Lessons learned from 2020 VNRs

Presentation by
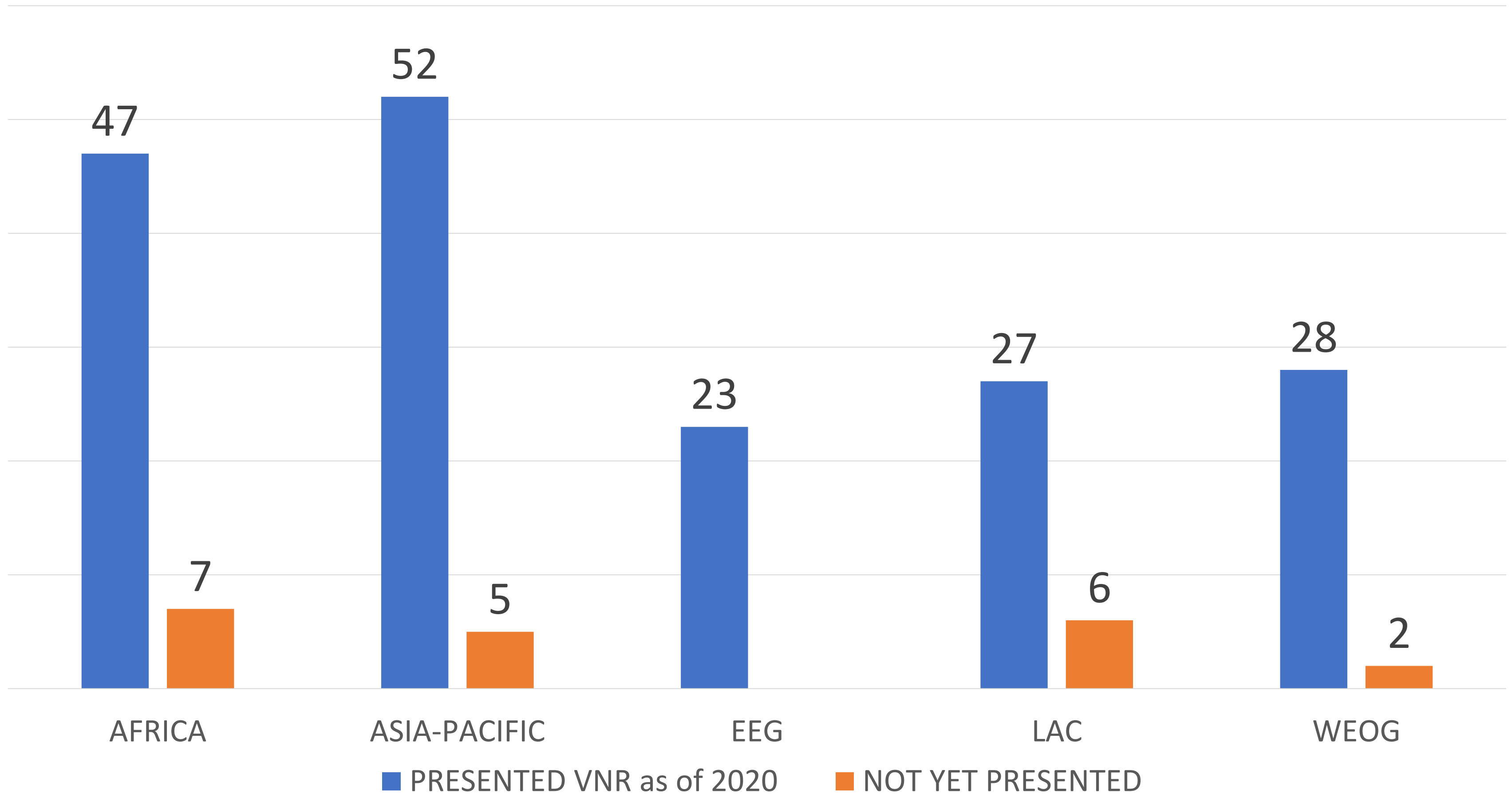
Irena Zubcevic
Chief of Intergovernmental Policy
and Review Branch, Office of Intergovernmental Support
and Coordination for Sustainable Development
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
(UN DESA), New York
<zubcevic@un.org>

