Southeast Asia
2024 Voluntary National Reviews Clinic

An Associated Event of the Seventh Southeast Asia Multistakeholder Forum

Wednesday 8 November 2023, 09:00-15:00
UNCC, Bangkok, Thailand (Conference Room 4)

CONCEPT NOTE

Context

The voluntary national review (VNR) is a process through which countries assess and present national progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As part of its follow-up and review mechanisms, the 2030 Agenda encourages member States to "conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven".

VNRs serve as a basis for the regular global reviews by the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) held annually in July in New York. The VNR aims to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Most countries in South-East Asia (SEA) have completed and reported two VNRs. Lao People’s Democratic Republic is preparing their third report to be presented in 2024. At the same time, Voluntary Local Reviews have been prepared in Indonesia and Malaysia with more countries in the sub-regions getting interested in producing such reports. While reporting on the specific context of each country, the VNR also outline challenges, many of which are similar across countries, especially within the same region.

The VNR also seeks to strengthen policies and institutions of governments and to mobilize multistakeholder support and partnerships for SDG acceleration. VNRs are not only a reporting mechanism to periodically take stock, but also a tool to continuously reflect and improve on the SDG implementation process itself.

Achieving the SDGs requires multistakeholder efforts and VNRs provide an opportunity to lead and mobilize support for an open, transparent, participatory, and multistakeholder approach to SDG implementation. Multistakeholder engagement for the VNRs promotes ownership and raises public knowledge of national initiatives to achieve the SDGs. By forging new partnerships, it increases the accessibility of resources such as funding, technical know-how, analytical tools, and data. Furthermore, multistakeholder engagement makes VNRs more cohesive and comprehensive, promoting integrated approaches to sustainable development.
For the four least developed countries (LDCs) of the subregion\(^1\), the newly adopted Doha Programme of Action for the Decade 2022-2031 (DPoA) can provide an additional framework for VNRs by contextualizing the specific challenges that LDCs face. In particular, by emphasizing productive capacities and human capital and addressing LDC-specific impediments, the DPoA fosters the sustainable development of LDCs and aims to support these countries to graduate from the category. In turn, VNRs can inform the follow-up and review of the DPoA by interlinking SDGs and targets of the DPoA and providing useful data and information for the review of the plan of action.

**Objectives**

This VNR Clinic aims to facilitate the exchange of good practices in preparing VNRs and present ESCAP’s support for the VNR process. It will provide an opportunity to discuss the role of VNRs as enablers for multistakeholder partnerships and improve policy frameworks to accelerate SDG implementation.

The clinic seeks to:

- Provide a space to discuss VNR preparation amongst countries.
- Underscore evident complementarities between the 2030 Agenda and the Doha Plan of Action and identify common tools for achieving both agendas.
- Foster capacity building and peer learning by providing advice on VNR preparation processes and key challenges encountered in 2\(^{nd}\) and 3\(^{rd}\) VNRs.
- Provide an overview of ESCAP’s support and tools for VNR preparation and LDC graduation.
- Promote south-south cooperation on the VNRs and SDG acceleration.

**Participants**

Participation is by invitation only. The workshop will gather a broad range of stakeholders involved in VNR processes, such as:

- Government officials engaged in various aspects of implementing and monitoring the SDGs.
- Representatives of civil society organizations active in SDG advocacy and implementation, including those representing or working with marginalized and vulnerable groups.
- Representatives of the private sector.
- Experts from think tanks and academia.
- Other stakeholders involved in VNR and LDC graduation processes at the national, local, sub-regional and regional levels.

**Agenda**

| 09:00 - 09:10 | **Opening and welcome remarks**  
**Master of Ceremony:** Mr. Riccardo Mesiano, Sustainable Development Officer, ESCAP |

