6th Workshop on Voluntary National Reviews in the Arab Region

Online, 22-23 February 2022

Information note

I. BACKGROUND AND WORKSHOP SERIES

When the UN member states adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, they committed to engaging in systematic follow-up and review of the Agenda through a robust, voluntary, effective, participatory, transparent, and integrated framework that comprises, among others, the main element which is the Voluntary National Review (VNR).

Through VNRs, member states share their experiences, including successes, challenges, and lessons learned. The VNR is considered a reliable tool that supports the progress monitoring of the implementation of the Agenda. It also motivates toward accelerating the achievements of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) of the Agenda by mobilizing multi-stakeholders support and partnerships.¹

Up until 2021, 247 VNRs have been submitted to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), including 26 VNRs from 19 Arab countries. Among the 45 countries that will present their VNRs in 2022, three Arab countries (Jordan, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates) will carry out their 2nd VNRs, and two (Djibouti and Somalia) will conduct the VNR for the first time.²

In support of Member States, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) has been organizing global workshops on VNRs. In the Arab region, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in partnership with DESA and the League of Arab States, has been also organizing a series of VNR-focused workshops, offering a space for dialogue, knowledge sharing, and peer learning. Since 2019, five workshops have been organized, as reflected in the below table. The common agenda items for all these workshops are the presentations of: (1) the concluded VNR experience, and (2) the preparation for the forthcoming ones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Topics</th>
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| 1st workshop | 10-11 October 2019 | Beirut | • Whole of government approach  
|            |       |                                                  | • Leaving no one behind and gender equality  
|            |       |                                                  | • Whole of society approach  
|            |       |                                                  | • Accelerating implementation post-VNR  |
| 2nd workshop | 26-27 February 2020 | Cairo | • Strengthening partnerships and enhancing stakeholder engagement in the VNR process |

¹ See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/ for further information.
² As reported online at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/, as of 12 January 2022.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Topics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd workshop</td>
<td>27-28 October 2020</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>• VNRs in the context of COVID-19&lt;br&gt;• The post-VNR phase: implementation of VNR recommendations and integration in national development plans</td>
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<td>4th workshop</td>
<td>9-10 March 2021</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>• VNRs and leaving no one behind&lt;br&gt;• VNRs in the context of instability&lt;br&gt;• Data for the 2030 Agenda and the VNRs</td>
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<tr>
<td>5th workshop</td>
<td>20-21 October 2021</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>• Enhancing SDG data via reporting platforms and coordination frameworks&lt;br&gt;• Evaluation for more effective VNRs&lt;br&gt;• Role of National Supreme Audit Institutions during and post-VNRs</td>
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A Community of Practice (CoP) on VNRs in the Arab region was established during the 1st regional workshop and serves as an informal platform to engage members in continuous and focused knowledge sharing and experience exchange on various VNR topics. A virtual consultative meeting for CoP members was organized on August 16, 2021, during which participants discussed main priority topics for the 2022 regional VNR workshops. On December 7 2021, a CoP focused discussion was held virtually during which representatives from Egypt and Iraq showcased their 2021 VNR experience that relied on reviews at the local level (governorates).

II. OBJECTIVES AND AGENDA OUTLINE

A. Objectives

As in previous editions, the 6th Workshop on Voluntary National Reviews in the Arab Region (Online, 22-23 February 2022) will provide a platform for dialogue and peer learning among Arab countries on VNR related issues in the Arab countries. This edition will provide participants with in-depth hands-on knowledge on mainstreaming gender in VNRs. As the second workshop in the 2022 VNR cycle, it will also give an opportunity to the Arab countries presenting their VNR at the 2022 HLPF in July to inform about their preparations so far, the challenges, and the way forward.

B. Agenda outline

1. Mainstreaming gender in the Arab country VNRs:
The first-day session will explore in depth the concept of gender mainstreaming of VNR and present successful models of VNRs based on regional and global examples. Participants will undertake practical exercises on gender mainstreaming in VNRs based on the handbook and e-tutorial on "Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Voluntary National Review" developed by ESCWA (available in both Arabic & English). They will discuss structural challenges that hinder gender mainstreaming in VNRs and identify measures that can be taken to limit these challenges.

2. Preparations for the 2022 Arab country VNRs: Progress and challenges
The second-day session will allow Arab Countries presenting their VNRs in 2022 to share their ongoing preparations for the VNR, the approach they are taking and the challenges they are facing. The session will also inform about the VNR sessions at the 2022 HLPF.

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3 The e-tutorial is offered for free using the CLANED platform. To access the e-tutorial, participants need first to register at https://escwa.claned.com/
III. ORGANIZATIONAL AND LOGISTICAL DETAILS

A. Date and venue

Considering on-going COVID-19 restrictions, the workshop will be held online. It will take place over two days, 22 and 23 February 2022, with each daily session having a duration of 2-3 hours.

B. Working languages

Arabic and English are the working languages of the workshop. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in Arabic, English, and French only on the second day of the workshop (23 February 2022).

C. Documentation

- General Assembly resolution A/70/1 – Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- General Assembly resolution A/70/684 – Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient, and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level
- Voluntary National Reviews Handbook, 2022 edition in English
- Voluntary National Reviews global website
- High-level Political Forum (HLPF)
- Arab Forum for Sustainable Development 2021
- Guidelines for Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Voluntary National Reviews

D. Participants and registration

The workshop targets government officials in Arab countries involved in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda, in particular those engaged in the preparation of VNRs. Participants will also include CoP members, and experts from regional, international and United Nations organizations.

Participation is by invitation only.

E. Correspondence

Correspondence regarding logistical arrangements of the regional workshop should be addressed to:

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