Presented at the Webinar on Voluntary National Reviews in the Arab Region
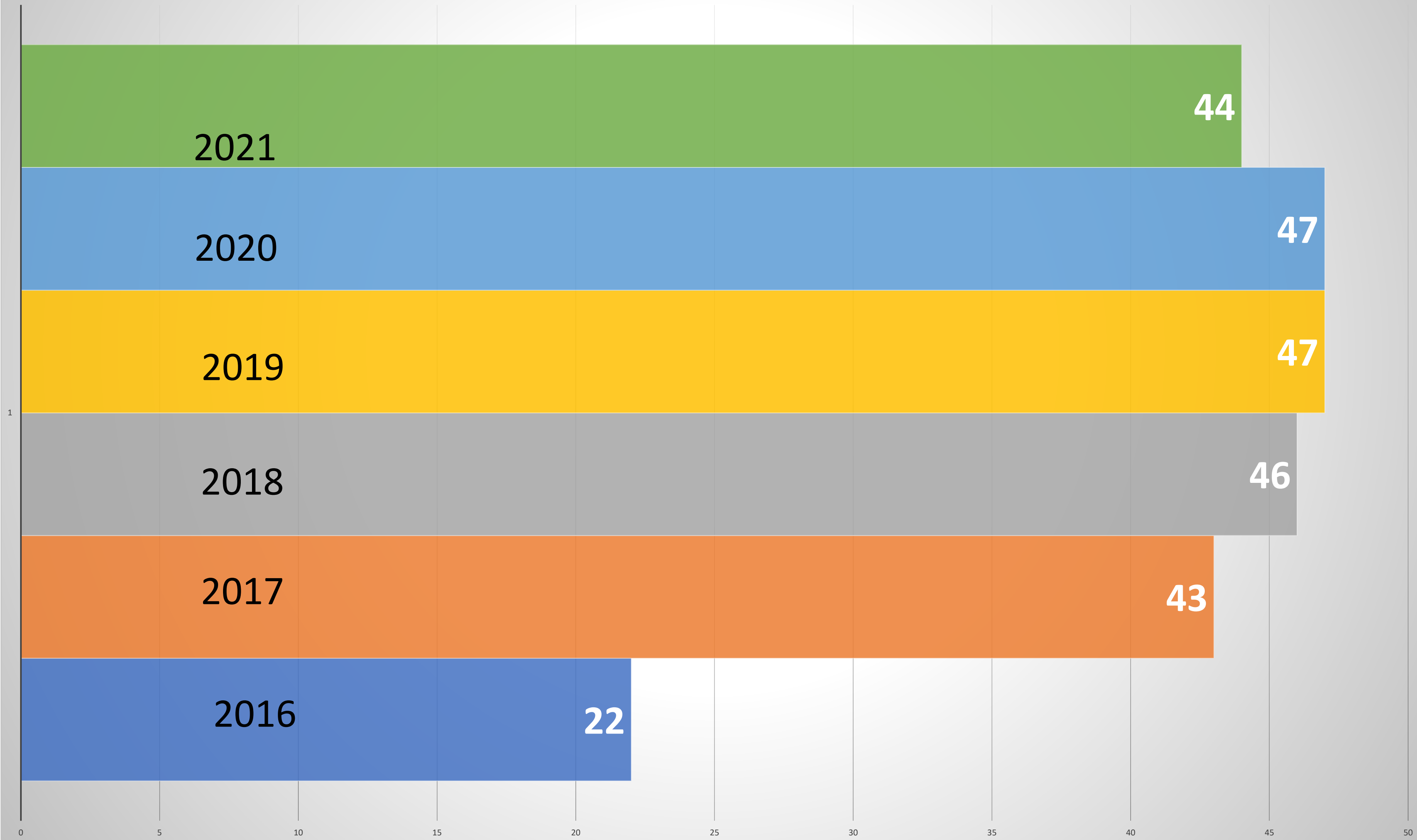**27 October 2020**

