VNRS halfway the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Overview and reflections

Joop Theunissen
Office of Intergovernmental Support and Coordination
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
theunissen@un.org
Overview

1. The process so far: Global achievement in reaching the SDGs

2. VNR reporting as a tool for implementing the Agenda

3. Towards a new generation of VNRs:
   - ECOSOC/HLPF Review
   - What have the VNRs done well?
   - How can they be improved?
Overview

1. The process so far: Global achievement in reaching the SDGs

2. VNR reporting as a tool for implementing the Agenda

3. Towards a new generation of VNRs:
   - ECOSOC/HLPF Review
   - What have the VNRs done well?
   - How can they be improved?
An overview of global SDG reporting


Available in all 6 languages
Progress on the SDGs in a nutshell

- **Green** - Only 15% of SDG targets are currently on track for achievement by 2030
- **Yellow** - About 50% are moderately-to-severely off track
- **Red** - Over 30% are either stagnant or moving in the wrong direction.
Overview

1. The process so far: Global achievement in reaching the SDGs

2. VNR reporting as a tool for implementing the Agenda

3. Towards a new generation of VNRs:
   - ECOSOC/HLPF Review
   - What have the VNRs done well?
   - How can they be improved?
High-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF)

HLPF oversees a network of follow-up and review processes at the global level (2030 Agenda, para 82)

• Convened annually in July under the auspices of ECOSOC, and every 4 years under auspices of the GA (SDG Summit)
• Follow-up and review at the HLPF informed by an annual SDG Progress Report
• Carries out thematic reviews of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, including cross-cutting issues.
• Reviews of national progress (VNRs)
• Adopts ministerial declaration (every July) & political declaration under GA (every 4 years)
## 41 VNR presenters at the 2024 HLPF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Times Presenting/Region</th>
<th>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Time (2)</th>
<th>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; time (20)</th>
<th>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; Time (14)</th>
<th>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Time (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>African States (16)</strong></td>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>Congo (Republic of the), Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Libya, Mauritania, Mauritius, South Africa</td>
<td>Chad, Kenya, Namibia, Uganda, Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asia-Pacific States (10)</strong></td>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>Micronesia (Federated States of), Oman, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Syrian Arab Republic, Vanuatu</td>
<td>Lao PDR, Nepal,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eastern European States (4)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Armenia, Estonia, Georgia,</td>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Latin America &amp; Caribbean States (9)</strong></td>
<td>Belize, Brazil, Ecuador,</td>
<td>Costa Rica, Honduras, Peru,</td>
<td>Argentina, Colombia, Mexico</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Western Europe &amp; other States (2)</strong></td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2023 VNR Synthesis Report - Key Conclusions for 2023

1. Governments adapt existing institutional and coordination frameworks. Many have created new mechanisms to elevate the SDGs to the highest levels of Government.

2. More countries include statistical annexes in their reports, or provide narratives based on data.

3. The reports focus on national efforts to overcome setbacks from Covid-19, conflict and climate change.

4. Many examples of stakeholders implementing inclusive and homegrown solutions at local levels.
2024 High-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF)

2024 HLPF: 8 - 17 July 2024, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council.

Ministerial Segment: 15-17 July

Theme: "Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions”.

Review in-depth:

- **Goal 1.** Poverty
- **Goal 2.** Hunger, food and nutrition
- **Goal 13.** Climate change
- **Goal 16.** Peaceful and inclusive societies, justice for all
- **Goal 17.** Means of implementation
# 2023 High-Level Political Forum & High-Level Segment of ECOSOC

## WHO WAS THERE?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days</th>
<th>SDGs under review</th>
<th>VNRs</th>
<th>EU Voluntary Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than 110 overall</td>
<td>Keynote speakers, panelists, lead discussants, respondents, moderators, youth speakers, in townhall, panels and fireside chat</td>
<td>Heads of State or Government, Ministers, Vice Ministers and Ministerial Level Officials</td>
<td>181 Statements in general debate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Key Events

- **134** to talk about
- **800** MGos & NGOs accredited to ECOSOC
- **12** Special Events
- **16** VNR Labs
- **204** Side Events (141 in person & 63 virtual)
- **19** Exhibitions at UNHQ
Overview

1. The process so far: Global achievement in reaching the SDGs

2. VNR reporting as a tool for implementing the Agenda

3. Towards a new generation of VNRs:
   - ECOSOC/HLPF Review
   - What have the VNRs done well?
   - How can they be improved?
ECOSOC and HLPF Review

• Takes place every four years to review the structure of the Economic and Social Council and the HLPF – including the VNRs

• Sets structure of all meetings including themes and goals to be reviewed.

• Could review a call for “new generation” of VNRs as called for by the Secretary-General in his SDG Progress Report:
  
  • “[...] nationalization of the Goals has not yet had the necessary “normative and institutional impact.” (para 52)
  
  • [...] It is essential for our attention to shift from reporting national action to an international audience to strengthening national accountability for progress and transformation. [...] (para 58)

• Expected to complete its work in May.
What have the VNRs done well?

- **Nearly universal uptake**: 188 countries presenting over 360 reports so far; 123 countries reporting for a second, third or fourth time this year

- **Strong political interest**: high representation at HLPF; intense efforts to prepare reports at national level; many voluntary local reviews; more outreach

- **Increasingly robust data sets** made available internationally and nationally
  - [IAEG-SDGs](#): 17 Goals, 169 targets and 231 unique indicators
  - A global [SDG Indicator Database](#)
  - Regional dashboards, including by ESCAP
  - Ever stronger links of national statistical systems to reporting: [Wiki](#)

We must stay the course!
How can a good thing be made even better?

• Better links between development planning and national targets.

• Indicate how the SDGs are making an impact at the national level.

• Taking pride in achievements made is great, but...

• Greater level of consultations and creating ownership with major groups and other stakeholders

• Ensure the VNR report is used after its presentation in July and becomes truly embedded in national policy.

• Address, and advocate for, gaps in means of implementation

• Contribute to transitional change in the environmental Goals

• **What do you think?**
Agreed principles VNRs

Voluntary
encourage reporting and include developed and developing countries

State-led
country driven reviews of progress at national and sub-national levels

Platform for partnerships
including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders

Learning experience
facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, part of a process

National circumstances
reviews in accordance with national circumstances, policies and priorities, together with relevant partners
Possible additional principles?

- **Embedded in data**
  - based on robust consistent data sets

- **Link to national strategies**
  - ensure that the VNR process aligns with existing national planning processes – even when done separately

- **Stronger accountability**
  - review and evaluate what has worked since the first report and what has not, due to domestic, not external factors

- **Link to national budgeting**
  - show how targets are funded by means of implementation

- **Transitional change**
  - show how the national goals set will help achieve the SDGs nationally
What do you think?

What has been your experience preparing a VNR?

Thank you!

theunissen@un.org

19 February 2024