

Voluntary Reporting on SDGs and Agenda 2063 for the 2025 HLPF: Peer-Learning Exercise between African countries

AFRICAN PEER REVIEW MECHANISM (APRM)



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Mechanism

An Institution of the

**African
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**HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

Background and Rationale

The African Peer Review Mechanism is a pioneering AU- led Mechanism dedicated to promoting Good Governance, rule of law and democracy on the African continent. Since 2017, the Heads of State designated APRM to play a role in enhancing national governance reporting along with supporting African countries in monitoring and evaluating Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 in tandem.

The APRM, in collaboration with the AU Commission, UN DESA, AUDA-NEPAD, UNDP- Addis Ababa Regional office and other organs have been working jointly to support African countries in enhancing reporting on both agendas. Over the past five years, the APRM established [APRM Platform for VNRs and Agenda 2063 domestication in Africa](#) which trained over 700 national experts and civil servants from 45 African countries involved in the planning , monitoring and evaluation of SDGs and Agenda 2063. The training took place through continental technical workshops in Djibouti, Addis Ababa, Accra, Kigali, Durban, Cape Town Abuja, Windhoek, Nairobi, and Johannesburg.

With less than five years to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eight years in pursuant of the second-ten implementation plan (STYIP) of Agenda 2063, African countries emphasised visible political commitment to both agendas. Throughout the past five years, all 54 African States have undertaken at least one voluntary review on SDGs while more than thirty countries reported once on Agenda 2063.

Voluntary national reviews (VNRs) are complemented by a sub-national process which can be aligned with

the APRM National Governance processes. Reporting voluntary at the provincial, district and municipal levels contributes significantly to promoting citizen-centric approach in the reporting process and hence enhancing national planning at sub-national levels and align budget with prior planning programs.

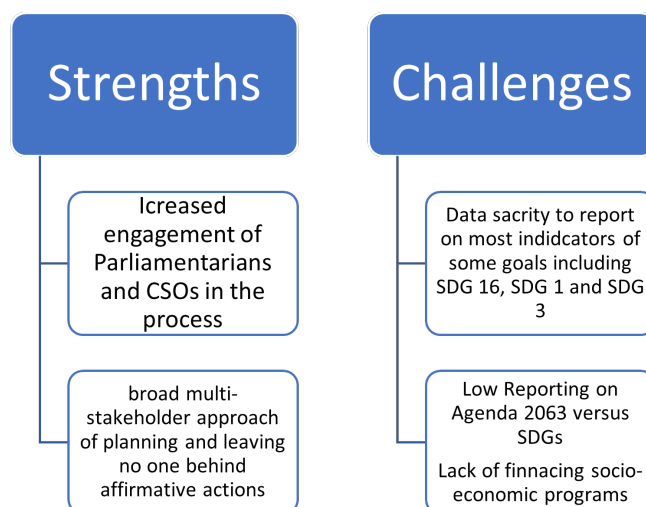
Africa at the HLPF 2025 and Peer-learning between African countries

- In 2025, ten African countries committed to report for the second or third time in the VNR process for the meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development to be held in July 2025. They are equally active members of the APRM governance processes and continental initiatives. Three countries are conducting their second review (Angola; Seychelles and South Africa) and seven are conducting their third review.
- In June 2025, the APRM supported the third round of validation of the 2nd VNR of South Africa in collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator Office and the Pan-African Parliament.
- To encourage knowledge sharing between AU member states, African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) provided a collaborative, peer learning platform for African countries preparing Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) for the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). The Platform offered two virtual consultations with the participation of (100) experts and representatives of civil society and youth to take stoke of current efforts exerted by the African countries which are planning to present voluntarily on the SDGs progress on certain goals and their peer-goals of Agenda 2063 during the HLPF 18-24 July 2025.

