2023 Voluntary National Reviews through the Lens of Peaceful, Just and Strong Institutions
Acknowledgements

Authors: Mariana Neves, Thea Andersen, Xinyue Wen
Editor: Jeanne Finestose
Cover and design: Atle Eftedal Sunde
Reviewers: Alexandra Wilde, Priya Sood, Thea Urke

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United Nations Development Programme
One United Nations Plaza, NEW YORK, NY10017, USA

United Nations Development Programme
UNDP Global Policy Centre for Governance
Kongens gate 12
0153 Oslo
NORWAY
https://www.undp.org/
For more information: https://www.undp.org/policy-centre/governance

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Financial support: The production of this report was made possible due to financial contributions from the Kingdom of Norway.

Contact: sdg16indicators@undp.org
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<tr>
<td>CNDSI</td>
<td>Council for Development and International Solidarity</td>
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<td>CSOs</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECLAC</td>
<td>Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
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<td>ECOSOC</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>EFSD+</td>
<td>European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>EUVR</td>
<td>EU Voluntary Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCSD</td>
<td>Federal Council for Sustainable Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>FUDESO</td>
<td>Fundación para el Desarrollo Social</td>
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<tr>
<td>GPCG</td>
<td>Global Policy Centre for Governance</td>
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<td>HLPF</td>
<td>High-Level Political Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDDRI</td>
<td>Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMCSD</td>
<td>Inter-Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Development</td>
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<td>IPU</td>
<td>Inter-Parliamentary Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>LNOB</td>
<td>Leave No One Behind</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIP</td>
<td>National Implementation Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>NSS</td>
<td>National Statistical System</td>
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<tr>
<td>ODA</td>
<td>Official Development Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Public-Private Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAC</td>
<td>Sociedad Civil por la Acción Climática</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPONG</td>
<td>Permanent Secretariat of NGOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSN</td>
<td>National Statistical System</td>
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<tr>
<td>TSDP</td>
<td>Tanzania Sustainable Development Platform</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNESCAP</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNFPA</td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNSNA</td>
<td>United Nations System of National Accounts</td>
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<tr>
<td>VNRs</td>
<td>Voluntary National Reviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>WGI</td>
<td>Worldwide Governance Indicators</td>
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Introduction

In 2015, The Heads of State, Government and High representatives affirmed that “On behalf of the peoples we serve, we have adopted a historic decision on a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Goals and targets”. The Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) are part of the reflection on integration and progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, thus providing a valuable source of information to assess the integration of peaceful, just and strong institutions (SDG 16) in national priorities.

The **2023 Voluntary National Reviews through the Lens of Peaceful, and Inclusive Institutions** is an analytical report designed to respond to the pivotal questions on the uptake of SDG 16: Are the targets being integrated into the national priorities? Is the process inclusive? What are the existing gaps? Achieving SDG 16 is only possible through the efforts of all member states and stakeholders towards a common 2030 vision. The report sheds light on the progress of integrating SDG 16 and respective targets in the VNRs, and where possible quantifies the integration.

This VNR analysis will give member states and entities active on SDG 16 the information they need to be most effective: assess progress on integration by target; identify where measurable progress on SDG 16 is happening, and what policies, projects and programmes are promoting it; identify the gaps in attention and achievement and signal areas in which additional advocacy and action are needed; and showcase the interlinkages between SDG 16 and other goals. Furthermore, it draws attention to the multistakeholder engagement on the development of the VNR process as it has a direct impact on achieving a more inclusive integration of the goal in the national agendas and strategies.

The process is a valuable opportunity to involve multiple national stakeholders in assessing progress, mobilizing their support, and strengthening policies and service delivery towards implementing the SDGs.

Since 2016, when 22 countries presented VNRs in the High-Level Political Forum, there has been an increase in the number of reports, as well as an increase in the coverage of SDG 16 on peaceful, just, and strong Institutions. In 2023, 39 countries[1] presented their reviews.

**Review Criteria**

The present report reviews the 39 VNRs presented in 2023 following a similar[2] structure used by the Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021. In this regard, it considers (i) whether the countries reported on the SDG16 targets; (ii) the extent of the reporting on these targets; (iii) whether the report indicated that it was a product of an inclusive, participatory process and highlights the main stakeholders[3]; (iv) whether the report noted that the private sector was involved in implementation and reporting; (v) whether data was well integrated in the report. For each chapter, this report quantifies the number of VNRs that have mentioned each criterion and illustrates some countries[4] alphabetically.

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[1] 39 reports were presented to the commission. These were presented by, Barbados, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Canada, Central African Republic, Chile, Comoros, Croatia, Democratic Republic of Congo, European Union (EU), Fiji, France, Guyana, Iceland, Ireland, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Maldives, Mongolia, Portugal, Romania, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, and Zambia.

[2] The Global Alliance did not produce a review in 2022, so the latest criteria from the 2021 which included reporting challenges associated with COVID-19. This review criteria have been removed as this was not a significant reporting constraint in the assessment period.

[3] The previous reports considered whether the report indicated that it was a product of an inclusive, participatory process without quantifying for each type of stakeholder.

[4] The selection of countries is based on the diversity of contexts and regions.
Between 2016 and 2023, there has been a progressive increase in the inclusion of SDG 16 targets in the VNRs. The depth of analysis varies, with some reports providing a brief reference to the goal while others extensively analyze the progress. The analyses assess the ‘inclusion’ aspects of the goal, which is in the comparative assessment between the first reporting year and 2023. The statistics show a considerable increase in coverage for all targets, where most targets have a coverage of over 80%. Organized Crime (16.4) and Global Governance (16.8) are below this percentage, but they still show progress over the previous reporting year. The only target that presents a decrease is Legal Identity. The highlights below also present a brief overview of each reporting year based on the Synthesis Reports which, until 2021, presented an assessment by goals summarizing the key issues.

