

# DEMYSTIFYING THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



## What is the Voluntary National Review (VNR)?

During the High-Level Policy Forum (HLPF), which is the main United Nations platform on sustainable development taking place every year in New York in July, Member States have the opportunity to report voluntarily, taking stock and assessing progress and challenges in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at national and sub-national levels. This is to be conducted through an inclusive government-led review, otherwise known as the Voluntary National Review Report (VNR), concluding in a presentation of the report at the HLPF.

These regular reviews at the HLPF are voluntary, state-led, conducted by both developed and developing countries and can involve a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society. The VNR aims to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and achievements, to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. The VNRs also function as an accountability mechanism, with a view to strengthen government policies and institutions, but also mobilise support from a wide range of stakeholders and encourage partnerships for the implementation of the SDGs.

## Why is it important to include perspectives from civil society in the VNR process?

The VNR consultation processes provide a strategic entry point for continuous dialogue and coordination around implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the country level. Broad civil society participation is instrumental in ensuring localisation and inclusive implementation processes of the SDGs. Fostering meaningful inclusion, participation and contribution of national and local civil society organisations in government-led consultations, reviews and validation processes on SDG16 will ensure reliable and inclusive reporting for future advancement of the 2030 Agenda. Further, civil society “shadow” reports developed in parallel to the official government VNR report can highlight the role of unofficial data in understanding SDG Progress and in some cases challenge “official” narratives that may not present an accurate narrative of SDG progress and challenges at national and sub-national levels.

## How can CSOs engage in the VNR process?

CSOs can play an active role in the VNR process by first engaging with their respective governments, in order to stress the importance of including them, ask for transparency from the government on how they are working in this process, next to seeing how the government can involve them concretely and practically (e.g. consultations, joint reporting, multi-stakeholders workshops,...). However, when governments are not willing or able to involve civil society in their VNR process, it can be challenging for CSOs to raise their voice, especially in a context of restricted civic space. In this situation, CSOs can make their voice heard at the global level by joining forces within coalitions and co-drafting “spotlight” and “shadow” reports. These reports can then be highlighted during and after the HLPF with the support from global civil society networks’ partners, such as from CSPPS and the TAP Network.



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## How can CSPPS and the TAP Network support the meaningful participation of CSOs in the VNR process both at the national and global levels?

- Raising awareness around the VNR process, exchanging good practices and lessons learned between members of the network, specifically between the ones who already engaged in past VNR process and civil society organisations that are going through this process for the first time, via the organisation of online workshops such as effectuated the 6th of March 2024.
- Providing technical and methodological support with the drafting of spotlights and shadow reports by CSPPS and TAP Network members.
- Amplifying the voices of CSPPS and TAP Network members engaging in the VNR process. This can be in the context of global partnerships and coalitions of which the Platform is a part of, such as the TAP Network or the Global SDG16 Coalition, but also during the HLPF itself.
- Lobbying and advocating on the importance of involving civil society in the VNR process, by engaging with national governments and the donor community at both the global and national levels in the context of the International Dialogue for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS).

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews. 2024 Edition. UN DESA](#)

[Home - SDG16+ Civil Society Toolkit](#)

[MAINSTREAMING SDG 16](#)

[Mainstreaming SDG16: Using the Voluntary National Review to Advance More Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, Global Alliance et Réseau TAP. 2020](#)

[Reporting for the Future. Rapport final Ready for Review 2019. CSPPS. 2020](#)

[SDG Accountability Portal](#)

[Stakeholder Expression of Interest in VNR Engagement 2024](#)

[Tools & Resources - TAP Network](#)

Please contact CSPPS Secretariat at [info@cspps.org](mailto:info@cspps.org) for further information



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