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VNR LABS
HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM

2023 High Level Political Forum - VNR Lab

INNOVATIONS & FRONTIER TECHNOLOGIES IN SUPPORT OF VNR PREPARATION AND SDG IMPLEMENTATION *Experiences from the regions*

Monday, 17 July 2023, 1:00 – 2:00 PM (EST) Conference Room 11, UN Headquarters, New York

Background

The world is gearing up for the SDG Summit to take stock of progress at the mid-way point towards 2030 and chart the bold innovations and breakthroughs needed to turn the tide and kickstart a new drive for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) remain critical country-led instruments for tracking progress towards implementing the 2030 Agenda at the national level. The VNRs facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating SDG implementation. The VNRs also seek to strengthen policies and institutions and help mobilize multistakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the Goals.

Technology and innovations are critical enablers for most – if not all – of the SDGs and key ingredients for the renewed drive to rescue the SDGs in the remaining seven years to 2030. Over the years, countries across all regions have developed innovative approaches and leveraged the power of emerging technologies for undertaking VNRs, including in areas such as data analysis, national SDG coordination architecture/ institutional arrangements, innovative partnerships, and stakeholder engagement platforms. These have contributed to generating SDG evidence and insights, ensuring meaningful participation of all stakeholders, promoting a culture of continuous improvement, harnessing SDG synergies and accelerating SDG action. In addition to enabling evidence-based policymaking, they have also created conducive conditions for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to coordinating design and implementation of interventions. For instance, Earth Observation (EO) is one of the priority technologies for the development of the Bulgarian space sector and has been extensively used for monitoring and assessing the status of, and changes in, the natural and manmade environment via remote sensing technologies. In the Asia Pacific region, Fiji implemented the “Leaving no one behind” LNOB platform (<https://lnob.unescap.org/>) that leverages machine learning to analyze nationally representative household surveys to generate evidence on inequalities in SDG indicators. Moreover,

national statistical offices innovated during COVID-19 to collect data in support of VNRs and SDG monitoring and reporting through the pandemic.

During the 2023 High-level Political Forum) cycle, countries have continued to receive support for the preparation of their VNRs, benefiting from the wealth of knowledge and experiences in each region and from the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development convened by the UN Regional Commissions. The VNR preparation processes greatly benefit from the exchange of valuable lessons learned and peer review, opportunities for technical assistance, analysis of the means of implementation, and work on data and statistics at the regional level, which also contribute to the follow-up and review of the SDGs at the global level.

Objectives

Following past editions of the VNR Labs organized by the Regional Commissions, the 2023 Lab will continue to build on lessons emanating from VNR preparation processes as well as from national SDG implementation efforts in the regions. In particular, the 2023 Lab is organized with the objective of affording space for five countries, including those presenting VNR in 2023 and stakeholders to exchange on their experiences of the VNR preparation processes and facilitating cross-regional learning.

The VNR Lab seeks to demonstrate how innovations and application of new/ emerging technologies supports participatory follow-up and review processes at the national and local levels, reinforce the principle of LNOB, evidence-based tracking of progress and policymaking.

Specifically, the Lab will seek to:

- showcase innovations including how the use of emerging technologies has led to better SDG data, improved collaboration, impactful SDG action and policy coherence and strengthened VNRs overall; and
- identify examples of innovations in the conduct of VNRs from planning to presentation at the HLPF to post-HLPF follow-up, including fostering collaborations among various levels of government.

The Lab will provide an informal platform for experience sharing and reflection on the Voluntary National Review process. The Labs are held under the Chatham House rules and are open to Member States, the UN system and representatives of Major Groups and other Stakeholders attending the 2023 HLPF.

Representatives of VNR participating countries, regional organizations and other stakeholders are invited to exchange experiences and best practices to illustrate how efforts to bring countries together at the regional level have been useful and continue to be relevant as we approach the midpoint assessment of the SDGs at the SDG Summit in September.

Agenda

- 8:00 Opening remarks, by Ms. Yera Ortiz De Urbina, Deputy Director Regional Commissions New York Office, acting as moderator (3 mins)
- 8:04 Interventions by selected speakers showcasing experiences from the regions: (4 mins each)
- **Arab region:** Ms. Mona Essam, Assistant Minister of Planning & Economic Development for Sustainable Development Affairs
 - **Asia Pacific:** Mr. Andrew Coriakula, Sustainable Development Specialist, Ministry of Finance, Strategic Planning, National Development and Statistics, Fiji.
 - **Africa:** Ms. Mwila M. Daka, Acting Director, Development Planning Department, Ministry of Finance and National Planning, Zambia.
 - **Latin America and the Caribbean:** Mr. Paul Floor, Coordinator, Interministerial Coordination Division, Ministry General Secretariat of the Presidency, Chile.
 - **UNECE region:** Ms. Henrike Beckmann, Scientific Advisor to the Delegate of the Federal Council for the 2030 Agenda, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland.
- 8:25 Discussion with participants (including round of comments by the Regional Commissions)
- 8:45 Second round of comments/response by selected speakers (2 mins each)
- 8:58 Concluding remarks by moderator.
- 9:00 End of Programme

Suggested guiding questions

- How have emerging technologies impacted the undertaking of VNRs, including in areas such as data analysis, national SDG coordination architecture/ institutional arrangements, innovative partnerships and stakeholder engagement platforms?
- Can you provide some practical examples of how the use of emerging technologies has led to better SDG data, improved collaboration, impactful SDG action and policy coherence and to strengthened VNRs overall?

- Can you provide examples of innovations arising from emerging and frontier technologies in the conduct of VNRs from planning to presentation at the HLPF to post-HLPF follow-up?
- What key message can you share regarding technology and innovation for ensuring effective midpoint assessment of the SDGs at the SDG Summit in September 2023?

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