

SDGs at the Subnational Level: Regional Governments in the Voluntary National Reviews





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Executive Summary

Building on the engagement of nrg4SD and ORU Fogar in 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, a consultation was held with few member regional governments from countries presenting Voluntary National Reviews in 2017. Considering the unique and shared competences states, regions and provinces have on the provision of basic services, territorial planning, building resilient infrastructure and more, this report emphasizes how they should be further involved in national and international efforts on the implementation, follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The realization of the 2030 Agenda will only be possible with the recognition and support to enable the full potential of regional governments' contribution.

In this regard, this report highlighted:

1 The challenge of data remains key to monitoring the SDGs progress. For producing disaggregated data and for comprehensive reviews, national efforts should support subnational statistical offices and capacities. Existing practices and institutions of regional governments

need to be taken into consideration, and support be given where those are not yet developed. This could alleviate the burden of national governments, strengthen national data systems and address inequalities within countries.

2 Although 75% of respondents confirmed to be aware of VNRs, only 50% informed to be able to input to the national reviews. Besides, responses demonstrated that understanding of the process and way of contributing is still mostly unclear. Therefore, committees, working groups and commissions should be established to coordinate subnational input, and particularly the modalities and format of the contributions need to be better clarified.

3 All regional governments consulted believe it is important they contribute to the implementation of the SDGs through their own efforts. Nevertheless, only 75% have told to already have in place initiatives and actions to discuss how to implement the SDGs in their territories. Besides, when it comes to mechanisms that could enable the proper monitoring, follow-up and review of those efforts, the percentage

drops to 58%. Therefore, it is urgent that regional governments are further supported and involved with strategies to implement the agenda and review the SDGs progress.

4 Among the countries assessed in this report, the mechanisms and practices adopted by Kenya and Belgium should be praised and considered for benchmarking to other countries. Even if countries vary in circumstances and arrangements, the regional governments of those countries showed detailed level of understanding of the process and modalities to contribute to the VNRs.

5 Towards improving understanding and enabling regional governments to play its full potential in the implementation of the SDGs, the role of national and global associations of subnational governments is fundamental. Our networks can provide regional governments with access to information and opportunities, as well as promote peer-review and collaboration for a stronger delivery of the agenda at the subnational level.

Introduction

After two years working on the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is important to observe the levels of awareness and the perception of the different actors involved. Particularly, this report emphasizes the need to include regional governments as fundamental partners to the national efforts for implementation and review of the SDGs. It is thus based on the responsibilities and ongoing actions of subnational governments to achieve these ambitious goals and targets, as well as their capacity to collect data and to further strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Therefore, this report provides an overview of the level of participation of regional governments, members of nrg4SD and ORU Fogar, in the process of elaboration of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).

Based on the perception of these member governments, and the continued engagement of our networks in this agenda, some recommendations will be put forward.

This paper serves as an assessment and position paper of our networks, based on the consultation and experience of some member regional governments, being presented as our input to the meeting of the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2017.

On another note, the present report makes specific and exclusive considerations regarding subnational governments, which refer to regions, states and provinces, in other words, the level of government immediately below the national level. Although there are many similarities among local/cities and regional governments, more than on the scale of the actions, the constitutional

competences and capacities also vary a lot. Besides, the organizations involved in this material work exclusively with regional governments, and thus the consultation was held only with those.

In sum, the report calls attention to the following aspects:

1 The level of awareness of member regional governments in regards to the VNRs, and the 2030 Agenda in general;

2 The perception and capacity of these governments to contribute to the national process of review on implementation of the SDGs.

3 How VNRs should include and foresee the participation of regional governments.

As a disclaimer, the report reflects only the view of the networks Secretariats and not necessarily from the respondents' regional governments who contributed to this process.

Global Follow-up and Review: the High-level Political Forum (HLPF)



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Back in 2015, the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, containing 17 SDGs and 169 targets. The SDGs cover a broad range of themes that aim to balance the economic, social and environmental dimensions in order to achieve sustainable development at all levels.

While it is expected to count with the contribution of all relevant actors, and at all levels, the SDGs implementation, follow-up and review are mandated to be country-driven. Particularly during the annual meetings of the HLPF, national governments can present their findings, practices and experiences through VNRs. The HLPF is the central platform for the global review of the SDGs. In addition to the VNRs, the HLPF meetings conduct thematic reviews, promoting the exchange of lessons learned, experiences and good practices towards the implementation of the SDGs. Not only from Member-States, the HLPF meetings also provide the opportunity for Major Groups and other Stakeholders to share their efforts on achieving the SDGs.