**2016**

The key constraint highlighted in the VNRs was corruption. Some countries, like Angola and Namibia, created new anti-corruption laws; Antigua and Barbuda started requiring all officials to report their assets; Mexico's Federal Government invested in understanding how corrupt practices occur; and Namibia created a new special court. Afghanistan and Iraq highlighted the conflicts, while Bolivia, Colombia and Norway highlighted violence. However, the countries informed on very different types and levels of violence, with the latter informing on a concern with rising intimate partner homicide and domestic violence. Sweden and Japan highlighted concerning trends related to violence against children by a parent.

**2017**

The countries reported a broader range of targets. They highlighted violence, covered good governance, strong and transparent institutions, the rule of law, protection of human rights, anti-corruption, and preventing illicit flows. They also reported on delivering public services and government accountability, access to government and information, and strengthening peace and security through strong institutions and good governance. Some countries have also highlighted the enabling role of the goal.

**2018**

The countries continued to underline the enabling role of SDG 16, particularly Armenia, Cabo Verde, Australia, Canada, Hungary, Jamaica, Latvia, Lebanon, and Spain. Some countries highlighted peacebuilding efforts and conflict resolution as prerequisites to achieving SDG 16, for instance, by integrating a gender perspective into international peace and security policy outcomes.

One of the challenges continued to be corruption. Countries mentioned other specific challenges including weak institutional capacities, limited specialization and regulation of the legal profession, slow and underdeveloped justice systems, and the lack of or limited birth registration and/or legal identity. However, it should be stated that the latter was the most underreported target that year.

**2019**

Almost all countries incorporated SDG 16. In general, the countries emphasized reducing all forms of violence, protecting human rights, eliminating corruption, improving the effectiveness and transparency of institutions, ensuring public access to information and upholding the rule of law. Several countries highlighted the need to take action to protect vulnerable groups, including children, youth, women, LGBTI persons and persons with disabilities. In general, countries reported an increase in women’s representation in political life and an increase in birth registration.
2020

It should be noted that despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the 47 countries reporting in 2020 concluded their VNRs processes and presented them in the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). The countries reported a negative impact of COVID-19 on their national budgets as the measures to mitigate its effects amounted to a considerable proportion of the budget. It also had a social and economic impact, further accentuating inequalities and exacerbating vulnerabilities.

In terms of SDG 16, the reports mentioned that countries were investing insignificantly reducing all forms of violence, ending abuse and violence against children, promoting the rule of law, reducing illicit financial flows and corruption, and developing accountable and transparent institutions. Countries reported birth registration and legal identity, but in some cases, they highlighted insufficient awareness as a limitation. Some countries also highlighted institutional structural changes and reforms to address those challenges, such as improving service delivery, enhancing good governance, and strengthening the judicial system, including access to justice. Some of the challenges experienced by the justice system were a shortage of law and justice officers, lack of trust and corruption in the justice system, legal costs, and court case backlogs. In some cases, the countries adopted national strategies and measures to address organized crimes, including terrorism, illicit financial flows, money laundering and drug trafficking.

2021

The VNR reports focused extensively on corruption and measures several countries had taken to prevent it. Some examples include Angola creating new anti-corruption laws, Antigua and Barbuda requiring public officials to declare all their assets, and Mexico partnering with the National Institute of Transparency to understand corrupt practices. Other issues highlighted in the reports include challenges related to the rule of law and democracy, external events constraining progress toward the SDGs, and local violence and high crime rates in certain countries. Additionally, industrialized and high-income economies also face significant challenges, such as intimate partner homicides, domestic violence, abuse, and violence against children. Countries are actively promoting peacebuilding, institutional capacity and human rights through UN bodies.

2022

The VNR Reports addresses the connection between peace, governance, the rule of law, and sustainable development. They emphasize efforts by various countries to build capacity in the justice and security sector, promote an independent judicial system, ensure equal access to justice, and enact legal reforms to address issues like corruption, money laundering, and terrorism. The reports also underscore the significance of participatory processes, human rights approaches, and inclusivity in promoting social cohesion and sustainable development. Additionally, they touch upon the impact of conflicts and crises on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, showcasing efforts by conflict-affected countries to engage in nation-building processes and promote reconciliation and inclusive participation as essential elements for sustainable development. Furthermore, they highlight the importance of regional and international cooperation, as well as the role of governance, transparency, and public information management in economic development.
Percentage of countries including SDG 16 targets in the Voluntary National Reviews, 2016 vs 2023

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target 1.1: Violence</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2023</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>97%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target 16.2: Child Protection</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2023</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target 16.3: Access to Justice</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2023</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target 16.4: Organized Crime</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target 16.5: Corruption</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>92%</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Target 16.6: Effective Institutions</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>97%</td>
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</table>
Integration of the SDGs in national development plans and strategies

The 39 reporting Member States and the EU reported that they have integrated the SDGs into their national development plans and strategies. In the case of the EU, the programs and plans are integrated into the SDGs.

Belgium

According to the report, the integration of the SDGs in national development plans and strategies varies across governments. While there is some overlap between government budgets and the SDGs, explicit links to the 2030 Agenda are more of an exception than the rule. Most governments evaluated existing policies related to sustainable development, but only the federal and Flemish levels compared them to the 17 SDGs. Indicators to monitor the SDGs are developed differently, and reporting often focuses on realized actions without evaluating them against the SDGs. The Court of Audit has recommended a more coordinated approach, translating global SDGs into concrete targets involving citizens and stakeholders, and ensuring periodic reporting to parliaments. The report has influenced governments to take new initiatives, such as setting quantified targets in sustainable development strategies and integrating the SDGs into policy notes.

