



**HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

2024 Voluntary National Reviews Synthesis Report



Prepared by the



**United
Nations**

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



With the coordination of
the Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development

Acknowledgements

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Foreword



The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) was convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) from 8 to 18 July 2024. This session of the Forum was the first to follow the summit-level HLPF convened by the General Assembly in September 2023 (the SDG Summit), which marked the end of the second four-year cycle of the Forum, as well as the midpoint of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The 2024 HLPF featured presentations of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) by 36 countries. Since 2016, 366 reviews have been presented at the HLPF by 191 countries and the European Union. Most countries have now conducted at least two VNRs, demonstrating a continued global commitment to monitoring and follow-up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The process of conducting a VNR can help to support and enhance national monitoring mechanisms, provide continuous real-time data and feedback, and facilitate timely adjustments to policies aimed at achieving the SDGs. Over the years, VNRs have illustrated good practices in governance, institutional capacity-building, stakeholder engagement, data collection and analysis, and means of implementation that engage both local and national actors, with emphasis on the principle of leaving no one behind.

I am therefore pleased to introduce the ninth annual VNR Synthesis Report, which captures some of the most notable experiences and trends in national implementation by the 36 countries that presented their VNRs at the HLPF in 2024. The VNR Synthesis Report is a useful resource for Governments, stakeholders, the United Nations system and others who seek to learn from the examples of reporting countries on how to accelerate progress towards sustainable development.

By drawing on these examples and lessons learned Member States and stakeholder can identify successful policies and practices not only for delivering on the SDGs but on the broad range of global goals including the Pact for the Future adopted by Member States at the Summit of the Future. I encourage countries to utilize the VNR process to fully integrate the SDGs into national development plans, establish linkages between local and national review mechanisms, and strengthen monitoring and reporting practices.


Mr. Li Junhua
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Executive Summary

The VNRs in 2024 reflect areas of progress and ongoing challenges in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The reports highlight national policies and measures that support economic recovery and resilience, environmental sustainability, social inclusion and governance reform; they also identify numerous obstacles and persistent vulnerabilities, many of which are common among the least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing States (SIDS), and countries in conflict or post-conflict situations. Twenty of the 36 countries that conducted reviews in 2024 fall into one at least one of these categories.

Overall, country level efforts to bolster economic, social and environmental resilience in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing global disruptions were central to many VNRs in 2024. Some reported improvements in macroeconomic stability and employment levels, supported by fiscal policies and efforts to diversify their economies. In parallel, there has been a marked shift towards more sustainable economic models, with an increasing emphasis on circular economies, green innovation, and digital transformation. Governments are leveraging technology to boost productivity and streamline service delivery, and there is growing recognition of the role of innovation in achieving the SDGs.

However, poverty and food insecurity remain widespread concerns, due to ongoing conflicts, climate impacts and economic instability. Addressing hunger and improving food security, particularly in conflict and post-conflict settings, remains a critical issue. In line with the principle of leaving no one behind, the VNRs often highlight initiatives to support displaced populations, improve access to basic services, and address humanitarian needs.

Social inclusion continues to feature prominently in national development plans. Many countries have expanded social protection systems, with increased investments in health, education, and social welfare. Efforts to reduce gender inequalities have been emphasized in this year's VNRs, with many countries working to enhance the participation of women in political and economic decision-making processes. There is a growing recognition of the need for inclusive governance, with more emphasis on addressing ethnic, gender, and disability-based disparities. Policies to promote the rights of children and youth, particularly regarding education, health and mental well-being, are also being implemented.

Institutional reforms and governance improvements are central to advancing SDG implementation. Strengthening institutional frameworks has been a priority, with many countries enhancing their capacity to monitor and evaluate progress. The growing engagement of civil society, local governments, and academia in the VNR process has improved transparency and accountability. Local governments are taking on a more active role in SDG implementation, with an emphasis on decentralization and

community level development. Voluntary local reviews (VLRs) are helping to ensure that local initiatives are aligned with national development priorities, facilitating greater coordination between different levels of government. By strengthening the linkages between local and national SDG agendas, countries are making strides in fostering more inclusive, community-driven development.

National statistical systems are being bolstered to improve the quality of data on SDG indicators, while many countries are expanding their engagement with civil society, local governments and academia to ensure a more inclusive approach to reporting. This expanded stakeholder engagement is also helping to improve transparency and strengthen accountability in the SDG implementation process. The use of data storytelling, through charts and progress assessments, has become more common in VNRs, helping to communicate SDG progress. Yet most countries struggle with gaps in data, requiring enhanced data collection methods, capacity-building and coordination. Many have made strides in using diverse data sources, including national statistics, surveys, geospatial data and citizen-generated data (CGD), but challenges remain in data quality, availability and disaggregation.

Financing and debt are persistent challenges for developing countries reporting in 2024. The reports provide examples of actions such as the adoption of Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs) to align financial resources with sustainable development priorities, expansion of public-private partnerships and exploration of mechanisms like SDG Investor Maps to attract investment for SDG-related projects. Despite these efforts, attracting foreign direct investment remains a challenge, and there is concern over decreasing official development assistance (ODA) to LDCs. Some countries are addressing this by strengthening South-South cooperation or advocating for reforms in international aid systems. Debt service has also increased for many countries, pushing some into debt distress, while others are exploring solutions like debt-for-nature swaps. Several countries are focusing on regional economic integration, trade facilitation, and the role of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), particularly in driving inclusive economic growth through policy support, digital transformation, and innovation initiatives.

Countries are increasingly focusing on resilience-building as a core component of SDG implementation. Innovative policies and recovery plans are being introduced to address socioeconomic vulnerabilities, promote green recovery, and build climate resilience. Social protection programs, disaster risk management policies, and green energy initiatives are becoming integral to national strategies. Nature-based solutions such as community-led forest management and sustainable agriculture are being integrated into broader climate strategies to support biodiversity conservation, mitigate environmental degradation and restore ecosystems that are vital for both human and ecological well-being. Additionally, non-traditional sectors such as sport, culture and the arts are being leveraged to address gender inequality, social inclusion and well-being, showcasing how these areas can contribute to achieving the SDGs in innovative ways.

Although progress towards the SDGs is lagging at the halfway point to 2030, overall, the VNR process remains a central means for countries to measure and evaluate their successes and challenges at the national level. Governments are implementing innovative policies, tools and institutional changes to address emerging challenges and foster resilience. Continued innovation, commitment and multi-stakeholder cooperation are needed to address institutional gaps, enhance stakeholder engagement, improve data collection, secure sustainable financing and ensure no one is left behind.

Introduction

The present report provides a brief synthesis of the 36 VNRs presented at the 2024 HLPF, which was convened in person from 8 to 18 July 2024 under the auspices of ECOSOC at United Nations Headquarters in New York. All 36 countries presented their VNR reports over the course of the meeting, on 13 July and during the ministerial segment from 16 to 18 July 2024.

Number of Times Presenting/Region	1 st Time (2)	2 nd time (17)	3 rd Time (13)	4 th Time (4)
African States (14)	South Sudan	Congo (Republic of the), Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Guinea, Libya, Mauritania, Mauritius	Chad, Kenya, Namibia, Uganda, Zimbabwe	Sierra Leone
Asia-Pacific States (9)	Yemen	Oman, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Syrian Arab Republic, Vanuatu	Lao PDR, Nepal	
Eastern European States (3)			Armenia, Georgia	Azerbaijan
Latin America & Caribbean States (8)		Belize, Brazil, Ecuador,	Costa Rica, Honduras, Peru	Colombia, Mexico
Western Europe & other States (2)		Austria	Spain	

This year, four countries reported for the fourth time,¹ 13 for the third time² and 17 for the second time.³ South Sudan and Yemen conducted their first VNRs this year, amid challenging and difficult national conditions.

Of the 36 VNRs presented, 14 were from the African region, nine from Asia and the Pacific, eight from Latin America and the Caribbean, three from Eastern Europe and two from Western Europe and other States.

