IFP FIP

INTERNATIONAL FORUM OF
NATIONAL NGO PLATFORMS

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EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE VNR PROCESS!

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INTRODUCTION

Like many other civil society organisations, you probably intend to participate in your country's annual Voluntary National Reporting (VNR) process.

However, you would like to know more about the VNR process and how it should operate in your country.

The purpose of this IFP Briefing Document: "Everything you need to know about the VNR process" is to provide a useful introduction to, and links for VNR-related resource materials.

The Briefing Document also aims to share with you the experiences of CSOs in other countries who have engaged with their government's VNR process, and to help you to identify best practice.

1. WHAT IS THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REPORTING PROCESS?

As part of its follow-up and review mechanisms, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encourages member states to "conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven" (paragraph 79).

These national reviews are expected to serve as a basis for the regular reviews by the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), meeting under the auspices of ECOSOC. As stipulated in paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda, regular reviews by the HLPF are to be voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and involve multiple stakeholders.

The voluntary national reviews (VNRs) aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The VNRs also seek to strengthen policies and institutions of governments and to mobilize multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

For all the countries that presented their VNR in 2017 at HLPF, the VNRs are online on the https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf website. The VNRs from following years will be also uploaded there.

2. USEFUL VNR-RELATED LINKS AND RESOURCES

UN website Q&As for Voluntary National Reviews
https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/12103Q&A_for_VNRs_HLPF2017.pdf

The UN Secretary General has developed guidelines & Q&A for UN member states who are preparing VNRs:
https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/17346Updated_Voluntary_Guidelines.pdf

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/17429QA_for_VNRs_2018.pdf
These guidelines provide recommendations for CSO inclusion in the VNR process. The performance of governments in this area can be evaluated against these guidelines.

UNDESA has published an excellent handbook for countries preparing VNRs. This handbook can be used by CSOs when monitoring their country's VNR process and the extent to which it facilitates their inclusion:
https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/17354VNR_handbook_2018.pdf

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has also produced the following guidelines
http://ifp-fip.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/UNDP-Overview-report-to-guide-the-preparation-of-a-VNR-and-SDGR.pdf

A joint civil society research initiative, coordinated by a range of global and other CSO networks, including the IFP and some of its members, investigated good practices emerging from the 2017 VNRs submitted to the HLPF by governments. Its report presents a range of conclusions and recommendations concerning how countries can improve their implementation of the Agenda 2030 at national level, and use the HLPF as an opportunity for mutual peer learning, knowledge exchange and support. See here the links to the report in English and summaries in French, Spanish and Portuguese:
http://ccic.ca/resources/VNR2017_e.php

3. ENGAGEMENT OF COUNTRIES IN THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

Engagement in the Voluntary National Reviews varies from country to country. From the 43 brief country presentations at the HLPF in 2017, a handful of countries presented challenges they encountered. But most countries still consider this mainly as a "public relations" exercise. After each presentation, lead discussants gave brief comments and ask questions, followed by questions from the floor - including Member States, as well as Major Groups and other Stakeholders. It is positive that some countries make their VNR presentations in close partnership with civil society. This has been the case with the VNRs that were presented by Sweden, Denmark, Slovenia and Thailand to the HLPF.

This is where you can find information about the countries that are presenting their VNRs to the HLPF, or who have presented it in previous years:
https://action4sd.org/tools-resources/

The overall focus of the HLPF varies each year and involves reviewing progress on a cluster of inter-related SDGs, as well as on Goal 17, which is reviewed each year.