In this regard, the national reviews have the responsibility of including inputs from varied stakeholders, as stated in the document that set the SDGs, [Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#):

“We commit to fully engage in conducting regular and inclusive reviews of progress at sub-national, national, regional and global levels” (para. 77).

The relevant inclusion of regional governments in national reviews.

“Governments and public institutions will also work closely on implementation with regional and local authorities, sub-regional institutions, international institutions, academia, philanthropic organisations, volunteer groups and others (para. 45).”

It is now largely acknowledged that regional governments have a crucial role to play in the implementation of the SDGs. Considering their unique and shared competences on planning, legislation and policy-making, governments at the subnational level are directly responsible for actions required for achieving the SDGs, such as the provision of basic services, like health, education, water and sanitation. Besides, through tailored-cut projects and programs, regional governments are key to building resilient infrastructure, tackling climate change, protecting the environment, promoting gender equality and others - in a more efficient manner, as these are adapted to the territories' reality and specific circumstances.

“We also encourage member states to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels which are country-led and country-driven (para 79).”

Therefore, national governments should reflect the localization of the SDGs in any plans or strategies developed, in terms of considering the implementation at the subnational level, in close collaboration with local and regional governments. Likewise, it is fundamental that national follow-up and reviews are built on the reports and inputs from the subnational level. Given the adequate support and capacity building, regional governments can provide relevant data and consistent contributions to improve the experience of national reviews.

Moreover, it should be taken into consideration that many regional governments have already in place their own sustainable development strategies and action plans, and in many cases, indicators and monitoring frameworks to assess the progress of these policies. Hence, and towards achieving the most efficient implementation efforts, the national reviews should foster improved interaction and multilevel coordination among the different levels of government.

Regional governments can accelerate implementation, raise the ambition and alleviate the burden of national governments, especially when it comes to follow-up and review. Therefore, a more decentralized decision-making process led by national governments could amplify the capacities of subnational levels to implement and achieve the SDGs and therefore boost the progress of national implementation.

The consultation process

The report builds on the continued participation of nrg4SD and ORU Fogar in the UN agenda on sustainable development, especially since the Rio+20 Conference, and the following negotiations towards the adoption of the SDGs.

For the elaboration of this paper, a consultation was targeted to member regional governments from the 44 countries presenting voluntary national reviews during the 2017 HLPF. There were 12 total respondents, 11 regional governments and one national association of regional governments, spanning from 8 of the 44 volunteer countries.

Namely, the respondents were the following: Goiás, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Flanders (Belgium), North Sumatra (Indonesia), Aichi (Japan),

Chaco, Buenos Aires and Center provinces (Argentina), Rivera (Uruguay), O'Higgins (Chile), and the Council of Governors (Kenya).

The consultation had an informal character, as the responses are not to be considered official submissions from the regional governments, which would require a much more exhaustive bureaucratic process and the approval of pertinent high-level authorities. Rather, the consultation sought the input and perceptions from the departments directly responsible and involved with the sustainable development efforts on the ground.

The consultation form to collect responses included 10 questions, requesting regions to inform of (i) their awareness and

opportunities to input on the national review processes, (ii) their assessment of the national review process and concrete suggestions, as well as (iii) information on their own efforts on the implementation and follow-up of the SDGs.

The questionnaire was open from mid-April to the end of May, 2017, and in some cases bilateral clarifications were required from respondents. The questionnaire was made available in both English and Spanish. Besides, this consultation has an intentional limited reach, pursued through direct contact with member regions of nrg4SD and ORU Fogar from countries presenting VNRs in 2017. An engagement letter from nrg4SD and ORU Fogar Presidents supported the contact with these regions.

BOX 1 – Data in the SDGs follow-up and review

Data and indicators are a fundamental aspect of monitoring and reviewing the SDGs progress. With that in mind, the UN Statistical Commission developed a [global indicators framework](#), which was finally adopted in 2017.

Based on these indicators the UN Secretary General prepared the 2017 [SDGs Progress Report](#), using data provided by countries, when and where available. The report brings interesting information on the situation of the 17 SDGs globally, and it also sheds light to the fact that many national governments still need to improve their statistical systems, including in terms of collection and availability of data.

