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Sixth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda**

**Linking national, regional and global dimensions of
the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

Institutional mechanisms for Sustainable Development
Goals coordination in Asia and the Pacific Voluntary
National Reviews***

Summary

The aim of this document is to provide provides examples of the institutional arrangements supporting and coordinating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the role of Parliaments, Supreme Audit Institutions and other stakeholders across Asia and the Pacific, as outlined in the voluntary national reviews of this region. The conceptual framework is supported by a series of country examples to facilitate the sharing of information and open up possibilities for peer learning at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.

I. Introduction

1. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires a solid institutional framework to steer implementation of the 2030 Agenda, leverage interlinkages between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and assure that the 2030 Agenda and National Plans are fully integrated. This information note for the Sixth Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) provides an overview of the key elements that member States may consider strengthening their institutional frameworks to better support implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This include, also, shedding a light on the role of data and statistics and budgeting and finance to ensure that adequate resources are available to support the institutional mechanisms for the advancement of the Agenda.

2. The handbook on Voluntary National Review (VNR) preparation¹ issued by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) of the UN

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*** This document is being issued without formal editing.

¹ “*Handbook for the Preparation of the Voluntary National Review*” available online at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20872VNR_hanbook_2019_Edition_v2.pdf.

Division for Sustainable Development (DSD) places emphasis on the importance of institutional mechanisms and how these should not be influenced by political and electoral cycles to ensure the sustainability of the institution and leverage its role in Sustainable Development Goals implementation.

3. This document provides examples of the institutional arrangements supporting and coordinating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the role of Parliaments, Supreme Audit Institutions and other stakeholders across Asia and the Pacific, as outlined in the voluntary national reviews of this region.² The conceptual framework is supported by a series of country examples to facilitate the sharing of information and open up possibilities for peer learning at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.

II. Why institutional arrangements are key for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda

4. The aspirational nature of the 2030 Agenda, along with the broad scope and interlinked nature of the Sustainable Development Goals calls for rethinking governmental strategies and for applying different approaches to governance, based on the principles of accountability, innovation, integration, and collaboration. The multi and cross-sector nature of the Sustainable Development Goals covering multiple policy areas, requires strong collaboration among of all parts of government, along with institutions, the business sector and the Civil Society (CSO). Leaving no one behind (LNOB) necessitates a *whole of government* and a *whole of society* approach, where all ministries, public agencies and public at large are involved in the decision-making process. Finally, the limited resources available at the national level require a special focus on budgeting and financing to ensure an effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. While Governments are aware of the interdependency among sustainable development issues and of the benefits of integrated approaches, achieving a high degree of coherence, integration and coordination among different levels of Government and institutions remain cumbersome.

6. The first triennium of voluntary national reviews has shown that institutional arrangements can take various shapes and that there is no one model more appropriate than others.³ To meet the global goals, institutions shall reflect the nature and the main principles of Sustainable Development Goals, such as *universality*: harmonizing domestic and foreign policies; *integration*: breaking down the siloes of ministerial arrangements; *aspiration*: welcoming innovation and going beyond business as usual; and *leaving no one behind*: engaging a broad range of stakeholders, including marginalised groups.⁴

² Within the first three years of the global Agenda, 26 countries from the ESCAP region have presented their national reviews and 16 are volunteering to report at the 2019 High-level Political Forum in July. All reports and main messages are available on line at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>.

³ “*Compendium of National Institutional Arrangements for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*”, available online at: <http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/UNPAN97468.pdf>.

⁴ “*Sustainable Development Goals Best Practices for Institutional Structures*” available online at: www.bccic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/SDG-Best-Practices-for-Institutional-Structures-Policy-Brief-BCCIC.pdf.

III. The importance of mechanisms to ensure integration and policy coherence

7. The 2030 Agenda delineates a holistic perspective for sustainable development. Environmental conservation and protection, economic growth and development and social protection are inter-related and universal challenges that call for integrated and innovative approaches. Solid collaboration, and coordination across sectors and institutions are therefore needed to ensure that the main pillars of sustainable development and cross-cutting issues like gender, health, and climate change, for instance, are mainstreamed into national development programmes and policies.

8. Fostering integration, in fact, assumes strong cooperation among institutions at all levels and engagement of non-state stakeholders in the decision making. Integrated approaches to Sustainable Development Goal implementation allow for shying away from trade-offs among Sustainable Development Goals and related targets, promoting a more efficient, coherent and balanced allocation of resources. This can be accomplished only by addressing systemic issues that undermine institutional work. Breaking down silo approaches, enhancing opportunities for institutions and stakeholders to interact and find synergies, managing policy trade-offs and exploring interconnections among Sustainable Development Goals are key to addressing systemic flaws. The transformational nature of the 2030 Agenda urges Governments not to act solo, but rather engage at multiple level of governance and across manifold sectors.

9. Policy integration can be defined as the management of cross-cutting issues that goes beyond individual institutional responsibilities and established policy fields.⁵ Policy integration ensures that the progress made towards one goal will positively impact the achievement of another one. The 2030 Agenda stresses the importance of strengthening policy coherence to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 17.14) and ensuring that no one is left behind. Integrated policymaking necessitates establishing vertical and horizontal coherence, to ensure effective dialogue and collaboration among national, subnational, and local level, as well as between different actors and stakeholders, including Civil Society.

