



United Nations

Economic and Social Council

*“Managing the transition from the  
Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable  
development goals: What will it take”*

2015 National Voluntary Presentations

Guidance note

Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
United Nations

*Development Strategies that Work*  
[www.un.org/ecosoc/dsw](http://www.un.org/ecosoc/dsw)

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## 1. Introduction

The Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) is a key function of the Economic and Social Council, established by Heads of State and Government at the 2005 World Summit. The AMR is mandated as an instrument to track progress and promote efforts towards the realization of the internationally agreed development goals (IADGs).<sup>1</sup>

In its resolution 61/16 entitled *Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council*, the General Assembly invited Member States to make National Voluntary Presentations (NVPs) as part of the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review (AMR). The purpose of the NVPs is to assist countries to:

- a) assess progress at the national level towards achieving the United Nations development agenda;
- b) generate momentum for scaling-up and accelerating action to realize the agenda;
- c) serve as a forum for exchanging lessons learned and successful practices; and
- d) improve implementation of development strategies and policies.

Since 2007, 78 countries, developed and developing, have made National Voluntary Presentations as part of the ECOSOC AMRs. The NVPs have been a vehicle for ensuring progress and promoting exchanges of lessons learned and best practices.<sup>2</sup> ECOSOC has also emphasized that the NVPs should not be one-time events and recommends that countries follow-up on the implementation of policy recommendations, with support from the UN system where needed.

Through its resolution 67/290, the General Assembly decided to continue voluntary, state-led reviews. In particular, the General Assembly requested that the High-level Political Forum, meeting annually at the ministerial level under the auspices of ECOSOC, conduct regular reviews on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives, including those related to the means of implementation, within the context of the post-2015 development agenda. It further decided that those reviews would begin in 2016.

The 2015 ECOSOC annual theme, which will inform the review, will serve as an opportunity to transition the NVPs to this next level of engagement. The 2015 annual theme is "*Managing the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals: What will it take*". The 2015 NVPs would thus include an increased emphasis on sustainable development and the balanced integration of its three dimensions, a stronger analytical approach and format, and a move towards more rigorous reviews for deeper insight and enhanced effectiveness in advancing sustainable development.

These guidelines therefore aim to give relevant information about the 2015 NVP process, and to strengthen that process in anticipation of the transition to the HLPF regular reviews that will begin in 2016. The guidelines also provide recommendations for effective follow-up beyond the NVP Presentations at the 2015 ECOSOC High-level Segment (HLS).

The NVP presentations and discussions on country-level experiences will inform and strengthen synergies between the AMR and HLPF, which will both take place during the 2015 ECOSOC High-level Segment.

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<sup>1</sup> A/RES/60/1, Para. 155 (c)

<sup>2</sup> For a full overview of all countries and their highlighted policies, see the *Development Strategies that Work* website at [www.un.org/ecosoc/dsw](http://www.un.org/ecosoc/dsw)

## **2. The NVP process and its outcomes**

### ***NVPs and sustainable development***

The Outcome Document of the Rio+20 Conference mandated ECOSOC to play a key role in achieving the balanced integration of the three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – of sustainable development. To this end, the ECOSOC NVPs can enrich the global discussion on integration by sharing insights on ways to fulfill this important task at the national level. The NVP process provides an instrument to capture national lessons learned on sustainable development.

### ***The national report***

Preparing for the NVP typically entails two key activities: (1) drafting a national report as a background document for national consultative dialogues and/or workshops and for the National Voluntary Presentation at the ECOSOC High-level Segment; and (2) convening national consultative dialogues or national workshops to discuss the draft national report.

In this context, some of the 2015 NVP countries may wish to structure their presentations within an analytical approach that focuses on sustainable development integration. It is expected that there will be a limited number of countries giving 2015 NVPs, bearing in mind a regional balance of developed and developing, LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS.

The NVP national report serves as the basis for discussion and multi-stakeholder inputs for national-level consultations. The report assesses progress achieved and gaps remaining in the country's overall development objectives, with the aim to identify good policies, as well as those that have not worked well, and to highlight challenges. The report discusses the state of implementation of a country's national development strategy by highlighting the key features of the strategy or policies that have worked well and those that were less successful. The report can also highlight those policies/projects which have been successful in a country and could be replicated elsewhere.

The final NVP national report is submitted to the President of ECOSOC and made available to all UN Member States and Observers. At ECOSOC, the report serves as a basis for the presentations made at the Council's High-level Segment, providing important background information for the NVP Reviewers and for the interactive, moderated dialogue that follows the presentations.