NUMBER OF VNRs PER YEAR
2016 - 2020

Year	Value
2021	44
2020	47
2019	47
2018	46
2017	43
2016	22

Feedback on the VNRs from 2019 HLPF questionnaire
(234 responses from all stakeholders)

- VNRs have been useful for sharing lessons learned & experience gained:
- 44% strongly agree & 45% somewhat agree
- VNRs have been useful for sharing SDG implementation challenges:
- 41% strongly agree & 46% somewhat agree
- Preparation and presentation of VNRs advanced national implementation:
- 42% strongly agree & 40% somewhat agree
- VNRs have been useful for mobilizing partnerships:
- 32% strongly agree & 43% somewhat agree
- More specific guidance needs to be provided on the preparation content and approach to VNRs
- 66% strongly agree & 25% somewhat agree

BENEFITS OF PREPARING VNRs

❑ Change mindsets

❑ Strengthen political will, national ownership, institutions and coordination

❑ Integrate SDGs into national development plans, aligning them with budgets identifying financial frameworks, and integrating all three dimensions of sustainable development

❑ Embed VNRs into institutions and links the VNRs to reporting to other mechanisms and conventions

❑ Meaningfully engage stakeholders

❑ Monitor SDG implementation including through parliaments and supreme audit institutions

❑ Map existing policies and their compatibility with the SDGs, and identify implementation gaps and data availability

❑ Define challenges and identifies areas where support is needed

❑ Provide an important accountability tool

❑ Provide an important communication tool

❑ Draw lessons and provide critical reflections on 2030 implementation: increases level of meaningful consultations

❑ Whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach

❑ Stimulate continued national conversations _after_ VNR has been presented

❑ Strengthen VNR follow-up by implementing lessons learned from other countries at HLPF

CHALLENGES IN PREPARING VNRs

❑Insufficient time and resources for more robust capacity building

❑Insufficient coordination and integration

❑Insufficient and ad hoc engagement of stakeholders

❑Not enough available data to monitor and evaluate progress and assess the progress

❑Lack of comparability among reports due to different approaches and methods used

