Detailed Event Summary

"Strengthening Post-VNR Best Practices on SDG16"

An online webinar hosted by the TAP Network and UNDP
Tuesday, 10 March 2020 at 12:00-1:30pm GMT

Background

On 10 March 2020, the Transparency, Accountability, and Participation (TAP) Network and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) hosted an online webinar entitled: *Strengthening Post-VNR Best Practices on SDG16.*

This webinar focused on the experiences, lessons learned, and best practices of governments and other stakeholders working on post-Voluntary National Review (VNR) processes for Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG16) and the 2030 Agenda more broadly. Speakers looked to provide their insights and experiences of translating the VNR processes into political action, policy change, and how repeated VNR reporting can be linked to national development processes.

This webinar is part of a partnership initiated between UNDP and the TAP Network to further explore emerging best practices and challenges related to advancement of SDG16 as part of VNR process, with focus on the post-VNR follow up and how this can be linked to national planning and development processes. Country experiences are being collected to feed into a new resource to be launched (as a draft for further consultation) in May 2020 to inspire member states and national stakeholders such as civil society and the private sector on how to include reflections on post-VNR follow up on SDG16 as part of their VNR process. The final resource will be published in Fall 2020 with plans to implement national capacity building multi-stakeholder workshops.

Speakers for the event included:

- Mr. Joern Geisselmann, Advisor, Partners 4 Review (P4R)
- Mr. Peter van Sluijs, Senior Strategist, Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS)
- Ms. Margarita Cano, Asesora Técnica Especializada, Secretaría de Planificación y Programación de la Presidencia (SEGEPLAN) de Guatemala
- Ms. Ameyovi Alice Goza, Founder and President, International Association of Women and Young Leaders (AIFJL) in Togo and part of UNDP's 16x16 Initiative
- Ms. Fiona Dawe, Head of Sustainable Development Goals, United Kingdom Office of National Statistics (ONS)

The panel was moderated by Ms. Anne Kahl, Special Advisor on Governance and Sustaining Peace at UNDP, and Mr. John Romano, Coordinator of the TAP Network.

Summary

The webinar began with opening remarks by the event co-hosts, Ms. Anne Kahl (UNDP) and Mr. John Romano (TAP Network).

Today, an increasing number of Member States are using the VNRs to report on implementation of the 2030 Agenda. More countries are reporting for second and third times, and many VNRs are now including comprehensive and detailed breakdowns of progress on SDG16. This is encouraging given the widespread challenges faced by

many Member States in collecting and aggregating data for the global indicators related to peace, justice, and strong institutions.

Nevertheless, reviewing implementation is not an end in itself but rather a means to accelerate transformation—and thus promote reporting for action. The increased number of repeated VNRs serves as an opportunity for a greater focus on post-VNR processes, particularly for SDG16. As an enabler of all the SDGs, SDG16—and its underlining principles related to accountability, transparency, and inclusion—must be seen as a guiding pillar for all follow-up actions to implement and mainstream the 2030 Agenda after the VNR.

This webinar is part of a partnership initiated between UNDP and the Transparency, Accountability, and Participation (TAP) Network to further explore emerging best practices and challenges related to advancement of SDG16 as part of VNR process, with focus on the post-VNR follow up and how this can be linked to national planning and development processes.

The upcoming resource was inspired by several requests from governments and other stakeholders for guidance on how to action SDG16 implementation and monitoring in the post-VNR period. With the first four-year cycle of the HLPF completed and the launch of the "Decade of Action", this resource will serve as a tool to maximize the potential of the VNR process, including its follow-up and review, to ensure progress towards the achievement of SDG16.

The development of the resource kicked-off with an online survey to collect experiences and lessons learned on post-VNR activities for SDG16. Inputs from this broad consultation – which engages governments, youth, civil society, businesses, national statistics offices (NSOs), human rights institutions, UN agencies, and others – will help guide the development of the resource. The survey is still open, and we encourage stakeholders to engage in this opportunity and to share it widely.