The following link to the UN's website provides more information about the HLPF and the VNRs
https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf

4. RESOURCES PRODUCED BY CIVIL SOCIETY FOR ENGAGING IN THE VNR PROCESS

A document that provides a good overview of how best to engage with your government around SDG was produced by Civicus – "A guide to engaging with your government on the Sustainable Development Goals": http://civicus.org/thedatashift/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Guide-for-engaging-governments-of-the-SDG-MA.pdf

The UK development platform BOND produced the following resources: "Progressing national SDGs implementation: Experiences and recommendations from 2016" https://www.bond.org.uk/sites/default/files/analysis_of_hlpf_2016_final_paper.pdf and "Implementing the SDGs: Lessons from Around the World" https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2017/02/implementing-the-sdgs-lessons-from-around-the-world

CIVICUS also produced the following "High-Level Political Forum Report: Civil Society Engagement in Monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals" http://www.civicus.org/images/CivilSociety.HLPF.NationalReviewProcess.pdf

The global CSO network Together 2030 produced the following case study compilation on CSO engagement in VNRs ; "Experience from national voices – civil society engagement on national reviews of the 2030 Agenda" http://www.together2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Case_Study_Compilation_FINAL_DRAFT_styles-1.pdf

Together 2030 also produced the following resource: "Together 2030 Perception Survey – National Reviews: Is civil society already being left behind?" http://www.together2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Report-Together-2030-Perception-Survey-April-2016.pdf

A Civil Society Report on SDG implementation in Peru (In Spanish Only) http://ifp-fip.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Informe.-Estudio-Linea-Base-sobre-la-imp-lementación-de-la-Agenda-2030-vf-1.pdf

A Civil Society analysis of SDG localisation in Moldova: http://ifp-fip.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/05/Informe.-Estudio-LineaBase-sobre-la-imp-lementaci%C3%B3n-de-laAgenda-2030-vf-1.pdf

A report from German NGO Forum on Environment and Development – "Champions to be? Making the 2030 Agenda a reality" http://www.forumue.de/en/champions-to-be-making-the-2030-agenda-a-reality/

The global CSO network "Action for Sustainable Development "– Tools and Resources (including numerous civil society shadow reports) http://action4sd.org/tools-resources/

The Center for International Strategic Thinking (Cepei) published an analysis of the 11 2017 National Voluntary Reviews of countries from Latin America and the Caribbean. Read the reports here: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B-Q35gtcB4-7ZzlUMmVOVkwtMG8 (Spanish only).

The CSO Network TAP's Paper on "Approaches and Methodologies for Civil Society Reporting on SDG 16" which you can find here: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B-Q35gtcB4-7ZzlUMmVOVkwtMG8

Transparency International's Guidelines for monitoring corruption and anti-corruption in SDG implementation: https://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/monitoring_corruption_and_anti_corruption_in_the_sustainable_development_goals

Together 2030's position paper with key messages to governments and stakeholders engaged in the follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda. The position paper includes national experiences from seven countries (Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, India, South Korea, Togo and the United Kingdom). The paper raises concerns around participation, accountability and transparency. Find the position paper and country experiences here. http://www.together2030.org/final-t30-hlpf-2017-position-paper-july-2017/

Together 2030, in partnership with World Vision, commissioned a review of the Main Messages submitted by Member States reporting on their implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the HLPF 2017. The purpose of the review was to provide information to civil society stakeholders for their engagement in the HLPF in July 2017, and to make recommendations for improving VNR reports in 2018 and beyond.

5. OTHER USEFUL VNR RESOURCES

Synthesis of Voluntary National Reviews 2016 https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/127761701030E_2016_VNR_Synthesis_Report_ver3.pdf

Compendium of National Institutional Arrangements for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/UNPAN97468.pdf

Critical Milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A%20/70/684&Lang=

Other useful IFP resource materials available:

*To see if your NGO is ready to Monitor and Implement the SDGs, read the IFP's "Checklist - Is Your NGO Ready to Monitor and Implement the SDGs?".

*If you are preparing a CSO Shadow Report in your country, have a look at the IFP"Guidelines for CSO Shadow Reports monitoring the implementation of Agenda 2030 at national level".

Both of these documents are available on IFP's webpage http://ifp-fip.org/en/sections/resources/

We're rebranding

The International Forum for National NGO Platforms, widely known as IFP-FIP, is undergoing a rebranding exercise and will be called Forus starting in September 2018. The new name and branding aims to better reflect the purpose and ambition of the network and its members. The new strapline "Connect Support Influence" describe the key aims and activities of the network.

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