

North and Central Asia Workshop on Next Generation of Voluntary National Reviews

**An Associated Event of the Seventh North and Central Asia
Multistakeholder Forum on Implementation of the
Sustainable Development Goals**

Hybrid Meeting Format, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 3 November 2023

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. The VNR is a country-led and country-driven process at the cornerstone of Follow-up and Review (FUR) mechanisms. The VNR aims to facilitate the sharing of success, challenges, new trends, and good practices among countries, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The VNR also serves to improve evidence and data collection, strengthen government policies and institutions to monitor progress, and to mobilize multistakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

All countries in North and Central Asia have completed and reported at least one VNR. Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan presented their second VNR in 2023; while Azerbaijan is preparing the fourth VNR in 2024. The next generation VNRs enable countries to show development since the previous VNR by deepening impact and trend analysis, increasing localization, reviewing resource mobilization, and improving engagement with stakeholders. VNRs can also indicate emerging challenges, which is particularly important in the context of ongoing crises of climate change, geopolitical uncertainties, and economic slowdown.

At the **North and Central Asia Workshop on Preparation of VNR in 2022**, participants shared knowledge and practices in leveraging VNRs to enable institutional changes, strengthen national planning and monitoring systems, and improve stakeholder engagement. The workshop also provided an opportunity for countries participating in ESCAP's flagship VNR Twinning Programme to facilitate South-South cooperation by sharing approaches, knowledge, and ideas.

Countries in North and Central Asia were the pioneers of ESCAP's flagship [VNR Twinning Programme](#), which has been running since 2019.

The first VNR twinning between Georgia and Uzbekistan in 2019 contributed to broadening stakeholder engagement in Uzbekistan's first VNR process. In 2023, Uzbekistan demonstrated leadership on the SDGs by hosting **the triangular VNR cooperation** and shared with **Mongolia and Tajikistan** lessons since the first review and twinning¹. Moreover, countries involved in the twinning programme demonstrated their willingness to collaborate and promote inclusive dialogue at the national and regional levels.

¹Agenda Item 4: Accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through voluntary national reviews, <https://www.unescap.org/events/apfsd10>



The aim of this workshop is to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and practices in VNR preparation and will provide an overview of ESCAP’s VNR support.

Objectives

The workshop will be held in the format of interactive and forward-looking discussions to provide stakeholders with a platform to:

- Discuss the experience and knowledge gained from the second and next generation VNRs;
- Share technical knowledge and best practices in assessing progress, challenges, and new trends in VNRs, and post-VNR action, informing the integration of SDGs into national development priorities and action plans;
- Explore ideas to adapt next generation VNRs in the context of ongoing multiple crises.

Participants

The workshop is intended for relevant stakeholders from the Government, academia, civil society, parliaments, private sector, think tanks, international organizations, etc. involved in the preparation of VNRs in North and Central Asia. Participation will be by invitation only.

Programme Overview

* All times as stated in Astana Time (GMT+6)

Time	Session
Friday, 3 November 2023_09:00 – 15:00 TBC	
Morning	<p>Welcome Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Subregional Office for North and Central Asia, ESCAP
	<p>Setting the Scene: <i>The role of voluntary national reviews</i> <i>This session will introduce elements the key elements of the VNR process, highlighting the role of VNRs as tools for SDG acceleration.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section on Sustainable Development and Countries in Special Situations, Office of the Executive Secretary, ESCAP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Tour de table and participants’ experience with VNRs.</i> ➤ <i>Overview of VNR timeline & process, and best practices from the NCA region.</i> ➤ <i>Reflections on the role of VNRs in SDG acceleration.</i>
	<p>Roundtable 1: <i>Exploring the voluntary national review process and experiences from North and Central Asia</i> <i>This roundtable discussion will provide space for countries to share their experiences with VNRs.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Country experiences with 2nd and 3rd VNR</i> ▪ Open debate

	<p>Group photo and networking break</p> <p>Session 2: Using the VNR to strengthen evidence-based policy on sustainable development and targeting those left behind</p> <p><i>This roundtable will discuss approaches and methodologies to integrate SDG progress assessments as well as analysis on the most vulnerable groups and into VNR processes. 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.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ESCAP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>SDG Progress Assessment: using data for evidence-based analysis for VNR</i> ➤ <i>Integrating Leaving No-One Behind analysis in the VNR</i> ▪ <i>Country experience of conducting/utilizing an LNOB analysis</i> ▪ Open debate
	<p>Lunch break</p>
Afternoon	<p>Session 3: Multistakeholder approaches for VNRs to promote SDG acceleration</p> <p><i>This roundtable will discuss the importance of promoting multistakeholder participation in the VNRs, presenting best practices from the region with stakeholder engagement, including through ESCAP's VNR Twinning Programme and other collaborative initiatives.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stakeholder experiences with engagement in VNR processes ▪ Open debate <p>Wrap-up and vote of thanks: Key take aways</p> <p><i>This session will summarise key points emerged during the discussions and will present future activities on Follow-up and Review.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section on Sustainable Development and Countries in Special Situations, Office of the Executive Secretary, ESCAP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Forthcoming global VNR workshops and APFSD.</i> ➤ <i>Connecting countries for peer learning.</i> ➤ <i>Resources and support available.</i>

Further Information

The Workshop will take place on 3 November 2023 in Almaty, Kazakhstan and online. It will be conducted in English and Russian with simultaneous interpretation. Detailed information can be found on the official event page [HERE](#).

Invited participants are required to register [HERE](#) to participate in the Workshop.

For more information on ESCAP VNR support please visit <https://www.unescap.org/2030-agenda/voluntary-national-reviews>