Brunei Darussalam

The integration of the SDGs in national development plans and strategies is mentioned in the report. It states that efforts have been made to align the SDGs with Brunei Darussalam's national vision, Wawasan Brunei 2035, and other national development projects.

The document highlights the need for stronger localization efforts to ensure that SDG targets and aspirations are integrated to complement and support national goals.

It emphasizes the importance of policy coherence and the alignment of SDGs with ministries and agencies’ priorities. Additionally, the report mentions establishing a strategic national initiative called SDG Partners to connect with multiple stakeholders in the sustainable agenda and promote integrated efforts to advance the SDGs in a whole-of-society approach.

Ireland

The Report highlights that Ireland's second National Implementation Plan (NIP) for the SDGs aims to embed the SDG framework into government departments and policies. The plan outlines steps and actions to better mainstream Agenda 2030 across government departments and enhance cooperation and coordination between policymakers at the national level. Additionally, the report discusses the need for greater policy coherence for sustainable development in Ireland and suggests integrating the SDGs into public administration, planning and accountability frameworks. It also emphasizes the importance of localizing the SDGs, including embedding them in local governance and planning frameworks. However, the report acknowledges that there are challenges and gaps in SDG delivery, and more efforts are needed to ensure effective integration of the SDGs at all levels of government.
Timor-Leste

The VNR mentions the integration of the SDGs into national development plans and strategies. It states that Timor-Leste has prioritized the implementation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, with the state budget fully aligned with these goals. The report further highlights the integration of the SDGs into government budgeting, policies, and programs of line ministries as a key priority for the Timor-Leste government. Additionally, the report discusses efforts to review the outcome indicators of government programs to ensure alignment with the SDG indicators.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan conducted three Rapid Integrated Assessments to determine the relevance and integration of SDGs into existing national programs. The assessments reveal a high level of integration of SDG targets into the current national policy documents, with 84%-85% integration in 2017 and 2019. It stated that all 17 SDGs have been integrated into the current national policy documents implemented in Turkmenistan (2021-2025). The report also mentions the development of a National Action Plan to strengthen SDG reporting and implementation.
34 out of 39 Voluntary National Reviews had a dedicated chapter or section on SDG 16, but the number of VNRs that presented statistics[5] on the targets is lower (87%) and not presented consistently.

The format of presenting progress on SDGs varies greatly from country to country. In general, most countries assess progress across all goals, presenting different formats. Some countries focus on the target; for instance, the Central African Republic focused on assessing whether the goals were attainable by 2030.

In some cases, the country considered the progress made until the assessment period. For instance, Comoros classified each goal in terms of progress as insufficient, moderate, significant or if data was not sufficient to assess the progress. The last is particularly important as the country is considering that it might not have sufficient information.

There are several other notable SDG 16-related issues that come up in multiple VNRs. These include:

- **Conflict prevention and resolution**: Many countries mention the importance of preventing and resolving conflicts to achieve SDG 16 and other SDGs. This often involves working with local communities and promoting peaceful dialogue.
- **Women's empowerment**: Many countries emphasize the importance of empowering women and girls to achieve SDG 16 and other SDGs. This includes promoting equal representation in decision-making processes and addressing gender-based violence.
- **Youth engagement**: Several VNRs mention the importance of engaging young people to achieve SDG 16 and other SDGs. This includes providing opportunities for youth leadership and participation in decision-making processes.
- **Disarmament**: Some VNRs mention the importance of disarmament in achieving SDG 16 and other SDGs. This includes reducing military spending and promoting non-violent conflict resolution mechanisms.

[5] Countries used SDG 16 indicators as requested in the Global indicator framework, but in most cases the countries used proxies or other indicators.
Bahrain

The country informs on its national efforts on achieving SDG 16. Some examples include investing in increasing the efficiency of the judicial system through several individual activities; the 2022 elections saw an increase of 30% in women's representation with the election of 8 candidates; investing in artificial intelligence and technologies to enhance public safety; creating a feedback system where stakeholders can communicate their opinions and complaints to the government entities.

Belgium

The chapter focuses on peace, justice and strong institutions and includes discussions on crisis management, digitalization, coaching towards sustainable organizations, and international actions. It emphasizes the importance of tackling the root causes of vulnerability, building resilience in vulnerable contexts and strengthening governance aspects in line with SDG 16. The report notes that Belgium has developed a national sustainable development strategy and participates in the United Nations System of National Accounts (UNNSA) to measure progress towards the SDGs. The report also highlights specific targets related to SDG 16 that have been integrated into Belgium's national policy framework.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The country VNR has a succinct chapter on SDG 16 that includes three national level indicators. The report states that the framework provides all levels of government in BiH with general development pathways and accelerators, which are one of the three main pathways to guide all levels of the government; these are goal 16, goal 5 on gender equality, and goal 13 on climate action.

The report emphasizes the importance of good governance and public sector management for sustainable development in Bosnia and Herzegovina, highlighting the need for a holistic approach to governance. It underlines the significance of the Agenda 2030 in supporting vertical and horizontal integration, creating an enabling environment for private sector growth, and establishing citizens' trust. Additionally, it stresses the importance of citizen-oriented administration, the provision of digitalized services, and the challenges of digital transformation within the public sector. Lastly, it highlights that to accelerate transformation, it's necessary to "establish a system for measuring service user satisfaction, which will be transparent and accessible to the public."

