



Voluntary national reviews (VNRs) of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

The Committee continued its analysis of the voluntary national reviews. In the view of the Committee, the reviews could become more effective instruments to share lessons learned and promote mutual learning with the inclusion of more explicit and detailed discussions on national strategies for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Substantive coverage of the voluntary national reviews should be more comprehensive;

reporting should not be selective and leave out major areas, especially since the 2030 Agenda is intended to be indivisible and integrated. The Committee also highlighted the need for further work and sharing of experiences in effectively translating the central principle of leaving no one behind into development strategies and frameworks.

The Committee conducted an analysis of the 43 voluntary national reviews presented to the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2017. The reviews are a central element of the follow-up and review mechanisms of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They are conceptualized as mechanisms of accountability to a country's citizens, not among States. The purpose of the Committee's study was to contribute to improving the effectiveness of the voluntary national reviews and to sharing experiences among countries.

The Committee analysed how countries addressed the three central cross-cutting objectives of the 2030 Agenda: leaving no one behind; integration across Goals and addressing trade-offs; and addressing Sustainable Development Goal 17 (strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development). The Committee found that, while almost all voluntary national reviews acknowledge the overriding objective of leaving no one behind, only 19 of the 43 countries analysed included explicit strategies towards implementation. Little attention appears to have been dedicated to integration among Goals, fostering synergies and addressing trade-offs.

Similarly, Goal 17 received scant attention in the voluntary national reviews, and what there was focused mostly on domestic resource mobilization and policy coherence within national frameworks. Less attention was given to issues of policy space and leadership, investment promotion regimes and environmentally sound technologies.

These findings show that the substantive content of the voluntary national reviews could be significantly strengthened through the provision of more detailed information on strategies for achieving the 2030 Agenda. Moreover, coverage should be more comprehensive; reporting should not be selective or leave out major areas, especially given the fact that the 2030 Agenda is intended to be indivisible and integrated. The concept of leaving no one behind is central to the 2030 Agenda. The voluntary national reviews need to go beyond the enunciation of the principle, as the principle will not be achieved by "business-as-usual" policy approaches. The current state of reporting indicates that most countries focus on social protection as a means to ensure that no one is left behind, with few examples of the role of macroeconomic, productive sector and technology

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policies. Given the importance of these policy areas, the sharing of concrete examples in this regard has the potential to significantly accelerate implementation of Agenda 2030. Moreover, the voluntary national reviews presented did not indicate that priority was being given in national policies to those furthest behind or to the principle of pushing no one behind. While participation of the most vulnerable in decision-making is highlighted in the voluntary national reviews as a critical issue, there was little discussion of which participatory mechanisms can be effective and how.

To strengthen the global partnership for the 2030 Agenda, countries could reflect on the impacts of domestic policy on the progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in other countries. In the view of the Committee, the global review and follow-up architecture should include not only voluntary national reviews, but also voluntary reviews by key actors of the global community concerning how they are supporting Member States' implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The study by the Committee was presented to the meeting of the high-level political forum in 2018. The Committee will continue its analysis of voluntary national reviews. In 2019, the focus will be on leaving no one behind, global partnerships and Sustainable Development Goal targets that relate to the Economic and Social Council and high-level political forum theme of empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.

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