Insights from the sessions

*APRM: Ms. Sara Hamouda, Senior Continental Governance Officer

- The APRM representative displayed latest developments on the agenda 2063 progress and newly adopted core indicators framework of Agenda 2063 along with the domestication guidelines of Agenda 2063. It also presents reforms of the VNR process to enhance inclusivity of youth and civil society in accelerating innovative solutions and local initiatives to promote SDGs and Agenda 2063.
- This session focused specifically on governance, Agenda 2063, and the integration of global and continental development agendas. It aimed to foster collective dialogue on good governance, institutional effectiveness, and implementation methodologies aligned with both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063.
- The gathering reinforced Africa's shared commitment to transparency, mutual accountability, and regional integration by enabling countries to exchange experiences and lessons learned. As emphasized during the opening remarks, this process is more than a reporting mechanism it's a tool for fostering greater ownership, policy coherence, and a unified African governance architecture.
- The platform gave participating nations the opportunity to engage in peer learning through presentations, focused group discussions, and a review of progress aligned with the HLPF's annual theme.
- Special attention was given to SDG 16, which underscores the importance of peace, justice, and strong institutions areas closely aligned with the APRM's mandate. The session also spotlighted challenges in implementation, including data availability and alignment across national and regional frameworks, while encouraging the use of modern monitoring and evaluation tools to support coherent reporting. In essence, this convening offered a regional space to amplify African perspectives, enhance integrated planning, and strengthen the continent's readiness to deliver comprehensive and impactful VNRs.



- While 54 African countries have reported on the SDGs at least once, Agenda 2063 reporting remains comparatively low. The APRM noted trends such as increasing engagement of parliamentarians in the VNR process, growing local SDG initiatives, and broader use of multi-stakeholder consultations. Countries are now expected to demonstrate ownership and integration of Agenda 2030 within national development plans and to reflect how they are ensuring no one is left behind.
- The APRM also supports the development of an updated indicator framework, aiming to align reporting for both agendas 70% of Agenda 2063 indicators already correspond with SDG targets. Special attention is given to SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions) and "Moonshot 3" of Agenda 2063, which focuses on responsive public institutions. These are foundational for empowering youth, women, and children, and are considered enablers for achieving broader sustainable development goals.
- Looking ahead, the APRM emphasizes the importance of integrated governance ecosystems, innovative reporting tools, and citizen satisfaction with public service delivery all crucial for preparing credible, inclusive, and impactful VNRs that reflect Africa's governance priorities and development ambitions.

NIGERIA

Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), **Dr. Bala Yusuf Yunusa**, Special Advisor to the SSAP.

- Nigeria's experience for the third VNR preparations and consolidation underscored a strategic, inclusive, and data-driven approach to SDG implementation and reporting. Anchored within the Presidency, the institutional framework enables horizontal and vertical governance alignment across the nation's vast landscape, while deliberately integrating the United Nations' Agenda 2030 with the African Union's Agenda 2063.
- Nigeria's VNR journey reflects a clear evolution: the first review in 2017 focused on setting up institutional and legal foundations; the second, in 2020, adopted a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, even amid the COVID-19 pandemic; and the 2025 review, building on lessons learned, prioritizes participatory, evidence-based reporting through an inclusive national co-working group. This group includes government agencies, the private sector, academia, civil society, youth, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens, collectively guiding the process, validating findings, and ensuring wide representation.
- To capture grassroots perspectives, six regional consultations were held across Nigeria's geopolitical zones between February and March 2025, supplemented by dedicated engagements with persons living with disabilities and with youth and children co-led with UNICEF and complemented by an online survey. These insights informed a comprehensive SDG Progress Report (2024), which fed into the VNR drafting process. Internationally, Nigeria took part in bilateral peer reviews with Finland and joined peer learning cohorts alongside countries such as Germany, South Africa, and Malaysia, exchanging knowledge and good practices. The effort was tracked through a robust activity matrix, culminating in the submission of the final VNR report to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in July 2025, with audiovisual materials to follow.