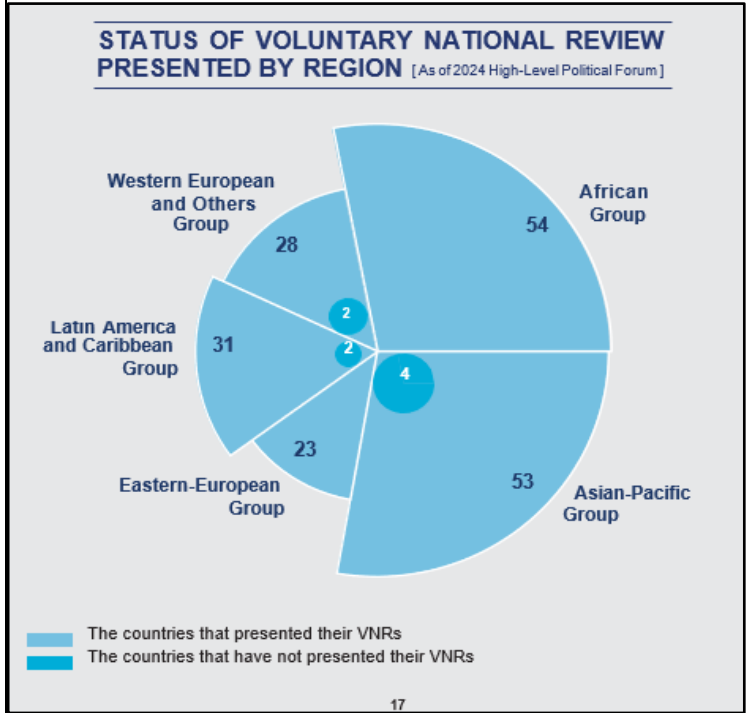
Since 2016, 191 countries and the European Union have conducted VNRs, with 138 countries having conducted more than one review. All 54 African countries and 23

¹ Azerbaijan, Colombia, Mexico and Sierra Leone.

² Armenia, Chad, Costa Rica, Georgia, Kenya, Honduras, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Namibia, Nepal, Peru, Spain, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

³ Austria, Belize, Brazil, Congo (Republic of the), Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Guinea, Libya, Mauritania, Mauritius, Oman, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Syrian Arab Republic and Vanuatu.

Eastern European countries have conducted at least one VNR. There are currently only a few countries that have not yet volunteered to undertake a VNR.



The engagement of local and regional governments in national reporting processes has continued to grow. Local and regional governments demonstrate a strong commitment to SDG localization through the preparation VLRs. Since 2018, nearly 300 VLRs have been prepared by local governments from all regions of the world, as well as more than 40 voluntary subnational reviews, prepared by local government associations. Over half of the VNRs presented in 2024 were prepared with varying types

of involvement by local governments, ranging from their inclusion in national SDG coordination or VNR drafting bodies, provision of written inputs and key messages from VLRs, or participation in consultation processes.⁴

The 2024 VNR synthesis report provides an overview of specific actions countries are taking to implement the 2030 Agenda, including integration of the 2030 Agenda into national development plans, localization of the SDGs, best practices for inclusive monitoring and evaluation processes in partnership with stakeholder groups, policies for leaving no one behind, measures to improve data collection, and examples of innovative initiatives. It is necessarily selective rather than exhaustive. The examples included are illustrative, and their selection does not imply that the 2024 VNRs do not also contain many other equally valid and useful instances of best country practices.

⁴ Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, facilitated by United Cities and Local Governments, [Local and Regional Governments' Report to the 2024 HLPF: Towards the Localization of the SDGs](#).



Individual VNR country reports from 2016 through 2024 are archived in the online VNR database at <https://hlpf.un.org/countries>, which also includes a repository of tools, resources, and key documents such as the VNR Handbook and the Secretary-General's updated voluntary common reporting guidelines for VNRs at the HLPF.

1 Integration of the 2030 Agenda in national and local contexts

Most reporting countries have taken varied yet complementary approaches to integrate the 2030 Agenda into their national and local contexts. The integration of the SDGs into national and subnational plans and strategies has progressed in many areas, especially among countries reporting for the third or fourth time, with some also incorporating the SDGs into national financing and budgetary frameworks. Best practices such as the establishment of sustainable development coordinating bodies, decentralized governance, and public-private sector collaboration support context-specific actions, multi-stakeholder involvement, and long-term planning.

Several developing countries, including the Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, have identified priority “accelerator” SDGs to concentrate scarce resources more effectively and target specific national priorities. Libya has integrated the SDGs into the National Plan for Economic Recovery and Stability, emphasizing job creation through infrastructure rebuilding and promoting renewable energy projects, particularly in water management. Syria has localized the SDGs through the Post-War Development Program, prioritizing housing reconstruction, clean water access, and rehabilitating schools while coordinating with international agencies for sustainable funding.

Oman embedded the SDGs into their Vision 2040, with specific targets for education reform, expanding green energy use and establishing digital infrastructure to support economic diversification. Armenia has established a Sustainable Development Centre at Yerevan State University, which is dedicated to promoting research and education related to SDGs, especially those focused on climate action, water, and biodiversity. This initiative supports the country's commitment to its climate goals and to quality education, while fostering partnerships between the Government, academia and local communities.

Decentralization is a common strategy for ensuring that SDG implementation is tailored to the specific needs of local communities. Many countries have empowered local governments with the autonomy to plan and implement development projects aligned with the SDGs. For example, Costa Rica has adopted a National Strategic Plan to 2050 with a strong focus on decentralization. The plan seeks to create 12 regional development poles, each fostering sustainable and inclusive growth. This approach ensures that development is distributed more evenly across the country, reducing regional inequalities. In Peru, the implementation of national social programs is guided by the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy, which aligns poverty alleviation efforts reduced inequalities. Vanuatu has made strides in decentralizing governance through amendments to the Decentralization Act and Municipalities Act, which grant provincial and municipal governments more control over budgeting, planning, and implementation of development projects.

Contextualized reforms can also empower local authorities to better address their communities' unique needs. In Nepal, the Dhulikhel Municipality's leadership has demonstrated strong commitment to the SDGs and an inclusive VLR process. It established five local councils representing women, people with disabilities, Dalits, tribal communities and youth to engage marginalized groups in decision-making. Over 80 municipal policies and acts have been formulated to support SDG achievement. Some notable successes include surpassing national targets for quality education, providing universal access to safe drinking water, and establishing itself as a healthcare hub with facilities serving 1.9 million people annually. Poverty has declined but remains a focus, with programs to boost agriculture, tourism and economic inclusion.

Climate action has become a cornerstone of national development plans in many countries, with policies explicitly designed to build resilience, promote environmental sustainability and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Belize launched its Low Emissions Development Strategy (LEDS 2020-2050) in 2021, aiming to reduce the country's carbon footprint and transition to a low-carbon economy. The strategy highlights Belize's commitment to climate action by fostering sustainable practices in agriculture, energy, and other sectors. Georgia has integrated climate action into its development framework through its Green Hydrogen Strategy and Action Plan, which prioritizes the development of green hydrogen production. This initiative also shifts the energy mix toward cleaner, renewable energy sources and positions Georgia as a leader in green energy innovation.

Some countries are focusing on child protection and gender equality as foundational elements of SDG implementation, with various laws, policies and programs aimed at safeguarding vulnerable populations. The Government of Mauritania has prioritized child protection and health through the creation of the National Health Solidarity Fund, which aims to extend healthcare coverage to vulnerable populations, particularly focusing on children and an emphasis on maternal and child health. Lao People's Democratic Republic has integrated child protection into its development strategy through the provision of Comprehensive Sexuality Education and a range of services aimed at preventing child marriage and adolescent pregnancy. These efforts are empowering youth with the knowledge and resources they need to make informed decisions about their health and well-being.

Several countries have prioritized education and skills development as a key component of their SDG implementation strategies, focusing on aligning educational systems with labour market needs and fostering lifelong learning. Austria has empowered local communities to promote child participation through initiatives like Family and Child-Friendly Communities and Children's Councils, which directly engage children in shaping their environments. Sierra Leone has made substantial investments in early childhood education and child protection through its Free Quality School Education program, which has expanded access to education and enhanced retention rates. The program directly supports education and gender equality by ensuring equitable access to quality education for all children, especially girls, in underserved areas.

Several countries have made significant efforts to strengthen their judicial systems and institutions, ensuring access to justice and promoting the rule of law. In Brazil, the establishment of the Interinstitutional Committee of the National Council of Justice has enhanced the judiciary's role in promoting SDG 16. The committee evaluates how the judiciary can integrate SDG targets and indicators into its processes, ensuring that justice is accessible, equitable, and responsive to the needs of all citizens. The establishment of Judicial Committees at all local levels in Nepal signifies a pivotal step towards achieving SDG 16. These committees play a crucial role in resolving disputes and delivering justice at the community level, providing accessible and responsive legal mechanisms to marginalized communities. By promoting the rule of law, upholding human rights and ensuring equitable access to justice for all citizens, the Judicial Committees foster social cohesion and strengthen democratic governance at the grassroots level.

The collaboration between the public and private sectors has proven to be a key driver in achieving the SDGs, particularly in areas like employment, innovation and sustainable business practices. Austria's SDG Business Forum has played a pivotal role in encouraging private sector engagement in SDG implementation. The platform connects the Government with businesses and civil society to promote sustainable economic growth, innovation and vocational training. Through this initiative, businesses contribute to decent work and economic growth, education and innovation. Azerbaijan's New Generation Economy Strategy (2024-2030) emphasizes the importance of public-private partnerships in driving digital transformation and economic growth focusing on digital innovation to promote the role of technology in sustainable development.