Beyond the agreed global indicators, each country has the flexibility to use and produce data according to their specific circumstances and practices with data. Besides, national governments may choose which and if indicators and statistical data would be included in the respective VNRs; although it would be logical and preferable to do so.

Towards improving national data collection and analysis, it must be recognized that some regional governments have already installed efforts and institutions to collect and analyze data and this should be incorporated and considered into the national data.

For example, the regional governments of São Paulo and Catalonia have their own statistical offices, which should now contribute to the monitoring of the SDGs implementation. Other governments as Flanders, Wales, Quebec, have comprehensive Sustainable Development strategies or plans. As these turn to adjust existing strategies as to also reflect the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, most already have well defined indicators and processes to collect data, which would be useful to add, complete and validate national data.

For a proper monitoring of the SDGs, a lot of emphasis is placed on the need to collect and use disaggregated data, especially by sectors, gender, age, ethnicity, and others; always aiming to have a clear picture of the most vulnerable ones. At the same time, **it should be highlighted the need to have territorially disaggregated data, particularly in terms of creating data of the different territories that compose each country, and in close collaboration and coordination with regional governments.**

Progress on the SDGs can be uneven within countries, and hence the SDG 10 “Reduce inequality within and among countries”. In this regard, a coordinated involvement of subnational governments in national processes could enable tracking those persistent inequalities, and tackle them at the most effective level.

While countries work to modernize and strengthen the statistical and monitoring systems around the SDGs, it is thus crucial that these efforts consider ways of supporting and building capacities of regional governments to engage and contribute to this endeavor. Whether through guidelines, specific methodologies or institutions and committees for coordination, it would be important to pursue greater alignment and a comparison of subnational data to input to national reviews.

For more information on the topic of data and the engagement of regional governments, including examples of best-practices of subnational statistical offices, please check nrg4SD paper: [The Role of Regional Governments in the Monitoring of SDGs](#).

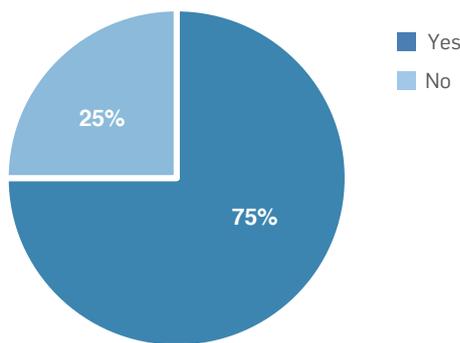
Analysis of regional governments' perceptions and responses

Awareness and inclusion of regional governments in VNRs

In response to the questions if regions knew their countries were to conduct reviews and present VNRs in the 2017 HLPF, most of the regions (75%) were aware that their countries were engaging VNRs (Figure 1), only three respondents mentioned not be aware.

Figure 1. Regional governments awareness of respective countries VNRs

Were you aware your country is presenting a Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs during the 2017 High-level Political Forum?



In this point, however, it should also be highlighted that these governments are already engaged in our global networks, which provide and facilitate timely information from the global process, including on the countries presenting VNRs each year. As the 2030 Agenda is a continued process, member regions have been participating in the global discussions for some time. However, this should lead to the consideration that many regional governments do not count with developed international departments or presence, and thus they rely mostly on the information received by the national governments, if any.

Also on this point, all respondents replied to believe their government should be able to contribute to the national reviews on the SDGs implementation. Therefore, it is clear the necessity of improving the communication channels between both the national and subnational governments and, within the second one, among the different departments, in order to ensure the engagement of all parties involved.

Another interesting element of this segment was how some governments in their responses to the consultation mentioned the

Climate Change agenda, and the mechanisms national governments have to collect inputs from regional governments, especially towards UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COPs). This is a common aspect, as subnational governments can have a combined approach to many of the “global agendas”, and especially those coming from the UN.

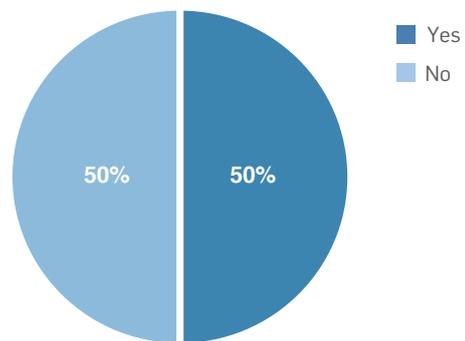
The government of North Sumatra, for instance, mentioned that the national process for the review of the SDGs to be very broad and comprehensive, both in terms of thematic areas, as well as the structures for the awareness and participation of subnational actors. Besides, the Indonesian province mentioned their very developed and integrated framework for the monitoring and review of efforts to fight climate change. These were said to follow an adequate coordination with the national government, and thus should also inspire and contribute to the review of the SDGs.