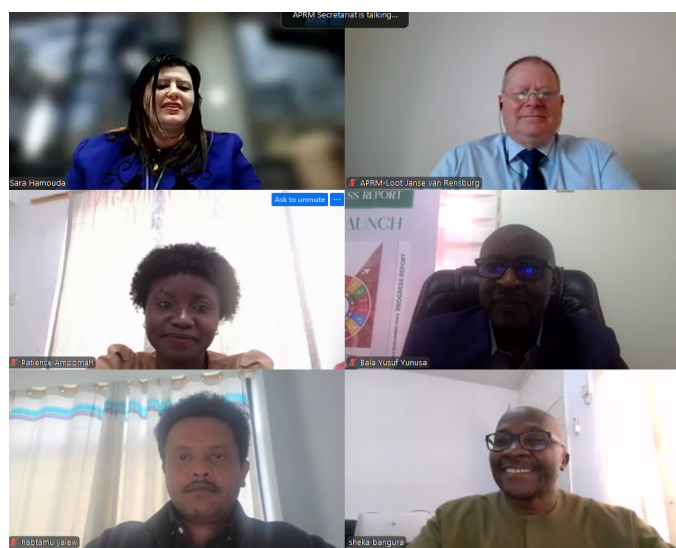


Figure 1 Peer-Learning between African countries-19 June 2025

The 2025 report is themed "A Whole-of-Society Perspective on the SDGs," reflecting Nigeria's commitment to deepening SDG localization and ensuring that development is people-driven, inclusive, and aligned with both continental and global aspirations.

GHANA

National Development Planning Commission (NDPC): **Ms. Patience Ampomah**, Senior Planning Expert

Ghana's 2025 Voluntary National Review (VNR) presentation highlights its structured, inclusive, and forward-looking approach to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation, rooted in lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Coordination of the SDGs is led by the National Development Planning Commission, which ensures alignment with long-term national plans. Drawing from Nigeria's presentation, Ghana acknowledged opportunities for peer learning, particularly in the areas of institutional design and multi-stakeholder engagement. Ghana has built a strong SDG architecture that includes an SDG Advisory Unit, a high-level ministerial oversight committee, an implementation coordinating body chaired by the Commission, and a technical committee made up of ministries and agencies complemented by a Civil Society Platform to ensure inclusivity.

Ghana emphasized a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, supported by a dedicated stakeholder team. The 2025 VNR focused on assessing progress, sharing success stories and challenges, and accelerating delivery of the SDGs. Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), introduced in 2020, were central to this year's process, enabling sub-national actors to influence national reporting through locally grounded insights. Ghana also forecasted which SDG targets could realistically be achieved in the next five years, using the IPRT alignment tool to determine that current policies align 76.55% with the SDGs and 69.45% with Agenda 2063. The next national development plan, covering 2026 to 2029, is already in preparation.

The 2025 VNR emphasizes five core areas: the Six Transitions (including food systems, energy access, education, digital inclusion, jobs/social protection, and climate action); specific SDG targets (such as 4.1, 6.2, 7.1, 8.5, and 16.6); expanded local reviews; key priority goals (SDGs 3, 5, 8, 14, and 17); and Ghana's commitment to the UN's Pact for the Future. Results include expanding SDG indicators from 66 to 102, hosting four side events, improving coordination among CSOs and development partners, and strengthening statistics and reporting. Consultations were held with diverse stakeholders, including youth and private sector actors and a U-Report poll, supported by UNICEF, gathered youth perspectives on SDG gaps.

Ghana benefited from the APRM processes along with the APRM- UNDESA Continental workshops on SDGs institutional capacity building. It ensures alignment with UNDESA guidelines and reported meeting all preparatory milestones, submitting its main messages on 12 April 2025 and its VNR on 17 June 2025, with the final report set to launch on 8 July 2025. While the report process demonstrated strengths in collaboration, demand-driven engagement, and technical support, challenges included delays in budget disbursement, limited resources due to shifting donor commitments, and persistent data gaps. Overall, Ghana's VNR reflects a commitment to data-driven, participatory, and internationally connected development planning, with clear lessons learned to inform future progress.

SIERRA LEONE

Ministry of Planning and Economic Development: Dr. Sheka Bangura, Advisor and Head of SDGs/Agenda 2063 program

Sierra Leone's presentation of its Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) reflects a consistent, integrated, and inclusive approach to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation, underscored by a commitment to national planning, youth engagement, and institutional collaboration. Having presented four VNRs three times (in 2016, 2019, 2021, and 2024), Sierra Leone positions itself as a proactive participant in global and continental development frameworks.

Coordination of the SDGs, Agenda 2063, and the VNR process is led by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, with all frameworks deeply embedded in the national development plan. Reporting is supported by strong partnerships with civil society organizations, NGOs, UNDP, and UNICEF, while tools like U-Report offer a youth-centred perspective particularly on SDG 4 (education).

