing the scope of stakeholder consultation and outreach reporting countries can manage.

IX. Awareness-raising

Awareness-raising among all stakeholders is crucial to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda and ensure that no one is left behind. Governments, civil society, business, and the wider public need to know about the SDGs to act upon them – to be agents of change for a more sustainable future. This chapter highlights different ways and tools that countries have used to raise awareness and increase ownership of the SDGs. Activities ranged from organising conferences, workshops and festivals to broader communication campaigns, using different kinds of media, including social media. Many countries reported on awareness-raising initiatives with civil society organisations and highlighted the importance of including youth in such initiatives. Countries also noted that education was a powerful tool to foster awareness of the SDGs.

An important part of implementing the 2030 Agenda is engaging the whole of society. Many countries highlighted activities to raise awareness and increase ownership of the SDGs among the population. Activities included a variety of awareness-raising initiatives such as workshops, seminars, conferences, symposiums, training opportunities, and public debates in parliament. Countries also outlined outreach events of a more public character such as awards, contests and festivals. For example, Brazil noted the

SDGs Music Project, for mobilisation and engagement of the artistic and cultural sector with an emphasis on outlying and vulnerable areas. In Belgium (Wallonia), a sustainable development fair is organized annually to raise awareness among citizens on sustainable development, while a film festival about the SDGs has also been created.

Provinces and municipalities have an important role in spreading awareness, and many countries highlighted the importance of awareness-raising activities at sub-national and local levels. In the Netherlands for example, the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) has launched the Municipalities4GlobalGoals campaign to promote awareness of the SDGs among municipalities and help them contribute to the goals.

To reach out to a broader public, many countries have developed communication campaigns through mass media or used information and communication technologies, for example social media, the establishment of online portals and websites, online streaming of workshops, and production of flyers and posters. Argentina, Guatemala, India and Kenya highlighted social media campaigns to reach out to the public.

Many countries worked together with civil society, or highlighted initiatives by civil society, to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda among various actors and citizens in general. The importance of raising awareness among youth was emphasized. Many countries, among them Afghanistan, Argentina, Denmark, Jordan, Nigeria, Sweden, Tajikistan, Thailand and Togo mentioned activities for, and with, youth. Other forms of outreach comprised engaging celebrities or using art. Denmark mentioned the initiative taken by a non-profit organization to engage artists and designers to create artistic interpretations of the 17 SDGs.

Education was recognised as a powerful tool to foster awareness of sustainable development. Many countries reported on integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into curricula and educational programmes, as well as producing educational materials on the SDGs. Zimbabwe outlined the launch of a SDG lecture series in universities.

X. Means of implementation

Countries addressed means of implementation as a cross-cutting issue, with material contained variously in their review of the SDGs, under SDG 17, as well as in a number of cases in a separate section on means of implementation. The majority of countries reported on their progress on issues related to means of implementation in their separate section on SDG 17. Due to the overlapping nature of the thematic areas, some of the issues have been addressed in Chapter 2 on Goals and Targets, in the section on SDG 17, while others are covered in the current section.

International cooperation

Several countries reported on their actions to implement the 2030 Agenda through bilateral, regional and international cooperation, including in collaboration with the United Nations system and international financial institutions. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Czech Republic, and Sweden highlighted the role of the Addis Ababa Action Plan (AAAA) for ensuring the means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda.

Belgium, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Sweden, and Thailand stressed the importance of policy coherence, noting the interconnectedness of different thematic areas and the impacts of national actions in other

parts of the world. The Czech Republic is promoting a broader concept of policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD), supporting the paradigm shift from the “do no harm” concept towards complex and integrated solutions built on partnerships and dialogue with developing countries and all the relevant stakeholders at the national level.

The Czech Republic, Denmark, Japan, and Sweden were among the donor countries that reported on integrating the SDGs in their development cooperation strategies, as well as highlighting thematic priorities. The Kingdom of the Netherlands, for example, reported having four priorities: water, security and the rule of law, food security, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Denmark applies a human rights-based approach and considers SDG 16 and SDG 17 to be the foundation for its entire development engagement.

Countries also noted numerous other initiatives and fora for SDG implementation such as OECD’s Sustainable Development Investment Partnership (Jordan), Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP) - Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (Portugal), India’s International Solar Alliance which aims to reduce the price of solar energy, the India-Africa Forum Summit and BRICS Summit (India), and the Sustainable Development Goals Centre for Africa (SDGC/A) (Japan).