Synergies between the 2030 Agenda and regional agreements are also being integrated in national development plans, to meet multiple objectives more efficiently. For example, African countries have agreed to adopt a single monitoring and evaluation framework and a common reporting architecture to reduce duplication and promote the coherent and integrated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Africa's Agenda 2063.⁵ Countries including Libya, Oman and Syria have aligned their national SDG efforts with the Arab Sustainable Development Goals Initiative, sharing regional knowledge on food security and energy challenges.

Institutional capacity-building and coordination

2 Institutional arrangements and frameworks

To achieve progress on the SDGs, Governments are required to work across multiple policy areas and implement whole-of-government approaches. In recognition of this fact, a substantial number of inter-ministerial committees and commissions have been created or designated in many countries,⁶ demonstrating their interest in cross-sectoral collaboration. Other countries have assigned the responsibility for SDG implementation to a specific ministry.⁷ In some countries such as Uganda and Vanuatu, the Office of the Prime Minister plays a crucial role as the focal point for coordinating SDG activities. The majority of VNR reports in 2024 do not indicate changes in institutional arrangements for SDG implementation; however, some countries described an evolution of their institutional frameworks as part of the implementation process.

After the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, the Government of Chad established an institutional framework for monitoring the SDGs, which has evolved over the years. In 2018, a National Coordination Committee for the Monitoring of the SDGs in Chad was created within the Ministry of Economy, Development Planning and International Cooperation. In 2019, the Committee was elevated to the General Directorate of Coordination Services and Monitoring of Development Policy and International Agendas, comprising a Directorate for Monitoring and Evaluation of Development Policies and Strategies and a Directorate for Coordination and Monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and Africa's Agenda 2063.

The Government of Brazil reformulated its National Commission for the SDGs in 2023 after it was disbanded in 2019, to strengthen governance of the 2030 Agenda and promote greater synergy between public policy and global objectives.

⁵ Chad, Congo (Republic of the), Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Guinea, Kenya, Libya, Mauritania, Mauritius, Namibia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

⁶ Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Colombia, Equatorial Guinea, Georgia, Honduras, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Oman and Samoa.

⁷ Belize, Congo (Republic of the), Kenya, Libya, Mauritania, Sierra Leone, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

Costa Rica's institutional framework for SDG implementation has evolved significantly since 2016, when the Government created the High-Level Council as the top governance body for SDG implementation. In 2019, the Ministry of Human Development and Social Inclusion was added to the Council, reflecting a focus on social inclusion. In 2023, further reforms were made to strengthen the operational finality of the Council and improve coordination among stakeholders.

Mexico's institutional arrangement for SDG implementation has also evolved significantly. Initially, the responsibility for SDG coordination was concentrated within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which played a central role in international engagement and reporting on the SDGs. Recognizing the need for a more integrated approach, the Government of Mexico established the National Council for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2017. To operationalize the council's work, Mexico formed the Technical Committee of the National Council for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the SDGs across different sectors.

Although some reports do refer to previous VNRs, many second- or third-time presenters in 2024 do not systematically document institutional changes having occurred since previous VNRs and the reasons behind such changes, nor assess the performance of institutional arrangements. This is an aspect that could be improved in the future, as most countries now have conducted two or more reviews.

Implementation at the local level

Local authorities have a direct impact on the implementation of the majority of the 169 SDG targets. Some countries explicitly identify localization of the SDGs as critical to the successful implementation of the SDGs. In Costa Rica, the Network of SDG-Promoting Cantons (Red Pro-ODS) is a platform designed to support local governments in implementing the 2030 Agenda. It is a collaborative effort between local and central governments, along with international partners, to localize the SDGs at the municipal level. The Network provides resources, tools and training to help local governments integrate the SDGs into their management practices. At the same time, the Network of Cantons acts as a coordinating entity that seeks to establish connections between local governments and other national government institutions, cooperation agencies and the international community. In Spain, the Federation of Municipalities and Provinces is the primary driving force behind the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the local level, through the Network of Local Entities for the 2030 Agenda, which is comprised of over 600 local entities. Through this network, actions have been undertaken to promote and extend the knowledge, awareness and implementation of the SDGs by strengthening institutions and involving local stakeholders.

In some instances, the practice of preparing VLRs is becoming widespread within a given country. For example, Kenya's VNR references 17 newly prepared VLRs, and Mexico notes

that by the end of 2024 it will have conducted more than 35 VLRs. Zimbabwe has indicated its intention to have all local governments take up the practice, which will support and enhance the VNR and provide horizontal linkages across municipalities.

Engagement of parliaments

Parliaments serve as the primary institutions for accountability and have an important role to play in realizing the 2030 Agenda. Through their oversight and budgetary functions, and through passing national legislation to support SDG implementation, parliaments can help ensure that the 2030 Agenda is integrated into national institutions. They can also review and evaluate the implementation of the SDGs.

In 2024, 12 countries mentioned parliaments as contributors to the VNR process, and 11 of these had submitted VNRs in the past (see table). This is evidence that Governments realize the significance of parliamentary engagement as they become more well-versed in the VNR process over time.

Parliamentary input over time

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2023	2024
Austria					No			Yes
Azerbaijan		No		No			Yes	Yes
Chad				Yes		Yes		Yes
Costa Rica		Yes			No			Yes
Ecuador			No		No			Yes
Georgia	No				No			Yes
Kenya		n/a			Yes			Yes
Libya					No			Yes
Sierra Leone	Yes			No		Yes		Yes
South Sudan								Yes
Uganda	Yes				Yes			Yes
Zimbabwe		No				Yes		Yes

Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2024

Some VNRs in 2024 referred to the role of the national parliament in SDG implementation, or described how parliaments have taken the initiative to follow up on the 2030 Agenda through new institutional mechanisms. For example, in 2016 the National Assembly of Chad created a Special Commission to monitor the implementation of the SDGs, which was elevated to a Permanent Commission in 2020.

In 2019, Georgia’s parliament approved the Strategy of the Parliament of Georgia for the Promotion and Monitoring of the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. The

document aims to facilitate the implementation and monitoring process of the SDGs by utilizing the Parliament of Georgia’s effective supervisory and lawmaking mechanisms.

In Costa Rica, one of the key focus areas has been the training and awareness-raising of legislative staff on the SDGs and their relevance to parliamentary work. These initiatives aim to increase understanding of the SDGs and promote a mindset shift toward integrating sustainable development considerations into all areas of legislative responsibility. In Kenya, the parliament serves as a member of the country’s Inter-Agency Technical Working Committee on SDGs. In Nepal, oversight spearheaded by the Committee on Development, Economic Affairs and Good Governance of the National Assembly is exercised for the advancement of the SDGs through systematic reviews of the National Planning Commission and relevant line ministries. Austria’s parliament formed a non-partisan SDG Working Group to monitor progress.



3 Ensuring ownership and engaging stakeholders

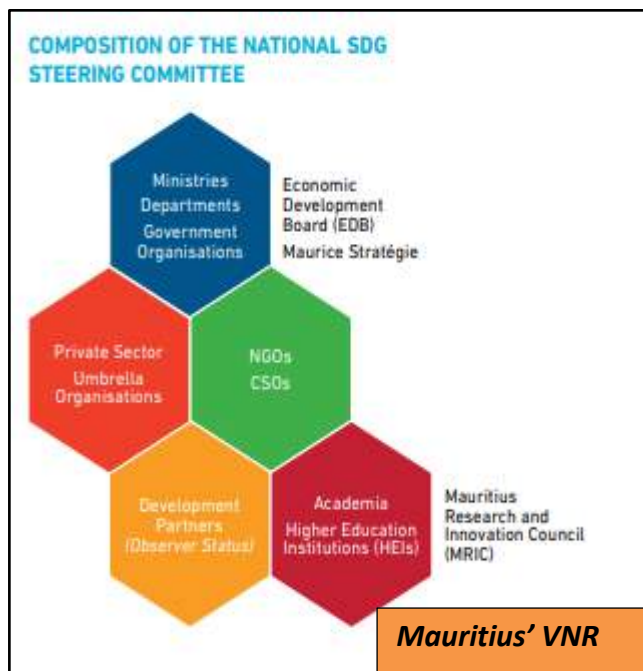
Many VNRs in 2024 highlighted stakeholder engagement as essential for effective SDG implementation, recalling that stakeholder involvement fosters policy coherence, brings diverse perspectives, and maximizes resource use. VNRs emphasized the importance of stakeholders in decision-making, contributions to national and subnational SDG plans, and their role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda.

Stakeholder participation in SDG-related coordination and decision-making mechanisms

Stakeholder participation in SDG decision-making is a key feature of numerous VNR reports.⁸ Brazil's re-establishment of its National Commission for Sustainable Development Goals in 2023 as a key governance body included equal representation from the Government and stakeholders, as well as local and regional authorities. Belize's VNR Sub-Committee also has parity representation between Government and stakeholders. Kenya's Inter-Agency Technical Committee enhances SDG coordination

and inclusivity by engaging with a range of diverse stakeholders. Spain counts on over 300 multi-stakeholder bodies for participatory policy development.

