

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

Almaty, Kazakhstan, Hybrid format
3 November 2023, 09:00 – 15:00

REPORT

Summary

On November 3, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) organised a [workshop](#) on the voluntary national reviews (VNR) for countries in North and Central Asia, as an associated event of the *Seventh North and Central Asia Multistakeholder Forum on Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals*. The event provided a space for the exchange of good practices in VNR preparation and discussed the role of VNRs as enablers for multi-stakeholder partnerships and for improved policy frameworks to accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The event was attended by 58 participants (in person and online), representing different stakeholder groups (Government, Civil Society Organisations, Intergovernmental Organisations, private sector, and others). The event was held in English with simultaneous interpretation to Russian.

Representatives from civil society, government, parliamentarians, business sector and other stakeholders of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan presented experiences on three main topics: VNR process; data collection and analysis to leave no one behind (LNOB); and stakeholder engagement.

During the first session, Government representatives from Georgia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan elaborated on their national experiences of conducting multiple VNRs. Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan submitted their second VNR at the 2023 High-Level Political Forum, while Armenia and Georgia will present their third VNR, and Azerbaijan their fourth VNR in 2024. Panellists noted the importance of learning from past reports, especially when conducting a second or subsequent review. Aligning the storyline of the VNR report to national priorities was acknowledged as an effective way to bring about changes.

Stakeholder engagement was stressed as a key component of the VNR process, and all interveners noted their endeavours to improve it, particularly for 2nd or 3rd VNRs. Participants emphasized that efforts to improve awareness of the SDGs among the broad public, particularly at the local level,



must be strengthened. Actors, such as the private sectors or Civil Society Organisations (CSO) did not necessary understand their contribution to the SDGs nor to VNR processes. Participant therefore highlighted the importance to create platforms for dialogue that could go beyond reporting cycles, as SDGs are a matter of all stakeholders.

The focuses of the second session were the role of data for evidence based VNRs as well as policy making. Participants recognized strong data and statistics as crucial elements of VNR reports. Coordination among institutions for data gathering and analysis is central to SDG attainment. Voluntary local reviews (VLR) should also be leveraged as they can support VNR with relevant and updated data at the local level. While qualitative data generated by CSO or from other alternative sources can complement quantitative data, data harmonization and integration remained a burden.

“Leave no one behind (LNOB)” is the game-changing pledge of the 2030 Agenda and the ultimate commitment to end poverty in all its manifestations. It puts an end to prejudice and exclusion, lessens inequality, and addresses vulnerabilities so that everyone, regardless of background, can reach their full potential and live respectable, dignified lives. Participants recognized that data disaggregation is key to this end. Without reliable data and statistics, particularly targeting the most vulnerable, it would be difficult to implement full the SDGs. For such, different vulnerable groups must be involved in VNR preparation.

The last session promoted a dialogue on a whole-of-society approach for the VNR. The VNR process and report offers the opportunity to value and recognize the contributions of different stakeholders to achieve the 2030 Agenda, for instance by adding examples as case studies. All stakeholders appreciated being involved in VNR processes, as it gives them a chance to highlight their role in achieving the SDGs. Trust remained the key for all stakeholders. Although the integration of stakeholder views and results of people’s scorecards in the official report was improving, conducting, and presenting alternative reports still faced stigma as levels of mutual trust among CSO and Governments remain low. Participants stressed that alternative or shadow reports are not intended to create instability, but rather to provide a supplementary platform for dialogues. Capacity building for CSO and other non-State actors could help bridge this information gap.

Evaluation of the Workshop

An evaluation run after the event showed that overall, participants were satisfied with the content as well as the format of the event. About 47.5 per cent of participants took part in the assessment. Based on the post-event assessment, participants rated the meeting very favourably (maximum rating of 5): 4.53 for adequacy and conduciveness to learning and participation, 4.68 for quality of presentation and adaptability for the need of the audience, and 4.89 for organization of the VNR workshop. Nevertheless, they noted the necessity to provide more space for informal knowledge exchanges to allow for a deeper and more encompassing discussion.