A. Horizontal coherence

10. Horizontal coherence refers to the ability of institutions to work across their policy domains. As afore mentioned, cross sectoral integration is critical to address cross-cutting issues, as well as the interlinked nature of the global goals. Sustainable Development Goal implementation goes beyond the competences of individual departments, moving from a silo approach to multi stakeholder one and overcoming sector boundaries by bringing together all relevant ministries to identify gaps and synergies.

11. Alignment to International Conventions is thus also critical to ensure integrated and coherent policies. While the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) 2015-2030⁶ (Sendai Framework), and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third

⁵ “*Working Together: Integration, institutions and the Sustainable Development Goals*” Available online at: <http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/UNPAN98152.pdf>.

⁶ “*The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*” (Sendai Framework), available online at: www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework.

International Conference on Financing for Development (AAAA) have all been adopted under separate global processes, they require global concerted action to address concerns such as climate change, disaster risk reduction, or finance for sustainable development in a holistic manner, recognising their linkage to the Sustainable Development Goals. For instance, with respect to climate change, shifting the focus and the burden of climate action from one ministry, such as the environment one, to encompass other key sectors and line ministries, will broaden the spectrum of climate action policies and activities.

12. Most countries acknowledge their commitment to the conventions in their voluntary national reviews and make the connections to the specific Sustainable Development Goals, such as 7 and 13 for the Paris Agreement, 11 for the Sendai Framework, or 17 for the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. For instance, **Australia** recognizes that the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework go hand in hand, as the increase of natural disasters and related costs risk to undermine the progress made on the Sustainable Development Goals. **Sri Lanka** also notes how being a signatory of these conventions, paved the way and created a favourable environment for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. To ensure policy coherence and integration, all policies in **Bhutan** are screened through the Gross National Happiness (GNH) Policy Screening tool.⁷ This consists of 22 variables, which are designed to identify whether the proposed policies align with sustainable development. The policies must meet at least 66 of 99 points to be passed. Given the alignment between Gross National Happiness and the Sustainable Development Goals, the tool allows for formulation of policies that enable the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals in Bhutan.

B. Vertical coherence

13. Enhanced vertical coherence means promoting concerted actions among local, subnational, national and international levels. In fact, while it is national Governments to set country goals and priorities, local Governments oversee their implementation on the ground and can steer advancement towards sustainable development. Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals implies the involvement of communities and all layers of society, especially of the most marginalized groups, in Sustainable Development Goal implementation. Local governments are ergo pivotal in making the 2030 Agenda a reality for individuals and communities.

14. Several are the Sustainable Development Goals that highlight the importance of engaging local communities, especially in achieving the environmental Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 6.b; 13b, 15c). Furthermore, Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities puts forward a novel approach to sustainable development that centres on the linkages among the rural, urban and regional layers of governance. Sustainable Development Goal 16 also stresses the importance of creating a multi-layered system that can bridge the gap among citizens and their national Governments.

15. **Australia** has taken the opportunity offered by the voluntary national review to encourage the participation and engagement of subnational level of Governments, such as local and federal ones; for instance, some local Governments, like the Perth Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council and Melbourne City Council, are incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals

⁷ For more information, see: www.gnhcentrebbhutan.org/what-is-gnh/gnh-screening-tool/.

into their planning. **Bhutan's** 12th Five Year Plan (FYP) emphasises the importance of coordination, consolidation, and cooperation (Triple C) among different stakeholders and levels of governance. Local Governments are involved in the formulation of the 12th FYP programmes to ensure integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into the Agency and Local Government Key Result Areas.

16. **Lao PDR** also recognises that engaging sub national administrations is necessary to ensure implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals at localized level. The national Government is ergo working towards strengthening collaboration with local administrations to assess progress against the National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) and the Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on public service improvement, participation, rule of law and sound financial management. In **Viet Nam**, Ministry of Planning and Investment as the leading agency for the Sustainable Development Goals, also engages with multiple layers of governance, through the assigned focal points for the 2030 Agenda at the planning and financing departments of other ministries and related agencies, and the Provincial Departments of Planning and Investment (DPI).

17. In **Sri Lanka**, the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Wildlife & Regional Development (MSDWRD), which ensures coordination among national and subnational levels, has mapped the roles and responsibilities of the various levels of governance, and has requested line ministries and provincial councils to appoint sustainable development focal points. The Ministry of Sustainable Development, Wildlife & Regional Development has started several initiatives to ease the involvement of different shares of governance, including for the preparation of the voluntary national review, such as: a) has drafted a strategy for public service delivery; b) prepared a handbook that delineates Sustainable Development Goal implementation responsibilities of 425 agencies; c) prepared a Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework in three languages; and d) appointed a Task Force for the preparation of the voluntary national review, comprising of key agencies. Provincial, district, & divisional level government representatives were also involved in the voluntary national review process through subnational workshops.

