VNR Lab

A new informal platform for learning and sharing at the 2018 HLPF

In the run up to the 2018 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), there has been a strong demand from Member States and major groups and other stakeholders to take stock of the experience thus far with the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). Such a reflection would aim to further improve the VNR process at the HLPF and contribute to the review of the General Assembly resolutions on the HLPF at the GA's 74th session starting in September 2019 (resolution 67/290 and 70/299).

The *VNR Lab* aims to provide an informal platform to start such a reflection. It will comprise eight informal reflection sessions held in New York during the ministerial segment of the HLPF from 16 to 18 July 2018, in the morning, lunch-time and evening.

The sessions will be the following:

Lab 1-3: *Learning from each other*

Several sessions of the VNR Lab will focus on a specific cross cutting theme related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They will allow a few countries having conducted a VNR between 2016 and 2018 to engage in a discussion on the theme with each other and with other countries and actors. These selected VNR countries will thus share their progress, policies, lessons learned, and experiences at the national level in relation to the theme. Other countries and actors will have the opportunity to share their own experience and provide advice and support in response to challenges identified by the selected VNR countries on the selected theme. The sessions will be prepared in advance so that participants come prepared to discuss specific experiences and challenges. The themes will be as follows:

> Lab 1: *Leveraging interlinkages*
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> Discussions will address integrated policies and policy coherence at national level in the selected VNR countries. This will include reflecting on how to organize institutions and use plans and budgets to promote integrated approaches, and to address trade-offs and synergies between policy objectives. The session will build on the recent analysis of VNR reports by the UN Committee for Development Policy[1] and other relevant inputs.
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> Lab 2: *Leaving no one behind*
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> Discussions will address measures taken at national level in the selected countries to improve the condition of the poorest and most vulnerable people. They will build on

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[1] 2018 Report of the Committee for Development Policy. See related link.

the analysis of the UN Committee for Development Policy[2] and other relevant inputs. This lab could also reflect in a more comprehensive way how countries have mainstreamed into national SDG policies the concerns to leave no one behind and reduce inequality.

Lab 3: *Leveraging data for evidence-based VNR*

This session of VNR Lab will focus on how data can be used for effectively reporting on progress on the implementation of the SDGs and providing critical information for evidence-based VNR. The session will demonstrate how the process for preparation of VNRs can be linked to other national reporting processes conducted by the national statistical system and coordinated by the national statistical office. It will also address how the use of data can support the VNR process. It will also explore the role that the United Nations system can play in support of the preparation of review and monitoring process and in helping mobilize resources and build statistical capacity to measure progress on sustainable development. The session will conclude with a problem-solving exercise focused on identifying specific actions to address the challenges identified by many countries in obtaining and making use of quality, accessible, timely and disaggregated data to inform the VNR process.

Lab 4: *Mobilizing and organizing institutions*

Discussions will address measures taken by the selected VNR countries to adapt their institutions to promote and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This will include an exchange of experience on how various countries have mobilized various ministries, local governments and parliaments for implementing the SDGs and on how they have engaged civil society and other stakeholders, including the private sector in the implementation and review of the SDGs.

Lab 5: *Mobilizing resources*

This session of the VNR Lab will focus on SDG17 – and more specifically on how to capitalize on the VNRs to mobilize investments to implement the 2030 Agenda This session will engage between one and three countries that have an investment strategy related to the SDGs, or may be in the process of developing one, along with institutional investors and other potential partners. The session may also build on the recent analysis of VNR reports by the UN Committee for Development Policy and other relevant inputs.

Lab 6: *Reflecting on the VNRs and moving ahead*

This session will discuss the experience with the VNRs thus far, and reflect on how VNRs can be made more effective in the future as an instrument for exchanging experiences, building partnerships and accelerating implementation. This lab will engage a few countries having conducted VNRs in 2016 or 2017. It will discuss whether and how the VNRs have led to follow-up activities or mechanisms at national level. This session will also engage countries having conducted both a VNR and a review through another existing review mechanism, along with representatives of other review mechanisms within and outside the UN. It will

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[2] Ibid.

also draw lessons from the VNR Lab discussions and reflect on whether and how they can be useful for future VNRs and for next year's VNR Lab.

Lab 7 and Lab 8: *Continuing the dialogue*

Two of the VNR Lab sessions will focus on one country each having conducted a VNR in 2018. They will allow these countries to engage in a more extensive dialogue with other countries and stakeholders, on one or more specific aspects related to its implementation of the SDGs. The purpose will be to give a further opportunity to the country concerned to share its challenges and lessons, learn from the others and receive support in the area(s) addressed by the sessions. Ahead of the session, the country would work with the Secretariat to collect questions from other countries and stakeholders and to draw attention to areas where it would need advice or support or new partnerships. During the session, the country will respond to these questions, which will have been synthesized by the Secretariat, and engage in a further conversation with the audience. Other countries and stakeholders will have the opportunity to share advice, propose support and/or ask additional questions. The aspects to be addressed during the session will be decided in consultation with the country concerned.

Participating countries:

Countries having conducted a VNR in 2018 will be invited to volunteer for the various sessions. They will be engaged on a first come, first served basis, while ensuring geographical balance. Countries having conducted a VNR in 2016 or 2017 will also be invited to volunteer in the Labs 1-6. Countries having been identified by the Committee for Development Policy as having a particularly relevant experience with regard to the given theme will be invited specifically to Labs 1-2 & 4.

Format and organization:

Each Lab sessions will have a moderator and a rapporteur. The rapporteurs will work together to prepare the last session. The rapporteurs and DESA will also produce brief summaries of each Lab.

The Lab sessions will aim for different formats in engaging VNR countries, non-reporting countries, UN system and other international organizations as well as major groups and other stakeholders. The discussions will be informal and held in small breakout groups in some sessions.

Participants can be at any level considered appropriate by the countries or organization concerned. The VNR Lab will be organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in close cooperation with VNR countries.

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