Fifth North and Central Asia Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

Building Back Better from COVID-19 while Advancing the Full Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Session 3: Strengthening Second-generation VNR Processes

Virtual Meeting Format
5 October 2021, 15:30 – 17:20 hours (UTC+6)

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

Fulfillment of obligations under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires countries to undertake regular and inclusive reviews of progress towards achieving the Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at national and subnational levels.

An essential component of the review and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at the national level is the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process. All member States from the North and Central Asian subregion have already undergone at least one VNRs during the first five years of 2030 Agenda implementation: Armenia (2018, 2020); Azerbaijan (2017, 2019, 2021); Georgia (2016, 2020); Kazakhstan (2019); Kyrgyzstan (2020); Russia (2020); Tajikistan (2017); Turkmenistan (2019); Uzbekistan (2020).
countries have submitted two VNRs, and one country has submitted third VNR in 2021. Kazakhstan aims to prepare its 2nd VNR in 2022, and Turkmenistan in 2023.

Figure 1. VNRs submission by NCA countries

![Diagram showing VNR submission by NCA countries]

Processes of preparing VNRs provide an opportunity to share experiences, including challenges, best practices and lessons learnt, and generate efforts towards the strengthening the VNR processes. The core activities will be tied with examining the impact of COVID-19 and the steps towards better coordination, governance, stakeholder engagement and evidence-based approach. What should governments do to better be equipped for VNRs? How VNRs serve as a good tool for national governments to harmonize and align planning process? What are the main challenges and limitations in VNR process? The fundamentals of better VNR preparation in the NCA sub-region focusing on key drivers and enablers will be integrated in the country experiences to be shared and discussed, among others.

This Session is a platform for follow-up, review and preparation for the next VNR submission. Through it, member states have a chance to revise national development goals and targets; assess and strengthen the adequacy of national coordination processes and institutions; rethink and address the challenges and main gaps observed during the previous VNRs and mobilize multi stakeholder support through creation of partnerships for the achievement of the global goals.
Objectives and Expected Outcomes

As an objective this Session has to foster deepened and shared understanding between member states and other stakeholders in North and Central Asia on VNR preparation, implementation and coordination processes by sharing the experiences and to accelerate the balanced implementation of the 2030 Agenda to Build Back Better after COVID-19. It aims to support member states in their efforts to prepare their next generation VNRs to be presented at the United Nations High-level Political Forum. Main discussion points will feed into the 2021 sessions of the Asia Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (APFSD).

Session will give an opportunity to member states and stakeholders to share best practices and engage in peer learning, help in preparing their presentations at the 2022 meeting of the high-level political forum. It will pave a way to optimize reporting and evidence-based mechanisms and practices available in the countries and promote ‘twinning’ by enabling different stakeholders.

Participants

Targeted audience will comprise officials from relevant ministries and national authorities, planning, coordinating and implementing VNR process, respective councils’ and working group members and other public institutions that oversee implementation and coordination of SDGs from the member states of NCA sub-region. It will also include the representatives of regional and subregional organizations, local business and private sectors, civil society organizations, think tanks, research, academia and UN entities.

Co-organizers

The session will be co-organized by ESCAP and UN DESA.

Tentative Programme

*all times in Almaty local time [UTC +6]*

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<th>Time*</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>15:30 – 16:00</td>
<td>This session aims to reflect the impacts of the pandemic on the subregion, with government representatives and relevant stakeholders presenting and discussing VNR experiences in the NCA sub-region,</td>
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current challenges and next steps. Session will discuss different aspects of VNR process, i.e. stakeholder engagement and strengthening evidence-based approach.

**Housekeeping Announcements**: Natalja Wehmer, Economic Affairs Officer, ESCAP [2 min]

**Moderator**: Mr. Nikolay Pomoshchnikov, Head Subregional Office for North and Central Asia, ESCAP

**Welcome Remarks** [6 min]
- Mr. Nikolay Pomoshchnikov, Head Subregional Office for North and Central Asia, ESCAP [3 min]
- Mr. Amson Sibanda, Chief, National Strategies and Capacity Building Branch, DSDG, UNDESA [3 min]

**Introductory Presentations to Set the Stage**
- Overview on SDG Progress and VNRs Globally and in NCA Countries, Ms. Caitlin Louise Porter, Senior VNR Adviser, ESCAP [10 min]
- Preparing a Next Generation VNR for Kazakhstan in 2022: Plans for Process and Structure with Special Focus on Lessons Learned and Evolution in Stakeholder Engagement and Evidence-based Approaches, Ms. Baktygul Khambar, Director of the Center for Strategic Research and Sustainable Development, Economic Research Institute, Kazakhstan [10 min]

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<th>16:00 – 16:15</th>
<th>VNR Process [15 min]</th>
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<td><strong>Stakeholder engagement</strong>: Experiences from Countries and Concrete next steps:</td>
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<td>o Good Approaches to Timely and Meaningful Engagement with Stakeholders, Ms. Tamar Iakobidze, Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN), Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist and SDG Focal Point, Georgia [7 min]</td>
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| 16:15 – 16:18 | BREAK [3 min] |

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<th>16:18 – 17:15</th>
<th>Strengthening evidence-based approach [26 min]</th>
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<td>o Turkmenistan: SDG Center, Mr. Arslankerim Kerimov, Student, Faculty of International Economic Relations of the Institute of International Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, Young SDG Ambassador of the Goal 17. [5 min]</td>
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Guiding Questions for the Session

- What is the current progress of North and Central Asian states in VNR preparation? What are the barriers to effective implementation and better preparation?
- What support would be required for next VNR preparation? How you want to address the prioritized targets to report the progress? What are the gaps, constrains and limitations for better VNR and local reporting on SDGs?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the ability of governments and other stakeholders to report and review the implementation of development agenda that leaves no one behind? What are the drivers or underlying causes of the VNR reporting?
- How to strengthen national and regional reporting and evidence-based actions for VNRs? What should governments do to better be equipped for VNRs?

Further Information and Registration

The 2021 subregional SDG Forum is taking place in virtual modality. It is conducted in English and Russian languages and is open to all interested participants.
• Online registration for the Subregional SDG Forum is possible here or via QR code
• Detailed information will be available on the official website here.
• For further information, please contact escap-sonca@un.org