Sierra Leone's data ecosystem blends government-led systems with shadow reports from NGOs and CSOs, whose structures extend to the grassroots. The country draws heavily from annual progress and sector reports and incorporates findings from the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and academic and private sector contributions. Central to its strategy is the "National SDG Accelerator" program, which prioritizes SDG 4 and SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions), viewed as foundational to achieving broader development outcomes.

Sierra Leone has also conducted three Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) focused on local resource mobilization, especially within the blue economy space. These local efforts are tightly linked to the district development plans and Agenda 2063 commitments, which Sierra Leone has actively reported on since 2017.

To enhance planning and reporting, the country employs the IPRT data template and integrates it into broader policy cycles. Sierra Leone has also engaged in global peer platforms and was invited to Nairobi to contribute to resource mobilization strategies. With resource constraints posing a major

hurdle, Sierra Leone is actively exploring innovative financing strategies, particularly aligned with SDG 17 (partnerships). The country is slated to participate in the 4th Financing for Development (FfD) Conference in Spain, where it will host a side event on managing its mineral wealth.

Data quality remains a persistent challenge; however, Sierra Leone is addressing this through partnerships under the UN's "Power of Data" initiative and ongoing collaboration with international agencies, including UNICEF and UNDP. Overall, Sierra Leone's VNR experience demonstrates a strong commitment to systemic integration, community involvement, and sustainable transformation driven by evidence and collaboration.

ESWATINI

Ministry of Economic Planning and Development:
Ms. Nonhlanhla B. Shongwe, Senior Economist

Eswatini's 2025 Voluntary National Review (VNR) marks its third national SDG report, and notably, its most locally grounded yet. Building on the first two VNRs which included elements of Agenda 2063 this report introduces sub-national insights for the first time through Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) conducted across seven municipalities: Ezulwini, Manzini, Matsapha, Mbabane, Ngwenya, Nhlangano, and Siteki. This integrated approach aligns national monitoring with local realities and reflects Eswatini's commitment to strengthening vertical and horizontal coherence in its SDG delivery.

Eswatini submitted its VNR by the June 17 2025, alongside finalized video and statement components. Progress on SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) includes a significant drop in under-five mortality from 104 to 41 per 100,000 live births mainly due to improvements in skilled health personnel coverage. Rates of HIV, TB, and malaria have also declined. However, rising non-communicable diseases (NCDs) now pose a growing challenge. Under SDG 5 (Gender Equality), notable gains include an increase in women's parliamentary representation from 22% (2018) to 29% (2023) and the appointment of the country's second female Deputy Prime Minister. Yet, gender-based violence remains a serious concern, with one in three girls experiencing abuse before age 18.

- For SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), GDP growth averaged 2.8% between 2016 and 2024. Youth unemployment dropped modestly, and the female employment rate rose from 29.8% in 2021 to 42% in 2023. The NEET rate (youth not in education, employment, or training) declined from 52% (2016) to 36.7% (2023).
- Under SDG 14 (Life Below Water), Eswatini strengthened fishery regulations and maintained low pollution levels in line with EPA standards.
- On SDG 17 (Partnerships), although Official Development Assistance (ODA) declined from \$250 million in 2016 to \$210 million in 2024, strategic partnerships helped expand infrastructure, agriculture, and health systems.

What sets Eswatini apart is its integrated VNR-VLR process, where planning, capacity building, data monitoring, and stakeholder engagement occurred concurrently. This approach fostered stronger collaboration across ministries, regional and local governments, civil society, traditional leaders, and groups such as youth, women, and persons with disabilities. Eswatini sees this model not only as a national innovation but as a potential blueprint for peer learning and regional collaboration, particularly with the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). Suggested areas for cooperation include tailored technical assistance, policy alignment tools, and capacity-building workshops focused on SDG and Agenda 2063 reporting.

Overall, Eswatini's 2025 VNR underscores a strong institutional commitment to inclusive, localized, and integrated SDG implementation anchored in evidence, partnerships, and policy coherence.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA): Mr. John Solan

Representing the Executive Secretary, Mr. Claver Gatete, Sloan congratulated the ten African countries presenting VNRs this year, emphasizing the importance of these detailed preparatory discussions leading up to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). He celebrated efforts by countries like Eswatini to align both the SDGs and Agenda 2063 with national and local priorities, encouraging more nations to do the same.