Financing

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Denmark, Japan, and Nepal highlighted, that given the challenges involved, successful implementation of the SDGs will hinge on finding effective approaches for mobilising both public and private resources, both at national and international levels. Countries reported on their actions to increase the revenues from all sources and on creating an enabling environment for attracting financing.

While the expectations are that financing needs for SDG implementation will be considerable, concrete cost estimates are still lacking in many countries. Kenya, Nepal and Nigeria referred to the need to prepare needs assessments and cost analysis for the SDG implementation, and Ethiopia is conducting an SDG financing needs-assessment with support from the UN Country Team.

Domestic financing

Numerous countries stressed the importance of raising domestic revenue for increasing SDG financing, and Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cyprus, Ethiopia, Jordan, India, Maldives, and Togo described their tax and fiscal reforms to this end. Afghanistan reported that currently 95 per cent of its development budget is donor funded. India reported on direct tax reforms as well as the Goods and Services Tax (GST), a uniform and simplified form of indirect taxation. The innovative Swachh Bharat Cess (Clean India Cess) tax has also been levied for mobilising resources for the Clean India Mission. Indonesia reported on efforts to improve the quality of government spending, including by effective and efficient planning for, and development of, banking services.

Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Japan, the Netherlands and Portugal reported on their willingness and actions to support capacity building for enhanced revenue mobilisation, particularly in tax matters. The government of Japan invites practitioners from tax authorities in developing countries to Japan for seminars on improving tax policy and administration. Denmark reported on assisting developing countries by supporting them in mobilising domestic resources, including through strengthening and enhancing the

effectiveness of the national and local tax systems and combatting tax havens. Nigeria reported its efforts, in collaboration with like-minded countries, in advocating for the return of illicit and stolen assets to countries of origin, including co-hosting three seminars with Norway on combating illicit financial flows.

International financing

Bangladesh, India, and Nepal were among the countries that referred to the need for donor countries to uphold their commitment of providing 0.7 per cent of GNI as ODA. Similarly, Bangladesh and Nepal outlined their commitment to allocate 0.15 percent of GNI for the LDCs. India reiterated that developed countries have an essential obligation to provide financial assistance to developing countries, especially for global public goods such as climate change mitigation and control of pandemics.

The Czech Republic, Denmark, Japan, and the Netherlands addressed their commitment to the ODA target, with some highlighting their ODA priorities and thematic focus areas. Japan noted that it is important to use ODA in a strategic and effective way, bearing in mind financing from the private sector as well as domestic resources in developing countries. Denmark aims at using ODA to leverage private investments and, in addition to existing development funds, the government is preparing to launch an SDG Fund in 2018 with a contribution of US\$450 million, which will be matched by an equal contribution from institutional investors.

Other sources of financing

Countries also reported on their efforts to attract funding from other sources. Bangladesh and Zimbabwe stressed the importance of remittances from the diaspora. Bangladesh reported on fiscal incentives for remittances, and noted that the government had recently decided to abolish all charges for remittances made through formal banking channels. India noted its proactive policy reforms to attract foreign direct investments, including opening key sectors like defence and railways to such investment, as did Togo, which highlighted its aim of showcasing good macroeconomic management to attract investment.

South-South cooperation

Many countries underlined that the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires the utilisation of all forms of cooperation available and highlighted the roles of South-South and triangular cooperation in this regard. Indonesia noted that such cooperation is implemented to pursue the common interests of developing countries by addressing a fairer, equitable, and mutually beneficial world order, as well as to promote economic diplomacy with the spirit of solidarity among developing countries.

Azerbaijan, India, and Thailand were among the countries that stressed sharing of best practices and knowledge as one of the key functions of South-South cooperation. In its report, the Kingdom of the Netherlands stated that in 2016 Aruba partnered with the Netherlands, the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO) and UNDP to establish the UN Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Development for Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Indonesia seeks to involve academics, community organisations and the private sector to establish more inclusive cooperation that accommodates the aspirations, views, and participation of various parties.

Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, the Netherlands, Thailand, and Zimbabwe were among the countries that highlighted regional South-South cooperation. Bangladesh reported on utilising South-

South cooperation for widening internet connectivity, and it has collaborated with Nepal, Bhutan and India to establish a regional information highway through South Asian Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) in order to ensure broadband information communication, information-related knowledge exchange, and access to ICT in inaccessible areas. India noted that it launched the South Asia Satellite in May 2017 for sharing data with neighbours.

The importance of South-South cooperation in multilateral fora was also referred to. India noted that it has been following the principles of South-South Cooperation in its bilateral and multilateral engagements, which helps to foster the southern narrative on development and sustainability at multilateral forums. Malaysia reported that its contributions to South-South cooperation have been strengthened through Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).



Chile

Chile reported on the development of the South-South Chile and Mexico Fund, where both countries contribute equally to the implementation of activities in Chile, Mexico and in third countries. Indonesia outlined steps to address challenges related to South-South and triangular cooperation, including improving the accuracy of budget monitoring, the establishment of evaluation guidelines for cooperation activities, and the development of a communication strategy for Indonesian cooperation activities.

Partnerships

Numerous countries highlighted in their reports that the key to success in attaining the SDGs is the willingness and resolve to form partnerships at national and international levels. Belgium, Brazil, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Portugal, Qatar, Slovenia, Tajikistan and Thailand were among the countries that reported on national level, multi-stakeholder partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders such as local governments, NGOs, academia, the private sector, international organisations, and other actors, including parliamentarians, scientists and cooperatives stakeholders. Denmark noted that partnerships are essential for achieving the SDGs as vehicles for innovation, investment, and for disseminating solutions and leaving no one behind. They are preconditions for achieving the SDGs, as all ideas, knowledge, experience and capital are needed to deliver the solutions to the challenges that the SDGs present. More information on countries' stakeholder engagement can be found in Chapter 8.

Many countries reported on private sector participation in the implementation of the SDGs. Among the SDGs and targets considered suitable for public-private partnerships were infrastructure, (Honduras, Maldives and Nepal), job creation and employment (Bangladesh and Portugal), growth, and the delivery of key services such as education, sanitation and health (Bangladesh and Maldives). For the health sector, public-private partnerships are particularly suitable for developing private health facilities, producing drugs and medical equipment, providing health insurance, and high-quality essential health care and affordable medicines (Nepal). Maldives noted that strengthening the laws and regulations to facilitate and

widen the private sector investment in such areas should be emphasised. Jordan has taken several steps towards reform that will serve to strengthen partnerships with the private sector to build and operate infrastructure projects and services. For Indonesia's poverty alleviation programme the non-cash distribution mechanisms in social services require partnerships between national and sub-national governments with the support of the private sector and banking systems.

Several countries also reflected on their partnerships with the United Nations system. Sweden and Denmark welcomed the reform of the United Nations in order to maximise coherence among agencies and deliver results in a consistent manner, particularly at the national level. Jordan reported that Jordan and the UN Country Team are on track to become the first formal 'Delivering as One' (DaO) country in the Arab region. Belize reported on its work as a UNDP Pilot country for SDG implementation. El Salvador and Argentina reported on their participation as one of the UN Development Group's MAPS (Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support) countries, receiving technical support from the UN system for the achievement of the SDGs. In addition, El Salvador participates together with six other countries worldwide in a pilot initiative for the monitoring of SDG 16 in the country.

Capacity-building



Sweden

Capacity-building is recognized as one of the key means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Some of the areas in which capacity-development is required in countries include: mainstreaming the SDGs into national development and sub-national plans, including gender mainstreaming (Jordan); SDG costing and budgeting (Jordan and El Salvador); monitoring, evaluation and policy formulation (Nepal); coordination mechanisms and institutional arrangements (Jordan and El Salvador); technical capacities to achieve the goals (Jordan and Panama);

management and governance capacities (Panama); and basic statistics and management of information, particularly administrative data (Kenya).

From the donor perspective, Sweden noted that many developing countries are among the most severely affected by international tax avoidance, and developing countries should be enabled to detect and counteract tax evasion and to collect taxes in accordance with their national tax legislations. Sweden supports capacity-building efforts in this area, partly through aid-financed interventions undertaken by the Swedish Tax Agency in, for example, Kenya and Cambodia.

