VNR lab: Recent innovations in institutional arrangements for SDG implementation

15 July 2022 (8-9 am New York time)

About 60 participants joined the VNR Lab entitled "Looking forward: Recent innovations in institutional arrangements", which took place on the margins of the 2022 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. The event, organized by the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government of UNDESA, took stock of recent innovations in institutional arrangements for SDG implementation. The lab invited selected countries to share information on changes made to their institutional arrangements since their last VNRs and during the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance in relation to policy coordination and integration as well as SDG planning, implementation, and monitoring. They were also invited to share their experiences and lessons learned about the effectiveness of those changes. Government representatives from Italy, Jamaica, the Philippines, Tuvalu, and two experts from the Committee of Experts on Public Administration interacted during the session.

Participants emphasized the crucial role of political will and strong, resilient, inclusive, coherent, effective and agile institutions for the achievement of the SDGs, as also illustrated in the World Public Sector Report 2021. Innovations in institutional arrangements were particularly important considering the ongoing global crises, such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, which were putting even more pressure on public institutions. There was an urgent need to act now, while taking stock of and scaling up successful innovations. One major challenge was that ministries were working in silos with separate budgets and plans, making it difficult to act coherently and to effectively monitor and evaluate government progress. Breaking silos, localizing the SDGs and offering (mandatory) training on the SDGs to public servants at all levels were important next steps.

Governments should also strive to engage all stakeholders, including the private sector and vulnerable groups, by designing spaces for consultation, collaboration, and partnerships, including regarding VNR preparation and data collection, to enhance ownership and commitment. In this regard, institutionalized mechanisms could be considered, taking into account national culture and tradition. Informing citizens about the importance of the 2030 Agenda was seen as crucial, including by making use of social media while also fighting misinformation. Long-term (sub-) national development plans and strategies, shorter term action plans as well as national budgets were to be aligned with the 2030 Agenda and supported by the highest level of policymaking. One suggested innovation was to make action plans on a rolling basis to reconcile short- and medium-term aspirations. Monitoring, (quantitative and

qualitative) evaluation and reporting, as done during the VNR process, remained crucial and could include the use of regulatory impact assessments. There is a need to continue and enhance regional and international cooperation, peer to peer learning and the sharing of information, experiences, and data.

Selected innovations mentioned during the lab:

- Dedicated SDG stakeholder chambers created to enhance stakeholder engagement (The Philippines)

- SDG unit within Ministry of Finance created to be able to better monitor and report on SDG progress and make recommendations to Government advisory committee; national SDG steering committee to link SDGs to workplans of ministries (Tuvalu)

- SDG core group and national oversight committee created, which includes parliamentary opposition; Roadmap for SDG implementation developed; cost estimation framework developed to better identify priorities and funding gaps regarding SDGs (Jamaica)

- Laboratories created for Italy's National Action Plan for Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) (Italy)

- Regulatory impact assessments and peer-to-peer workshops (EU) – see also report: https://www.ps4sd.eu/peer-to-peer-for-sustainable-impact-assessment/