C. Stakeholder engagement

18. The involvement and participation of all segments of society is critical to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda devotes several targets to participatory and inclusive societies, promoting “*responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels*” (Goal 16.7), asking Governments to regard the broad society as a partner in governance. Establishing mechanisms and spaces for meaningful engagement not only strengthens people’s political rights, but it helps shaping policy development.

19. The 2030 Agenda necessitates national Governments to adopt a new type of leadership, the so-called whole of society approach that invests in a diverse a broad set of stakeholders, mobilizing and harnessing people’s participation in the decision-making. Multi-stakeholder participation, in fact, fosters sustainable decisions as it gives the opportunity to those affected by the decision to express their views, going beyond governance as usual and building a whole of society approach for Sustainable Development Goal implementation. Inclusion, accountability and transparency shall be at the core of the consultation process, ensuring that all affected stakeholders, regardless

of their race, gender, ethnicity, and identity, have adequate means and information to participate in the process and influence the decision-making.

20. Engagement can be considered as a one-off exercise, but institutionalisation is very critical, requiring political will at all levels and going beyond the political cycle. Effective engagement demands organizational and political leadership; support and commitment to meaningful engage stakeholders; it needs specific mechanisms and channels for sustaining the communication with stakeholders; and it requires institutional responsibilities and resources to be allocated. Engagement is a process that calls for a shift in paradigm within Governments and institutions: it is of utter importance in fact that their personnel share a common understanding of how engaging with stakeholders contributes to their mandate; who are relevant stakeholders; what kind of decisions need their inputs; and what quality of the engagement entails.

21. What can be observed from the analysis of the voluntary national reviews is that there is a recognition of a need to engage the broad society more meaningfully and the voluntary national review process galvanises actions and engagement which can lead the foundation to further steps. The voluntary national review exercise in **Sri Lanka** laid the basis for institutionalizing the engagement process. In fact, under the guidance of ESCAP and the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2), a stakeholder engagement plan (SEP) was developed with two main purposes: collecting inputs for the voluntary national review and raise awareness; and establishing a platform as a long-term plan for sustaining the stakeholder engagement process beyond the voluntary national review. Several multi-stakeholder consultations were held at national and regional level and a Multi-stakeholder Reference Group (MRG) was also established. **Australia** regards the Sustainable Development Goals as everyone's endeavour, possible through the engagement of the Government with a wide range of actors: private sectors, youth groups, volunteers, civil societies, families, communities, academia. To this end, to raise awareness and reach the broad population during the voluntary national review preparation, an Australian Sustainable Development Goal web page⁸ was developed by the Global Compact Network Australia (GCNA), supported by the Australian Government. The platform intends to showcase the contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals and the actions undertaken across all level of governance and the whole society. Australia in its voluntary national review dedicates ample space to the efforts undertaken by groups such as youth, volunteers, and academia.

22. To support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in national policymaking, the Government of **Nepal** established three high-level committees comprising of representatives from the private and public sector and civil society. They adopted an inclusive approach to the implementation of the goals by organizing a series of workshops and summits to meet the large capacity-building needs and strengthen partnerships with the private sector, cooperatives, civil society, development partners and the international community.

23. Engaging with the broad society implies having mechanisms in place also for engaging with the private sector. The Japan Innovation Network (JIN) is tasked with sharing the countries learnings on Sustainable Development Goals. It launched the SDGs Holistic Innovation Platform (SHIP)⁹ with the

⁸ For more information, see: <https://sdgs.org.au/>.

⁹ For more information, see: www.sdgs-ship.com/en/.

support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The SDGs Holistic Innovation Platform aims to use the Sustainable Development Goals as a vehicle for innovation. It is working to bring together both domestic and foreign stakeholders to gather information on challenges and collaborate on opportunities for beneficial innovation. The country has also initiated the “Japan SDGs Award” to promote private sector and organizations’ engagement in achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry develops publications on issues such as climate change such as “Climate change adaptation good practices by Japanese private sector”. This specific publication showcases the good practices of Japanese companies to further engagement.

D. Data and monitoring to inform policy makers

24. A compelling and efficient national monitoring system is a key element of good governance. Reliable, timely, and accurate data availability is essential for countries to set priorities, review progress and develop informed policies for sustainable development. Monitoring is the process of collecting data based on a set of predetermined parameters or indicators. By comparing indicator data, it is possible to monitor and track progress, and thus assess the effectiveness of implementation policies. Monitoring, in fact, is a key component of the 2030 Agenda, as it provides essential information for effective follow up and review. By evaluating progress toward implementation, it helps policy and decision-makers identify challenges and opportunities, set priorities for more effective and efficient implementation, depict interlinkages among the goals, and communicate on progress. Moreover, reliable data can spur public and private investments, and catalyse political commitment and advocacy. Monitoring is also instrumental for sharing best practices and support inter-sectoral integration of goals and targets.

25. National Statistical Systems (NSS) are at the core of the data and monitoring process. Responsibility on data collection and monitoring data at country level, in fact, lies with member States, who are accountable for reporting on national progress on the Sustainable Development Goals to custodian agencies that ultimately organize the data and report on global progress toward Sustainable Development Goals. While the Sustainable Development Goals may represent an unprecedented statistical challenge, solid collaboration and close coordination with National Statistical Offices (NSO), institutions producing official statistics, and other data producers are thus critical to create robust national monitoring systems.

