



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



## 11<sup>th</sup> Workshop on Voluntary National Reviews in the Arab Region

Virtual, 15-17 October 2024

### Information Note [DRAFT]

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development established principles for a follow-up and review process that is robust, voluntary, effective, participatory and transparent. Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) lie at the heart of this follow-up and review process. Through VNRs, Member States report on their progress, highlight matters of priority and share their experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As of 2024, all Arab countries have submitted at least one VNR, bringing the total number to 40 reports for the region. Three Arab countries have thus far expressed interest in submitting a VNR in 2025.<sup>1</sup>

Member States reaffirm every year the importance of the VNR process during the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) held annually in July in New York. The 2024 Ministerial Declaration<sup>2</sup> reiterated commitment to the VNR process and stressed the importance of meaningful stakeholder participation, evidence-based reviews, and improved quality of the VNRs by a more systematic use of accurate and comparable data and anticipatory models.

Amidst growing mistrust in global governance, the 2024 Ministerial Declaration reaffirmed that international cooperation, multilateralism and international solidarity at all levels are the best way to address the global challenges. The Summit of the Future (22-23 September 2024) will be the opportunity to reinvigorate multilateralism, restore trust and push for an international system better prepared to handle global challenges in a more complex, more interconnected, and rapidly changing world.

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in partnership with the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the League of Arab States (LAS), has been organizing [regional VNR workshops](#) since 2019. The workshops provide a space for knowledge exchange and peer learning on VNRs in the Arab region. ESCWA also established the Arab VNR Community of Practice (CoP) as an informal peer learning mechanism that brings together government officials from Arab countries involved in the preparation of VNRs.<sup>3</sup> In 2023, ESCWA organized the first twinning activity between two Arab states to facilitate a bilateral exchange of experiences on the VNR process and follow-up of the SDGs. ESCWA has also launched a [Compendium of Good VNR practices](#) to document noteworthy experiences from the Arab region.

<sup>1</sup> As of 10 September 2024, they are Iraq, Jordan, Qatar, Palestine and the Sudan. The updated list of VNR countries is available at the [HLPF website](#).

<sup>2</sup> ECOSOC (2024). Resolution [E/2024/L.20–E/HLPF/2024/L.1](#) on the Ministerial Declaration of the high-level segment of the 2024 Economic and Social Council and the 2024 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (advanced unedited version).

<sup>3</sup> More information is available online on [ESCWA's VNR support](#).

## I. Objectives and thematic focus

The 11<sup>th</sup> regional VNR workshop will continue to provide a **platform for dialogue and peer learning** on VNR and sustainable development issues in the Arab region. As the first workshop in the 2025 VNR cycle, it will shed light on experiences of Arab countries that submitted a VNR at the 2024 HLPF and on preparations of countries that plan to conduct a VNR in 2025.

The workshop will provide an opportunity to present key findings of the recently published **Arab Sustainable Development Report 2024** and reflect on implications for VNRs and 2030 Agenda follow-up and review more broadly. Participants will also be briefed on relevant outcomes of the **Summit of the Future** (22-23 September 2024).

The thematic focus of the workshop will be on **SDG 16 "Peace, justice and strong institutions"**, building on the review of that Goal at the 2024 HLPF, and reflecting its centrality for development in the region.

## II. Topics of discussion

- a) **VNRs of 2024 and 2025:** The Arab countries that submitted a VNR report in 2024 (Libya, Mauritania, Oman, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen) will be invited to present a summary of their VNR processes, including methodology, main challenges and solutions adopted to address them. Innovative methods to engage stakeholders and fill data gaps will be highlighted. The workshop will support countries in planning for a 2025 VNR, with the opportunity to share their proposals for linking with previous VNRs. The workshop will also update on ESCWA's support for VNRs, including the Compendium of VNR Good Practices in Arab Countries and opportunities for twinning.
- b) **2024 edition of the Arab Sustainable Development Report (ASDR 2024):** ASDR is a quadrennial inter-agency flagship publication that supports the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region. ASDR 2024 builds on the structural barriers identified in the 2020 edition and analyses main policy directions to achieve the SDGs. It also identifies opportunities, the potential for regional action and the financing landscape. The workshop will present ASDR 2024, highlight some of its key findings and discuss the way forward.
- c) **Outcomes of the Summit of the Future:** The [Summit of the Future](#) (22-23 September 2024) is described as a "once-in-a-generation opportunity to mend eroded trust and demonstrate that international cooperation can effectively achieve agreed goals and tackle emerging threats and opportunities". It will bring together world leaders to "forge a new international consensus on how we deliver a better present and safeguard the future." The VNR workshop will present the main outcomes of the Summit, including the Pact for the Future<sup>4</sup>, and implications for the 2030 Agenda.
- d) **SDG 16 on "Peace, justice and strong institutions"** will be the workshop's thematic focus. Under review at the 2024 HLPF, SDG 16 is an outcome in itself and an enabler of all other SDGs, covering issues of peace, good governance, effective institutions, access to justice, and freedom from fear and violence.<sup>5</sup> Despite the significance of SDG 16, many countries struggle to adequately review its progress due, among others, to the lack of data, a siloed approach, the sensitivity of the issues, and the lack of an inclusive

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<sup>4</sup> Two other outcomes are the Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations. See General Assembly (2023). Resolution 77/L.109 on [Scope of the Summit of the Future](#).

<sup>5</sup> United Nations (2024). [Background Note – SDG 16 and interlinkages with other SDGs](#).

and participatory process for reviewing this SDG in particular. The workshop will discuss: (1) the interlinkages of SDG 16 with other Goals and the need to mainstream SDG 16 across the VNR report; (2) the SDG 16 data environment and untapped data sources; (3) the main actors to engage across different sectors of society and at all levels; and (4) country experiences and good practices in comprehensive and analytical SDG 16 review and reporting.

### **III. Organizational and Logistical Details**

#### **a) Date and venue**

The workshop will be organized online from 15 to 17 October 2024.

#### **b) Participants and registration**

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

Participation is by invitation only.

#### **c) Working languages**

Arabic and English are the working languages of the workshop. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in Arabic, English and French.

#### **d) Correspondence**

Correspondence regarding logistical arrangements of the workshop may be addressed to:

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