Today's online consultation webinar serves as an opportunity for further collection of inputs. Speakers looked to provide their insights and experiences of translating the VNR processes into political action, policy change, and how repeated VNR reporting can be linked to national development processes. Following the brief presentations, webinar participants had an opportunity to ask questions and share their own achievements, challenges, and lessons learned.

Additional consultations for the initiative will be hosted by TAP and UNDP in the lead-up to the annual sessions of the UN High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF) and UN 75th Anniversary. Included in these consultations will be workshops in a select number of countries which have submitted or plan to submit a subsequent VNR.

Country experiences are being collected to feed into a new resource to be launched (as a draft for further consultation) in May 2020 to inspire member states and national stakeholders such as civil society and the private sector on how to include reflections on post-VNR follow up on SDG16 as part of their VNR process. The final resource will be published in September 2020 with plans to implement national capacity building multi-stakeholder workshops.

Partners 4 Review
Mr. Joern Geisselmann of P4R—a multi-stakeholder network set up in 2016 by the German Government to promote transnational dialogue and peer learning about VNRs and SDG Review and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ)—opened the panel with an introduction of the concept of follow-up or post-VNR and then shared a few observations concerning trends and country experiences.

Follow-up and post-VNR are very similar concepts. However, in P4R's view, follow-up puts more emphasis on the fact that something happens not simply after but as a direct result of the VNR. Follow-up is action taken in response to findings from the VNR. It ensures that the implementation process moves forward after the VNR. This understanding implies a few things, including:

1) The VNR should not only review past implementation, but also agree on next steps and arrive at policy conclusions based on the identified lessons learnt, challenges and good practices. This objective needs to be taken into account when designing the VNR process.

2) There should be immediate follow-up action, such as reporting to parliament and/or the media about the proceedings at the HLPF and the feedback and recommendations received after the VNR presentation.

3) Following or in parallel to these immediate follow-up actions, concrete steps should be taken to implement the next steps and policy recommendations identified during the VNR and possibly at the HLPF.

4) In addition, there can be actions that are not a direct result of the VNR, but that nevertheless help move the follow-up or post-VNR process forward, e.g. conducting a performance audit or a peer review.

5) Last but not least, the institutional mechanisms established during or before a VNR should be institutionalized and continued after the VNR. In fact, more and more countries report that their mechanisms were further improved after the VNR. And a number of countries have started reviewing the SDGs even in years when they don't conduct a VNR or have decided to hold annual Stakeholder Fora to discuss implementation progress.

Since 2019, P4R has observed a number of countries undertaking follow-up activities after the VNR. A few notable trends and experiences have emerged from these efforts.

Mongolia is an innovative example for using the VNR to develop concrete next steps and policy recommendations. The country decided to focus on a particularly pressing sustainable development issue and review it in an integrated manner. Their 2019 VNR includes one chapter dedicated to air pollution. They have conducted a systems analysis of drivers, bottlenecks and impacts and developed short- and long-term actions needed to tackle air pollution.

There are also a couple examples of countries taking immediate follow-up action after the VNRs. **Guatemala** committed to host a series of workshops after the HLPF to discuss recommendations evolving from the VNR process and to then communicate these recommendations to sector ministries. **Mexico**, on the other hand, involved the Ministry of Finance during follow-up to map all applicable budget lines and programs with SDG indicators to better visualize how opportunities and synergies for sustainable development may be driven through the budgetary process.

Institutional mechanisms established during a VNR have frequently evolved after the VNR. **Georgia**, for example, belonged to the relatively small number of 22 "early moving" countries that conducted their first VNR immediately after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. At the time, it had not been possible to already set-up the necessary institutional mechanisms to coordinate the implementation of the Agenda. In 2017, the Government of Georgia introduced its SDG architecture, including a multi-stakeholder SDG Council, thematic working groups and an Annual Forum where the members of the SDG Council come together to share and debate experiences related to SDG implementation. The practice of an Annual SDG Forum has since then been adopted by a number of countries.

While **Germany** had already institutionalized mechanisms to coordinate government activity and engage with other stakeholders on sustainable development since the early 2000s, after the VNR in 2016, Germany also newly established an annual Sustainability Forum as multi-stakeholder dialogue forum organized by the Chancellery.