26. The 2030 Agenda has put pressure on National Statistical Offices, in terms of the quantity and the quality of the data to be collected to effectively monitor progress. National Statistical Offices are at the core of data collection, coordination, reporting and validation of statistics for the Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable Development Goals are tasked with the responsibility of providing statistics to international bodies and identifying appropriate data sources and methodologies to produce national and global sustainable development goal indicators. It is thus critical for institutions and the United Nations system to increase their support to Sustainable Development Goals in the collection, use and dissemination of data and official statistics. Capacity-building for closing the gap in statistics is deemed necessary to increase data monitoring at country level, to better document and identify national progress, and accelerate Sustainable Development Goal implementation.

27. The establishment of the National SDG Statistical Platform¹⁰ by the Statistical Committee of **Armenia** (SCA) with the support of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) was crucial to ensure effective and holistic data collection for the voluntary national review process. Furthermore, Armenia is planning on establishing a National SDG Platform for Planning and Monitoring Sustainable Development Goal implementation at country level, as overarching framework for its national follow-up and review activities. The platform would build on the experience of the National SDG Statistical Platform, which was recently set up with the support of the UN country office. Similarly, the Government of **Australia** has set up an online Sustainable Development Goal platform¹¹ named Transforming Australia, to support monitoring of progress in the country. The webpage focuses on the data for goals and indicators that Australia has set as a national priority. The webpage was set up by the National Sustainable Development Council, in cooperation with civil societies, academia, private sector, and experts from the Australian Government.

28. In **Bhutan**, the SDG Working Committee, under the leadership of the Director of Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat, reports every quarter to the Secretary of the Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat on Sustainable Development Goal progress. The Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat is the main responsible body for monitoring and evaluation of the Sustainable Development Goals and follows the Royal Government's Monitoring and Evaluation system. Sustainable Development Goal monitoring and evaluation, in fact, is based on the country five-year plans by which the Sustainable Development Goals are embedded into national planning. The National Economic and Planning Office (NEPO), as secretariat for the Development Coordination Committee in **Kiribati** plays the key role in monitoring and evaluation of progress. Similarly, in **Singapore** the Inter-Ministerial Sustainable Development Policy Group oversees the monitoring of the country's sustainable development strategies as well as the Sustainable Development Goals.

29. In **Lao PDR**, it is the National Steering Committee that is charged with the national coordination for the Sustainable Development Goals also among line ministries, including activities related to monitoring and follow-up. The Laotian Governments stresses the necessity to strengthen effectiveness of monitoring at the local level as well and has initiated corrective actions to bridge these gaps. Furthermore, as a way forward, the Government highlights the need to include the Sustainable Development Goal indicators that are currently not aligned to national plans.

30. In **Sri Lanka**, a monitoring system was developed by the Department of Project Management and Monitoring (DPMM) to collect updates and improvements on projects from all line ministries. To enhance monitoring, a National Evaluation Policy (NEP) plan is expected to be operative from 2019. Besides, a web-based monitoring information system is also under preparation to ease online reporting and policy review. In a like manner, **Viet Nam** is conceiving a road map and indicator system to monitor and evaluate the Sustainable Development Goals. A statistical working group, with representatives from different line ministries and agencies and coordinated by Minister of Planning and Investment (MPI) general statistics office

¹⁰ For more information, see: www.armstat.am/en/?nid=699&thid=1&submit=Search.

¹¹ For more info, see: www.sdgtransformingaustralia.com/.

superintends monitoring and evaluation for the Sustainable Development Goals.

E. The role of budgeting

31. Effective public financial management is at the core of good governance. Budgets are to be regarded as a natural starting point for Governments for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as it will not be possible achieving the Sustainable Development Goals if budgets are not aligned. Poor alignment of resources in fact, can weaken national development strategies. Even though performance budgeting and spending reviews are effective tools to mainstream the Sustainable Development Goals into national budgetary process,¹² they are rarely applied in the context on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals are seldom regarded as the overarching framework to inform the national budget process. Integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into budgeting processes requires political support and to be recognized by the broad society as a national priority on the political agenda.

32. However, circumstances for a successful integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into budgetary processes may differ country to country. First of all, it depends on the broader Sustainable Development Goal implementation strategy of a country, how the Sustainable Development Goals have been translated into the national context: having a national implementation plan makes it easier including the Sustainable Development Goals into national budgets. Secondly, the degree of involvement of the Ministry of Finance. Effective engagement of the Ministry of Finance represents a key factor in Sustainable Development Goal implementation, due to its role of setting national fiscal priorities and adjusting budgetary processes. It strengthens coherence creating a link between Sustainable Development Goals as medium-term strategic goals and the national budget; however, it may not be sufficient to reduce conflicting expenditure.¹³ In **Bangladesh**, improved cooperation among the Ministry of Finance and other parts of Governments have led to a more efficient allocation of resources to climate change adaptation.

