

Regional workshop for Latin American and Caribbean that will present their Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2022

*Tuesday 8 March 2022
2:30 - 5:00 pm Costa Rica time (GMT-6)*

Background

- In 2022, eight Latin American and Caribbean countries will formally present their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) during the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in July 2022: Argentina, Dominica, El Salvador, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, Uruguay.
- Within the framework of the fifth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, which took place from March 7 to 9, 2022 in San José, Costa Rica in a hybrid format, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) organized a virtual regional workshop on Tuesday, March 8, 2022 mainly orientated towards these eight countries.
- The countries of the LAC region have appropriated the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a State commitment, in broad cooperation with multiple actors, including civil society, youth, the private sector, academia, local authorities and legislative and parliamentary authorities, among others. Between 2016 and 2021, 28 of the 33 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean reported their progress in the ownership, monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs with the presentation of at least one VNR at the HLPF. Of these 28 countries, 14 countries presented a VNR on more than one occasion (Argentina, Bahamas, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay).
- Despite the multiple challenges posed by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the region, the commitment and sustained effort of the countries to ensure the follow-up of the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs remains very solid: 20 countries of the region have submitted their VNRs to the HLPF between 2020 (Argentina, Barbados, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama, Peru, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago) and 2021 (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Dominican Republic and Uruguay).
- While the 2030 Agenda continues to be the roadmap for a sustainable post-pandemic recovery, the VNRs continue to be the main mechanisms for reviewing the progress and challenges in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national level and allow accounting for the trajectory and the strategies of each country. They also generate opportunities for peer learning and collective reflection on common or cross-border challenges of sustainable development. The emergence in the region of a series of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), innovative exercises that express the commitment of actors at the sub-national, municipal and local levels with the 2030 Agenda, also constitute a tool for appropriation of the 2030 Agenda and complement national monitoring and review efforts.
- The main goal of the workshop was to strengthen the knowledge, peer learning and capacities of the countries of LAC for the elaboration and preparation of VNRs, as part of their strategy for the implementation and national follow-up of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Furthermore, it was designed to strengthen the space and the regional dimension of the process of preparing the VNRs towards their presentation to the HLPF and to identify the common challenges of the countries of the region as well as solutions to overcome them.
- In the workshop, more than 100 representatives of twenty governments from Latin America and the Caribbean, representatives of DESA and ECLAC, Resident Coordinators of the UN system in countries of the region and representatives of their offices, and other officials of the United Nations system will participate in the meeting, as well as other actors, including civil society, participated.

Key Messages

- **The COVID-19 pandemic has posed a considerable challenge**, particularly to countries in the LAC region. It has exacerbated the inequalities that exist within and among countries. The weaknesses in health and socio-economic systems have been exposed. The pandemic threatens to reverse the progress many countries have made on the SDGs. VNRs allow for an opportunity for countries to showcase policies that countries have taken to tackle and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **The VNRs have been a great success story of the 2030 Agenda.** To date, 176 countries have presented a VNR. 45 countries are expected to present a VNR during the 2022 HLPF, after which only 8 countries globally will remain to present a VNR (Haiti as the only country from the region).
- **The VNRs are much more than a report presented at the HLPF.** The VNRs are a process that can engage all parts of government and all relevant stakeholders. This whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach can be transformative and become an integral part of a country's national implementation of the 2030 Agenda. VNRs can strengthen government policies and institutions, facilitate alignment with other national, regional and global development frameworks, raise SDG awareness, mobilize multi-stakeholder support, and foster partnerships.
- **The nature of VNRs is evolving and an increasingly analytical tool of the complex national reality and for policy decision-making and monitoring.** More VNRs look at the 2030 Agenda as a whole, integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development, and include the principle of leaving no one behind (LNOB). Many VNRs offer continuity between the first and subsequent reports, show progress made based on data, define next steps and describe measures undertaken to overcome challenges identified in the previous review.
- **LAC countries have made significant progress in integrating the SDGs into their national development plans and in the localization of the SDGs.** In several countries there is a gradual process of decentralization of the governance of the 2030 Agenda, from the national to the subnational level. Connecting different governance levels is essential for accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the Decade of Action and to recover from the pandemic.
- **Multiple challenges in the VNR process persist**, such as complex multilevel coordination, limited financial and time resources, urgent demands posed by the health crisis vs. the implementation of medium and long-term strategies to deliver on the SDGs; the incorporation of data and statistics; administration changes and staff fluctuations; incorporation of data and statistics, LNOB, etc.
- **Recommendations for VNR countries:** Looking ahead, countries are encouraged to build a national roadmap of VNR presentations until 2030 and link them to the most important national policy milestones in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. VNR countries should engage in a Twining Experience (as conducted by UN ESCAP), join the Group of Friends of the VNRs and engage in peer-reviewing exercises, as in ECLAC's Community of Practice provides. Countries should make use of free training and capacity opportunities as well as methodologies and tools and do not be shy to ask the global community for financial and capacity support to conduct a successful VNR.