Other countries strengthened their institutional mechanisms during the second VNR. For example, **Guatemala** and **Mexico** adopted broader consultation processes during their second VNR compared to their first VNR. In their words, their VNRs evolved from government strategies to national strategies.

P4R concluded by providing some insights on other approaches for moving the Agenda forward after the VNR.

Supreme audit institutions can provide impetus to follow-up and the implementation of the Agenda. After having audited the preparedness of Governments to implement the 2030 Agenda, supreme audit institutions increasingly conduct performance audits of individual SDG goals or targets. These audits can help identify bottlenecks in SDG implementation and focus government attention on these bottlenecks. A number of Latin American countries, for example, have performed a coordinated audit on sustainable food production. Instead of just auditing the government policies directly related to sustainable food production, the SAI examined all the policy instruments in place regarding food production and farming and mapped which policies contributed to sustainable food production and which where counterproductive to that goal.

Localizing the Agenda is another way to make progress on the SDGs. In **Mexico**, for example, after completing its VNR the federal government encouraged the subnational level to implement the Agenda and conduct their own reviews. In 2019, the states of Oaxaca and Yucatan began to engage in this process. They intend to present their experiences at the margins of the HLPF this year.

Lastly, peer reviews and other forms of peer exchange are increasingly seen as a tool to foster mutual learning and encourage follow-up action. **Germany** has conducted an international peer review, headed by Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand and former Administrator of the UNDP, which offered crucial orientation regarding the further development of the German Sustainable Development Strategy (GSDS) and encouraged all engaged parties in Germany to increase the level of ambition and accelerate implementation.

Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding

Mr. Peter van Sluijs of CSPPS—a global platform of civil society actors, practitioners, experts and academics working on conflict and crisis prevention, peacebuilding and statebuilding—provided experiences on engaging civil society in VNR and post-VNR processes, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected countries (FCAS).

CSPPS uses the link within national dialogue processes as an entry to engage in VNR processes. In 2019, CSPPS, in coordination with the TAP Network, UNDP, and other partners, organized its *Ready for Review* project to support and strengthen the engagement and capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) in fragile and conflict-affected countries participating in the VNR process in 2019. In implementing this project, the CSPPS sought to foster meaningful inclusion and contribution of national, regional and local civil society organizations in government-led consultation, review and validation processes of the SDG16. The project provided capacity building training through national workshops among civil society in the countries concerned to ensure their meaningful participation in the relevant processes leading up to the review, working towards a more participatory and inclusive VNR.

The key objective of the Ready of Review project has been to ensure and foster meaningful inclusion, participation, and contribution of national and local CSOs in the government-led process on SDG16 consultation, review, and validation. As is well-know, the VNRs is government led process, but it is meant to be a consultative process that involves other stakeholders. Countries going for second review often improve on the stakeholder engagement but it's not a given that all stakeholders are being given a seat at the table when countries first embark on these processes, particularly in FCAS.

In implementing the Ready of Review project, CSPPS has observed that the VNR consultations, and the activities that are organized in conjunction with these processes, can be a starting point for initiating and solidifying the dialogue between the various stakeholders. These processes can also serve to enhance that coordination between the government and stakeholders.

Last year was the first year that SDG16 was reviewed at the HLPF. This served as one of the impetuses for implementing this Ready for Review project. CSPPS observed that it is not an easy task for governments to review progress on SDG16.

CSPPS, as a civil society actor, has tried to both be an active partner in these processes of review and in those contexts where the space was not granted for civil society engagement, CSPPS has been actively supporting civil society spotlight reports or other means of bringing civil society viewpoints to the fore. However, the latter is not an

ideal approach. Multi-stakeholder processes should be prioritized and embarked upon in the true spirit of SDG 17. The review needs to bring in the viewpoints of various stakeholders. It needs to shed light on the aspects that are not going well and the challenges that the countries are facing in implementing the Agenda. The VNRs should also be action oriented and lead to localization of the Agenda after the review.