The BiH report's dedicated chapter on SDG 16 integrated the trend analysis, which was mainly negative for six of the indicators selected.

Figure 3 - Bosnia and Herzegovina's Overview of the Vision 2030
The country adopted the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators as a proxy indicator, monitoring six specific governance indicators. Although the country did not use the SDG indicators, it has conducted operations to collect satisfaction with public services (16.6.2) at the community level, which indicated a decrease in dissatisfaction with infrastructure and services provided by the local government. The indicator is the only one retained by the country from the global framework. The country provided the status but also a midterm target value (2023) and a desired target value for 2030 for the SDG indicators adopted by the country, allowing a more concrete assessment at the end of the agenda.

Canada

There is a dedicated chapter on SDG 16 in Canada's 2023 VNR. The chapter is titled "SDG 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies" and provides an overview of Canada's efforts to achieve this goal. The chapter highlights the country's three main ambitions, namely, that Canadians are safe and secure (in person and online), that Canadians have equal access to justice, and that Canadians are supported by effective, accountable and transparent institutions. The report refers to several initiatives to increase inclusiveness but notes some challenges, including the need for disaggregated data to support decision-making.

Cambodia

The report has a dedicated chapter on SDG 16 that is structured around progress, challenges and policies. The chapter emphasizes building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, while also focusing on anti-corruption measures and anti-drug efforts. Despite these efforts, the country has identified gender representation as a constraint that is hindering the progress of SDG 16. Therefore, some of the highlighted priorities include increasing gender representation in public service, capacity building and making the working environment more attractive for students, particularly female graduates. The country presented data on 4 targets, 16.2, 16.3, 16.7, and 16.9, because the information on two targets is based on proxy indicators.

Chile

The report acknowledges the complexity of achieving progress in SDG 16, which involves institutional modifications and requires the involvement of various actors, including the state, civil society, academia and businesses. The report further mentions that the measurement of SDG 16 is an ongoing task and emphasizes the contributions of diverse stakeholders, including the private sector, in promoting sustainability. It is mentioned in the document snippet that the situation of SDG 16 in Chile will be addressed, and it refers to the available information on various indicators related to SDG 16, such as indicators 16.1.1, 16.1.2, 16.1.3, 16.1.4, 16.2.1, 16.2.2, 16.3.1, 16.3.2, 16.5.1, 16.8.1 and 16.9.1.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

The country provided a table with the data available for the past five years, allowing us to see the status and progress (where data is available). The country also expanded from the original indicators. For instance, the global indicator of satisfaction with public services requires statistics on health services, education services and government services. DRC also assessed the satisfaction with public administration, police, justice, water management, electricity, roads and transport. The expansion of the indicator to include assessment on other services shows the potential for national adaptation expanding from the existing framework.
Fiji

The VNR presents a chapter on SDG 16 that has an assessment five out of the twelve targets of SDG 16. The country has made progress in two targets (16.6 and 16.a), experienced reversed progress in target 16.7, and requires accelerated action in Targets 16.1 and 16.3. Seven targets (16.2, 16.4, 16.5, 16.8, 16.9, 16.10, and 16.b) are not currently being measured.

Kuwait

The report provides information and progress updates on SDG 16, which is titled "Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions." It discusses the country's efforts to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions. It also mentions specific indicators related to SDG 16 and provides data and statistics on specific aspects such as the number of victims of premeditated crime, reported cases of violence, and efforts to improve cultural activities and cultural diplomacy.

Romania

There is a dedicated chapter on SDG 16 in the VNR report which focuses on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. It highlights Romania's achievements in strengthening the rule of law, combating corruption, promoting human rights and reducing violence against women and girls. However, the chapter also notes that there are still challenges to be addressed, such as improving access to justice for marginalized communities and addressing hate speech and discrimination.

St Kitts & Nevis

The country reported on SDG 16 targets in the VNR. Although there is no dedicated chapter, the report mentions a "Dashboard of SDG targets – Peace and Partnerships," which provides a snapshot of the stakeholders' assessment of St. Kitts and Nevis' progress in achieving the SDG targets under Peace and Partnerships. It also includes information on the strategies and actions the country is taking to accelerate the SDGs in the peace dimension.

Timor Leste

There is a dedicated chapter on SDG 16 in the Second VNR (VNR-2) of Timor-Leste's progress towards achieving the SDGs entitled "Institutions that deliver for the people." It provides an assessment of progress, challenges and priorities related to SDG 16, providing access to justice, and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. The report emphasizes that the country tried to adapt and integrate national SDG 16 targets. It specifically acknowledges the importance of strengthening national institutions and effective governance as part of SDG 16. The report also mentions target 16.6, which focuses on effective institutions and provides data on government expenditures as a percentage of the original approved budget.

Uzbekistan

A dedicated chapter on SDG 16 discusses the importance of governance reform and its inclusion in the government's comprehensive reform agenda within the National Strategy. It also mentions the improvement in Uzbekistan's performance on all six components of governance according to the World Bank's World Governance Indicators.
Bosnia and Herzegovina

SDG 16 is linked with SDGs 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14 and 17. The VNR explains how progress towards achieving SDG 16 contributes to progress towards these other SDGs and vice versa. For example, the VNR notes that strengthening the rule of law, a key component of SDG 16, can help promote gender equality (SDG 5) and support economic growth (SDG 8). Regarding interlinkages between SDG 16 and SDG 13 (climate change), the VNR notes that promoting peaceful and inclusive societies can help reduce conflict and instability, which in turn can contribute to efforts to combat climate change. Additionally, the VNR highlights the importance of addressing climate-related risks and vulnerabilities in the context of SDG 16, noting that climate change can exacerbate existing inequalities and undermine efforts to build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions. Overall, the VNR emphasizes the interconnected nature of the SDGs and the need for holistic approaches to achieving them.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

The report emphasizes the importance of effective and accountable institutions at all levels in supporting the implementation of other SDGs, such as reducing poverty, improving access to education and healthcare, and promoting sustainable development.