The national reports provide a platform for knowledge sharing, exchanging information and strengthening accountability for sustainable development. They stimulate dialogue anchored in Member States' experiences in implementing strategies and policies towards sustainable development and serve to enhance reporting commitments at the national level.

National reports also could include assessments of financing needs. A brief overall assessment of the support of the international community as presented can be made, which includes the United Nations system and development partners, and the report identifies areas of need for scaling-up efforts to promote national priorities. The report can also shed light on the issue of national policy space and the extent to which such space may be constrained by international actions, obligations or commitments.

### *National consultations*

An initial draft of the national report is the main input for the national consultations. NVP countries hold consultative dialogues or, in the case of programme countries, national workshops, to undertake multi-stakeholder reviews. Such national consultations aim to contribute to improving public and intra-governmental debate on issues relating to the implementation of the development strategy and priority-setting in pursuit of sustainable development objectives.

National consultations assist countries in assessing progress towards their development objectives and the implementation of their national development strategies with the broad participation of key stakeholders. Participants should include policy makers, government representatives and representatives from the non-state sectors, such as think-tanks and academia, civil society and the private sector. Such broad participation facilitates engagement and ownership, the identification of successes and gaps and contributes to sharpening policy recommendations. The workshops can also be used to assess national best practices and lessons learned.

### *NVPs and the regional dimension*

Regional consultations that are held in preparation for the 2015 ECOSOC annual themes and the HLPF theme can include NVP countries from the region presenting initial findings from their national reviews. Regional level consultations can facilitate exchange of development experiences that are region-specific and enable various regional stakeholders to present views on how lessons learned from other countries can be incorporated into the implementation of the respective national development strategies or policies. NVP countries could also actively participate in other regional meetings and use existing regional cooperation arrangements to improve policies.

### *Support of the United Nations system*

The United Nations system support to the NVP process could take the form of assistance in identifying, selecting and analyzing relevant indicators and data, guiding the preparation of national reports and supporting the convening of national consultations. Such support should be progressively strengthened at the country level. The UN Country Teams' assistance in the preparation of the NVPs has been greatly acknowledged by previous NVP developing countries, and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) is a crucial vehicle for Governments and development partners to integrate policy recommendations from the global presentation and discussion into national policy instruments and strategy. DESA has also offered technical support.

### *Dissemination of national reports*

The national reports are published by the United Nations as official submissions from the NVP countries. They are translated into six working languages of the UN and become part of the official record of ECOSOC. They are also placed on the ECOSOC NVP webpage and the "Development Strategies that Work" website of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. To enhance the visibility and impact of the NVPs, the national reports are published and widely disseminated. The NVP country is responsible for making available advance capitals of the national report.

### ***Reviewers***

Approximately three NVP reviewers (any Member State or international organisation) will be selected by each presenting country at the beginning of the process.

To prepare for such an inter-action, NVP countries will share the national reports with the reviewers in advance of the presentation and could organize a meeting with the reviewers on the overall approach to the session. The reviewers will identify the key bottlenecks and, during the NVP session, pose questions to the presenting country arising from its review process, immediately following the national presentation (made by the Cabinet Minister of the presenting country).

The comments by the reviewers should provide feedback to the presenting country and guide the discussion in ECOSOC towards the most important issues or specific questions. The objective of the reviews is to initiate and stimulate the discussion based on the national report, setting the stage for further in-depth deliberations held in an interactive manner.

The NVP reviewers are expected to critically review and analyse the national report of the presenting country. The NVP reviewers could specifically address the following aspects:

- Provide a critical and objective assessment of the strategies and policies presented in the national report, along with the means to achieve them;
- Point towards ways to accelerate and achieve better performance;
- Examine how strategies, policies and initiatives presented enrich policies or could be replicated regionally and internationally;
- Identify relevant new initiatives, experiences and international or regional comparisons wherever applicable;
- Bring forward any programmes, initiatives or bottlenecks in MDG/SDG achievement that they share with the presenting country.

The interventions should aim to be *concise* and *sharp* and focused on *key issues, challenges and opportunities*.

### ***Outcome and follow-up***

The NVP presenting countries are anticipated to benefit from the interactions during the presentation made at ECOSOC and to make follow-up interventions at the national level through updating and improving national policies. The presentation and discussion are intended to yield policy guidance and recommendations for accelerating development. Presenting countries, with the support of international partners and the UN system, are expected to address suggested measures through changes in national policies and development strategies. Additionally, the Ministerial Declaration adopted by the HLPF and ECOSOC HLS provides specific policy input to guide all NVP countries and the wider UN membership.