Mauritius' National SDG Steering Committee and Namibia's Multi-stakeholder Committee include multiple stakeholders, ensuring broad participation in SDG efforts. In Palau, traditional leaders, civil society and the private sector participate in a Steering Committee chaired by the country's President.



Stakeholder engagement in the implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda

Stakeholder contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda were highlighted in almost all VNRs,⁹ and many countries reported on establishing and consolidating stakeholder consultation mechanisms for SDG implementation. Mauritius and Vanuatu developed stakeholder engagement plans to ensure people-centred, inclusive participation. Peru showcased collaboration between public entities, international partners and civil society. Zimbabwe moved from a consultation-driven to a collaborative approach, bringing Government and stakeholders together during the drafting process.

⁸Azerbaijan, Austria, Belize, Brazil, Chad, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Kenya, Mauritius, Mexico, Namibia, Nepal, Oman, Palau, Spain, South Sudan, Syria and Uganda.

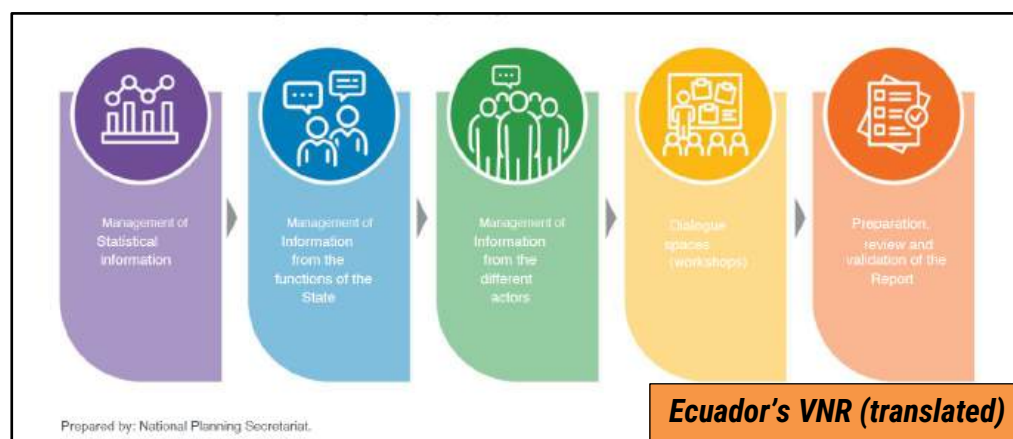
⁹ Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belize, Brazil, Chad, Colombia, Congo (Republic of the), Costa Rica, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Guinea, Honduras, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Libya, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Nepal, Oman, Palau, Peru, Samoa, Spain, Sierra Leone, Samoa, Solomon Islands, South Sudan, Uganda, Vanuatu, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

Lao People's Democratic Republic held an inception multi-stakeholder workshop for its VNR, and Azerbaijan's SDG Dialogues Series brought together Government and stakeholders to share knowledge and innovative solutions. Syria conducted 20 workshops connecting Government and stakeholders in preparation for the VNR, while Honduras held 20 consultations with more than 1,000 participants.

Brazil's VNR included excerpts from the CSO spotlight report (Relatorio Luz), establishing a dialogue between Government and civil society perspectives on SDG progress. Kenya included a civil society parallel report as an annex, and Ecuador highlighted over 400 civil society initiatives in its VNR. Oman's VNR featured the long-term visions and recommendations from a series of SDG Laboratories. Spain featured an annex with a progress assessment from its Sustainable Development Council, the formal body representing civil society.

Some countries held validation workshops to review VNRs, with the participation of stakeholders.¹⁰ Guinea held regional consultations with local authorities, civil society and youth, while Mexico conducted visits to territories and in-depth interviews to assess experiences. Nepal's local administrations prepared SDG baseline reports, and the Libyan Forum for Sustainable Development engaged communities via seminars. Austria, Mauritius and Sierra Leone consulted through stakeholder umbrella networks, and Kenya used CGD to update SDG indicators. In Samoa, Government agencies, NGOs, development partners and other stakeholders were asked to provide feedback on data for each global indicator.

Online platforms were established in several countries to track SDG implementation. Ecuador launched the Plataforma Web ODS for SDG awareness and consultation. Participatory Brazil Platform (Brasil Participativo) promotes citizen collaboration in Government decisions. Libya created electronic platforms for entrepreneurship and SDG dialogue. Uganda's e-platform engages youth in the VNR process with videos, documentaries and awareness messages.

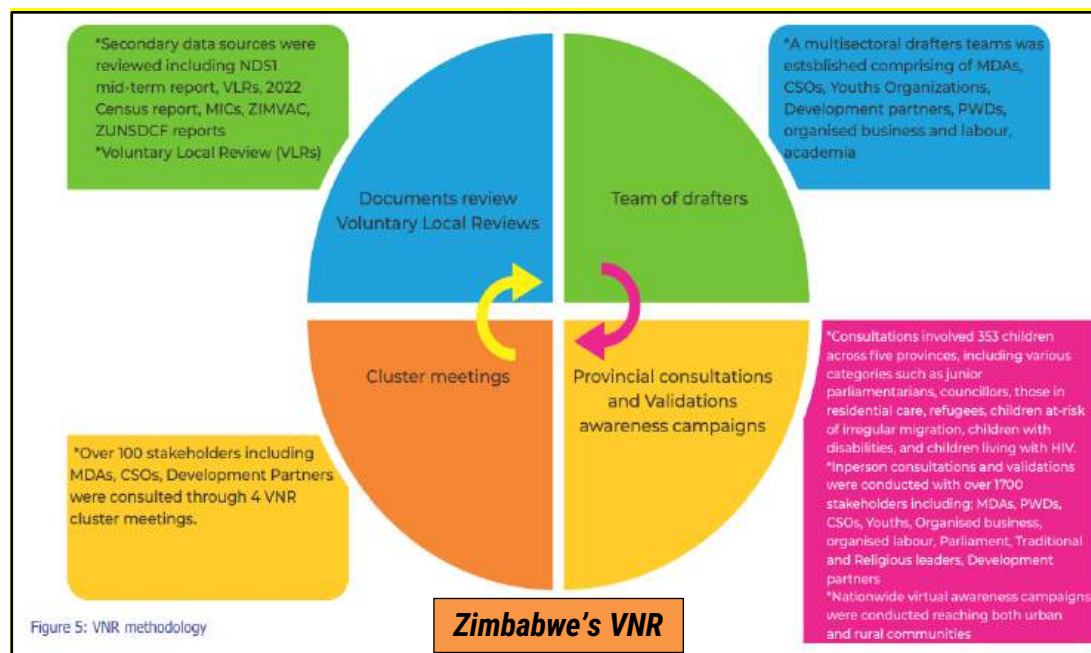


¹⁰ Austria, Belize, Congo (Republic of the), Eritrea, Solomon Islands and South Sudan.

Sectorial engagement and participation

Countries tailored engagement strategies for different sectors. To foster engagement with the private sector, the Government of Azerbaijan created the SDG Investor Map. Kenya initiated the Accelerating the Private Sector Decade of Action to boost private sector involvement. Peru's SDG Corporate Tracker Initiative assesses private sector contributions to the SDGs, and Colombia's VNR includes private sector lessons and best practices.

Belize, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Mexico and others mobilized youth to assess SDG progress. Georgia's Youth Advisory Council advocates for youth voices in decision-making. Zimbabwe incorporated recommendations from VLRs into their VNR, along with a children's scorecard designed for children by children, which gathered data on SDG progress from children's perspectives and outcomes.



Numerous countries consulted local and regional governments in their VNR preparations,¹¹ including by highlighting the role of VLRs. Costa Rica committed to expanding its SDG Champion Counties program to increase VLRs. Countries also reported the number of VLRs conducted by their local governments, including Kenya (17), Mexico (13), Nepal (16) and Sierra Leone (3).

Mauritius, Armenia, Austria and Vanuatu highlighted contributions from educational institutions to their VNRs. Costa Rica's National Council of Rectors and five public

¹¹ Austria, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Eritrea, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Kenya, Mauritania, Mexico, Nepal, Oman, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda, Vanuatu and Zimbabwe.

universities are integrating the 2030 Agenda into their training processes. Oman launched an SDG-themed art competition for school students. Vanuatu engaged local media in covering SDG-related stories, while Equatorial Guinea held a training webinar for journalists.

Many countries emphasized partnerships with international development partners.¹² Nepal, Brazil and Mauritania mentioned efforts to enhance stakeholder capacity to support SDG implementation and leave no one behind. Belize hosted dedicated consultations with older persons, the LGBTQI+ community and people living with HIV. Samoa and Belize held consultations with persons with disabilities, while Guinea analysed volunteer participation in SDGs. Sierra Leone partnered with volunteers for regional sensitization workshops.

Awareness-raising

Countries continue to report on initiatives to increase awareness of the 2030 Agenda across various societal sectors. Costa Rica's civil society platform (POSC) organized a "Walking journey for the SDGs" to raise public awareness, while Austria targeted youth with a project promoting sustainable lifestyles and the SDGs. Equatorial Guinea launched a national campaign to disseminate the SDGs, encouraging action from all social groups. In Kenya and Uganda, localized communication programmes used local languages, cultures, and customs to boost SDG engagement. Spain emphasized regional educational and awareness activities, while Namibia has conducted extensive awareness campaigns since 2016.

Belize and Uganda noted low stakeholder participation in focus group discussions, emphasizing the need for SDG awareness-raising while Mauritania expressed concerns about weak SDG ownership among stakeholders, especially at subnational levels. Chad plans a communication strategy with civil society to address low SDG awareness. Honduras, Peru, South Sudan, and Yemen also emphasized the need for stronger awareness-raising efforts, while Vanuatu highlighted the importance of capacity-building for institutions and individuals involved in SDG implementation. Nepal's Post-VNR Action Plan includes translating the report into Nepali, broad outreach, and regular multi-stakeholder forums.

¹² Armenia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Chad, Colombia, s(Republic of the), Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Palau, Peru, South Sudan, Uganda and Yemen.

4

Data for monitoring progress towards the SDGs

Harnessing data for sustainable development

High-quality data are essential for the effective monitoring of progress towards the SDGs. They enable countries to identify successes, gaps and areas needing intervention. A data-driven approach to VNRs not only allows reporting countries to assess their performance, but also holds them accountable for progress to their citizens and the international community. As Austria explained in its 2024 VNR: “The SDG indicators serve on the one hand to verify the status of implementation of the 2030 Agenda and on the other hand to ensure transparency towards Parliament and the public.”

Most of this year’s reports (31 of 36) describe consultations with stakeholders that represent a wide range of perspectives and interests, ensuring that the VNR development process is comprehensive, participatory and responsive to the priorities of each country. For instance, Honduras’s report includes a section on the contribution of the private sector and civil society to the development of the VNR. Palau’s consultation process for its 2024 VNR involved a Steering Committee chaired by the President, a Secretariat, Thematic Area Group leaders from various ministries, working groups on specific goals and engagement with both domestic partners and United Nations entities.

Some countries went beyond merely describing the consultation process and provided detailed supplementary assessments by key stakeholders. For instance, in addition to its main report, Spain submitted two additional documents: an opinion by the Sustainable Development Council—a formal body representing civil society—on the strengths and weaknesses of the country’s sustainable development strategy, and a report by the National Institute of Public Administration on its plan to strengthen sustainable development skills and knowledge among Spain’s public administration employees.

The use and presentation of data in 2024 VNRs

Countries gathered data from diverse sources for their VNRs, including through national statistical systems, administrative data, surveys, geospatial data and big data. Most countries relied on quantitative data presented in tables, charts and dashboards to track progress towards the SDGs. Additionally, many countries used narrative reporting, such as policy descriptions and case studies, to provide qualitative information and explain the context behind the numbers.

Statistical annexes: Fifteen of the 36 countries reporting included statistical annexes, a lower proportion than in 2023 (25 of 39 countries). Some annexes, for example in Nepal’s VNR, provide detailed baseline data, national targets for various years and current values for SDG indicators.

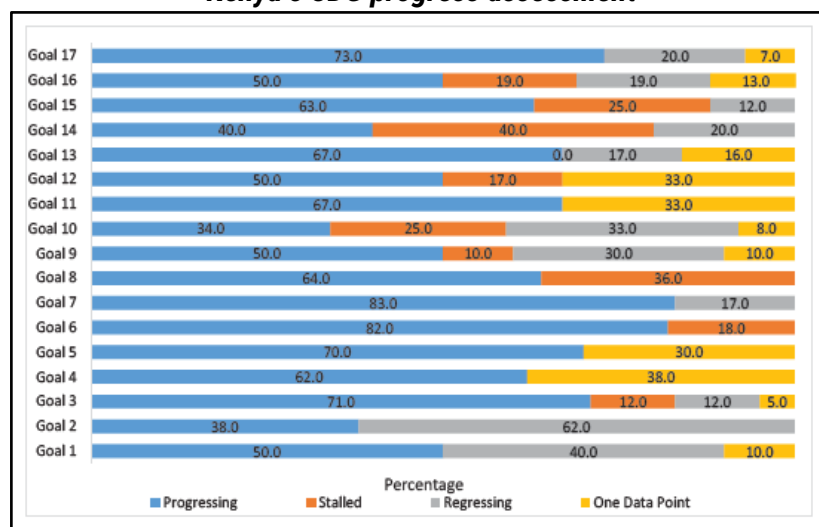
Nepal's statistical annex

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Indicator	Description of SDG Indicators	Baseline	Targets			Progress	
		2015	2019	2022	2030	2019	2022
1.1.1.1	Poverty \$1.9 Per day (PPP value)	36.0	28.5	22.9	8.0	15.0	15.0
1.1.1.2	Per capita Gross National Disposable Income (GNDI) (US\$)	766	821	1647	2500	1097	1755
1.2.1	Proportion of population living below the national poverty line	21.6	17.1	13.8	4.9	16.7	20.27
1.2.2	Multidimensional Poverty	30.1		28.2	10.0	30.1	17.4
1.3.1	Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems	8.1	27.3	41.7	80.0	17	47.0
1.3.1.1	Social protection expenditure in total budget (percent)	11.0	12.1	12.9	15.0	11.7	14.8
1.4.1.1	Households having access to market center within 30 min walk (percent of total)	45	57	66	90.0	44.7	44.7
1.4.1.2	Households covered by formal financial services (percent of total)	40	50.7	58.7	80	61.9	61.9
1.4.1.3	Households within 30 minutes travel time to health facility (percent of total)	61.8	69.3	75	80.6	49.3	77
1.4.2.1	Households having property/tangible assets in women's name (percent of total)	19.7	25.1	29.2	40.0	19.7	23.8
1.5.1.1	Loss of lives from disaster (number)	8891	331	268	100.0	968	320

Progress charts: Nearly 60 per cent of this year's VNRs (21 of 36) included progress charts, demonstrating the importance of effective data storytelling in communicating SDG progress. The levels of information varied, as did the methods used to present them. Kenya, for example, provided a high-level snapshot of SDG progress in terms of the percentage of indicators for each Goal that are progressing, stalled, regressing or have insufficient data.

Kenya's SDG progress assessment



The VNR from Lao People's Democratic Republic included a tracker that combined data tables and a traffic light system to offer historical data since the 2015 baseline year, including the 2030 target and a progress assessment for each indicator.

Data table and progress assessment of Lao People's Democratic Republic

SDG 2 – 11 Indicators
SDG Reporting Owners – Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Ministry of Health

Note

- Number of SDG indicators in total = 11.
- However, SDG1 sequence no.18 is divided into two indicators.
- Therefore, for an easy reference of the SWG1 owner, total number of SDG indicators that need to be reported against is 12.

SDG1 Owners		
MAF	MOH	MOIC
5 indicators	6 Indicators	1 Indicator
2.1.2	2.1.1	2.e.1
2.1.4	2.1.3	
2.3.1	2.2.1	
2.a.1	2.2.1.a	
2.a.2	2.2.3	
	2.2.4	

SDG Indicator	Disaggregation	Year	Value	Unit	SDG Owner	Data Source	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2030 Target	Overall process
2.1.1 Percentage of population of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population	National	2015	6.7	Percent	MOH	FAO estimate (FAO Statistical pocket book)	5.9	5.6	5.3	5.4	5.1	4.7	4.7		19	
2.1.2 Percentage of population of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)	National	2015	29.4	Percent	MAF	FAO estimate (FAO Statistical pocket book)	29.4	29.4	29.4	29.4	31.8	34.1	34.1		27.1	
2.1.5* Percentage of population consuming less than the minimum dietary energy requirement of 2100 kcal/day/person according to the Food Fortification Laws defined by the Government	National	2015	20.1	Percent	MOH	Survey - LSB (LECS)									10	

Disaggregated data: Countries used disaggregated data by numerous factors, such as gender, age, income, and geographic location, to show the varying degrees of SDG progress among different population groups. This year, disaggregated data in some forms were available in half of the VNRs (18 of 36). While data for dimensions such as gender are relatively well covered, those for race/ethnicity and disability status remain largely unavailable.