Many of the countries highlighting the need for capacity-building also noted the demand for high-quality data and analysis for monitoring and follow-up of implementation, as well as a need to strengthen national statistical offices. Bangladesh noted that support is required for data generation and analysis at both institutional and individual levels in order to store, manage and monitor the vast amount of data required for the SDGs. Kenya reported on its National Statistics System's (NSS) limited statistical capacity and adoption of technology and innovation. From the support side, Japan noted that the United Nations Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP), the only UN statistical training institution, implements

statistical training programs including training courses for monitoring SDGs in partnership with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Countries are also aiming at enhancing the capacities of civil society and other stakeholders. In Indonesia, the Ministry of National Development Planning has conducted capacity building activities in the forms of disseminating SDGs to all stakeholders, training opportunities on mainstreaming SDGs in development plans, the development of SDGs indicators, and the formulation of action plans.

Science, technology and innovation

Science, technology and innovation (STI) can serve as enablers for SDG implementation and help countries deal with emerging issues, and numerous countries stressed their role both in their national work and in international cooperation. Several countries reported on their systematic plans and existing strategies for STI efforts, including for increasing productivity, promoting green growth and renewable energy, improving the quality of education and public health, reducing disaster risks, increasing agricultural productivity and improving waste treatment.

The link between science, technology and innovation and employment and entrepreneurship was stressed. Indonesia, for example, plans to develop techno parks at the district/municipal level and science parks at the provincial level. The aim is to create centres for the development of advanced science and technology, cultivating entrepreneurship and increasing employment opportunities. Denmark noted a project entitled DRIP which will reduce water consumption in the Danish food industry by 15–30 per cent by developing new sustainable water and production technologies without compromising on product quality and food safety.

Bangladesh and Nepal highlighted the need for technology transfer and capacity building in order to harness the full benefits of modern technologies and products. India noted the role of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) for SDGs, in this regard. Nepal noted the challenges related to copyright and patent issues and called for strengthening technology transfer under the World Trade Organisation's Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement. The Netherlands reported on its aim to guarantee open access for low- and middle-income countries to knowledge and technology that are currently protected by intellectual property rights.

Trade



Denmark

The role of a fair and rules-based multilateral trading system which respects the principles of sustainable development and enables development opportunities for all was noted in the reviews. Bangladesh, Brazil and Cyprus highlighted the role of the Doha Development Agenda and subsequent negotiations in the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The role of trade as an enabler for SDG implementation and national finance mobilization for LDCs was also highlighted. Bangladesh reported that it has been able

to take significant advantage of the preferential market access provided for its exports, particularly apparel. It also addressed current challenges, including a weak ability to comply with sanitary and phytosanitary measures, non-tariff barriers, and inadequate trade-related supply-side capacities. Denmark reported that it aims, through active involvement in the EU, to utilise trade policies to create better conditions for the least developed countries and to support the least developed countries by enabling them to take advantage of existing EU market access. The Kingdom of the Netherlands highlighted the integration of foreign trade and development cooperation policy and stated that the introduction of the aid and trade agenda had resulted in a strong focus on responsible business conduct in global value chains.

XI. Conclusion

This report synthesized the main findings from the reports prepared by the 43 countries that conducted voluntary national reviews at the 2017 High-level Political Forum. However, of necessity, the report only skims the surface of the rich content of the reports themselves. It documents the varied approaches countries are taking to implementing the 2030 Agenda, responding to their country-specific challenges and in accordance with their national circumstances, while remaining cognizant of the indivisible nature of the SDGs. Importantly, while the synthesis covers solely the reports prepared by the volunteering countries, it bears emphasizing that voluntary national review is a process, of which the report is but one component, albeit an important one.

The 43 reports, read together with those from 2016, provide a solid evidence base from which to draw insights into country-level progress, including lessons learned and challenges encountered in implementing the 2030 Agenda. At this stage in the implementation of the Agenda, many countries have focussed on outlining the institutional and policy frameworks for implementation. The reports also demonstrate that countries are going further to analyse factors behind successful implementation, as well as the conditions hampering progress. Identifying the factors that can trigger transformative change, in line with the ambition of the 2030 Agenda, is a possible area for development in future VNRs. The 47 countries that have volunteered to conduct reviews in 2018 will no doubt draw on the experiences from 2016 and 2017, while continuing to enhance the review process, including with respect to their reports. The fact that 2018 will see countries conducting a second or even third VNR will no doubt lead to a further deepening of the reviews.