Effective follow-up to the NVP process takes several forms — research, policy analysis, advocacy, promoting policy dialogue, sharing best practices, developing indicators and monitoring their implementation, as well as strengthening statistical capacities for tracking progress.

NVP alumni countries are encouraged to:

- (i) communicate any developments after the NVP to the ECOSOC President or to the UN Secretariat;
- (ii) make use of the network of global partners and experts supporting NVPs in assessing the implementation of their National Development Strategies (NDS) and policies (see section 4 below); and
- (iii) report back to the Council on the results of the changes implemented following their initial national presentations.

### **3. NVP detailed guidelines**

#### **a. Commitment from presenting countries**

- Preparing for NVPs entails four key activities:
  - (i) *drafting a National Report synthesizing analyses of progress in national development objectives;*
  - (ii) *holding a national consultative dialogue or workshop to discuss the draft national report;*
  - (iii) *giving a National Presentation to the ECOSOC High-level Segment; and*
  - (iv) *follow-up implementation of policy recommendations.*
- The national consultative dialogues or workshops, involving participants from government, civil society and the private sector, are an essential element in the preparatory process. The outcomes of these meetings provide inputs to the National Report, which is used as the main background document for the national presentation to ECOSOC.

#### **b. National Report**

- The National Report (8,500 words, including executive summary and any statistical annexes), highlights the main accomplishments in the implementation of national development strategies and policies, the country has undertaken. It can identify obstacles to implementation that require regional and global cooperation, and make proposals in this regard. The Executive Summary (one page) should highlight the key findings.
- The report should include analysis at the national level on the thematic focus of the 2015 ECOSOC annual theme: *“Managing the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals: What will it take”*.
- The report should expand on the country’s efforts to integrate the three pillars of sustainable development in its policies.
- The report can also draw attention to other key sustainable development issues relevant to the presenting country within the national, regional or global context.

- The report should be accompanied by statistical tables containing standardized indicators of national progress.

### **c. Outline of the National Report**

#### **Executive Summary**

The Executive Summary provides a brief overview of the implementation of national development strategies and policies. It could include the following:

- (i) *Highlights of progress made in the implementation of national development objectives;*
- (ii) *Identification of key challenges encountered and lessons learned; and*
- (iii) *Identification of areas of international support, including of the international community, including the UN system required for scaling up efforts.*

#### **Part A. Implementation of national development strategies and policies**

This section would analyze progress made in the implementation of national development strategies and policies and their focus on the United Nations development agenda, including the Millennium Development Goals. It would draw out the major interventions, the challenges faced, and how the international community could assist in overcoming these challenges. Efforts to improve development cooperation for better results could be highlighted.

The following are a few suggested questions that this section could aim to answer:

- *What are the major policy interventions that have helped advance progress on the development goals? How were these devised?*
- *What role did various stakeholders play in developing and implementing these policies? What are the lessons learned?*
- *In which area did the country face challenges? How can these challenges be overcome?*
- *What are the next steps planned? How can the international community assist in addressing these challenges?*
- *What steps has your country taken to hold different actors accountable? How have accountability mechanisms played a role in ensuring that the various actors fulfill their commitments?*

#### **Part B. Thematic focus**

This section would be anchored on the 2015 ECOSOC annual theme: “*Managing the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals: What will it take*”. It could analyze the main policies by the national Government in transitioning towards the SDGs and the broader United Nations development agenda.

In particular, the section could examine how the country is promoting or advancing policy integration and the related changes to institutions or structures supporting coherence and increased integration. This could include the country’s policies towards achieving a balanced integration of the three pillars of sustainable development. It could also illuminate integration and coherence among national ministries, including the ministry of finance, in advancing policy integration and coherence across the development agenda.

The report could also address the various policy areas that have been used by other countries in the NVP process and are posted on the *Development Strategies that Work* website. These are reflected in section 4 on page 11 of this note.

#### ***Country Statistical Annex***

A statistical annex and graphs could be included to provide relevant data.

#### ***d. Content of the national presentation at ECOSOC***

National presentations, drawing from the National Report and consultative process, could focus on two to three key issues that the country would like to analyze in depth for discussions by the Council.

A suggested structure for the ECOSOC presentations includes:

- ❖ Key policy successes and lessons-learned, including from advancing policy coherence and integration;
- ❖ Key policy challenges and constraints;
- ❖ Emerging trends and new opportunities; and
- ❖ Substantive guidance for action by the country and regional and international partners.