The level of inclusion and quality of inclusion in the VNR processes matters. It is not a tokenistic notion but must be a true multi-stakeholder process that needs to be embarked upon. At the HLPFs so far, CSPPS has observed that, though it is not universal across the board, there are instances where countries are not fully utilizing consultative processes to develop and present a good, quality, and realistic view of progress. In this sense, the VNR is not being used as a management tool with which the national agenda can be steered to yield better results in the future.

One of the key lessons coming out of the VNR processes is that these reviews cannot be seen as an end product but should instead be seen as a step in between the implementation and subsequently looking forward on what needs to happen and be prioritized in moving the Agenda forward.

These lessons on meaningful inclusion, participation, and stakeholder engagement must be carried over into the follow-up processes to the VNR to accelerate progress on SDG16 and the Agenda more broadly.

Secretaría de Planificación y Programación de la Presidencia de Guatemala
Ms. Margarita Cano of SEGEPLAN—the State planning entity in Guatemala, which advises and technically assists public institutions and the Development Council System to link the public policy, planning and programming processes with the National Development Plan and Policy and lead monitoring and evaluation—discussed her country's efforts to mainstream and implement SDG16 and the 2030 Agenda following its first VNR in 2017 and now second in 2019.

As of 2019, **Guatemala** has conducted two VNRs. There have been many lessons learned since its first VNR in 2017. For the 2019 VNR, the country changed its VNR processes from a solely government-led approach to a whole-of-society approach. In reality, this was a challenging adjustment and it took the country nearly an entire year to prepare its second VNR. In the end, however, the 2019 VNR processes involved representatives from local government, CSOs, the private sector, and congress, and was able to collect far more usable data than it had in 2017.

The national government of Guatemala sought for its report to reflect an honest picture of progress on implementation of the 2030 Agenda, especially with regard to data. If there were no sources of quality data available for an indicator, then the government reported this, and also noted its plans for how it would address these gaps in the future. The Guatemalan government recognizes that there is a need to improve data collection and aggregation, so we leave no one behind. This is something it is already begun to work on since July 2019 when it presented its second review and made its commitment to following-up on improving its data collection and aggregation abilities.

In 2019, the VNR processes generated more local government involvement through its expanded focus on meaningful stakeholder engagement. Since the VNR in July 2019, Guatemala underwent a change in government in January 2020, both for the presidency and at the local government level. Going forward, this means that the national planning ministry will need to work to engage new authorities in SDG review and implementation processes. This is a good thing, however, as it serves as an opportunity to take into account the VNR results in 2019. The planning ministry outlines the national government's general policies over a four-year period. In designing its policies in 2020, the ministry took into account the results from the country's 2019 VNR and used these to develop the goals of its new government for the next four years. Specifically, the ministry worked to connect long-term and short-term goals of the new administration to the 2030, especially with regard to linking SDG16 to its goals for creating better institutions.

Though improved from its first VNR in 2017, coordination and engagement with the different branches of government continued to be a challenge in 2019 during the processes for development Guatemala's second VNR. However, this coordination and broader stakeholder engagement was also good opportunity to not just improve the report but to also increase general buy-in and commitment the SDGs. For example, in 2019, a meeting was coordinated between the presidency, the judiciary, the congress, and other stakeholders to sign a public commitment to SDGs and the country's national development priorities. Without the VNR processes, this meeting would not have been set-up and buy-in between the three main branches of the Guatemalan government might not have occurred.

Going forward, Guatemala is continuing to build upon the work and processes it has already established for the VNRs. The government has also committed to present a third VNR in a couple of years.

International Association of Women and Youngs Leaders (AIFJL) and UNDP's 16x16 Initiative

Ms. Alice Goza of AIFJL—an organization in Togo which unites young women and young men from Togo, with the primary goal of promoting women's leadership and encouraging youth participation in a culture of democracy, governance, human rights and peace— and of UNDP's 16x16 Initiative for young leaders—a new global initiative implemented by UNDP's Youth Global Programme, and supported by the Government of Italy—presented on her experiences around the engagement of youth and the human rights community in VNR and post-VNR processes.

