

Key Messages from the Inter-Regional Workshop:

Experiences and Lessons Learned from ECOSOC National Voluntary Presentations

Kingston, Jamaica
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*Consolidated from small-group discussions on
the key messages of the workshop*

General Reflections

- The NVPs were **valuable** and should be **continued**. In addition to the learning benefits — exchange of experience and knowledge sharing — they increase **national ownership** of the the MGDs / SDGs by political leaders.
- But they need greater **visibility**.
- And we need to learn how to increase **engagement**, and increase the support of **country leadership**.
- The SDG agenda raises the bar from achieving “basic needs” to a transformational, global change. This requires **changes in mind-set, policy, institutions and implementation processes**.

The NVP Process (1)

- The structure needs to be improved to allow greater **comparability**, promote greater **continuity and consistency**, and respect **differing contexts**
- It needs to be designed so that it is a “**value-added**” for the countries, including **building capacity** and enhancing **south-south cooperation**
- But it needs to remain **flexible**: the framework needs to be adaptable and accommodate differences in systems, capacities, regions, etc.
- The issues need to be **contextualized** and take account of **local realities** to make them relevant and build buy-in.

The NVP Process (2)

- Countries need **more feedback** on the reports from the UN agencies (on the technical side), and from similar groups of countries
- **Alignment of national goals** with the MDGs / SDGs makes for better M&E; but we don't want to force countries to abandon their own goals.
- **Other countries could be involved throughout the process**, not just at the end, thereby enhancing mutual support and learning.
- The NVPs should **include the private sector and civil society**, not just government.

Data and Indicators

- Data **reliability, consistency, and capacity** remains an issue within many countries.
- But **lack of data should be taken as an obstacle** to implementation.
- Data needs to be **standardized to allow comparison** between countries.
- We need to incorporate indicators that identify and measure critical **performance and achievement gaps**
- A key question is how to deal with the question of **data gaps**, for example by estimating and optimizing existing data.
- There is a need for **integrated research** and multi-dimensional indicators, which also means reform of instruments for data collection locally.

National Institutional Issues

- **Existing institutions** and technologies, capacities, and expertise should always be the starting point, not creating new institutions. Using the existing system reduces learning time. “New programs should not necessarily mean new institutions
- **The division of power** in driving the NVP process is often a key question, with planning departments being the most natural focal point.

Regional Issues

- Emphasize the **exchange of experiences at the regional level** (because of the similarity in characteristics).
- **Divide up the NVP sessions by region**, and open participation to all who show interest in attending.
- Allow **great flexibility in the topics** that are treated in the NVPs

The UN System

- The reform process in the UN is not yet complete; the SDGs need to be more **integrated in the UN System** itself.
- The **UN Country Teams** should be linked to the follow-up of the NVPs.
- The UN System's **funding models** need to be reformed; they currently promote fragmentation, e.g. population, environment, and children are all treated separately.
- There is a concern about **conflicts** between the SDGs and the agenda of other multi-lateral institutions (such as the IMF)

UNDESA's Role

- Providing **feedback** and **analyzing** key trends, key messages, and points of comparison coming out of the review process (a challenging task)
- Acting as a “**clearing house**” of current practice, including how challenges are being addressed in legislation, policy, and analysis
- There is a need for technical support in **coordinating the organization of integrated approaches**

UNDESA's Role

- There is a need for **clarification** from UNDESA on the nature of the NVPs going forward. How will national reporting fit with other reports? What framework? Is the process political or is it a technical process?
- (A proposed clarification: *reporting* is technical, *presentation* is political.)

Other Reflections

- It is recommended to countries to **do the national voluntary presentation in their countries**, as well, to get feedback from other stakeholders.
- A **power analysis** is also necessary with regard to the financing issue, and power issues must be addressed. Most developing countries rely almost solely on the international community to finance MDG (now SDG) implementation.
- It is important to **enhance the productive sector** to support wealth creation as opposed to broadening the fiscal base, which only broadens inequality and increases poverty.
- How do we **integrate the SDGs at the national and international level**? Within countries, how do we **ensure that ministers cooperate** more on the implementation of the goals?
- **The political level overshadows the technical level**, especially certain political priorities.