



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

7th Workshop on Voluntary National Reviews in the Arab Region

UN House, Beirut, 18-19 October 2022

Information Note

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. VNRs can also help mobilize multi-stakeholder partnerships. By 2022, 291 VNRs have been submitted to the HLPF globally including 31 VNRs from 21 Arab countries.

To support Arab States, 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, has been organizing regional VNR workshops. The workshops provide a space for knowledge exchange and peer learning on VNRs in the Arab region. Since 2019, six workshops have been organized¹.

I. Objectives and thematic focus

The [7th Workshop on Voluntary National Reviews \(VNRs\) in the Arab Region](#) will take stock of the experiences of Arab countries that presented VNRs in 2022 and inform preparations of countries planning to undertake a VNR in 2023. The thematic focus of this edition is private sector engagement in the 2030 Agenda. The theme choice stems from the important role envisioned for the private sector as a development partner in the region. It also comes in support of a greater engagement of the private sector in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and contribution to its follow-up and review process.

II. Discussion topics

The following topics will be discussed during the workshop.

a) **Arab VNR countries in conversation:** an open conversation between Arab countries that presented VNRs in 2022 (Djibouti, Jordan, Somalia, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates) and 2023 prospective VNR countries.² 2022 VNR countries will be invited to reflect on their experience, discuss how challenges were overcome, and highlight new elements and lessons learned. 2023 VNR countries will have the opportunity to present their workplan, ask questions and seek support.

¹ For more information, please visit the following website: <https://www.unescwa.org/2030-vrn>

² As of August 2022, five Arab countries have expressed their intention to present VNRs in 2023: Bahrain, Comoros, Kuwait, Oman and Saudi Arabia. The updated list is available at: <https://hlpf.un.org/countries?f%5B0%5D=year%3A2023>.

b) Businesses creating shared value: this topic will showcase opportunities for creating ‘shared value’, where economic gains for the private sector also create value for society. Examples of private sector contributions to the SDGs, whether through formal partnerships with government or independently, will be highlighted. The discussion will include interventions by government and private sector representatives from the region and beyond.

c) Integrating private sector contributions into VNR processes: the role of the private sector in the VNR process varies across countries of the region in terms of level of input, the engagement mechanism, and the impact thereof but it has also evolved over the years since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015. The discussion will showcase examples of such engagement from the government perspective as well as the viewpoint of private sector representatives. The issue of private sector reporting on the SDGs, and how to best capture it in the VNR, will also be addressed. Country cases will be featured as well as participation from the UN Global Compact in the region.

d) The workshop will provide opportunities for **groups work** on strategic processes for better engaging the private sector in the VNR and utilizing the VNR to drive forward the alignment of business practices with the 2030 Agenda.

III. Organizational and Logistical Details

A. Date and venue

The workshop will be organized in person at the UN House, ESCWA premises in Beirut, Lebanon on 18-19 October 2022.

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. Participants will also include members of the VNR Community of Practice (CoP), representatives of the private sector and experts from regional, international and United Nations organizations. Participation is by invitation only.

Note: ESCWA administration is enforcing a 21-day rule for issuance of tickets for sponsored participants. As such, sponsorships of participations received after the above deadline may not be accommodated.

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 regional workshop should be addressed to:

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