Inputting into the VNRs

Only half of the regions informed they had the opportunity to actually input into the process of elaboration of the national report (Figure 2). Regions were also asked to briefly explain how they were able to contribute.

Figure 2. Possibility to contribute to the VNR

Has your region had the opportunity to contribute to the National review?



Under this point, it is interesting to notice that in some cases where we had more than one response from the same country, the responses were diverse, showing different perceptions from governments in a same country. Particularly, this happened with respondents from Brazil and Argentina.

BOX 2. Brazilian National Commission – Participation and collaboration of regional governments

Throughout the process to define and adopt the SDGs, Brazil was considered an important supporter of the engagement and inclusion of the civil society, and especially of subnational governments. With that in mind, for the coordination of the national efforts, the National Commission for the Sustainable Development Goals was created, through Decree No. 8,892, on October 27th, 2016. This advisory body has representatives from different stakeholder sectors, including regional governments, represented by the Brazilian Association of State Environmental Entities (ABEMA), a member of nrg4SD.

Respondent regional governments informed that meetings or activities in the context of the Commission were still to be conveyed. However, the Brazilian VNR report includes a section dedicated to the dissemination of efforts of regional governments, as to encourage those to pursue their own efforts around the SDGs.

In the National Commission, the ABEMA is represented by both the governments of Goiás and São Paulo, who have contributed to this consultation. It would thus be relevant to emphasize the interesting actions that these governments have undertaken for the implementation of the SDGs in their territories.

The São Paulo State Government has made progressive efforts in order to internalize the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Already in 2015, the government established a working group to develop a SDGs implementation strategy. This working group, which is composed by several of the thematic departments and secretariats of the government, organized activities to promote the understanding on the SDGs, and its implications on their territory, with the support of UNDP Brazil. With a view to defining the gaps, priorities and long-term actions, the state is also mobilizing its subnational statistical office (SEADE), as to produce data and build the internal capacities of the government agents.

On the other hand, the State of Goiás developed a pilot project to support and establish a plan to implement the SDGs in the municipality of Alto Paraíso. With the collaboration of the national government and especially of the National Federation of Mayors, initial activities and workshops have already been organized to crosscheck the ongoing actions in city and to identify the most adequate approach to incorporate the SDGs. Initiatives like this confirm the strong enabling character regional governments may have to collaborate and support with local governments.

The respondents from Brazil mentioned the existence of a National Commission on the SDGs as a good practice, in which they had been invited to designate representatives. Nevertheless, it was though informed this Commission had not yet organized any meetings or processes to collect inputs. For that reason, the government of São Paulo replied they did not have the opportunity to contribute to the national review.

At the same time, the respondent from Goiás replied to be in contact with the national government, specifically to inform of their implementation efforts. As the state was involved in a collaboration with the national government to support cities on the implementation of the SDGs, it was Goiás's perception they were contributing to the national review, as this information could be included in the VNR (see box 2 for more details on the case of Brazil and its respondent regional government).

In regards to the mechanisms for regional governments to input, as well as the level of inclusiveness in the VNR processes, the responses of Flanders and the Council of Governors of Kenya are considered the best practices identified. Especially considering their detailed understanding and the good structure of the national mechanisms in place, the practices adopted by the governments of Kenya and Belgium should be considered by

other countries (more information on those can be found on the boxes 3 and 4, respectively).

Besides, it should be mentioned that the government of Aichi, in Japan, informed that although the individual provincial government was not invited to provide inputs, the Japan guiding principles for the SDGs implementation did recognize the importance of involving regional governments, and that the National Association of Governors could contribute. Moreover, it was informed that this information was only obtained after receiving our consultation, and thus demonstrates that efforts like this report also have an important informative facet.

Implementation, follow-up and review by regional governments

When asked about their own efforts towards the implementation of the SDGs, 75% of the respondents replied they have their own plans, strategies and initiatives (Figure 3). At the same time, all of them recognized the importance of the agenda and that they should be contributing to its implementation.