In the opinion of this young activist at AIFJL, the States that participate in the review do so just when it suits them, and often without the inputs of other stakeholders. For example, **Togo** mobilized in 2018 around its National Development Plan. There was radio silence between the Government and civil society during this process except on a few priority areas.

The efforts of civil society in review processes for sustainable development often focus on capital and data collection challenges. In official reviews, it is often difficulty to take into account the data of organizations and actors in the interior of a country due to the challenges of access to the internet and also resource limitations to facilitate focus groups or direct interviews.

The participation of young people is often not very well supported either. In 2017, an alternative report from civil society was create by my colleagues in Togo—two young people who were not supported with resources or opportunities for follow-up to their recommendations, even by other members of civil society. The actions carried out by youth organizations are not often capitalized on. Our organization conducted an online study of youth organizations working on the SDG16 in Togo. Many of the actions carried out by youth organizations are hugely significant, and yet have not been taken into account in the national spotlight reports of civil society. There is a need for young people to better organize themselves so they can contribute to these types of alternative report.

Even where young people can contribute to reviews, often their recommendations are not very well followed. Once back from the HLPF, it seems that governments go back to business-as-usual until the next review, especially with regard to SDG16.

As of 2019, the state of Togo has not included in its review the findings from the alternative reports from civil society or young people. It should be noted that while there was no internal organization of civil society in 2017 to input into the national review, its participation was still very limited in 2018 as well. As such, the drafting of an alternative report was a crucial element to painting a realistic picture of progress on the ground.

In 2018, civil society was involved in all phases of the review process and there was internal consultation by the government to take its contributions into account—thanks in particular to a dynamic team of young people from civil society who pushed for inclusion. This work has enabled civil society to work in synergy and to strengthen the collaboration between itself, the state, and young people to improve how the review process is conducted and to acquire new experiences.

The year of 2018 in Togo was a major step forward for state and civil society collaboration. Several CSO actors took part in the HLPF thanks to the support of the government. The massive representation of young people in the national working group, many of which had worked on the alternative report in 2017, meant that in 2018, young people represented four out of the seven civil society representatives included in the government's delegation to New York. This collaboration also enabled civil society to identify the special needs for a prioritization grid of the targets and the monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs, which was done and validated in 2019.

Going forward, continued structuring and coordination of Togolese civil society organizations for a better involvement in public policies and the evaluation of SDGs, especially youth, is essential to progress on the Agenda. Strengthening the synergy between the state and civil society on the one hand and among CSOs themselves on the other will also be crucial. Civil society, including youth, must continue to produce reports and documents in order to have clear and reliable statistical data on progress towards achieving the SDGs. There must be a continued production of alternative reports. In 2019, the state of Togo did not participate in the VNRs nor did civil society prepare an alternative report, despite the national election emergencies. Finally, support for the capacity building of young people in their efforts to participate in VNR and post-VNR processes is critical, especially given the positive impact their youth groups are achieving on the ground.

United Kingdom Office of National Statistics
Ms. Fiona Dawe of the ONS—the national statistical institute of the UK—discussed her country's efforts to improve its SDGs data collection and aggregation for and since its VNR in 2019. Specifically, she discussed the UK's work around its Open SDG and National Reporting Platform, and efforts to support other countries in building out their own platforms to showcase official and non-official data for the SDGs.

The UK presented its VNR in 2019, which include a significant amount of data on many of the SDG indicators (around 77% of the data). The report had significant amounts of data and was very much data driven. The ONS worked with colleagues from across the UK government and other organizations to provide that data for this review. Throughout the report, data was displayed in each chapter in easy-to-recognize data boxes and see how the data was driving UK progress, as well as in a statistical annex at the end of the report that identified all the data that was in VNR and all the data that was on the UK's national reporting platform, and explained why there might be difference between the two.

Key to providing all that data was working collaboratively across the government. The ONS is keen to continue this collaboration post-VNR so that the ONS can make sure it is utilizing and finding the data that other departments may host. The ONS is maintaining collaboration through a cross-department statisticians working group, as well as maintaining close links with its policy colleagues.