Disaggregated data by dimensions in 2024 VNRs

Disaggregation Dimension	Number of Countries*
Gender	16
Age	5
Geographical Location	5
Income Level	2
Race/Ethnicity	1
Disability	4

*Aggregations are not mutually exclusive. Some countries provide indicators in more than one dimension and not all indicators are disaggregated.

Spotlight on data challenges and innovations

Data quality and availability: Many countries reported a lack of comprehensive and high-quality data for tracking SDG progress. For instance, the VNR of Lao People's Democratic Republic noted that more than a quarter of national SDG indicators still lacked data as of 2023. In South Sudan, the national statistical system struggles with low institutional capacity and funding constraints, resulting in a dearth of disaggregated data on all 17 Goals. Due to limited sample size, Belize reported that its Labour Force Survey could not be used to produce reliable disaggregated statistics by disability status. Enhancing data collection methods, standardizing reporting protocols, capacity-building, technical innovations, coordination and collaboration were cited as necessary steps to address these issues.

Citizen-generated data: Some countries are actively incorporating CGD alongside official data sources to provide a more comprehensive picture of development and to fill data gaps. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics has developed the Quality Criteria for Validating Citizen-Generated Data, which has allowed it to leverage CGD to fill data gaps for specific SDG indicators. Uganda recognizes CGD as a key component of its SDG data ecosystem: the country's third Plan for National Statistical Development includes a CGD toolkit setting out the criteria for the adoption and use of data produced by non-State actors.

Artificial Intelligence: Countries are beginning to dedicate more space in their VNRs on the impacts of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on society. Austria examined the implications of AI on the workplace and pointed out that women are underrepresented in universities and companies in AI fields. A few VNRs showcased the applications of AI in various sectors and its potential to contribute to sustainable development. For example, Mauritius highlighted a project using AI and other technological advances to improve productivity and competitiveness of the manufacturing sector. And some countries are now using AI to improve SDG data availability. In its VNR, Colombia explained how it was able to add 39 new indicators to its national monitoring framework between 2020 and 2023 by leveraging tools such as natural language processing.

Data partnerships: National statistical systems recognize that the data demands for the SDGs often exceed their capacity, and that partnerships with academia, civil society and the private sector are crucial to improving data coverage. Since Austria's first VNR, Statistics Austria has collaborated with universities to address data gaps in the national SDG indicators, resulting in proposals for eight new indicators. Brazil's VNR described two data partnerships that have produced 24 SDG implementation indicators for subnational governments and a Sustainable Cities Development Index with 88 indicators and a ranking of municipalities.

5

Means of implementation

Through their VNRs, countries underlined progress and challenges in mobilizing the necessary means to implement the 2030 Agenda. Some countries have conducted or are in the process of conducting an INFF, which will contribute to identifying financial resources, and targeting how the resources can be used to finance sustainable development strategies.¹³

All countries presenting in 2024 remain committed to increasing domestic public resources. A series of countries reported a rise in tax revenues in absolute terms and as a share of GDP. Nevertheless, the economic downturn and reduced fiscal revenues following the COVID-19 pandemic have hampered progress this area. Several countries mentioned their difficulties in increasing domestic revenues, citing a lack of Government capacities or a drop in commodity prices. Some countries also highlighted reforms aiming at increasing and diversifying their public revenue streams. The Solomon Islands indicated that a new law on tax administration strengthened tax compliance and administration, while Samoa underscored that the introduction of electronic fiscal devices for tax invoicing and monitoring contributed to an increase in revenue collection. Countries including Azerbaijan and Equatorial Guinea expressed their ambitions to reduce their dependence on oil royalties as a source of revenue.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Governments are engaging with the private sector as development partners, which can also mobilize additional resources for sustainable development, expand public-private partnerships, and grow investments in infrastructure. Several countries have developed SDG Investor Maps, as a market intelligence tool to help the private sector identify and seize investment opportunities that support SDG delivery. For example, Belize highlighted in its VNR how the SDG Investor Map had encouraged the establishment of an electric vehicle public bus system in collaboration with the Government.

The VNRs noted multiple challenges in attracting foreign direct investment and emphasized the need to improve investment climates through policy reforms. A range of countries mentioned ambitions to raise inflows of private climate finance. Several also highlighted their intentions to create a sustainable finance framework for the private financial sector.

Several countries noted a decrease in the amount committed to ODA for LDCs, from both the provider and the recipient side. Countries that rely on international development cooperation for the implementation of the SDGs have highlighted the risk that this decrease represents in the achievement of their national development strategies. Spain mentioned its additional efforts to fulfil its commitment of providing official development assistance worth 0.7 percent of gross national income. Other countries emphasized how issues such as the fragmentation of the development cooperation

¹³ Azerbaijan, Belize, Congo (Republic of the), Guinea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Namibia and Samoa.

landscape and the lack of targeting reduce the impact of assistance. Uganda initiated a process to revitalize the national partnership architecture in collaboration with its development partners.

Several countries mentioned the role of South-South and triangular cooperation. A few countries pointed out their efforts in measuring such efforts through the Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD). Finally, a few countries underlined the need for international development cooperation to better address the potential sudden drops in ODA from changes in classification, including graduation from LDC status and crossing into middle-income country status. For example, Nepal has developed the LDC Graduation: Smooth Transition Strategy 2024 to better manage potential challenges and maximize its opportunities for economic growth and development. Mauritius also highlighted how mobilization of grant financing is becoming more difficult as it nears high-income status.

Several countries pointed to an increase in debt service since COVID-19, which pushed some into debt distress or high risk of debt distress and limit their ability to invest in sustainable development priorities. Lao People's Democratic Republic is negotiating with creditors to defer and restructure its debt and is reforming its approach to public debt management. Belize underscored the use of debt-for-nature swaps to reduce debt burdens.

A range of countries highlighted efforts on trade facilitation and economic integration, particularly on the expansion of digital trade. The development of regional integration was cited as a positive development by several countries, especially the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). Syria criticized unilateral coercive measures blocking its trade flows. Several countries detailed their plans to increase public funding for science, technology and innovation and set up dedicated policies in these areas.

Most VNRs highlighted the crucial role of MSMEs to advance the 2030 Agenda. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Kenya reported efforts to strengthen MSME growth through national sustainable development strategies. Other countries highlighted growth through fiscal incentives and low-interest loans to improve credit access.¹⁴ MSME-support institutions were created in some countries to facilitate digital transformation and entrepreneurship skills.¹⁵ Chad, Spain and Palau reported on MSME formalization. Equatorial Guinea and Solomon Islands created special economic zones encouraging MSME investment, while other countries optimized their contributions to innovation and the circular economy.¹⁶ VNRs also noted policy initiatives focused on women- and youth-owned MSMEs.¹⁷

¹⁴ Congo (Republic of the), Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Uganda.

¹⁵ Brazil, Columbia, Georgia, Mauritius, Mauritania, Mexico, Namibia and Nepal.

¹⁶ Austria, Belize, Costa Rica and Peru.

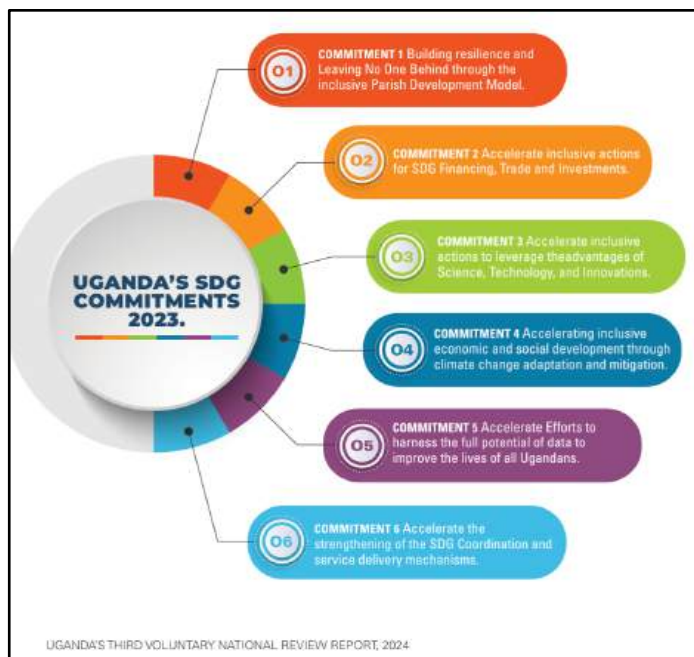
¹⁷ Honduras, Kenya, South Sudan, Vanuatu and Zimbabwe.

Pathways for effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions

6

At the halfway mark in SDG implementation, the 2023 SDG Summit held at United Nations Headquarters in New York emphasized the identification of transformative pathways and transitions for investment to accelerate SDG implementation. The VNRs include many examples of transformative policies, tools, or institutional changes that show a realignment of strategies and approaches aimed at fostering resilience and meeting current and future challenges.