BOX 3. Inclusive Kenyan VNR – the Council of Governors

In 2010 Kenya has adopted a new Constitution, which is acknowledged for promoting major changes in the country's organization. Particularly when it comes to regional governments, the 2010 constitution attributes responsibilities and competences to the 47 counties, especially in terms of developing specific economic and social plans for each subnational territory, as well as on the provision of basic services and the development of agriculture.

The home country of the UN Ambassador Macharia Kamau - who was considered a crucial actor for the approval of the SDGs – has developed a very comprehensive and inclusive framework to define national actions for implementation, follow-up and review, fully recognizing the importance of localizing the SDGs. For preparing the VNR and to oversee the 2030 Agenda implementation, Kenya established the Inter-Agency Technical Committee, to coordinate and collect inputs from subnational stakeholders, including from the county governments.

The contributions from the county governments were officially facilitated by the Council of Governors (CoG). Provided guidelines by the national government, the CoG prepared a specific template to collect and organize the input from counties in a report, in close collaboration with the counties' directors of planning and economic affairs. The report from CoG included diverse relevant information, as the (i) the counties' progress in implementation of SDGs, including statistics, when available; (ii) measures planned for the attainment of SDGs; (iii) areas for cooperation between counties and national government, and between county to county; (iv) best practices, lessons learned, emerging issues and areas that support was required; among others.

The CoG and the counties are mentioned several times in the Kenya VNR. Besides, the national government also engages the CoG in capacity building activities on the SDGs, especially as these will then promote training with county officials – the training of trainers -, ensuring the SDGs will trickle down to actions on the ground.

As a result of this fruitful collaboration, the constitutional planning instrument of counties, the County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) are not only aligned to the national priorities, but also make direct reference and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

Moreover, the Kenyan national government works to strengthen its statistical system, as to reflect the global indicators framework, but adapted and tailored-cut to the national circumstances. In this regard, the CoG already anticipates and wants to build its capacities to use the national indicators and promote the collection of disaggregated data in the county governments.

However, when it came to the question on whether the regional government had in place any kind of assessment or review, the percentage dropped to 58% (Figure 4).

Figure 3. Own efforts to implement the SDGs

Is your region involved with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs?

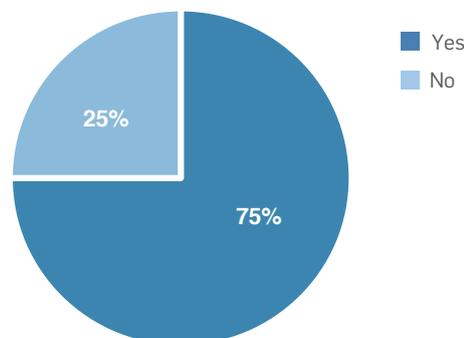
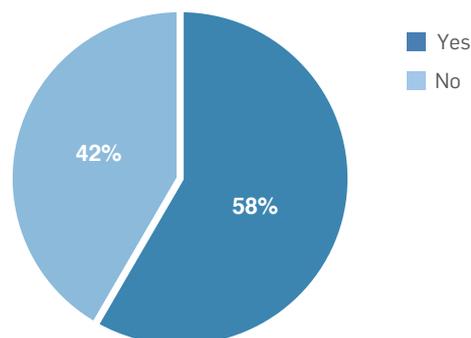


Figure 4. Own efforts on follow-up and review

Does your region carry any assessments or reviews of its own efforts towards the achievement of the SDGs?



These indicate two relevant points: that many are still in the initial steps to pursue the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in their territories; and that some also have ongoing efforts and initiatives to pursue the follow-up and review of the SDGs, which could easily be used to complement and strengthen the national reviews.

Regional governments bring a territorial approach to the SDGs implementation, which would be powerful enabler for the full realization of the agenda. Considering its competences on planning, legislation, policy making and implementation, regional governments can help build and address the linkages between urban and rural areas, and bring a holistic perspective of how the different areas, infrastructure and services should be installed to attend the needs of the territory.

Besides, it should also be reminded that the SDGs are a global agenda and its subnational implementation needs to take into account previous existing efforts, strategies and plans in regional governments. The respondent provinces in Argentina offer an interesting example of how existing structures could be used to help the SDGs implementation. More specifically, the province of Buenos Aires counts with the Provincial Body for Sustainable

Development and others working on sustainability and social affairs, which are already in coordination with national efforts, especially through its participation in the National Sustainable Development Council.