European Union

The report presents a section on interlinkages for each goal and analysis at two levels: a literary review of reports and a review of ODA projects.

For the first analysis, the EU created the SDG interlinkages to raise awareness of the SDGs and their interlinked nature, as well as to support policymakers in understanding the interactions across SDGs. The analysis[6] is based on a literary review of articles, reviews and reports published since 2015. The report illustrates that there are interlinkages with all 17 goals. The tool itself identifies in terms of synergies that there are interactions with a clear direction of impact between SDG 16 and all goals, and in terms of trade-off, the interaction is mainly with goals 3, 5, and 11.

The second analysis focuses on interlinkages at the ODA level. In 2022, 529 projects targeted SDG 16 as the main SDG. These contributed to other interlinked SDGs, mainly SDGs 5, 8, 10, and 17. On the other hand, SDG 16 was identified as significant in 415 projects even where another SDG was marked as the main SDG. This was notable in projects where goals 4, 8, and 17 were the main contributors.

France

The report has a section that presents the statistics for four indicators of SDG 16. However, the review does not focus on goals but rather on six challenges identified for France’s Roadmap for Agenda 2030. Two of the challenges were linked to SDG 16: challenge 1, on acting for a just transition by fighting against all discrimination and inequalities and guaranteeing the same rights, opportunities, and freedoms for all and to all, which was linked to goals 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 5 (gender equality), 8 (decent work and economic growth) and 10 (reduced inequality); and challenge 6, on building durable European and international transformations, which was linked with goal 17.

Figure 5 - Interlinkages between SDG 16 and other goals. Source: European Union’s 2023 VNR Report
36 out of 39 reports mentioned the investment on monitoring, evaluation or reporting of data (including statistics). The same number of reports included some form of statistical annex, but only 25 reports presented some statistics[7] on SDG 16.

**Canada**

The report mentions several types of data and initiatives, including the Canadian Legal Problems Survey and qualitative studies. There are also initiatives to collect data on specific populations: one to improve the collection and use of disaggregated data to address the overrepresentation of Indigenous, Black, and racialized people in the criminal justice system, and one, in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners, to advance sustainable Indigenous data capacity and support Indigenous self-determination.

**Belgium**

The country has established a National Database on Hate Crimes, which collects data on hate crimes and related incidents. Additionally, the country has created a system for collecting and analyzing data on human trafficking, which allows authorities to monitor trends and identify areas where more action is needed. The country also participates in international data-sharing initiatives, such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum’s Information Sharing Network, which facilitates the exchange of information among member states.

**Burkina Faso**

Burkina Faso’s 2023 VNR, the country’s first, highlighted difficulties related to data availability and the instability of sectoral indicators.

To address this issue, the country conducted a study in collaboration with other actors in the National Statistical System (SSN) to identify missing data and develop a strategy to fill the statistical gaps for monitoring the SDGs.

**European Union**

The EU selected three targets in their statistical section: 16.1 Peaceful and Personal Security, 16.2 Access to Justice, and 16.3 Trust. The report uses the indicator of intentional homicide, but the other indicators are proxies. For example, for access to justice, the EU used general government total expenditure on law courts instead of the three indicators of the framework: violence reporting, unsentenced detainees, and access to dispute resolution mechanisms.

**Iceland**

While Iceland uses the global SDG indicators provided by the UN, it also incorporates indicators from international organizations such as Eurostat, the OECD, SDSN and Bertelsmann Stiftung, which have their own set of targets and indicators. The report mentions that currently, there are nationally adjusted SDG indicators available in Iceland, which the country considers difficult to monitor for national and local progress towards the SDGs.

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[7] This includes proxies and national SDG 16 indicators.
Statistics Iceland, responsible for producing and disseminating statistics on the country’s progress towards the SDGs, adapts the UN indicators to the Icelandic context and reports the statistics using a National Reporting Platform (NRP). Since Iceland’s first VNR in 2019, the coverage of reported indicators has increased from 30% to 70% in 2023. For some SDG 16 indicators, it is possible to consult the series since 1996.

Lithuania

The report highlights one international index, the Sustainable Development Index, and although it recognizes its importance, it also highlights the insufficiencies of using the indicator. For instance, the report mentions that the “VNR uses both official statistics and informal statistics to measure progress on specific indicators. While most of the data used are official statistics, the use of informal statistics does not ensure an adequate assessment of the annual progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda.” Despite the limitation, the country uses the indicator to assess its performance.

Romania

Civil Society Organizations’ (CSO) data is integrated in Romania’s official statistics. The National Institute of Statistics collaborates with ministries, government agencies, organizations and CSOs to ensure the compatibility of the official statistical system with other information systems. The Department of Sustainable Development has facilitated the signing of collaboration agreements between the National Institute of Statistics and various stakeholders, including CSOs, to contribute consistent, high-quality data for monitoring the progress of Romania’s Sustainable Development Strategy implementation.
38 out of 39 VNRs mentioned the involvement of civil society organizations in the development process of the review, mainly in the consultation phase.