Programme

*Time zone by Astana Time (GMT+6)

Time	Session
09:00 –09:10	<p>Welcome remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Nikolay Pomoshchnikov, Head, Subregional Office for North and Central Asia, ESCAP
09:10 –09:30	<p>Setting the scene: The role of voluntary national reviews <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"> ▪ Ms. Sara Libera Zanetti, 2030 Agenda and VNR Specialist, 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>
09:30 –10:30	<p>Roundtable 1: Exploring the voluntary national review process and experiences from the region <i>This roundtable discussion will provide space for countries to share their experiences with VNRs.</i></p> <p>Moderator: Ms. Juliet Braslow, Sustainable Development Officer, ESCAP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Country experiences with 2nd and 3rd VNR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Ms. Bakytgul Khambar, Director of the Secretariat for SDG, Economic Research Institute, Ministry of National Economy, Kazakhstan ➢ Mr. Kammodilin Bozi, Head of Department on Regional Development and Monitoring the Implementation of National Program, Ministry of Energy and Water Resources, Tajikistan ➢ Mr. George Shoshitashvili, Counsellor Multilateral and Regional Economic Cooperation Division International Economic Relations Department Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Georgia ➢ Mr. Humoyun Yusufboev, Chief Specialist, Division of the monitoring of implementation of SDGs, Uzbekistan ➢ Ms. Elita Shymaskaya, Chief Specialist of the Department for Strategic and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Finance and Economy, Turkmenistan <p>Open debate</p>
10:30 –10:45	<p>Group photo and networking break</p>
10:45– 12.00	<p>Session 2: Using the VNR to strengthen evidence-based policy on sustainable development and targeting those left behind <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> <p>Moderator: Ms. Juliet Braslow, Sustainable Development Officer, ESCAP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Selahattin Selsah Pasali, Social Affairs Officer, ESCAP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ <i>Integrating Leaving No-One Behind analysis in the VNR</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Country experience of conducting/utilizing an LNOB analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ms. Olga Djanaeva, Director, Rural Women’s Association ALGA, Kyrgyzstan ▪ Mr. Arman Bidarbakht Nia, Statistician, Statistics Division ESCAP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>SDG Progress Assessment: using data for evidence-based analysis for VNR</i> ▪ Country experiences of conducting/utilizing an SDG Progress Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ms. Arzu Taghiyeva, Head of Sector, Sustainable Development Statistics Department State Statistical Committee, Azerbaijan <p>Open debate</p>
12:00 –13:15	Lunch break
13:15 –14:30	<p>Session 3: Multistakeholder approaches for VNRs to promote SDG acceleration <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> <p>Moderator: Ms. Sara Libera Zanetti, 2030 Agenda and VNR Specialist, ESCAP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stakeholder experiences with engagement in VNR processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ms. Jamila Asanova, Executive Director of the Civil Society Development Association (ARGO), Kazakhstan ➤ Ms. Nasibakhon Aminova, Executive Director, National Association of Small and Medium Businesses, Tajikistan ➤ Mr. Murat Karypov, Coordinator, The Human Rights Movement "Bir Duino Kyrgyzstan", Kyrgyzstan ➤ Mr. Otabek Izatillaev, Head of the Department of work with ratings and indices, Executive Secretary of the Parliamentary Commission for monitoring the implementation of SDGs, Uzbekistan ➤ Mrs. Zhanar Gabdullina, Deputy, Almaty Development Center, Kazakhstan ➤ Ms. Rusyan Jill Mamiit, Development Coordination Officer, UN Office of the Resident Coordinator, Uzbekistan <p>Open debate</p>
14:30 –14:50	<p>Wrap-up: Key take aways <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"> ▪ Ms. Juliet Braslow, Sustainable Development Officer, 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>
14:50 - 15:00	<p>Closing remarks and vote of thanks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Michiko Enomoto, Deputy, Subregional Office for North and Central Asia, ESCAP

Group Picture



List of Participants

MEMBER STATES DELEGATIONS

AZERBAIJAN

Ms. Arzu Taghiyeva, Head, Sector of Regional Statistics of the Department of Sustainable Development Statistics, State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Mr. Toghrul Mammadov, Leading Consultant, Sustainable Development and Social Policy Department, Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan

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Ms. Zhanar Gabbulina, Deputy, Almaty Development Center

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Ms. Victoria Kudaibergenova, Expert, International Cooperation Division, Ministry of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic

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Mr. Oleg Shamanov, Minister-Counsellor, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to ESCAP, Bangkok, Thailand

Mr. Rostislav Lenchuk, Second Secretary, Department of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation

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Mr. Kamoliddin Boziev, Head, Department on Regional Development and Monitoring the Implementation of National Program, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan

Mr. Hasan Qurbonzoda, Chief Specialist, Department for Strategic Planning and Reform, Executive Office of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan

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Ms. Tattu Mambetalieva, Director

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Ms. Murat Karypov, Project coordinator

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Ms. Nurzat Abyrasulova, Founder and President

BUSINESS AND ACADEMIA

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