Below are some examples highlighted in this year's VNRs of national initiatives for more effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions to deliver the SDGs, that focus on measures to advance the SDGs while targeting those most at risk of being further marginalized. These examples underscore the need for unique and multi-faceted solutions that promote economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection.



Uganda's third VNR presented six commitments for SDG acceleration and transformation, developed through a consultative process at national and subnational levels, where investments in the six commitment areas are expected to accelerate SDG implementation and generate socioeconomic transformation.

Belize's Global Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) has emphasized the

importance of integrating systemic approaches to address challenges related to poverty, sustainable development, and global market access. The GSDS advocates for innovation and social policy to accelerate the country's contributions to the 2030 Agenda. Equatorial Guinea has integrated SDGs 5, 10, 16 and 17 to address inequalities and leave no one behind.

Some countries have defined pathways that address shared issues like climate impacts, migration, gender disparities, and digital access through collaborative platforms. Oman has focused on large-scale solar energy projects, reduced digital divides through national broadband initiatives, and adopted inclusive policies targeting women and rural populations to ensure equitable access to services. Highlighting the role of digital connectivity in promoting inclusive economic growth, Palau has made strides in modernizing its economy through digital innovation. In 2022, it introduced a digital residency program that allows global citizens to obtain Government-issued identification, facilitating business operations and digital transactions. This initiative has attracted 19,000 digital residents and contributed significantly to the country's economy.

Countries that have experienced conflict and other crises reported on implementation of comprehensive post-conflict recovery strategies, prioritizing systemic actions to address the needs of vulnerable populations and addressing reconstruction and migration challenges, in collaboration with United Nations Country Teams and other development partners. For example, Syria launched the National Reconstruction and Resilience Program to rebuild healthcare facilities destroyed in conflict, and initiated land rehabilitation projects to combat environmental degradation caused by war. Libya deployed the Economic Recovery Task Force to address migration challenges, rebuild schools and hospitals, and implement water desalinization technologies in coastal regions, and has outlined an ambitious plan to diversify its energy sources and reduce its dependence on oil, with a focus on solar energy and planting 100 million trees by 2030, to address climate change, combat desertification and improve food security.

Armenia has launched the Green Armenia platform, which aims to drive a green recovery and promote robust, environmentally sustainable growth. In tandem, the Government has developed a Social Emergency Response System that identifies socially vulnerable groups and targets interventions to ensure the most pressing needs of these groups are met, with a focus on improving long-term resilience for vulnerable communities. These initiatives align with Armenia's 2020-2026 Strategy on Labour and Social Protection, which sets out interconnected components to foster systemic transition.

The Government of Zimbabwe has established Migrant Resource Centres that assist migrants in making informed decisions and combat human trafficking through the creation of standard operating procedures for ethical recruitment practices. Additionally, refugees and asylum seekers are receiving support at the Tongogara Refugee Settlement, where essential services such as food, shelter and education are provided. These efforts are part of Zimbabwe's broader strategy to safeguard human rights and ensure social protection for all populations. Nepal has adopted a holistic approach in the fight against human trafficking that includes prevention programs, rescue operations, rehabilitation and education, aiming to break the cycle of trafficking and empower survivors. Similarly, Nepal has launched Dalit welfare programmes that focus on addressing the systemic inequalities faced by the Dalit community, providing access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities.

Several countries have reported progress along multiple pathways to expand social safety nets in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Sierra Leone, significant progress has been made through the ECT programme, which has provided financial support and helped mitigate the economic hardships faced by informal sector workers. Similarly, the Productive Social Safety Net and Youth Employment program launched in 2022 has improved economic inclusion and expanded access to public works. These programs are integral to enhancing community resilience and reducing poverty in urban and rural areas alike. Austria's Recovery and Resilience Plan 2020-2026, launched in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, focuses on long-term economic recovery by prioritizing environmentally friendly policies and digitization, with measures such as the COVID-19 Investment Premium for Businesses that highlight the Government's commitment to supporting business transitions towards greener and more technologically advanced operations.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Policy in Mauritius sets out specific actions to address climate-related risks, with a focus on disaster preparedness and response. Alongside this, the Bank of Mauritius established a Climate Change Centre in 2021 to create a resilient financial ecosystem that supports sustainable development. Oman is focused on large-scale solar energy projects, reduced digital divides through national broadband initiatives, and adopted inclusive policies targeting women and rural populations to ensure equitable access to services.

Innovative policy examples that focus on how cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, the arts, physical activity and sport can accelerate progress towards multiple SDGs have emerged from 20 of this year's VNRs.¹⁸ Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Oman and the Solomon Islands focused on addressing gender inequality through sport policies and initiatives. Ecuador, through its National Agenda for Gender Equality 2021–2025, developed policies to address gender inequality, including in sport, by analysing and addressing gaps experienced by the LGBTQI+ community. Oman and the Solomon Islands concentrated on enhancing women's participation and inclusivity in sport. Oman introduced a mandatory seat for women in sports federations for the 2020–2024 period and established a department for sports for persons with disabilities to promote inclusive sporting opportunities. The Solomon Islands launched the Team-Up Programme to create programs providing opportunities for girls, women, and people with disabilities to participate in sport. Brazil developed and implemented an Intersectoral and Transversal Agenda for Preventing and Combating Violence against Children and Adolescents, covering various dimensions including sports and leisure. Georgia approved the 2022-2030 Sports Management Strategy for its penitentiary system, highlighting the role of sport in the rehabilitation process.

Some countries have integrated sports within educational frameworks to promote a well-rounded learning environment. Colombia's VNR reported on integrating food and

¹⁸ Austria, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Georgia, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mauritius, Oman, Palau, Peru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Spain, Uganda, Vanuatu and Zimbabwe.

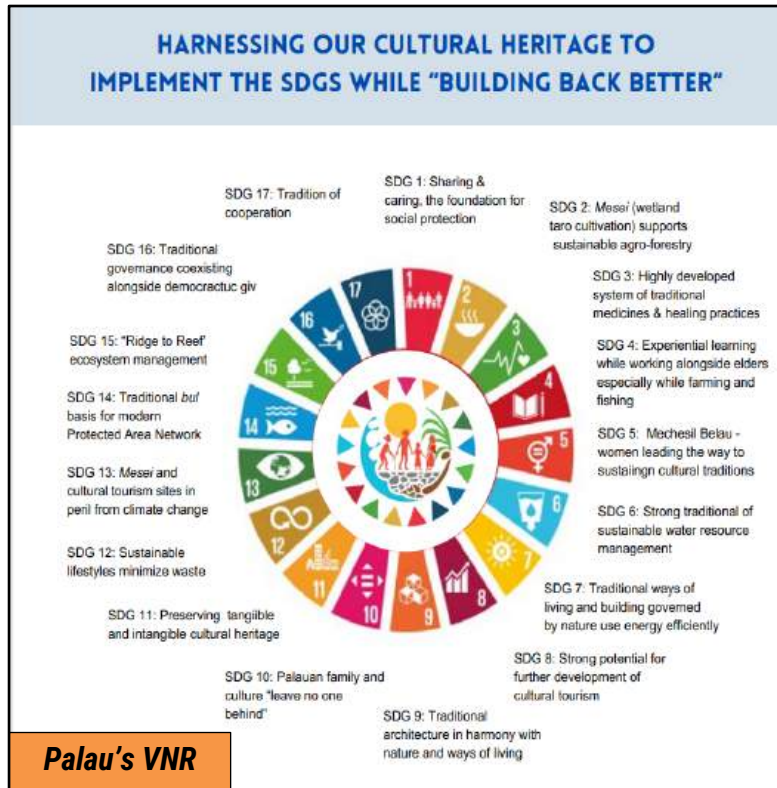
nutrition education across school curricula, emphasizing healthy eating and the importance of physical activity. Uganda's investment in education aims to promote sports development for citizens' well-being and contribute to the country's socioeconomic transformation. Zimbabwe's curriculum emphasizes sport alongside arts and academics.

Palau's VNR is organized around five

pillars—culture, people, the economy, the environment and partnerships—with the pillar on culture serving to harness cultural heritage as a means of SDG implementation, resilience in the face of climate change and leaving no one behind.

Samoa, Uganda and Lao People's Democratic Republic also focus on cultural preservation and socioeconomic growth through sport, and Samoa integrated sports with traditional practices to preserve cultural heritage.

Vanuatu exemplifies how indigenous practices are being woven into disaster preparedness and environmental management, contributing to national resilience-building efforts. The integration of traditional knowledge into modern governance systems is an approach that involves collaboration between key institutions like the Malvatumauri and the Vanuatu Kultural Centre, ensuring that traditional knowledge complements contemporary strategies in addressing environmental challenges.



