



United Nations
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VNR LABS
HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM

Harnessing SDG Interlinkages through the VNR: Best Practices from the Regions

Voluntary National Review (VNR) Lab
Hosted by the United Nations Regional Economic Commissions
at the 2025 High Level Political Forum

Tuesday 22 July
2-3pm
Room S-1522/S-1523
United Nations Headquarters, Secretariat Building, 15th floor
New York

Background

As the world turns the corner to the final five years of the 2030 Agenda, it has become clear that impactful and coordinated approaches are needed in order to ‘rescue’ the SDGs and ensure that the global community reaches its objectives for inclusive and sustainable development. Countries now have ten years’ experience in undertaking Voluntary National Reviews – or VNRs – of their frameworks and policies in place to encourage progress towards these objectives. The VNR plays an important galvanizing role in bringing together national and local governments, civil society, young people, women, the private sector, academia and other key stakeholders to take stock of progress and challenges, and plot out an achievable path forward. It has become clear that such a broad coalition is key to ensure coordination, synchronized efforts based on the reality on-the-ground, and the harnessing of resources to reach the 2030 Agenda.

As countries look to redouble efforts towards the SDGs, the many interlinkages between the 17 goals present a clear opportunity to maximize efforts and policies and build on progress that has been realized. This concept has notably led to the identification of ‘SDG accelerators’ that can yield successes across a host of different sectors. In this context, addressing interconnectedness in the VNR can open doors to creative implementation pathways and innovative financing opportunities, a lesson that many of the 37 countries undertaking VNRs in 2025 can convey.

Focusing on SDG interlinkages can also help countries address the intergenerational mandate of the 2030 Agenda, a priority enshrined in the Pact for the Future’s Declaration on Future Generations. Strategic foresight in SDG planning can not only efficiently address a variety of areas of urgent action needed – particularly in the 5 SDGs of focus at HLPF 2025 – but it can also ensure the participation of children, youth, and the elderly to ensure that interlinkages between demographic changes, social protection, technological innovation, economic development and climate impacts are captured.

Finally, an interlinkages-focused approach is a strategy strongly endorsed by the United Nations system, and one on which the UN can bring many tools and technical guidances at its disposal to assist member States.

Aims and Objectives

The broad aims of the VNR lab hosted by the UN Regional Commissions is to put a spotlight on the progress and innovative approaches being adopted across the regions, bringing in specific country cases and examples, and also harnessing the expertise held by the Regional Commissions themselves in supporting Sustainable Development and the SDGs. The lab has peer learning and exchange at its heart, which is an area that member States have indicated is an important role that the Commissions uniquely provide, in order to bring solutions from across the world to bear on the challenges that still persist.

Specific objectives of this lab include:

- Incorporating interlinkages visually and narratively in their processes
- framing synergies and tradeoffs constructively and with a view to building a concrete roadmap forward
- addressing interlinkages both between SDGs and between SDG targets, and with other regional frameworks and national development plans in place
- integrating SDG Interlinkage tools into the data analysis process
- Focusing on intergenerational linkages as an important area to ensure the success of the VNR in instilling lasting change
- Sharing UN support mechanisms to achieve these objectives.

The Lab will provide an informal platform for experience sharing and reflection on the VNR 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, and other participants attending the 2025 HLPF.

Agenda (tentative)

2–2:10	Opening Remarks • Maria Yera Ortiz de Urbina Rodriguez, Deputy Director, Regional Commissions New York Office
2:10–2:35	Interventions by participants from the regions • Her Excellency, Princess Adejoke Orellope-Adefulire, Senior Special Assistant to the President on the SDGs, Nigeria • Hamad Essa Al-Tamimi, International Cooperation Researcher - Secretary General Office, National Planning Council, Qatar • Lawrence Duguman, First Assistant Secretary – Policy and Budget Division, Department of National Planning and Monitoring, Papua New Guinea • Hydie Knowles, Sustainable Development Goals Officer, Office of the Prime Minister of the Bahamas

	Pascal Byarugaba, Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, Sustainable Development Goal secretariat, Office of the Prime Minister, Uganda
2:35–2:50	Open Discussion
2:50–3	Concluding Remarks Nassim Oulmane, Chief, Natural Resources, Green and Blue Economy Section, ECA

Proposed questions for discussion:

- How has your VNR harnessed interconnections across the SDGs in order to highlight specific actions that can create positive ripple effects across all 17 Goals?
- How were you able to overcome challenges in harnessing inputs of diverse stakeholders and the various needs of your planning process in order to focus on specific SDG accelerators and interlinkages?
- What has been effective in ensuring an intergenerational approach in your VNR? How have you engaged children, youth and the elderly and how do you plan to embed this in your development policy process beyond the VNR?
- How have you interacted with the UN system in supporting your VNR process, particularly with a view to the interconnectivity lens?

Logistical Notes:

Please ensure that you are registered for HLPF and have secured access to the compound

Register with [this link](#) for the lab