VIRTUAL FORMAT OF 2021 VNR PRESENTATIONS

BENEFITS: participation, written comments, questions, recommendations
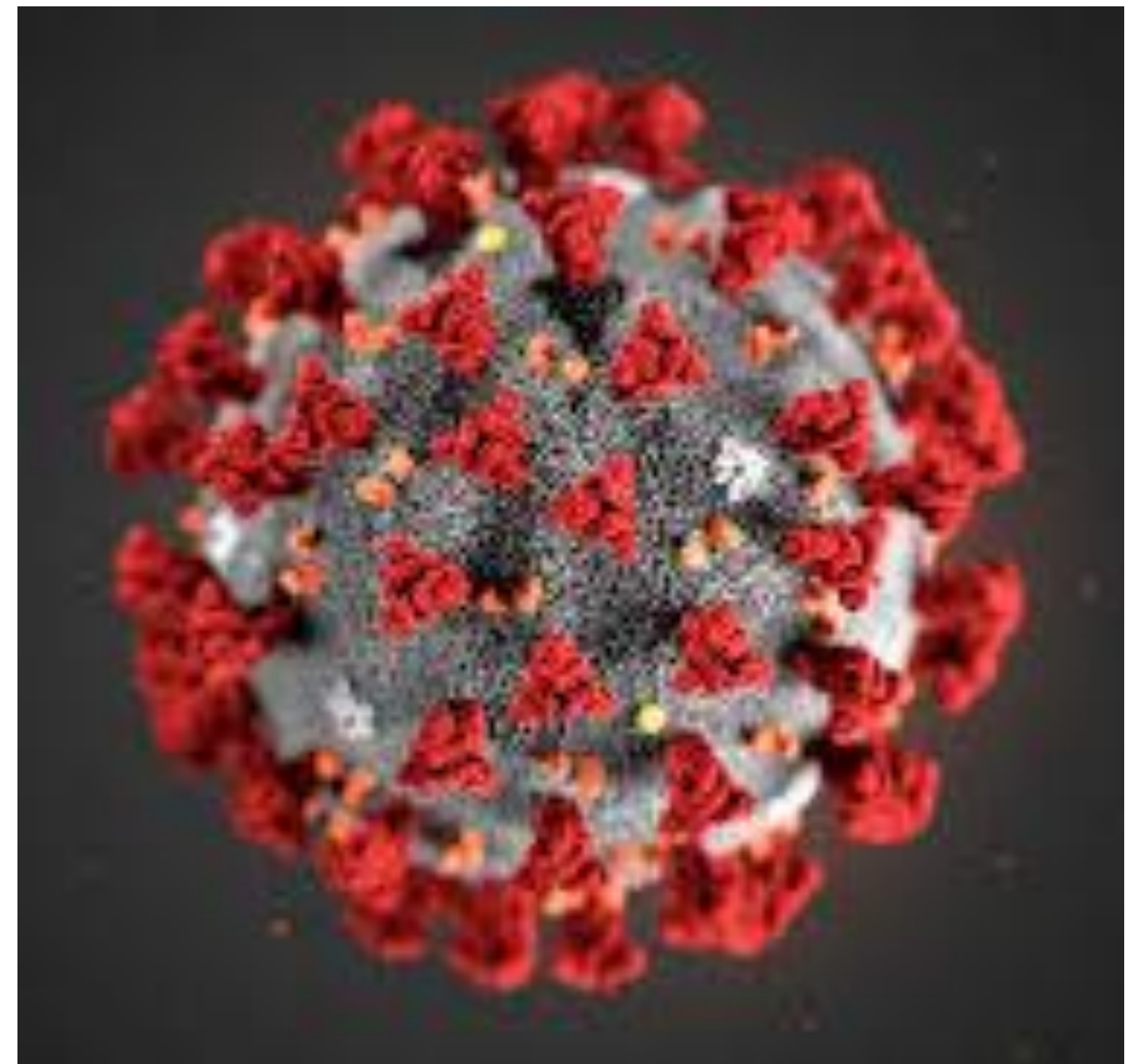
DRAWBACKS: not all countries had live presentations, lack of in-person networking, technical issues

Impact of COVID-19 in 2020 VNR country reports

- Can adversely impact progress in implementation of SDGs and disrupt development efforts and progress achieved

- Need expressed for international assistance based on global solidarity especially for developing countries and least developed countries

- Need for a coordinated approach and cooperation by all stakeholders in the society

- Health and socioeconomic measures undertaken to combat the pandemic are described.

- Impact on preparation of VNRs especially consultations with stakeholders are described

WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED

National level

❑ Strengthening national ownership including through capacity building and whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach and through preparing the VNRs by national multistakeholder team using international assistance when needed

❑ Linking the VNRs to reporting to other mechanisms and conventions

❑ Strengthening monitoring and oversight including through parliaments and supreme audit institutions, strengthening cooperation among all branches of government

❑ Explaining the impacts of strategies and polices on national level implementation of the 2030 Agenda

❑ Being honest in showing progress, but also gaps and challenges

❑ Identifying areas where support is needed

❑ Preparing a strategy how toti maximize benefits of the VNR process for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda after VNR presentation at the HLPF

WHAT CAN BE IMPROVED

Global level

❑ Using SG voluntary common reporting guidelines to increase comparability, but also to improve overall quality of reports over time by learning from good practices and reflecting these by updating periodically the guidelines
❑ Focusing VNR presentation at HLPF on explanation of impact of polices and strategies, lessons learned and peer learning that can be of benefit to all countries
❑ Strengthening of interactive discussion including through providing more time for Q&A and getting recommendations
❑ Strengthening the role of HLPF as a platform for peer learning and exchanging of experiences
❑ Strengthening HLPF to serve as a broker and matchmaker for partnerships in the follow-up after the VNRs through looking at areas where countries need support

Resources

Voluntary national data base
https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/

VNR Synthesis Reports
2020 2019 2018 2017 2016

Handbook 2021 for the preparation of national voluntary reviews in English [other UN languages coming soon]

Thank you!

Q&A