Since the publishing of the VNR, the ONS has continued its ongoing work to source additional data for the remaining indicators (23%) not reviewed in the 2019 VNR. The ONS is part of the Inclusive Data Charter and is therefore committed to disaggregating data wherever possible. The ONS is trying to source data in a variety of different ways, including through data science. For example, data science is being used on a project to look the Global Surface Water Explorer to identify changing extent of open water and display this on their platform. The ONS is also using administrative data held by governments and other organizations to show ATM and where those are in the UK. Alternative sources of data are being explored via surveys and interspatial mapping as well as other data available elsewhere. The ONS is working with local authorities to find local data so the UK is disaggregating at a much lower level. Finally, the ONS is also looking at how it can use citizen-generated data, corporate data, and academic research to be able to support the at already on the platform and to look at the disaggregation further.

The ONS has embarked on an innovative initiative to make UK data around the SDGs more readily accessible to the its government and other interested stakeholders within the country and elsewhere around the world. It's Open SDG and National Reporting Platform, which is a free-to-reuse, open source SDG reporting and monitoring solution developed in collaboration with the US government and the Center for Open Data for Enterprise. The software is completely customizable and a number of other countries around the world are replicating and customizing this site for their own contexts.

The platform allows for users to very quickly see what indicators have reported data. For SDG16, the UK is reporting 16 out of the 23 indicators. The process of sourcing and structing the data can be quite difficult and time consuming especially with large date sets. The UK ONS has streamlined where they can and automate the collection and structuring of some indicator data using OMS API.

The data is displayed in an easy-to-understand manner, visualized via charts and tables that can be downloaded from the platform itself and access programmatically. It is also de-aggregated where possible and each data page provides information on the source from where this information came from and the national metadata. The site is also transparent about the limitations of the data being displayed so the user knows how to use the data.

In order to make sure the data meets the user needs, the ONS is implementing a user center design process for the site and they found that there are generally four types of users using this UK platform. Understanding the audience is crucial and the ONS will start a second round of user research soon and make changes to the UK site as needed based on its findings. Where applicable, the ONS will make changes to the SDG site beyond the UK.

Another unique feature of the site is its interoperability—how you can put data on and take data off. The priority for ONS that the Open SDG can be used with other systems. As such, the ONS recently added a new functionality whereby users can upload data in xdmx format. Soon the site will also offer the option to export in xdmx as well. This will allow the global and regional SDG platforms to take country platform data in a standardized structure.

The UK has actively worked to share this site with other countries and provide technical support to national statistics offices and other stakeholders interested in creating their own platforms to house their country's data on the SDGs. Currently, there are around 13 countries who have created or are working to create their own platform based on the UK's Open SDG website. The ONS team is working with some of these countries directly to implement their platforms, while others are utilizing the self-help instructions for creating their own site which the ONS has published directly on the platform. The UK is happy to provide support to other countries interested in undertaking their own initiatives to create similar platforms and can host in-person country workshops or provide remote support depending on what the country needs and what supports the ONS has available.

Currently, there are two countries—Germany and Poland—which have made great strides in developing and customizing their own sites to fit their needs, and the UK ONS recommends that interested countries look to these as best practice examples as well. There sites are especially useful for those interested in platforms with the capabilities to switch between national and international indicators. The UK ONS will be investigating these country customizations going forward and will add them to the Open SDGs platform.

Interactive Discussion with the Audience

United Nations Global Compact
Michelle Breslauer of the UN Global Compact—a corporate sustainable development initiative of the United Nations that convenes over 10,000 companies and works through over 60 local networks to advance ten principles of responsible business and also to advance progress of the global goals—offered some thoughts of the role of the private sector in VNR and post-VNR processes.

The private sector has a long way to go in their involvement in the review and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. There are four broad categories of actions that the private sector can take in the advancement on the SDGs overall. It's important to note first, however, that not all types of private sector engagements are comparable and that the private sector is not one monolithic entity. It includes informal economies, small and medium enterprises and large multi-national corporations that have significant influence on governments. The four categories of actions include:

1) Aligning core business (i.e. operations, policies and strategies)
2) Basic philanthropy (i.e. funding)
3) Advocacy and public policy

4) