UNITED NATIONS ESCAP
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
Subregional Office for North and Central Asia

Fourth North and Central Asian Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

"Human Well-being and the SDGs: Recovering after the COVID-19 crisis"

Virtual Meeting Format

Session #2: Subregional and National Progress Reporting on SDGs and related risks in view of the COVID-19 crisis

CONCEPT NOTE

Date: 2 Sep 2020	**Organizer:** - ESCAP
Time: *Session 2A (by invitation only): 14:00-15:15 (Almaty time = UTC+6)* **Session 2B (public):** **15:30-17:00 (Almaty time = UTC+6)**	**Session Focal Point:** - Ms. Dinara Azhigaliyeva, ESCAP (main)
Language: Russian - English (simultaneous interpretation)	**Webpage Link:** - https://unescap.un.org/events/2020NCA_SDG **Participants Registration:** bit.ly/2020NCA_SDG

Context

To fulfill obligations under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development countries have committed to regular and inclusive review of progress towards achieving the Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the 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); Georgia (2016; 2020); Kazakhstan (2019); Kyrgyzstan (2020); Russia (2020); Tajikistan (2018); Turkmenistan (2019); Uzbekistan (2020). Processes of preparing VNRs provide an opportunity to share experiences, including challenges, best practices and lessons learnt, and facilitate acceleration of progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

This Session is a platform for follow-up and review at the subregional level. Through it, member States have a chance to revise national development goals and targets; assess and strengthen the adequacy of national policies and institutions; and mobilize multi stakeholder support through creation of partnerships for the achievement of the global goals.

The Session represents an opportunity to discuss among peers how to practically implement the guiding principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. One core principle is "to leave no one behind" (LNOB), another to implement all SDGs through an integrated and comprehensive approach, and a third to consult and involve key stakeholders in a whole of society approach focusing on people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting socio-economic crisis have magnified pre-existing challenges and vulnerabilities. It also reducing governments' ability to act when support for poor, vulnerable and marginalized population groups is most needed. The impacts of the pandemic are, for example, deepening pre-existing gender inequalities and structural barriers, particularly in relation to women's limited access to decent work, social protection systems, healthcare services, safe water and sanitation, decent work, and digital infrastructure.

What policy approaches are different governments considering/applying to ensure that "building back better" means more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable societies that leave no one behind? How have different sectors and levels within government, and stakeholders within society been meaningfully involved in the preparations of Voluntary National Reviews and in the implementation of the SDGs at national and local levels?

Session Objectives

As an objective this Session has to foster deepened and shared understanding between member States and other stakeholders in North and Central Asia on cross-border challenges and to accelerate the balanced implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national and subregional levels to Build Back Better after COVID-19, taking into consideration the distinct vulnerabilities and needs, capacities and skills of different segments of society, including women and men. Main discussion points will feed into the 2021 sessions of the Asia Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development (APFSD) and the HLPF.

Session Format

Agenda:

#	Time (Almaty time)	Activity
Session 2A [Closed]		
1	14:00-15:15	**Breakout discussion groups (presenting and discussing country SDG progress)** (**75 min**): (i) countries that presented the VNRs in 2019 (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan), **Moderators: Ms. Elena Danilova-Cross**, Programme Specialist on Poverty and Inequality, UNDP (ii) countries that presented the VNRs for the first time in 2020 (Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Uzbekistan), **Moderators: Ms. Ulziisuren Jamsran,** UN Women Representative in Kyrgyzstan (iii) countries that presented the VNRs for the second time in 2020 and plan to present the second VNR in the future (Armenia, Georgia, Tajikistan),

		Moderator: **Mr. Riccardo Messiano**, Sustainable Development Officer, Environment and Development Division, ESCAP **Discussion flow in each break-out group:** - Welcome and Setting the Stage by moderators (**5 min**) - Presentations by the 3 countries on VNRs and SDG implementation (6 min each) (**20 min**) - Round of questions from moderator to each of the 3 government speakers (**10 min**) - Round of invited responses from 3 stakeholders' representatives (**10 min**) - Open discussion and exchange (**20 min**) - Agreeing on main messages rapporteur should present in panel discussion of Session 2B (**10 min**)
	15:15-15:30	Break
Session 2B		
2	**15:30-15:45**	- Welcome and Setting the Stage by moderator, **Ms. Katinka Weinberger,** Chief, Environment & Development Policy Section, Environment and Development Division, ESCAP (**5min**) - Presentation: SDGs Progress in North and Central Asia, **Mr. Arman Bidarbakht Nia,** Head, Statistical Data Management Unit, Statistics Division, ESCAP (**10 min**)

3	**15:45-16:55**	- Panel discussion of Rapporteurs from Session 2A and different stakeholders involved in VNR preparation (**45 min**)
		    o **Mr. Dmitry Ezhov**, Head, International Cooperation Section, Integration Development Department, Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC)
		    o **Ms. Elena Danilova-Cross**, Programme Specialist on Poverty and Inequality, UNDP
		    o **Ms. Tamar Iakobidze**, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist & SDG Focal Point, Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN)
		
		Q&A from participants (**25 min**)

5	**16:55-17:00**	- Wrap-up (**5 min**)

Guiding questions for the session

1. What is the current progress of North and Central Asian states in achieving the 2030 Agenda and SDGs in order to "Leave no one behind"?

2. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the ability of governments and other stakeholders to implement development that leaves no one behind? And looking forward: what solutions and opportunities do we have to engage with vulnerable groups?

3. Already pre-COVID-19 many governments were struggling to ensure financing for development. Since the COVID-19 crisis, fiscal space has reduced at the hour of great need – how can we finance SDG implementation after COVID-19?

4. How to practically promote gender equality and empowerment of women through SDG implementation?

Session Documents:

- ESCAP, Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2020, 20 March 2020, https://www.unescap.org/publications/asia-and-pacific-sdg-progress-report-2020
- ESCAP, Report of the Seventh Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (ESCAP/RFSD/2020/6), 20 May 2020, https://www.unescap.org/apfsd/7/document/APFSD7_6E.pdf (Eng), https://www.unescap.org/apfsd/7/document/APFSD7_6R.pdf (Rus)
- ESCAP, Acceleration along transformative pathways to deliver sustainable development, (ESCAP/RFSD/2020/1), 20 May 2020, https://www.unescap.org/apfsd/7/document/APFSD7_1E.pdf (Eng), https://www.unescap.org/apfsd/7/document/APFSD7_1R.pdf (Rus)
- ESCAP, Five years on, where do we stand? (ESCAP/RFSD/2020/2), 20 May 2020, https://www.unescap.org/apfsd/7/document/APFSD7_2E.pdf (Eng), https://www.unescap.org/apfsd/7/document/APFSD7_2R.pdf (Rus)
- Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) in North and Central Asia:
  o Armenia, 2018 and 2020, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/armenia
  o Azerbaijan, 2017 and 2019, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/azerbaijan
  o Georgia, 2016 and 2020, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/georgia
  o Kazakhstan, 2019, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/kazakhstan
  o Kyrgyzstan, 2020, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/kyrgyzstan
  o Russian Federation, 2020, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/russia
  o Tajikistan, 2017, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/tajikistan
  o Turkmenistan, 2019, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/turkmenistan
  o Uzbekistan, 2020, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/uzbekistan