Recognizing the complexity of multiple reporting layers global, regional, national, Sloan highlighted that the purpose of these frameworks is to simplify planning, budgeting, and monitoring by linking efforts across society. UNECA, in collaboration with the African Union and UN partners, supports this integration through tools such as the Integrated Planning and Reporting Toolkit (IPRT), guidelines on SDG accelerators and interlinkages, localization toolkits, and Voluntary Local Review (VLR) frameworks. These resources aim to identify synergies where investments in select goals can catalyse broader progress.

UNECA's primary contribution, however, lies in facilitating peer learning platforms that help countries exchange best practices and demonstrate Africa's success stories especially crucial with only five years left to meet the 2030 targets. Through coordinated collaboration with the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), UNDESA, and other global partners, UNECA promotes consistency in implementation across all levels.

At the upcoming HLPF, Africa will take a central role, with UNECA serving as convener of all five UN regional commissions. Highlights will include a dedicated regional session featuring Uganda's Prime Minister as bureau chair a VNR Lab focused on SDG synergies (with participation from Nigeria, Uganda, and others), and the annual Africa Day side event hosted at the African Union Commission Mission to the UN. Sloan concluded by reaffirming UNECA's commitment to supporting African nations in advancing sustainable development through integrated governance, evidence-based policy, and global dialogue.

Figure 2 Second VNRs Peer-Learning session (23 June 2025)



Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning: **Mr. Julius Roberts, Economist**

Seychelles' 2025 Voluntary National Review (VNR) its second following the inaugural 2020 report showcases the island nation's sustained progress and challenges in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Africa's Agenda 2063, with a special focus on the unique vulnerabilities and strengths of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Submitted to UNDESA by the 17 June 2025 deadline, this VNR aligns closely with the country's new National Development Strategy (2024–2028) and reflects Seychelles' commitment to development that is inclusive, transparent, and sustainable.

The report was overseen by the Presidency and cabinet, with technical leadership from the Ministry of Finance, National Planning, and Trade. The process was highly consultative, involving five thematic working groups on inclusivity, governance, human capital, environment and natural resources, and economic growth. Stakeholder engagement spanned government ministries, the private sector, civil society, parliamentarians, youth, and students with added support from multilateral partners such as the UN Resident Coordinator's office.

Key results include:

- Continued excellence in governance, with Seychelles ranking first in Africa on the Mo Ibrahim Governance Index and 18th globally on the Corruption Perceptions Index.
- Strong economic gains post-COVID-19, particularly in tourism and fisheries, and became the first nation globally to comply with the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI).
- Under human capital development, Seychelles achieved a Universal Health Coverage Index of 0.82 in 2023, strengthened maternal and child healthcare, and maintained a literacy rate above 95% alongside free universal basic education.
- Cultural preservation was also celebrated, with the Mucha Dance recognized by UNESCO as intangible heritage under SDG 11.

However, challenges persist. Timely data availability and human resource capacity remain critical gaps, affecting both SDG and Agenda 2063 reporting. The small drafting team highlighted the need to enhance digital tools, cross-sectoral capacity-building, and systemic awareness of development goals among stakeholders. The way forward will focus on scaling

partnerships, leveraging technology for better monitoring and evaluation, and further integrating SDGs and Agenda 2063 in national and sectoral policies. As Seychelles continues its development journey, it emphasizes necessity to enhance synergies between global, regional, and national priorities, recognizing partnerships as a cornerstone of progress.

Seychelles' 2025 Voluntary National Review (VNR) continues to emphasize the country's integrated development vision, now further enriched by regional frameworks such as Agenda 2063 and the SIDS-focused Abas Declaration. Partnerships with the UN system, the African Union (AU), and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) have been instrumental, though Seychelles acknowledged the need to further deepen and formalize these relationships to achieve more unified and efficient future reporting.

While Seychelles has not yet undertaken Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) due to its small population size just over 122,000, the Ministry of Local Government and Community Affairs is actively exploring pathways to localize SDG action at the community level. The nation remains open and engaged on the possibility of integrating VLRs into future processes, especially as it seeks to ensure stronger mainstreaming of the SDGs at subnational levels.

The National planning Department serves as the focal point for both SDGs and the APRM, providing a unique institutional setup that ensures coherence between the National Development Strategy (NDS 2024–2028), the SDGs, Agenda 2063, and the SIDS-specific Abas Declaration. The VNR document itself includes an alignment section that maps these frameworks for greater synergy.

Seychelles offered several suggestions to improve continental coordination and reporting: encouraging member states to integrate governance and accountability frameworks into joint SDG Agenda 2063 reporting; promoting regional dialogues to exchange best practices; supporting both VNR and VLR implementation; and increasing APRM participation in national coordination platforms. The delegation also emphasized the critical role of digital tools and platforms, such as ECA's Integrated Planning and Reporting Toolkit (IPRT), and encouraged innovation in technology to further streamline data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Seychelles underscored its continued commitment to aligning national, regional, and global development goals, with partnerships and digital transformation forming key pillars for future action.

LESOTHO

Ministry of Development Planning, **Mr. Thabiso Kompi, Chief Economic Planner**

Lesotho's 2025 Voluntary National Review (VNR) marks the country's third SDG reporting cycle, following previous reviews in 2019 and 2022. Led by the Ministry of Development Planning, the process is government-owned but supported by a wide range of national and international partners including UNDP, UNFPA, Paris21, and civil society organizations (CSOs). The 2025 review focuses on six SDGs: Goal 3 (Good Health), Goal 5 (Gender Equality), Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), Goal 13 (Climate Action), Goal 14 (Life Below Water), and Goal 17 (Partnerships).

Lesotho introduced several innovations to improve data coverage and inclusivity. Recognizing persistent data gaps, particularly under the "leave no one behind" principle, the government partnered with CSOs to incorporate citizen-generated data validated by the National Statistical Office to strengthen evidence for indicators. This improved indicator coverage across all SDGs and allowed Lesotho, a landlocked country, to report on Goal 14 for the first time, drawing attention to aquaculture, waterway protection, and sustainable inland fisheries, including the country's standout production of rainbow trout.

Stakeholder engagement has deepened across VNR cycles, with increased influence from civil society on goal selection and thematic focus. The alignment of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 with national development plans has also enabled smoother, integrated reporting across global, regional, and national frameworks. Lesotho noted this alignment is particularly useful when data is limited, as proxy indicators can be adapted across agendas.

On Goal 17, Lesotho reported gains in domestic revenue mobilization, reducing reliance on external funding. Digital innovations, especially mobile financial platforms, have supported steady remittance flows, contributing to a stable 20% share of GDP. Internet usage rose from 25% in 2015 to 48% in 2025, enabling better data flow and communication infrastructure.

While Lesotho has yet to conduct Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), it recognizes their value and hopes to explore them in the future. The country commended the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) for promoting regional dialogue and peer learning, reinforcing that Africa is becoming more unified and self-aware in its development journey.

Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data: **Ms. Karen Bett, Senior Manager**

The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, hosted by the UN Foundation, is a global network of over 700 partners, including governments, civil society, and institutions working collaboratively to leverage the power of data for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Established in 2015, the partnership supports countries across 35+ regions through technical assistance, knowledge exchange, and capacity-building initiatives that enhance the production and use of both traditional and non-traditional data.



Their work centres around three pillars: timely data, which ensures governments have up-to-date and accessible information for decision-making; inclusive data, which emphasizes representation of marginalized communities in line with the “leave no one behind” agenda; and accountable data governance, focused on safeguarding privacy, consent, and ethical data use especially in the context of AI and digital systems.

Two key initiatives featured in the presentation include “Data for Now” a partnership with the UN Statistics Division, World Bank, and UNDP to help national statistical offices adopt innovative data solutions such as citizen-generated and mobile data and the Inclusive Data Charter (IDC), launched in 2018

to mobilize political commitments for inclusive data systems. Countries like Nigeria, Kenya, and Zanzibar have made progress through these frameworks by institutionalizing disability and gender data in official statistics, and aligning their VNR reports with inclusive data action plans.

The Global Partnership also facilitates peer learning, virtual exchanges, and promotes multi-stakeholder collaboration, including civil society involvement in SDG monitoring through shadow reporting alongside official VNRs. Their engagement supports governments in strengthening data ecosystems and integrating inclusive, disaggregated, and ethically governed data into their sustainable development reporting and planning processes.

Key Takeaways and Recommendations

- ✓ Nigeria emphasized its evolving commitment to inclusive, data-driven, and whole-of-society SDG reporting. Led by the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs, Nigeria’s 2025 VNR featured a robust multi-stakeholder co-working group, regional consultations across all geopolitical zones, and integration of youth, persons with disabilities, and civil society voices. Key takeaways include the institutional alignment between Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063, international peer learning engagements, and a clear activity matrix for tracking implementation. Recommendations emphasize sustaining the national co-working model, enhancing sub-national capacity, scaling youth engagement, and improving disaggregated data systems.
- ✓ Ghana reported its third VNR with a focus on SDG alignment, stakeholder inclusivity, and voluntary local reviews (VLRs). Coordinated by the National Development Planning Commission, Ghana has institutionalized SDG delivery through a structured architecture linking presidential advisors, ministries, civil society platforms, and technical committees. Key takeaways include improvements in planning-data-policy alignment using tools like the IPRT, a strong emphasis on six transition areas (including education, climate, and employment), and commitment to localization. Recommendations include continuing inclusive VLR integration, improving data systems, and ensuring adequate budgetary support for SDG targets.

- ✓ Sierra Leone has presented four VNRs to date, showcasing a highly integrated framework that fuses national planning with SDG and Agenda 2063 goals. The country draws heavily on its annual progress reports, APRM processes, and shadow reports from civil society. Special focus is placed on SDG 4 (education) and SDG 16 (institutions), deemed critical to national transformation. Innovative financing mechanisms, local resource mobilization (especially in the blue economy), and youth involvement through U-Report stand out. Recommendations call for data system strengthening, sustainable financing solutions, and further institutionalization of local reviews.
- ✓ Eswatini broke new ground by integrating VLRs into its VNR process for the first time, engaging seven municipalities in localized reporting. This approach allowed for stronger vertical and horizontal coherence between national policies and community needs. Eswatini demonstrated tangible progress on SDGs 3, 5, 8, 14, and 17 with notable achievements in healthcare, gender representation, aquaculture governance, and youth employment. Challenges such as non-communicable diseases and gender-based violence remain. The main recommendation is to continue building on this integrated approach and institutionalize multi-level stakeholder coordination.
- ✓ Seychelles submitted its second VNR, aligned with its National Development Strategy (2024–2028), showcasing strong progress in governance, economic recovery post-COVID-19, universal health coverage, and education. Noteworthy achievements include leadership on the Mo Ibrahim and Corruption Perceptions Indexes and being the first country globally to comply with the Fisheries Transparency Initiative. The VNR process was inclusive of government, civil society, youth, and Parliament. Recommendations highlight the need for improved data capacity, investment in digital tools, and expanded partnerships, particularly to explore future VLRs.
- ✓ Lesotho reported for the third time and spotlighted six SDGs (3, 5, 8, 13, 14, 17), with emphasis on data innovation and stakeholder influence. The use of citizen-generated data validated by the national statistics office helped close gaps in indicator reporting, while stakeholder input expanded the thematic focus (e.g., Goal 14 for a landlocked country). Lesotho praised the integration of Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 into national planning, enabling a smoother, multi-layered reporting process. Recommendations include institutionalizing citizen data use, exploring VLRs, and sustaining multilateral cooperation and policy alignment.
- ✓ Partner Agencies played integral roles across the board. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) provided a regional platform for governance-based peer learning and technical assistance. Its support focused on improving national capacities, facilitating dialogue, and promoting integrated reporting on both Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063. Recommendations from APRM include deeper governance mainstreaming, enhanced institutional capacity, and leveraging tools like the new indicator alignment framework (70% of Agenda 2063 indicators now map to SDG targets).
- ✓ The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) backed member states with tools like the IPRT, localization toolkits, and SDG synergy guidelines. It convened regional forums and VNR Labs to amplify Africa's voice at the HLPF. Recommendations focused on identifying investment synergies, promoting statistical innovation, and facilitating structured peer learning.
- ✓ The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data emphasized better data for decision-making through its "Data for Now" and "Inclusive Data Charter" initiatives. It champions timely, inclusive, and ethically governed data while helping countries institutionalize disability, gender, and citizen-generated data. Recommendations include investing in national statistical system capacity, closing data gaps through civil society participation, and fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration in VNR data ecosystems.



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