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CONCEPT NOTE

REGIONAL PREPARATORY WORKSHOP FOR AFRICA VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW COUNTRIES: Strengthening Integrated and Voluntary National Review and Reporting of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063

16 April 2019

Toukbal Hall, Palais des Congrès de la Palmeraie de Marrakech, Morocco

Background

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development attaches great importance to its follow-up and review mechanisms and encourages member States to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels. These are to serve as a basis for the regular reviews by the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). As stipulated in paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda, regular reviews by the HLPF are to be voluntary, State-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and involve multiple stakeholders. These Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) aim to share experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned in accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The VNRs also seek to strengthen the policies and institutions of governments and to mobilize multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Even as the VNRs themselves facilitate exchange of experience, it is equally important that, in their preparation, the same principles are applied. To strengthen VNR preparations and contribute towards a more effective product, an exchange of experience and lessons learned among the volunteering countries in their preparation processes can also help achieve this desired end, and this includes taking stock of the institutions and stakeholders involved in the process. As such, no one should be left behind in the VNRs. This sentiment is one of the pillars of the 2030 Agenda

For the 18 countries in the Africa region preparing their 2019 VNRs, this ties into the theme of the fifth Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD) “Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality” where a pre-Forum VNR workshop will be held to exchange experiences, share lessons learned and facilitate peer learning in preparation for the 2019 HLPF. In Africa, the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and African Union Agenda 2063 provide the framework for sustainable development. There is strong synergy and a strong alignment between the two agendas including at the level of goals and targets. As such, and because they are being implemented concurrently by the member States, it is pertinent to ensure integrated implementation, follow up and review of these agendas. The preparatory workshop for

Africa VNR countries will also help provide a platform for African countries to share their experiences in the integration of both agendas in development plans and advancing progress across the goals and targets of both agendas in an integrated, balanced and mutually reinforcing manner.

Scope

The objective of the Preparatory VNR Workshop for the Africa Region VNR Countries is to strengthen preparations for the 2019 VNRs. Specifically, the workshop will:

- Provide an opportunity for the participating countries to report on the status of VNR preparations;
- Create space for peer learning and exchange of experiences and lessons learned, with a regional focus;
- Strengthen capacity of Member States to undertake integrated implementation and voluntary national reviews and Reporting in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063;
- Provide a platform to strengthen understanding on role of supreme audit institutions (SAIs) in the implementation of, follow-up to and review on the Development Goals and forge synergy between the implementation and reporting procedures of the Goals and the human rights mechanisms and governance; and
- Discuss format and expectations for presentation of VNRs reports at the HLPF in July.

The workshop will include plenary sessions, presentations and discussions, alternating with interactive and engaging group work, as well as smaller group discussions on specific topics chosen by participants. Several on-line knowledge products to support VNR preparation will be introduced. The workshop will conclude with a joint session that will facilitate dialogue and experience sharing among both former and current VNR countries along with relevant stakeholders from the region.

Key Questions

The key questions to be discussed in this 5th ARFSD pre-event are:

1. What are the successes, challenges, gaps, and lessons learned from the VNR preparation processes?
2. What are the guidelines of the report?
3. How is the integration of the SDGs with national plans and strategies being defined?
4. How are African countries promoting an integrated implementation and follow up on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063?
5. Who are the stakeholders involved in the VNR and integration analysis?
6. What are the expectations from volunteering countries?
7. What on-line knowledge products can support VNR preparation?
8. What further support do the VNR countries need for the finalization and follow up to reports?
9. How can African countries engaging with SAIs in the implementation of, follow-up and review on the Development Goals and how can they forge synergy between the implementation and reporting procedures of the Goals and the human rights mechanisms and governance?

Expected Outcomes

- Strengthened capacity of countries to participate meaningfully in the VNR process;
- Enhanced consideration of regional specificities including Agenda 2063 and human rights and governance imperatives in the VNR and reporting;
- Continuous engagement in an environment of mutual support and shared progress among the participating countries in the peer-learning exercise within the VNR networks; and
- Increased synergies including with SAIs in the implementation, follow-up and review of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 Goals.

Guidance for Participants

Participants will include representatives of governments of the member States, African regional institutions, civil society organisations, private sector, and UN system entities.

Participants should come prepared for the VNR workshop with information on successes, challenges, and gaps in the VNR reports, highlights of stakeholder mapping and engagement, institutional mapping, lessons learned, and needs for further assistance to be shared during the sessions.

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