Belgium

The Inter-Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Development (IMCSD) launched a participatory process in which civil society organizations were invited to provide input for drafting the VNR. The Federal Council for Sustainable Development (FCSD) played a coordinating role in this process. Over 30 responses were collected from civil society organizations, and synthesized texts were produced based on these responses. Interactive sessions were also organized during the SDG Forum, where organizations and citizens could engage in the VNR dialogues. Civil society organizations appreciated the increased space for participation compared to the 2017 VNR process. Furthermore, a joint opinion was issued by several advisory councils on the draft VNR, assessing the progress in the quality of the report compared to the 2017 report.

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso’s VNR highlights the involvement of civil society in implementing the 2030 Agenda. The Permanent Secretariat of NGOs (SPONG), on behalf of Burkina-be civil society, was regularly consulted with and able to contribute to various national and regional dialogues and frameworks. The influence and advocacy efforts of civil society organizations helped prioritize basic social sectors such as education, health, water, hygiene and sanitation in public development policies.

Chile

The document mentions that the report was developed with the participation and contribution of various interested actors, including civil society organizations. The Technical Secretariat of the National Council for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[8] worked with civil society organizations to gather information about the actions they execute related to the SDGs.

Furthermore, the report highlights the active participation of civil society networks, such as the Comunidad de Organizaciones Solidarias, Acción AG, Red de Voluntarios de Chile, Sociedad Civil por la Acción Climática (SCAC), Red Promotores ODS, CRISOL, Bloque por la Infancia, Moviliza, Motumcorp, Fundación para el Desarrollo Social (Fudeso), among others. These organizations disseminated and promoted the completion of a questionnaire about initiatives related to the SDGs.

In summary, the report states that civil society played a significant role in the VNR’s development, providing input and information about their actions and initiatives. The VNR process also included regional dialogues with around 1,600 participants of whom 41.1% were representatives of CSOs.

Croatia

The Croatian Government’s Office for Cooperation with NGOs launched a call for civil society organizations to participate in the preparation of the second VNR of the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Croatia. Civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations were invited to submit projects related to the SDGs, and examples of successfully implemented projects by these organizations were included in the VNR.

France

The VNR mentions that two collectives, open to all, were established to contribute to the implementation of Agenda 2030 by France. Their contributions (presented as summaries of the discussions) were fully integrated into the text of the VNR. These contributions are included at the end of the chapters, providing additional information.

Furthermore, the document highlights that the Council for Development and International Solidarity (CNDSI), a consultative body between state and non-state actors working on development and international solidarity policy, formed a working group to examine the VNR, co-chaired by Coordination Sud and the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDRI).

Overall, the report emphasizes the importance of involving civil society in the implementation of Agenda 2030 and acknowledges the contributions made by various organizations and groups.

Portugal

The report emphasizes the importance of consulting with civil society in preparing a VNR.

The government organized town halls in all regions of the country to listen to civil society’s stakeholders and citizens. The aim was to consult with CSOs before drafting the VNR so the report would incorporate the contributions and challenges faced at the community level. The report also mentions the organization of focus groups with CSOs from different sectors to collect input and improve the understanding of the current state of the SDGs in Portugal. The document emphasizes the importance of transparent consultation procedures and systematic dialogue between government bodies, public bodies and organized civil society.

The United Republic of Tanzania

The report states that the Tanzania Sustainable Development Platform (TSDP), which is responsible for coordinating civil society inputs, consulted with over 2,000 civil society organizations. Additionally, the document mentions that civil society organizations were engaged in stakeholder-led consultations with their inputs submitted to the Ministry of Finance and Planning. The report stresses that the government ensures that CSOs are meaningfully engaged in contributing to national SDGs implementation strategies and processes. Overall, the report emphasizes the importance of stakeholder engagement, including civil society, in the implementation process.

Zambia

CSOs contributed both an independent chapter to give non-state actors space and a voice to strengthen dialogue and cooperation between the government and civil society. CSOs actively participated in the development of the 8th National Development Plans (2022-2026), which served as tools to integrate and cascade the SDGs as benchmarks for national development.
CSOs also provided technical reviews based on the work on monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning, as well as advocating for and monitoring the implementation of the SDGs. Additionally, the report mentions that CSOs played a significant role in service provision and financial support to complement government programs in various sectors related to the SDGs. They also engaged the Zambian National Assembly to promote discussions on SDGs at the national level and mobilized partnerships for the SDGs.
22 out of 39 reports mentioned the involvement of parliaments in the VNR process. 56%

Belgium

The preparation of the VNR report involved various levels of government in Belgium, including discussions in the parliaments, in Flanders within the Commission for General Policy, Finance, Budget, and Justice.

Canada

The SDGs have been included in Canada’s parliamentary reporting by federal departments and agencies, such as in the Departmental Plans and Departmental Results Reports. This reporting ensures consistent and transparent information across federal departments and agencies on their respective contributions toward advancing the SDGs.

Central African Republic

The report was drafted under the coordination of the Ministry of the Economy, Plan, and International Coordination, in cooperation with the United Nations System, and under the technical supervision of UNDP. The process was conducted with the involvement of all national stakeholders gathered within national coordination to monitor the implementation of the 2030 agenda, including the National Assembly, which was also part of a reading committee.

Ireland

The report does not specify if the Parliament was involved in the VNR. Still, it is mentioned that each Oireachtas Committee (parliamentary committee) has a role in monitoring and overseeing the progress of the SDGs as underpinned by a specific Standing Order that includes "(c) progress on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals set out in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as are within the scope of the Committee's orders of reference as set out in Standing Order". The report also mentions Parliament's regular engagement in the SDG NIP.

