

Remarks at the ECLAC Regional VNR workshop

Madam Executive Secretary, Alicia Bárcena,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank our partners, ECLAC and Madam Executive Secretary, for the excellent collaboration with DESA in supporting countries in their preparations of the voluntary national reviews. This collaboration has been critical. We have seen it support countries in connecting the different levels, from subnational, to national, to regional to global. We view this as essential for accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to recovering 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. Forty-five countries are expected to present one during the 2022 High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF), after which only eight countries globally will remain to present a VNR.

I would also like to commend the eight countries from the region that will be presenting their VNRs at this year's HLPF. We are pleased to welcome four, first-time presenters – Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Suriname – as well as one, fourth time presenter from the region, Uruguay. It shows great commitment, ownership, and political will from the countries in the region to show their national progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

This regional workshop provides a very good foundation for peer-learning and exchange. The VNRs themselves present a good opportunity to learn from each other and share good practices, as half of the VNR countries are presenting for the first time, whilst the other half of the countries have previously presented a VNR. They are not just a report or a presentation 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 your country's national implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Distinguished Delegates,

If this is your country's first VNR, you have the opportunity to learn from the experiences of others as you prepare. If your country has previously presented a VNR, this is an opportunity to build on your most recent VNR. It would be important to show progress made based on data, noting specific efforts undertaken to:

- address findings and recommendations,
- define next steps, and
- describe measures undertaken to overcome challenges identified in the previous review.

Let me also inform you about the Group of Friends of VNRs, chaired by the Permanent Representatives of Morocco and the Philippines in New York. The Group of Friends helps VNR countries identify friends – namely, other countries who can help you prepare the interaction at the HLPF on your VNR – and support you in your preparations, if you so wish. I also encourage ECLAC to support some of the VNR countries in twinning with another country for the preparations of the VNR, as ESCAP has been doing for some years.

We hope that the VNRs will show emerging development trends overtime, and remain a great source for sharing actions and interventions in sustainable development. Looking ahead, it could be also useful to you to prepare a national roadmap of presentations of VNRs until 2030. And link them to your most important national policy milestones in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The VNRs form an integral part of the HLPF. The theme of this year's HLPF is 'Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed a considerable challenge, particularly to countries in this region. It has exacerbated the inequalities that exist within and among countries. The weaknesses in health and socio-economic systems have been exposed. Furthermore, the pandemic threatens to reverse the progress many countries have made on the SDGs.

In view of this theme, the VNRs this year are particularly significant. You have an opportunity to showcase policies and measures that your countries have taken to tackle and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The recovery from the pandemic is an opportunity to build-back better, and the 2030 Agenda and its principle of 'leaving no one behind', can provide a blueprint for our collective recovery. Indeed, all countries here today have valuable experiences and lessons learned to share.

The ECLAC regional forum on sustainable development is a unique platform for exchanging and learning from each other. It will enrich the discussions at the HLPF. We are pleased that we could have this VNR workshop as part of the programme of the forum.

I wish you a successful workshop and good luck with your presentations at the 2022 HLPF.

I thank you.

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