33. Budgets call for extensive negotiations between different ministries and line agencies. For instance, in **Afghanistan** the Sustainable Development Goals are used by the Ministry of Economy as a framework for evaluating and prioritizing grant applications submitted to the central Government by the provinces. Furthermore, the budget can be a powerful tool to promote integration, as it may help identify synergies and opportunities across sectors and depicting interlinkages among the goals can ease budget allocation between sectors, also in the view of cross cutting issues. **Nepal**, for instance, has set up a gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) structure, as a mechanism to prioritise programmes based on a gender analysis. Institutional mechanisms have been set up since 2005 within the Ministry of Finance with the appointment of a gender budgeting expert and the establishment of a Gender Responsive Budgeting Committee (GRBC). The Committee, which is a

¹² “*SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2018 – Global Responsibilities*”, available online at: www.sdgindex.org/assets/files/2018/00%20SDGS%202018%20G20%20EDITION%20WEB%20V7%20180718.pdf.

¹³ “*Integrating SDGs into national budgetary processes*”, available online at: www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/study/integrating-sdgs-national-budgetary-processes.

permanent body within the Ministry of Finance, advises sectoral ministries on GRB and has the mandate to monitor budget allocations and public expenditure from a gender perspective and to assess the impact of development policies on both women and men. **Bhutan** has also embarked on a gender responsive budgeting and a gender equality diagnostic study and analysis has been carried out to facilitate gender mainstreaming across sectors.

F. Supreme audit institutions

34. Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) by monitoring the legality, accountability and effectiveness of public expenditures, render an independent overview of national budgeting and public financial management (PFM). For such reason, Supreme Audit Institutions are key players in the enactment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

35. The International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI)¹⁴ has identified four approaches for Supreme Audit Institutions to the Sustainable Development Goals: (i) evaluating national Governments' preparedness to implement, monitor and report on Sustainable Development Goal progress; (ii) engage in performance audits to evaluate the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of policies and programmes direct to the Sustainable Development Goals; (iii) support achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16; and (iv) and being role models of transparency and accountability.

36. Supreme Audit Institutions can help accelerate Sustainable Development Goal implementation in several ways. To start with, Supreme Audit Institutions can enhance transparency of national budgets. Indicator 16.6.1, in fact, suggests an evaluation of primary government expenditures as a percentage of the approved budget, disaggregated by sector as a defining element of effective, accountable and transparent institutions. While audits normally have been performed by sector, Supreme Audit Institutions are capable to provide a more comprehensive and integrated picture of the investments made by the different actors on a specific matter.

37. Supreme Audit Institutions are also essential actors in the fight against illicit financial flows (Goal 16.4), as they perform audits on tax and custom agencies and in preventing fraud and corruption (Goal 16.5). Furthermore, Supreme Audit Institutions support improvement of the overall Government's performance by informing national Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) systems with independent assessment of the effectiveness of sectoral policies and programmes to implement goals and targets. Supreme Audit Institutions can leverage the opportunity of posing questions about national baselines, for instance, whether they have been set, or whether national strategies have been adopted and enacted;¹⁵ about national follow-up and review mechanisms and how to secure means of implementations (MoI).

¹⁴ For more information, see: Auditing Sustainable Development Goals Programme, available online at: www.idi.no/en/idi-cpd/auditing-sustainable-development-goals-programme.

¹⁵ The International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) has developed a strategic plan (2017-2022) which depicts how Supreme Audit Institutions can contribute to the follow-up and review of the sustainable development goals in the context of each nation's sustainable development efforts and according to Supreme Audit Institutions' individual mandates. For more information, see: www.intosai.org/about-us/sdgs-sais-and-regions.html.

38. Nevertheless, the Sustainable Development Goals represent a chance for Supreme Audit Institutions themselves to enhance their modus operandi and go beyond their traditional way of collecting evidence and information, especially for what concerns the concept of stakeholder engagement and the way they communicate the results of their audits. Numerous Supreme Audit Institutions are thus working on more inclusive approaches to audits, to enable a broader stakeholder participation and ensuring that no one is left behind. Supreme Audit Institution of **Bhutan** and Supreme Audit Institution of **Indonesia** explored new ways of conducting their audits to better capture the national institutional arrangements and the participatory process of monitoring and evaluating the Sustainable Development Goals. Supreme Audit Institution of **Bhutan**, throughout an audit carried out in the country, identified the roles and expectations of civil society, the private sector and marginalized groups in Sustainable Development Goal implementation; however, the audit institution revealed that these stakeholders had not been properly consulted nor involved in the national planning process and that adequate communication channels to inform and include stakeholders were lacking. Supreme Audit Institution of **Indonesia** engaged with a local University which acts as Sustainable Development Goal Research Centre to deepen its understanding on the role of Academia in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the country. By broadening the range of stakeholders implicated in the audit exercise, the team also showed the necessity of raising awareness on the goals among marginal communities.

IV. National institutional arrangements for Sustainable Development Goal implementation

39. The Agenda recognises the essential role of effective, accountable, transparent, participatory and inclusive institutions in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 16.6, Goal 16.7), tasking national Governments with the primary responsibility of shaping institutional arrangements for implementation and review of progress. It will be therefore critical at the national level to understand how to adjust national frameworks to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals in an integrated and coherent manner, depicting synergies among the goals and minimizing the trade-offs. Institutional arrangements shall consider national circumstances, such as the political environment; existing institutions and their mandates; national policy frameworks for sustainable development; actors and stakeholders; and any other factors that might steer Sustainable Development Goal implementation, including budgeting and planning processes.

