

United Nations Nations Unies

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Excellencies,

Congratulating you on our appointment as co-facilitators of the process of review of the High-Level Political Forum, we would like to draw your attention to some of the conclusions of the analysis of the voluntary national reviews (VNRs) by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) over the past four years. The purpose of the CDP's work has been to identify how the VNRs can be used as a learning process for countries to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Our annual studies have identified some common trends in their strengths and gaps in the VNR process and suggest some innovations. We hope you will find the following considerations useful in your review:

- Learning lessons: the main value of the VNRs is not in the report presented at the HLPF, but in the process leading up to it, in how stakeholders are involved and in how lessons and knowledge accumulated in that process and from peer and expert feedback are brought back into policymaking. It is therefore concerning that of the 22 countries presenting VNRs in 2020 for the second or third time, only seven clearly acknowledged challenges identified in the previous VNR or referred to advances or setbacks on issues identified in previous VNRs; and only 5 referred to how the previous VNR's conclusions were fed back into policy. Countries did not meaningfully reflect on feedback from peers and experts received at the HLPF. The process may be more effective if greater attention is given to strengthening the process between HLPF sessions, nationally, regionally and globally, including rethinking the way in which feedback is provided by peers and experts at the HLPF: feedback is more likely to be taken into account if it comes after in-depth engagement with relevant actors in the country, of which the few minutes allocated at the HLPF should be the synthesis, not the full extent; there are experiences in that direction, such as peer review processes within the Pacific region reported on by Samoa; encouraging countries to report, like some have already done, on the steps to be taken after the HLPF in terms of bringing the

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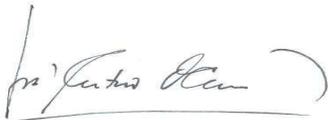
lessons learned in the process back into practice and policy-making and how they communicate/engage with national stakeholders on the incorporation of these lessons into policy and practice - contributing to strengthening national policy processes via the VNR process; providing space at the HLPF and on the internet platforms for meaningful exchange of experiences with policies and measures on issues of common concern.

- Stakeholder dialogue and shadow reports - If VNRs are to become effective instruments in accelerating SDG implementation, they need to be based on open dialogue with multiple stakeholders. Many countries have indeed involved civil society, the private sector and other actors in their VNR processes. The practice, already adopted by some countries, of giving non-state actors an independent voice in the process, the report and the VNR presentations at the HLPF would help identify and address barriers to SDG implementation. Including independent shadow reports from civil society at the HLPF would encourage this dialogue.

- Expanding digital access - Related to this, while the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly shed light on and aggravated digital inequalities, an issue that should be addressed with the greatest priority, it is also undeniable that in many countries, rich and poor, the pandemic has massively accelerated and amplified the possibilities for online interaction between people in different parts of the world and of the same country. Not ignoring that many are still left out, and reiterating the need to address digital exclusion, the review of the HLPF may want to consider ways in which the expanded online engagement can be fully explored. While imperfect, it can bring into the discussion a vast number of people who would otherwise have been excluded from discussions at national, regional and global levels due to the cost of travel, in terms of finance and time, and capacity limitations.

In terms of content, the CDP is currently analyzing how the VNRs have addressed leaving no one behind, SDG 17, gender, inequality, productive capacity and sustainable consumption and production, and pandemic preparedness. Its conclusions will be communicated to ECOSOC in the CDP's report to the Council later this year and published on the CDP's website. The CDP and its secretariat remain at your disposal should any aspect of its analysis be of interest in the review process.

Please accept, Excellencies, the assurances of our highest consideration.



Jose Antonio Ocampo,
CDP Chair



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CDP Vice-chair and head of the CDP subgroup on
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