Particularly in regards to the good experiences of subnational implementation, there are many other examples that could be mentioned, although not included as respondents,

since they are not coming from VNR countries in 2017. Just to mention a few among our member regional governments, the government of Wales (United Kingdom), for example, took the lead as the first government ever to commit to the SDGs implementation through legal enforcement, by linking it in Well Being of Future Generations Act.

Besides, the governments of Catalonia and Valencia (Spain) have put in practice

interesting modalities of assessing existing efforts, and defining the gaps and needs to achieve the SDGs in their territories. Moreover, governments such as Azuay (Ecuador) and the Western Province (Sri Lanka) have already started aligning the government priorities with the SDGs, as well as specific projects for mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda.

Conclusions & recommendations

Improving awareness on the VNRs and the 2030 Agenda

Although it was identified that many governments knew their countries would present VNRs, it is highlighted the level of awareness and communication methods need to be improved. Especially to provide subnational governments with the opportunity to weigh in their efforts and collaborate with the national review process. In order for a more integrated process, regional governments need to be better informed about the specific mechanisms in place for the national reviews, and how exactly to contribute and input. In this regard, roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined, so regional governments may understand exactly what is expected from them, and how their contributions would be reflected in the VNR report.

1 National governments should promote engagement campaigns and provide clear information for regional governments on how to participate in the VNRs.

2 National governments should partner up with regional governments to organize informative sessions, workshops and activities. These should include not only precisions on how to participate in the national reviews, but also to promote understanding of the SDGs, their importance and how they should be implemented. Besides, these should include representatives of the civil society and other subnational stakeholders.

3 Regional governments should be encouraged to join and be active in national and international networks and associations, as they play a crucial role in

the dissemination of the 2030 Agenda; to facilitate multilevel communication, and access to information, opportunities and possibilities in contributing to national and global processes.

4 National governments should support subnational governments in establishing international departments, as well as in joining delegations to UN Conferences and events. In general the challenge of internationalization of subnational governments remains key, and would enable a more inclusive global framework, improved access to information and a legitimate process.

Strengthening multilevel coordination and vertical integration

National governments should also revisit the arrangements and mechanisms of coordination with regional governments, especially towards more inclusive and efficient follow-up and review practices, and thus more comprehensive and inclusive VNRs. In order to promote ownership and improve the delivery of the SDGs in countries, national review processes should be permanent and have a bottom-up approach, based on the collaboration and inputs from subnational governments.

This report also demonstrates that the level of inclusion of regional governments in VNR builds on the existing relation these have with national governments. Where levels of decentralization are higher, or functional structures for multilevel dialogue are in place, it is expected regional governments are better included and reflected in national efforts.

1 Mechanisms established to prepare

VNRs, as national commissions, committees and others, should expressly include representatives from regional governments. Particularly these could be facilitated by national associations of regional governments. Besides, these mechanisms need to be active and give the opportunity for regional governments to provide inputs and reports on their own progress around the SDGs

2 As national reports builds on subnational inputs, the latter could follow specific guidelines, templates and even indicators previously agreed with the central governments. As to enable comparability and to facilitate the process of compiling subnational data, national governments should organize capacity building activities and provide clear instructions on how the subnational contribution should be shaped.

3 National processes of follow-up and review should be linked to permanent and inclusive mechanisms for implementation of the SDGs, also to enable the validation of national reports, especially data referring to the subnational territories. This process should include periodic reviews beyond the VNR presentations, and should be connected to National Sustainable Development Councils and other similar mechanisms.

4 National governments should enable regional governments as catalysts for dialogue in their territories, especially with the respective local and city governments. In order to increase the reach of the national review efforts, as well as implementation, countries should partner up with its regional governments, in organizing workshops, capacity building and other activities, also involving civil society and other stakeholders.

BOX 4. Vertical integration in Belgium – federative model for implementing and reviewing the SDGs

Belgium has a very unique model of inclusion of its three regional governments in its global and national agendas. As a federal state, the national government is in close coordination with the regional governments, also engaging their representatives in its diplomacy and official global delegations.

Accordingly, the country fully recognized the need to receive the contribution of the regional governments, as to prepare a more comprehensive picture of the Belgium situation, which would be reported in its VNR.