Evolution of the Voluntary National Reviews

7

The 2024 VNRs generally reflect deeper institutionalization of SDGs, with greater data availability, refined policy frameworks, and clearer tracking mechanisms than in earlier reviews, especially for sectors like health care, energy and education. Although countries are encouraged to link their VNRs to previous reviews, more can be done to improve comparability between reports. When examining whether and how countries have linked their VNR to past reports, several common trends emerge among the VNRs that reflect on progress and follow-up on previous reports.

Greater Specificity: Most second, third and fourth-time reports show that countries are moving towards more focused VNRs that target specific SDGs or thematic issues that are of particular importance at the national level. In Colombia, the VNR has evolved to focus more sharply on specific SDGs related to hunger and malnutrition, areas that have been persistent challenges in the country. Colombia’s first VNR focused on integrating the 2030 Agenda into national frameworks. Colombia’s fourth VNR, however, has adopted a more targeted approach, detailing concrete actions and measurable results in the fight against child hunger and malnutrition, including specific recommendations from diverse development actors to address these longstanding issues more effectively. The Republic of the Congo’s second VNR marks a shift towards greater specificity compared to its first VNR from 2019, focusing on just three key SDGs identified by the country’s Push Diagnostic: SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure), and SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities).

	2016	2018	2021	2024
Integration of SDGs with the National Development Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓
Focus on specific SDGs	✗	✗	✗	✓
Key messages on overcoming poverty	✓	✓	✓	✓
The 2030 Agenda is recognized as a platform to improve the quality of life of the population	✓	✓	✓	✓
The multidimensional approach to addressing the challenges of the 2030 Agenda is highlighted	✓	✓	✗	✓
Food security is recognized as a priority for the country	✓	✓	✗	✓
Multi-stakeholder participation	✗	✓	✓	✓
International or regional comparison	✗	✗	✗	✓
Reports processes and cycles taking into account the previous VNR	✗	✗	✓	✓
Identify vulnerable groups	✓	✓	✓	✓
Information on progress, stagnation and setbacks in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Technical Secretariat SDGs, DNP 2024

Evolution of Colombia’s VNRs over four years of reporting

From Colombia’s VNR (translated)

Human-Centred Development: A growing emphasis on social justice, equality and the well-being of vulnerable populations, as seen in the VNRs of Mexico, Honduras and

Belize, indicates a shift towards people-centred sustainable development policies. Following the change in administration in 2018, Mexico embraced a new development paradigm that prioritizes human well-being and social justice over economic growth alone. This shift reflects a broader recognition that sustainable development must address both social inclusion and economic resilience. Mexico's fourth VNR subsequently emphasizes the country's progress toward the 2030 Agenda through reforms that focus on improving the lives of the poorest and most marginalized populations. As noted in Chapter 3, countries conducting second and subsequent VNRs increasingly involve a wider range of stakeholders—political leaders, businesses, civil society and academia—in their VNR processes, to ensure sustainable development strategies and implementation are inclusive.

Political and Social Transitions: Countries such as Honduras and Libya are using their VNRs as critical tools to drive national transitions towards more democratic, inclusive and equitable systems of governance. Honduras' 2024 VNR is especially significant due to the political and social changes the country has undergone since 2022. This report marks a turning point for Honduras, as it transitions to a full democracy with a focus on equality, social justice, and well-being for all citizens, and the VNR provides an opportunity to lay the foundation for a new development path that embraces a more centralized development model. The country's focus in this report is on establishing a new development course that promotes inclusive growth, social equity and long-term stability. Since its 2020 VNR, Libya has focused on tracking progress in rebuilding war-affected infrastructure and improving food security by developing sustainable agricultural projects, now reported through detailed metrics in its 2024 VNR. Syria's 2024 VNR demonstrates a transition from emergency humanitarian aid to a structured approach integrating SDGs into post-conflict recovery, with specific attention to housing reconstruction, healthcare access and re-establishing local governance.

Continuous Improvement: The evolution of VNRs in countries like Belize, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Eritrea highlight a pattern of continuous learning and refinement of SDG strategies based on lessons learned from previous assessments. The third VNR of Lao People's Democratic Republic is a natural progression from its earlier reports, which focused on localizing the SDGs and developing suitable national indicators. In the first VNR (2018), Lao People's Democratic Republic undertook a narrative analysis to identify gaps and areas for improvement in SDG localization. The second VNR (2021) introduced a trend analysis to monitor national SDG indicators. Building on these earlier reports, the third VNR focuses on a combined trend and track analysis, which assesses country progress toward the SDGs while also looking at long-term trends to refine its approach to sustainable development.

Eritrea's second VNR builds on the insights and momentum gained from its inaugural report. The country has aimed to provide deeper insight into its nation-building efforts and to inject new impetus into its development strategies. The evolving nature of Eritrea's VNR highlights the country's desire to maintain focus on sustainable development, while continuously improving its approach based on previous lessons and

achievements. Oman's 2024 VNR shows measurable progress since the 2019 review, highlighting successful implementation of digital education platforms and significant advances in water conservation efforts across urban and rural areas. Libya's second VNR underscores the country's determination to integrate the SDGs into its national development strategies and plans; the Government has made it a priority to allocate necessary budgets for SDG implementation and has sought external financing sources to support these efforts. Libya's focus on private sector investment and encouraging sustainable financing is indicative of the country's drive to achieve SDGs through multi-sectoral engagement and strategic planning.

Conclusion

The 2024 VNRs reflect progress towards the integration of the 2030 Agenda into national development strategies. The shift towards context-specific SDG implementation is increasingly evident, with a clear emphasis on decentralization and with local governments becoming pivotal in driving SDG localization and tailoring policies to regional and community needs. This bottom-up approach is proving effective for engaging citizens and ensuring that SDG implementation is felt at the grassroots level. However, for these efforts to be truly transformative, further institutional innovation is needed to bridge gaps between national priorities and local realities.

Despite encouraging strides in governance, the institutionalization of SDGs remains uneven across countries. While some have established dedicated SDG coordination bodies, committees and cross-sectoral councils, others have yet to fully integrate SDG monitoring and coordination into their governance structures. Increasing parliamentary involvement could be a key mechanism for improving accountability and ensuring that SDGs are consistently prioritized across sectors. Many countries still face challenges in institutional performance and coordination, suggesting that more focused efforts on refining governance structures are necessary for ensuring progress towards the SDGs.

While most VNRs underscore the importance of inclusive participation in SDG processes, many countries still struggle to fully involve marginalized groups, youth and local communities in decision-making. As multi-stakeholder platforms, public-private partnerships and consultations with civil society become increasingly common, more can be done to reach those furthest behind. Gaps in participation, particularly at subnational levels, points to the need for more robust mechanisms to ensure that SDG ownership is widespread and that no one is left behind. Fostering deeper engagement with local communities and vulnerable populations will be essential for achieving the SDGs in a way that is truly equitable.

Data quality and disaggregation continue to present challenges for many countries. Although some have made advances in using diverse data sources, including national statistics and CGD, gaps in disaggregated data—particularly related to race, ethnicity

and disability—continue to undermine the accuracy and inclusiveness of SDG monitoring. This highlights the need for greater investment in data infrastructure and capacity-building, as well as the standardization of reporting protocols. Leveraging new technologies like AI could help address data gaps and improve the granularity of reporting, but this will require cross-sectoral partnerships and the active involvement of both the private sector and civil society.

Financing also remains a major barrier to SDG progress. Although countries are increasingly utilizing INFFs and exploring innovative financing mechanisms such as SDG Investor Maps, the financing gap for SDGs is still vast. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with rising debt burdens and fluctuations in global markets, have further strained national budgets. The decline in ODA to least developed countries has exacerbated the challenge, suggesting that other models of international cooperation such as debt-for-nature swaps and strengthened South-South cooperation must be a higher priority, while countries continue to mobilize domestic resources and advocate for a more inclusive international financing system that can support the SDGs.

There is a growing acknowledgement among many countries that environmental and socioeconomic resilience are integral to achieving sustainable development. Innovative policy responses, such as comprehensive recovery plans, green economic transitions and social protection schemes, are emerging as central to fostering resilience in the face of climate change, economic shocks and social inequality. Countries are also increasingly looking to cross-cutting sectors such as culture, sport and the arts to address pressing issues like gender inequality and social cohesion. These sectors are becoming vital tools for advancing the SDGs in ways that reach broader segments of society and promote well-being in more inclusive and creative forms.

Overall, the 2024 VNRs illustrate an increasing focus on specificity, inclusivity and continuous improvement across sectors. Countries are advancing from early-stage integration of the SDGs into national frameworks to more refined and focused strategies that address specific national challenges. The growing emphasis on people-centred development, alongside political and social transitions, indicates a broader shift toward inclusive, equitable and resilient growth. Although challenges persist in data comparability, governance and the integration of SDGs into post-crisis recovery pathways, the VNR process continues to serve as a crucial mechanism for countries to assess progress, share best practices and adapt strategies in pursuit of the 2030 Agenda.

