

**Side Meeting on Afghanistan Sustainable Development Goals**  
**Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan**  
**21 November 2020**  
**Serena Hotel, Kabul, Afghanistan**

The Side Meeting on Afghanistan SDGs started on 21 November 2020 with opening remarks by UNDP, the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Finance. In very broad strokes, UNDP laid out the specific interventions and areas of support to build a strong monitoring and reporting system for Afghanistan's SDGs (A-SDGs) and its national development plans such as the Afghanistan Peace and Development Framework II (ANPDF II) and the 15 National Priority Programmes. UNDP also alluded to the progress that it has made on the development of economy-wide models to support an evidence-based approach to planning and policymaking on the A-SDGs and the country's national development objectives.

The Ministry of Economy presented the progress made on the A-SDGs with technical support from UNDP, Afghanistan. This included the nationalization of the global SDGs, the establishment of an institutional structure, alignment with the national development goals, and the prioritization of the A-SDGs. The Deputy Minister of Economy also highlighted some of the key challenges, including the lack of sustainable financing, the lack of official statistics to measure progress and the required capacity to integrate the SDGs into national and local plans.

The Ministry Finance highlighted the importance of the 2030 Agenda for Afghanistan and clearly stated that the priority SDGs were fully integrated into ANPDF II. The Deputy Minister of Finance briefed the participants on the three main components of ANPDF II—State-building, peace-building and market-building, and how the A-SDGs were integrated into each of these components.

The UNDP Resident Representative in Afghanistan presented UNDP's work on building an integrated monitoring and reporting system, the development of economy-wide economic models for proper planning, investment in and implementation of SDGs in Afghanistan. The Director of the Statistics Division of UNESCAP mentioned the challenges involved in measuring progress on the SDGs for Afghanistan. Given that Afghanistan has no data for 43% of the global SDG indicators and insufficient data for measuring progress for a further 15% of the global SDG indicators, she highlighted the importance of using new information tools, such as SDG dashboards, to complement the monitoring and evaluation work. She made references to several tools, including the EPIc (every policy is connected) project which aims to improve the quality of existing and new policies and to provide a better framework for monitoring the SDGs, complemented by new information tools. This will help to establish a clear dialogue, identify key policy priorities and target groups, and improve monitoring by helping to fill the existing data gaps.

The Deputy Chief of Mission of the Royal Norwegian Embassy commended the commitment and the progress made on the A-SDGs. He talked about why the SDGs were important for peace and prosperity in Afghanistan. He also mentioned that the future of development cooperation to Afghanistan rests on the building of a strong monitoring, reporting and accountability system. He also indicated that Norway would support the attainment of the SDGs in Afghanistan.

During the later discussions, moderated by UNDP, the Deputy Minister of Public Health presented the challenges in the Health Sector in Afghanistan. He made it clear that without sufficient resources, access to public health services in Afghanistan would be a considerable challenge.

The representative from the European Union thanked the Ministry of Economy and UNDP for their commitment to the SDGs in Afghanistan. He said that EU's development cooperation would be delivered to Afghanistan by connecting the A-SDGs to the development objectives of ANPDF II and to the development priorities of the EU through a triangular approach. He also said that a strong monitoring, reporting and accountability system for the A-SDGs would be crucial as the international community is helping Afghanistan to transform itself into a peaceful and prosperous country.

The Country Director of the World Bank highlighted how important it was to enhance the capacity of the National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA) to collect and report data. He commended the progress that UNDP and the Ministry of Economy had made in the development of an integrated monitoring and reporting system for the A-SDGs. He alluded to the support that the World Bank was providing to the NSIA on collecting and analyzing new datasets. He said that the World Bank would engage with UNDP and its government counterparts on SDG monitoring and evaluation in Afghanistan.

The UN Resident Coordinator joined from Geneva to congratulate UNDP and the UN system for their work in supporting the implementation of the SDGs in Afghanistan. He made it clear that the Afghanistan Partnership Framework and the ANPDF II will be fully implemented and measured through the SDGs in Afghanistan.

The Australian Embassy appreciated the progress that both UNDP and the Ministry of Economy had made on the SDGs in Afghanistan, particularly the development of an integrated monitoring and reporting system for the SDGs. The Australian Embassy alluded to its work on Big Data with the Agha Khan Foundation in Afghanistan and was keen to know more about UNDP's diagnostics and assessment on SDG financing in Afghanistan.