Through official interactions with the federal government, the subnational governments had the opportunity to share its practices, challenges and plans on the SDGs, which were facilitated by a political steering committee. During these sessions, the federal government and subnational entities jointly decided what information would be finally included in the VNRs, which thus reflect the experiences of the Belgium regional governments.

The government of Flanders, also nrg4SD President for the North, has a very comprehensive Sustainable Development strategy, called “Vision 2050”. The strategy can be considered the main mechanism to pursue the 2030 Agenda in the Flemish territory. It counts with a governance system that gathers all relevant Flemish Ministries and thematic departments, in respect to the integrated nature of Sustainable Development. On top of that, the Flemish Strategy already includes indicators, which will be particularly useful for monitoring their progress on the SDGs.

The example of Flanders and Belgium are thus an especially interesting case of vertical integration. Through a structure multilevel coordination and collaboration, the Flemish efforts, progress and difficulties around the SDGs have been addressed in the country’s VNR. This structure also enables a continued involvement with the federal efforts, which are then expected to achieve much more efficient and cohesive results.

Final remarks and next steps

While this report brings important perceptions on the level of awareness and inclusion of regional governments in the process of national reviews on the SDGs, it is only an initial step towards making the VNRs’ process more inclusive. Besides, the task of strengthening the delivery of the 2030 Agenda by subnational governments is a much more complex, and also requires a continued discussion and exchange of experiences.

This report thus joins a broader process to disseminate and engage regional governments with the SDGs. In this regard, we believe it is the role of our global networks to raise awareness of the agenda and ensure an environment for sharing and exchanging ideas and experiences. In this regard, it should be emphasized the power of peer-review, in enabling regional governments to effectively

pursue the implementation of the SDGs in their territories.

For instance, the study on the section 4.3, in regards to the own implementation efforts of regional governments, is something that should be further developed, without limitation as whether or not they are coming from VNR countries. Other governments barely mentioned in this report, as Catalonia, Valencia, Wales, Quebec, Azuay, Western Province and many other active members of our networks are also undertaking initiatives and partnerships where the implementation of SDGs is concerned. Building on the materials already collected, and new ones, the efforts of regional governments should and will be the target of future studies and publications.

Based on the above, the role of nrg4SD

and ORU Fogar will support all member regions, regardless of the existence of international departments, or in the case there is inefficient communication with upper level of government, and ensure their involvement in all the international processes related to the Agenda 2030. Hence, our networks will continue to work closely with regional governments and other partners, as to strengthen the participation and engagement in this agenda.

With this in mind, our networks are looking to collaborate with international organizations and initiatives to further support the SDGs in regional governments. For example, we are currently working with UNDP ART to further discuss the specificities of the 2030 Agenda in subnational territories.

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Our special thanks to the regions that took the time to reply the questionnaire, which enabled the elaboration of this report.

The information collected will also support additional materials on the continued engagement of our networks in the process of SDGs implementation.

About nrg4SD



The [Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development - nrg4SD](#) - was established in 2002, and currently has over 50 members from 30 countries in four continents. The Network acts in three main fields: sustainable development, biodiversity and climate change; and has two main working lines: on the one hand, it seeks to convey a common voice of regional governments at a global level, especially following the UN agendas on these three thematic areas; on the other hand, it promotes cooperation among regional governments from across the world to ensure the engagement and implementation of these agendas, fostering the exchange of information, knowhow and best practices. In the field of Sustainable Development, nrg4SD acts as the Organizing Partner of the Local Authorities Major Group, and contributed to the whole intergovernmental process, bringing the perspective of subnational government. Since the approval of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, nrg4SD works with members to support the subnational implementation of the SDGs, and to encourage their engagement in national processes of implementation, follow-up and review.

nrg4sd.org | @nrg4SD

About ORU Fogar



The [United Regions Organization / Global Forum of Regional Associations \(ORU Fogar\)](#) brings together regions from all over the world acting as their voice before the international organizations, promoting a global policy of balanced development and territorial cohesion. Its main objective is to seek the intermediate governments' recognition as major players in the global governance. It defends that the decentralization of the national states' power towards other actors accelerates development; consequently fostering democracy by the proximity between these new actors and the citizens. ORU Fogar promotes a model based on a strong regional government, with capabilities and legally recognized powers and budgets. The organization has regional governments and regional networks from all five continents as members.

regionsunies-fogar.org | @ORUFOGAR



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