\(^1\) Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar, and Timor-Leste are the LDCs in the Southeast Asian subregion.
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<td>09:10 – 10:15</td>
<td><strong>Session 1: Exploring the voluntary national review process</strong></td>
<td>This session will introduce the key elements of the VNR process, highlighting the role of VNRs as tools for SDG acceleration. It will also provide space for countries to share their experiences with VNRs.</td>
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|           | **Ms. Sara Libera Zanetti**, 2030 Agenda and VNR Specialist, ESCAP | - Introduction to the event, tour de table and participants’ experience with VNRs.  
- Overview of latest global processes (SDG Summit/Doha), VNR timeline & process, and best practices from the SEA region.  
- Reflections on the role of VNRs in SDG acceleration. |
|           | **Moderator: Mr. Riccardo Mesiano**, Sustainable Development Officer, ESCAP | |
| 09:10 – 10:15 | **Country experiences with 2nd and 3rd VNR** | |
|           | **H.E. Mr. Juvêncio de Jesus Martins**, Ambassador of Timor-Leste to Thailand | |
|           | **H.E. Mr. Poch Sovanndy**, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Planning, Cambodia | remote connection |
|           | **Ms. Viengdalat Somphet**, Deputy Director of the UN Economic and Social Affairs Division, Department of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lao P.D.R. | |
| 10:15 – 10:30 | **Group photo and networking break** | |
| 10:15 – 11:45 | **Session 2: Strengthening vertical and horizontal policy coherence through VNRs** | This session will focus on horizontal and vertical policy coherence and underline how VNRs can be instrumental in ensuring the design of appropriate and coherent policies to achieve the SDGs and other development frameworks. The session will, among the others explore the link between the SDGs and the goals and targets of the Doha Programme of Action for LDCs (horizontal coherence); the synergies between VNRs and VLRs (vertical coherence); and the key role of stakeholders in facilitating the policy coherence process. |
|           | **Mr. Yusuke Tateno**, Economic Affairs Officer, ESCAP | - The DPoA goals and targets, their links to SDGs, and their alignment with national development plans |
| 10:30 – 11:45 | **Moderator: Ms. Sawat Adnan**, Regional Cooperation Framework and Partnerships Officer, UN DCO | |
|           | **Panellists:** | |
|           | **Dr. Phim Runsinarith**, Research Director, National University of Management, Cambodia | |
|           | **Mr. Ariel D. Odtojan**, Regional Advocacy and Campaigns Manager, External Engagement, World Vision East Asia | |
|           | **Ms. Tala Batangan**, Policy Officer, The Reality of Aid-Asia Pacific | remote connection |
|           | **Ms. Diani Sadiawati**, Special Staff on SDGs, Nusantara Capital Authority, Indonesia | |
| 11:45 – 13:00 | **Lunch break** | |
Session 2: Using the VNR to strengthen evidence-based policy on sustainable development and targeting those left behind

This session will examine how VNRs can promote better use of evidence in policy making, particularly in relation to targeting inequalities and those being left behind. It will also present good practices at country level and will elaborate on how VNRs can promote better use of evidence in policy making, particularly in relation to targeting inequalities and those being left behind.

Moderator: Mr. Arman Bidarbakht-Nia, Statistician, ESCAP

- Mr. Dayyan Shayani, Statistician, ESCAP
  - SDG Progress Assessment: using data for evidence-based analysis for VNR

- Country experiences with utilizing an SDG Progress Assessment

  - Ms. Pg Khairil Bahriah binti Pg Haji Mohd Ali, Acting Head of Secretariat, Special National Coordination Committee for Sustainable Development Goals (Brunei Darussalam), Prime Minister’s Office, Brunei Darussalam remote connection

  - Ms. Sin Putheary, Executive Director, Cooperation Committee of Cambodia remote connection

  - Ms. Nguyen Thi Thanh Nga, Official Department of Science, and Natural Resources & Environment (DSENRE) Ministry of Planning and Investment, Vietnam remote connection

- Mr. Selahattin Selsah Pasali, Social Affairs Officer, ESCAP
  - Integrating Leave No One Behind analysis in the VNR

- Country experiences with conducting/utilizing LNOB analysis

  - Ms. Robeliza Halip, Coordinator, Indigenous Peoples Major Group for Sustainable Development (IPMG)

  - Mrs. Chomquan Pinyowit, Director, Development Affairs Division Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand

Open discussion

Wrap up and vote of thanks: Key take aways

This session will summarise key points emerged during the discussions and will present future activities on Follow-up and Review and Doha Programme of Action.

- Mr. Riccardo Mesiano, Sustainable Development Officer, ESCAP

Further Information

For more information on ESCAP’s VNR support please visit: https://www.unescap.org/2030-agenda/voluntary-national-reviews. For more information on ESCAP’s work on LDCs please visit: https://www.unescap.org/our-work/countries-special-situations

All questions regarding the workshop can be directed to escap-vnr@un.org with copy to escap-sro-sea@un.org