Liechtenstein

The report states that since the second half of 2022, consultation reports and motions to Parliament have included a chapter on the SDGs, explaining how they are impacted by a motion or government project. This ensures that the interdependencies of the sustainability goals are considered in every legislative process and package of measures proposed to Parliament, promoting policy coherence for greater sustainability. Additionally, the Government regularly reported to Parliament on the implementation of the SDGs, demonstrating close monitoring and involvement of the Parliament in Liechtenstein's efforts.
Mongolia

The report mentions that more than 10 discussions were organized to encourage input from all sectors and stakeholder levels, including the Parliament, in the preparation of the VNR on the implementation of the SDGs in Mongolia. The Parliament organized the National Consultative Poll "Let’s Decide by Consultation" to determine the social and economic issues of the country and asked for the public’s opinions on various matters, including constitutional amendments and social and economic issues. The VNR also states that the Parliament’s Sub-committee on the SDGs works to incorporate the SDGs into government policies and decisions and ensure their implementation. Overall, the involvement of the Parliament is highlighted throughout the document as an important stakeholder in the SDG implementation in Mongolia.

Portugal

The report highlights that Parliament plays a crucial role in political debate and the design and programming of public policies, which are essential for achieving the SDGs. The engagement is at the highest political level, with the representation of the President of the Portuguese Parliament. Additionally, the document emphasizes the importance of engaging public stakeholders, including legislative ones, in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Therefore, it can be inferred that the Parliament was involved in the ownership and development process of the report.

Rwanda

The Parliament was involved in the ownership and development process of the report. As mentioned in the document snippet, the Parliament (Chamber of Deputies and Senate) has a role in overseeing and holding accountable the implementation of the national priorities and the SDGs, including endorsing plans and budgets related to the SDGs.

The report also mentions that the parliament reviews and approves the budget related to activities, projects and programs and monitors their implementation. Therefore, the Parliament plays a crucial role in ensuring Rwanda’s progress and implementation of the SDGs.

Uzbekistan

The report notes that Parliament (Oliy Majlis) plays an important role in ensuring the implementation and monitoring of the national SDGs. A special Parliamentary Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the National SDGs and targets of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030 has been established under the Oliy Majlis. The Commission carries out large-scale work, discussing specific measures to cover all national goals and targets, hearing from responsible ministries and agencies, and forwarding inquiries to members of the government. The Parliament is authorized to monitor and assess the activities of executive bodies based on the achievement of a set goals and targets. The inclusion of the Parliament in the implementation of SDGs was a direct initiative of the President of Uzbekistan, and a special resolution to enhance the role of parliaments in implementing the SDGs, co-authored by 80 countries, was adopted by the UN General Assembly. The Parliament has adopted a joint resolution and a corresponding roadmap to implement the tasks defined in the resolution. The resolution emphasizes the importance of parliamentary involvement in supporting recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring gender equality, and strengthening the legal framework, among other areas. The experience of the Parliament of Uzbekistan serves points to the potential of accelerating the achievement of national goals and targets and ensuring their legislative, legal, institutional and economic support.
Viet Nam

The National Assembly of Viet Nam has played a leading role in the implementation of the SDGs nationwide and has established important solid legal foundations for the comprehensive reform of the country.

The National Assembly of Viet Nam annually organizes a conference on the role of the National Assembly in the implementation of the SDGs and participates in activities within the framework of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to promote the role of parliaments in implementing the SDGs globally. The National Assembly, through its constitutional and legislative functions, has gradually created solid legal foundations for the comprehensive reform of the country.
Private sector engagement in 2023 VNRs

38 reports out of 39 mentioned the private sectors’ involvement in developing the VNR or in implementing the SDGs.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The report emphasizes the important role that the private sector plays in achieving the SDGs and mentions several initiatives and events aimed at is engagement and involvement, such as the annual SDG Business Pioneers Award and the SDG Business Week/Sustainable Development Week in BiH. Also, the article notes that over 50 BiH companies published their first annual sustainability reports as a result of participating in the SDG Business Pioneers Award.

Burkina Faso

The private sector was involved in the implementation of and reporting on the SDGs in Burkina Faso. According to the report, the private sector’s contribution in response to the COVID-19 crisis was highlighted. The report also mentioned improving the partnership between the public and private sectors through implementing Public-Private Partnerships (PPP).

Canada

The Government of Canada collaborated with the private sector on economic and social infrastructure, piloting innovative financing mechanisms, addressing debt vulnerabilities, improving remittance flows, and supporting tax cooperation. Additionally, FinDev Canada, a financial institution dedicated to providing financial services to the private sector in developing countries, was involved in mobilizing private capital for sustainable economic growth, including job creation, women’s economic empowerment, and climate change mitigation.

The private sector’s involvement in advancing the SDGs and contributing to poverty reduction was also highlighted through the SDG Funding Program, where not-for-profit organizations, academia and the private sector accessed funding to build engagement, increase public awareness, conduct research and develop partnerships related to the SDGs.

Chile

The report highlighted the contributions of Chile’s private sector towards sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs. The Instituto de Políticas Públicas of the Universidad Andrés Bello (UNAB) collaborated with Pacto Global Chile and other organizations to collect information on the initiatives and actions undertaken by businesses in line with the SDGs. The private sector also participated in the voluntary reporting process, providing information on their actions and initiatives related to the SDGs. The private sector also participated in the voluntary reporting process, providing information on their actions and initiatives related to the SDGs. The collaborative efforts of the private sector, civil society, academia, municipalities and the public sector demonstrate the multi-stakeholder approach taken in Chile to address the SDGs. The countries identified and mapped businesses that implemented initiatives on SDG 16. The country mapped the number of initiatives implemented by the private sector by goal, which shows the high engagement of the sector across all goals, including SDG 16.
European Union

The European Union report states that the EU focuses on private sector development to build resilience and promote decent jobs in low- and middle-income countries. The EU has helped private sector development, supporting investment and policies to improve the regulatory environment. The document also mentions that the EU’s assistance to private sector development has grown by 65% over the last decade and highlights the role of the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+) in supporting sustainable investment worldwide by leveraging private capital.