40. The format of the institutional arrangements varies from country to country; however, it can be noted that member States have tackled this task in two main ways: either creating new institutions, or repurposing and assigning new responsibilities to already existing ones, often set up during the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) era, like National Councils for Sustainable Development (NCSD).

Box 1

National Council of Sustainable Development in Armenia

In **Armenia**, responsibility for the overall 2030 Agenda lies with the National Council of Sustainable Development, which was set up back in 2002 and it is chaired by the Prime Minister. The council includes representatives from other ministries, other state agencies, and Civil Society (CSO) representatives. The council is tasked with coordinating Armenia’s efforts and activities towards fulfilling international agreements; translating global goals and targets into national policies and strategies; and supporting legal and institutional reforms related to sustainable development. The Inter-Agency Task Force for sustainable development goal Nationalization, and the National SDG Innovation Lab, both established in 2017 also support Sustainable Development Goal implementation efforts and institutional coordination.

41. Existing institutional coordination mechanisms can be classified into four groups depending on which level of governance and under which leadership the coordination responsibility lies: a) inter-ministerial entities: (i) under the Head of State or Government leadership; or (ii) under the leadership of a specific ministry; b) arrangements refer to a single unit located in the office of: (i) the Head of State or Government; (ii) of specific ministry. All approaches can be found within the Asia-Pacific reporting countries. (See annex 1).

42. Creating inter-ministerial structure can favour a whole of Government approach, mobilising different parts of Governments around the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in a coherent and integrated manner. Many of the countries that have established new mechanisms have opted for this system, as it eases integration. These include **Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, China** and **Indonesia** among the others.

43. Other countries, such as **Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Singapore, Republic of Korea** and **Kiribati**, have assigned responsibility to specific ministries to lead Sustainable Development Goal implementation.

Table 1
National Institutional arrangements

Type of arrangement	Existing arrangements	New ad-hoc arrangements
High-level Inter-ministerial entity (chaired by Head of State or Prime Minister)	Armenia, Bhutan	Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Japan, Malaysia, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand
Inter-ministerial entity (at Ministerial level)	Turkey	China, Kiribati, India, Samoa
Head of State or Government	Vanuatu	
Specific Ministry	Cambodia, Georgia, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Tajikistan, Viet Nam	Afghanistan, Sri-Lanka

Adapted from UNPAN (2018).

V. Conclusion

44. Countries in the Asia-Pacific region are progressing in their set-up of institutional frameworks for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals at country level and the selected arrangements vary. The enforcement of the 2030 Agenda requires a high level of coordination among institutions and the participation of multiple stakeholders. While ensuring integrated approaches and breaking through sector silos may be an arduous task, most Governments have already started identifying opportunities of facilitating integration and adapting the way they operate to the transformative and inclusive nature of the Agenda.

45. From the experiences shared through the voluntary national reviews, it can be noticed that the national institution that is leading the implementation of the Agenda needs to have an adequate political leverage to be able to mobilise resources in a holistic, coherent and integrated manner. The engagement of the highest level of Government can in fact steer and accelerate Sustainable Development Goal implementation. Furthermore, mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals into national planning and sectoral policies is also a very important element of successful implementation. It is of utter importance to make sure that the Sustainable Development Goals are embraced by all sectors and not perceived as a matter of a specific one; this will enhance cross-sectoral action and accountability among different levels of governance, ministries, agencies and non-governmental actors. The engagement of ministries with cross-cutting influence, such as the Ministry of finance, is also pivotal in ensuring adequate financing for the implementation of the Agenda.

46. Whereas member States are increasingly recognizing the contribution of different levels of governance and are prone to include a broad range of stakeholders, such as civil society, academia and the business sector, they very often still lack institutionalization of such engagement. The voluntary national reviews also put forward the important role played by Supreme Audit Institutions, Parliaments and National Statistical Offices in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals; nevertheless, many reports increased need for strengthening efforts to create awareness around the Sustainable Development Goals within the public administration, national and subnational institutions, political actors and within society at large.

47. The voluntary national review experience offers the chance to countries to realise how achieving the Sustainable Development Goals shall not be regarded as a collection of individual targets, but instead as a collective exercise that brings together all levels of governance and society.

Annex 1

National institutional arrangements

Sub Region	Name of country	Existing or new arrangement	Name of the institution	Level	Description
North and Central Asia	Armenia	Existing	National Council of Sustainable Development	High-level inter-ministerial entity chaired by the Prime Minister	The council includes representatives from other ministries, other state agencies, and Civil Society (CSO) representatives The Inter-Agency Task Force for SDG Nationalization, and the National SDG Innovation Lab also support sustainable development goal implementation efforts and institutional coordination.
	Azerbaijan	New	National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development (NCCSD)	High-level inter-ministerial entity	National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development (NCCSD) has the mandate of coordinating Sustainable Development Goal efforts and harmonize them with the country's development plans. The Secretariat of the NCCSD is arranged under the Ministry of Economy and it is chaired by the country's Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Economy. The NCCSD constitutes of four working groups: economic growth and decent employment; social issues; environmental issues; monitoring and evaluation.
	Georgia	Existing	Administration of Government of Georgia (AoG)	Ministry Level	The coordination of the 2030 Agenda falls under the Administration of Government of Georgia (AoG), mainly under the Government Planning and Innovations Unit of the Policy Analysis, Strategic Planning and Coordination Department. A joint technical working group with experts across line ministries and the National Statistics Office (NSO) was created to enhance sustainable development goal mainstreaming into national planning and implementation.

