Evidence-Based Voluntary National Reviews and

United Nations Network of Data Officers and Statisticians

Side Event at the United Nations Statistics Commission

4 March 2020, 1:15 – 2:30 pm

Conference Room E; United Nations Secretariat, New York

Concept Note

Overview

The effective follow-up and review of progress made towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets is essential for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. One of the critical follow-up and review mechanisms includes Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) prepared by Member States and presented at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). These reviews are prepared through a country-led process and describe the progress countries have made towards the SDGs. Through VNRs, it is expected to facilitate the sharing of experiences—both successes and challenges—among Member States, with a view towards accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Data and statistics form the backbone of any monitoring and review of the SDGs, including the VNRs. Without quality, timely and disaggregated data, meaningful reviews of implementation of the 2030 Agenda cannot be made. Without data, we cannot say with certainty what progress we are making, where gaps exist, and which vulnerable groups are being left behind. One of the main challenges identified by many countries in their VNR preparation process is insufficient data and the lack of statistical capacity to collect data in certain domains, in particular, the lack of capacity in collecting disaggregated data.

As a multi-stakeholder process, the preparation of the VNRs provide a wonderful opportunity for various stakeholders to come together and discuss how the use of data could be strengthened for supporting data-driven and evidence-based VNRs. Improved collaboration between national statisticians and policy makers is essential in the context of a complex, interdisciplinary, multi stakeholder process such as the preparation of VNRs.

The UN Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) at the country level lead the UN Country Teams and coordinate UN sport to countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda.   The UNRCOs also play an important role in supporting countries on monitoring and reporting on SDGs, including the preparation of the VNRs.

Objectives

This side event aims to bring together national statisticians, international partners and other stakeholders who contribute to the preparation of the 2020 VNRs or recent VNRs, to discuss the role data and statistics play in supporting a result-oriented and evidence-based VNR process. Through the event, participants can exchange knowledge and share practices on effective use of data for their VNRs and national SDG monitoring.

The discussions will focus on specific mechanisms, processes, partnerships and tools that countries have found useful/valuable/beneficial in strengthening the use of data in their VNR reports. More specifically, the side event aims to discuss the following questions:

- How can data and statistics improve/contribute to the VNRs?
- What have been the main challenges and opportunities in incorporating data and statistics into the VNR?
- What coordination mechanism(s) across the national statistical system (NSS) exist for monitoring the SDGs and between the NSS and policy makers?
- How can we bridge the data and policy gaps in the implementation of the SDGs?
- What have been the practices/approaches that statistical offices and their policy counterparts have used to increase the usage of data in the VNRs?
- How can countries identify national data disaggregation priorities and develop tools and practices to improve the collection of disaggregated data?
- What role can other actors, such as international partners and stakeholders, play?
- Which tools and formats do you use for presenting data in the VNR and in monitoring SDGs in general?

This side event also takes the opportunity to soft launch the **United Nations Network of Data Officers and Statisticians**. The Network provides the data officers at the UNRCOs a platform to link to the Chief Statisticians and the country's statistical systems to ensure consistency and alignment with the guidelines, standards, and principles agreed by the world's Chief Statisticians at the UN Statistical Commission. Through the network, the UN data officers and the national statistical systems can collaborate efficiently and effectively to support national governments in the full implementation of the 2030 agenda and the review and reporting on the SDGs. The Network will also provide a platform for the data officers to share experiences, improve coordination, and consult experts at national, regional and international levels on different topics related to monitoring and reporting on the SDGs. It will also help to promote international standards, best practices, system-wide coherence and coordination on SDG monitoring.

Preliminary agenda

- **Introductory Remarks:**
    - *Ms. Yongyi Min, Chief of SDG Monitoring Section, DESA Statistics Division*
- **Overview of the VNR process:**

- o *Ms. Marion Barthelemy , Director of Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination for Sustainable Development, UNDESA*
- **Experiences from countries on the preparation of 2020 VNRs**
  - o *Mr. Pravin Srivastava, Chief Statistician of India*
  - o *Mr. Chris Mukiza, Executive Director, Uganda bureau of Statistics*
  - o *National VNR and Role of Statistics Austria presentation provided by Mr. Werner Holzer, Director General-Statistics*
- **The UN Resident Coordinator Offices support to countries in implementing SDGs**
  - o *Mr. Frederik Matthys, Chief, Policy and Innovations, UN Development Coordination Office*
- **Launch of the UN Network of Data Officers and Statisticians**
  - o *Ms. Yongyi Min, Chief of SDG Monitoring Section, DESA Statistics Division*