Furthermore, the document mentions the engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including the private sector, during the preparation of the EU Voluntary Review (EUVR). The European Commission employed various consultation activities and events to gather the views of stakeholders, including EU institutions, advisory bodies and EU Member States.

France

The country recommends mobilizing diplomatic resources to defend a European approach to extra-financial accounting based on the concept of double materiality. The extra-financial reporting requirement in France is currently only mandatory for companies with more than 500 employees. One of the report’s recommendations is to extend it to all types of organizations to guide public and private financial flows toward responsible investments. This suggests that the private sector is involved in developing accounting standards and practices. Additionally, the country is working to involve the private sector in financing sustainable development in partner countries through initiatives promoting inclusive and socially responsible investment.
Kuwait

The report highlights the efforts made to promote a dynamic private sector and the establishment of an International Private Economic Zone (IPEZ). The government organized a series of consultancies and a national sustainability week involving stakeholders from the public institutions, private sector, academia and civil society organizations to participate in the review process and report on their achievements and ongoing programs. Additionally, the private sector played a significant role in Kuwait’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic, providing support to hospitals, quarantine locations, vaccination areas as well as launching awareness campaigns. The involvement of the private sector is a crucial aspect of Kuwait’s approach to achieving the SDGs and ensuring a sustainable future.

Poland

The private sector was involved in the implementation and reporting of the SDGs in Poland. The document mentions that Polish businesses are widely involved in initiatives to fight poverty and are taking action to reduce this phenomenon. They often cooperate with foundations and associations to create their own organizations to promote food security and sustainable agriculture. The document also highlights that socially responsible companies in Poland produce separate reports dedicated to aspects of their activities related to social impact, sustainability and different types of investments, known as non-financial ESG reporting. Moreover, the report mentions the growing interest of equity investors in companies that transparently communicate non-financial information, and how this trend is shaping the regulatory environment in mature markets.

Additionally, the report acknowledges the importance of involving stakeholders in the process of building appropriate conditions for the effective implementation of the SDGs, including representatives from the business sector. Overall, the private sector in Poland is recognized as having an important role in implementing and reporting on the SDGs.

Viet Nam

The proportion of investment capital from the non-state economic sector, which includes the private sector, increased from 50.2% in 2015 to 59.5% in 2021. The private sector’s investment in social development plays a significant role in improving living standards and facilitating the process of restructuring workers from agriculture to non-agricultural industries.

Regarding reporting, the private sector and other stakeholders are encouraged to submit reports with information, research results, evaluation, and critique on the SDGs to the Ministry of Planning and Investment and sector management agencies.
Barbados

The UN Resident Coordinator’s Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean commissioned a National SDG Report in late 2022. There was also a Rapid Integration Assessment commissioned the following year, which measured the alignment of national priorities with the SDG supporting documents. These served as a foundation for the VNR, conducted with technical assistance from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

Canada

The prime minister at the time of the report, Justin Trudeau, is a co-chair of the UN Secretary General’s SDG Advocates Group, a position shared with the Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley. The country states its contribution to the SDGs, both at the national and international level, for instance, through Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy, which guides the country’s international implementation of the SDGs. Canada is also an important contributor to development, having invested more than US$1.3 billion to access safe, quality, gender-responsive education and skills training. The country also co-chairs the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDGs Indicators as part of the national objective of ensuring accountability, transparency and reporting.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

The VNR was prepared in collaboration with the UN System agencies working in the DRC, based on the methodology established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The UN agencies, along with the Congolese Observatory for Sustainable Development (OCDD) and other stakeholders, contributed to the data collection and thematic studies that informed the report. Additionally, the UN Resident Coordinator and representatives from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNDP were part of the supervisory and coordination committees responsible for overseeing the preparation and validation of the report.

Fiji

The VNR mentions that the UNDP played a crucial role in supporting Fiji’s VNR process by engaging technical assistance to the SDG Unit of the Ministry of Finance.

Iceland

Although the involvement of the UN is limited, the VNR highlights that the United Nations Association in Iceland was responsible for carrying out a civil society assessment of Iceland’s progress on each of the 17 SDGs, and their assessment is included in the report.

Maldives

The report states that UN agencies, including UNRCO, UNDP, UNFPA, ESCAP, and UNCT, were stakeholders involved in the stakeholder consultations and provided support for consultations, feedback, and facilitation during workshops. Additionally, the report mentions that the ESCAP team prepared the infographic and analysis for the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) analysis used in the report.
Uzbekistan

The UN’s involvement in the VNR placed particular emphasis on the Twinning program where delegations from Mongolia and Tajikistan visited Uzbekistan as part of the program organized by ESCAP (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) to promote peer support and South-South Cooperation in implementing the SDGs.

Annex 1. Number of Countries that Reported on the SDG 16 targets year by year [9]

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[9] Sources of statistics for the different years are available here: [2016], [2017], [2018], [2019], [2020] and [2021]
Annex 2. Percentage of Countries that reported on the SDG 16 targets by year[10]

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[10] Computed based on Table 1.
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Synthesis Report - Voluntary National Reviews 2023
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

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United Nations Development Programme
One United Nations Plaza, NEW YORK, NY10017, USA