Sub Region	Name of country	Existing or new arrangement	Name of the institution	Level	Description
	Tajikistan	Existing		Ministry level	The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MEDT) steers sustainable development goal implementation and monitoring. A Sustainable Development Goal Secretariat and sectoral Technical Working Groups are under development.
	Bangladesh	New	Inter-ministerial SDG Monitoring and Implementation Committee	High-level inter-ministerial entity	Created by the Prime Minister (PM) and formed by Secretaries from 21 Line Ministries. The Committee is headed by a Principal sustainable development goal Affairs Coordinator at the Prime Minister's office and the General Economics Division (GED) of the Planning Commission acts as Secretariat.
South-South West Asia	Afghanistan	New	SDG Secretariat	Ministry level	The Ministry of Economy (MoEc) is the focal point for the implementation, monitoring and reporting on the SDGs in the country (A-SDGs). A SDG Secretariat, formed into specialized groups, has been set up under the supervision of the Ministry of Economy General Directorate of Policy and is tasked with coordinating the sustainable development goal nationalization process. Furthermore, the Government of Afghanistan is planning on establishing an Executive Committee on the SDGs within the Office of the Chief Executive with an advisory role to the Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers, chaired by the Ministry of Economy.
	Bhutan	Existing	Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat (GNHCS)	High-level inter-ministerial entity	Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat supports the Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC) ¹⁶ and provides guidance, coordination, evaluation and monitoring for sustainable development goal implementation in Bhutan. A High-Level SDG Working Committee, chaired by the Head

¹⁶ For more information, see: www.gnhc.gov.bt/en/.

Sub Region	Name of country	Existing or new arrangement	Name of the institution	Level	Description
					of the GNHCS, was established within the same body, to ensure ease of coordination and facilitate the overall enforcement of the 2030 Agenda.
	India	New	National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) ¹⁷	Ministry level chaired by the Prime Minister	In 2015, the Government replaced the Planning Commission creating the NITI Aayog, a policy think-tank to oversee sustainable development goal implementation and monitoring in the country. NITI Aayog is structured into two main hubs: Team India Hub and the Knowledge and Innovation Hub. While the first one coordinates the collaboration among the central and local state governments, the latter one focuses on building-capacity and expertise.
	Maldives	New	National Ministerial Coordination Committee	Inter-Ministerial entity chaired by the Prime Minister	The National Ministerial Coordination Committee comprising of cabinet ministries is the leading institution for the 2030 Agenda. The Committee is supported by a Technical Committee on the sustainable development goals, embracing both governmental institutions and CSO representatives, and organized in five different clusters, each responsible for several Sustainable Development Goals. To ensure inter-ministerial coordination, the SDGs Division at the Ministry of Environment and Energy serves as Secretariat for all sustainable development goal Committees.
	Nepal	New	SDGs Steering Committee	Inter-Ministerial entity chaired by the Prime Minister	The Government has formed three entities to coordinate the work around the 2030 Agenda. The SDGs Steering Committee, led by the Prime Minister, who also chairs the Chairman of the National Planning Commission (NPC), guides the implementation of the sustainable development goals and provides feedback to the SDGs Coordination and Implementation Committee and other levels of governance. The role of the SDGs Coordination and Implementation Committee is to mobilize

¹⁷ For more information, see: www.niti.gov.in/.

Sub Region	Name of country	Existing or new arrangement	Name of the institution	Level	Description
					resources and coordinate the intervention of civil society and the private sector. It is headed by the Vice Chairman of the National Planning Commission and is tasked with national sustainable development goal reporting. Furthermore, nine Sustainable Development Goals Implementation and Monitoring Thematic Committees have been set up to support line ministries with incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals into national planning, including budgets. Each of the committee is guided by a member of the National Planning Commission and includes civil society and private sector representatives among government officials.
	Sri Lanka	New	Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wildlife (MSDWRD)	Ministry level	The Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wildlife (MSDWRD), established in 2015 in the light of the national journey towards the Sustainable Development Goals was suppressed after the elections of late 2018.
	Turkey	Existing	National Sustainable Development Commission (NSDC)	Ministry level	The National Sustainable Development Commission established in 2004 under the Ministry of Development is the central body leading sustainable development goal implementation and follow-up and review activities. The High Planning Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, oversees Sustainable Development Goal integration into the country's development plans.
South-East Asia	Indonesia	New	SDG Steering Committee	Chair by the Head of the State	In addition to the SDG Steering Committee a SDG Secretariat/Implementation Team is set up within Bappenas, ¹⁸ the Ministry for National Development Planning, to support coordination among stakeholders of all processes of planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluation and reporting relate to the sustainable development goal s. It is organized in four working

¹⁸ For more information, see: <http://sdgs.bappenas.go.id/>.