To maximize the value of the presentation, it is recommended that the bulk of the presentation be focused on an analysis of two to three policy interventions that the presenting country wishes to share with the Council.

The content of the presentation should not cover the full breadth of the National Report, which is meant to be more comprehensive. Speakers should focus on selected issues of high priority to the country and, where possible, present specific examples or case studies.

#### ***e. Timeline***

The first draft of the National Report should be ready by the time the national consultative dialogues (or workshops in the case of the developing countries) are held, during the period of December to February. It should serve as a background document. The outcomes of the consultation process should then be incorporated into the finalized report. The final report should be ready and submitted to the President of ECOSOC *by Friday, 3 April 2015*.

#### ***f. The presentation at ECOSOC***

A professional moderator will guide the NVP presentations at the ECOSOC High-level Segment and the ensuing inter-active discussions to ensure a vibrant and productive dialogue. The overall length of the NVP will be one hour if the country is presenting alone. Beginning in 2011, there were also jointly held NVP presentations by two countries, with a total length of two hours.

Cabinet Ministers will deliver the presentations. Governments are encouraged to also involve in the presentation representatives of other stakeholder groups that participated in the national consultation process.

Approximately three NVP Reviewers will be selected by each presenting country. NVP countries will identify the Reviewers at the beginning of the process and share their national reports with the

Reviewers in advance of the presentation. They could also organize a meeting with the Reviewers in order to deepen their engagement with the review and reporting exercise.

The objective of the Reviewers is to initiate and stimulate the discussion based on the national report, setting the stage for further in-depth deliberations held in an interactive manner. During the NVP session, immediately following the national presentation, the Reviewers will give comments and pose questions to the presenting country arising from its review process. The comments by the Reviewers should provide feedback to the presenting country and guide the discussion in ECOSOC towards the most important issues or specific questions.<sup>3</sup>

After the interventions of the Reviewers, the discussion will be opened to all participants to make brief observations or pose additional questions, after which the representatives of the presenting country will be given an opportunity to respond. At the end of the session, the moderator will draw main conclusions.

Speaker	
Presentation	Interactive discussion
Cabinet Minister (15 minutes)	20 minutes
1-2 Representative of Civil Society/Private Sector/other stakeholder (optional – 2-3 minutes each)	40 minutes
Up to 3 NVP Reviewers (2-3 minutes each)	
Moderated inter-active discussion with the Members of ECOSOC (Interventions limited to 3 minutes each, followed by responses from delegations)	

#### ***g. Media***

A media series leading up to the presentation should be planned with leading media partners. Newspaper or magazine articles could be written relating to the NVP, to be published in major local and international newspapers and magazines, media interviews and discussions could be arranged involving the delegation to ECOSOC, with the aim to highlight key aspects of the national presentations. Live broadcast of the national presentation at ECOSOC to a local audience should be planned, where feasible. The presentations will also be web-cast.

## **4. Sharing lessons learned and best practices**

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<sup>3</sup> Additional coverage of the 2014 NVPs can be found on the following pages:  
<http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/ecosoc6639.doc.htm> and  
<http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/newfunct/amrnational2014.shtml>

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) has developed an NVP “*Development Strategies that work*” website (<http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/dsw>) to capture the findings of the national presentations and to facilitate learning and mutual understanding among Member States, international organizations, development practitioners and other stakeholders.

The purpose of the website is for countries to benefit from the experience of other countries. The website disseminates the lessons learned presented through the NVP process via national reports and national presentations to reach practitioners who have the potential to benefit from such information. The website also facilitates access to a network of global partners and experts to support Governments in the implementation of their national development strategies and policies.

NVP countries are encouraged to benefit from this site and contribute to its content. Information pertaining to policies that work can be sent to the ECOSOC Secretariat within UNDESA to be uploaded to the “*Development Strategies that work*” website. The national reports, statistical annexes and graphs will also be added to the same database.

The following categories are used for the website and may be kept in view when structuring the national reports:

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- National Development Strategies
  - Poverty Reduction
  - Economic Policies
  - Industry & Business Development
  - Agriculture
  - Infrastructure
  - Employment
  - Sustainable Development
  - Water and Sanitation
  - Global Partnership for Development
  - Governance
  - Gender
  - Education and Training
  - Social Justice & Inclusion
  - Social Protection
  - Housing and Shelter
  - Health
  - Science, technology and innovation
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