Sub Region	Name of country	Existing or new arrangement	Name of the institution	Level	Description
					responsible for drafting SDG Action Plans and monitor progress within their sphere of action.
	Lao PDR	New	National Steering Committee for the SDG Implementation	Chaired by the Prime Minister	The National Steering Committee for the SDG Implementation is supported by a National SDG Secretariat, under the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Department of International Organizations - and Ministry of Planning and Investment - Department of Planning and Lao Statistics Bureau, along with sustainable development goal focal points in relevant ministries and institutions to track progress towards achievement of the sustainable development goals.
	Malaysia	New	National SDG Council		The Council with the support of the National Steering Committee (NSC), is responsible for setting the national agenda by planning and monitoring sustainable development goal implementation in the country. The National Steering Committee, which is tasked with formulating a national sustainable development goal road map, reviewing progress on sustainable development goal targets and support the Council with identifying issues and national priorities, is structured around five SDG Cluster Working Committees (CWCs) on: Well Being; Inclusivity; Human Capital; Environment and Natural Resources; Economic Growth.
	Philippines	New	Committee on the sustainable development goals	Inter-Ministerial entity chaired by the Prime Minister	With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) proposed the creation of a dedicated Committee on the sustainable development goals and a Technical Secretariat, chaired by the Secretary of Socioeconomic Planning and embracing all national government agencies. Furthermore, the National Economic and Development Authority Subnational Offices is working with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to establish an operational and integrated

Sub Region	Name of country	Existing or new arrangement	Name of the institution	Level	Description
					mechanism for the localization of the sustainable development goals.
	Singapore	Existing	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Ministry level	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs leads and coordinate policies and programmes related to the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals. An Inter-Ministry Committee on SDGs (IMC-SDG) was established for the voluntary national review and to monitor sustainable development goal progress in the long term.
	Thailand	Existing	National Committee for Sustainable Development (CSD)	Inter-Ministerial entity chaired by the Prime Minister	National Committee for Sustainable Development is the main multi stakeholder institution that coordinates the 2030 Agenda in the country with the Secretary-General of National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) acting as the Secretariat. In 2015 under the National Committee for Sustainable Development, three sub-committees were established and dealing with: sustainable development goal implementation, split into three task forces; understanding and evaluating sustainable development in accordance with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP); developing information systems.
	Viet Nam	Existing	Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI)	Ministry level	The Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) is the main body responsible for the sustainable development goals. sustainable development goal Focal points have been set in planning and finance departments of other agencies and ministries as well as provincial departments. Moreover, the National Council on Sustainable Development and Competitiveness Enhancement advises the Vietnamese Government and the Prime Minister on sustainable development issues

Sub Region	Name of country	Existing or new arrangement	Name of the institution	Level	Description
East and North-East Asia	China	New		Inter-Ministerial entity under Ministry	The inter-agency mechanism for the Sustainable Development Goals embraces 43 line ministries and governmental agencies and is coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is assigned the role of drafting and coordinating implementation plans, including monitoring of progress and strengthening policy coordination.
	Japan	New	Sustainable development goals Promotion Headquarter	Inter-Ministerial entity chaired by the Prime Minister	The Sustainable Development Goals Promotion Headquarter, comprises of all ministries, and headed by the Prime Minister, with the Chief Cabinet Secretary and the Minister of Foreign Affairs as vice-chairmen. It is charged with enhancing cooperation among governmental bodies and leading the overall activities that pertain to Sustainable Development Goal implementation, including public awareness, stakeholder engagement and follow-up and review mechanisms.
	Republic of Korea (ROK)	Existing	Committee on Sustainable Development (CSD)	Inter-Ministerial entity under the Ministry of Environment	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Statistics Korea, and the Office for Government Policy Coordination are also highly involved with Sustainable Development Goal implementation.
Pacific	Australia	New	Inter-ministerial entity of senior officials	Inter-Ministerial entity level Co-chaired by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)	The inter-departmental group of senior officials with responsibilities linked to one or more Sustainable Development Goals is co-chaired by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and carries the overall coordination role for the 2030 Agenda, including the draft of the voluntary national review.
	Kiribati	New	Development Coordinating Committee (DCC)	Inter-Ministerial entity under the Ministry of Economy and Finance	The Development Coordinating Committee (DCC), comprising of the Heads of all ministries, is tasked with the general coordination of the national development plans and activities, including the 2030 Agenda and

Sub Region	Name of country	Existing or new arrangement	Name of the institution	Level	Description
					the Sustainable Development Goals. The National Economic and Planning Office (NEPO) acts as secretariat to the Development Coordinating Committee and is responsible for presenting reports on implementation of all national plans as well as for their evaluation.
	Samoa	New	National SDG Task Force	Inter-Ministerial entity chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	The multi-stakeholder coordination body is headed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and includes representatives from the Ministries of Finance and Planning, Natural Resources and Environment, Community and Social Development, representing the three pillars of sustainable development. The Samoa Statistics Bureau (SBS) and the Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet assist the work of the Task Force within different aspects of Sustainable Development Goals implementation, including the assessment of Sustainable Development Goal indicators and of the national Sustainable Development Goal road map.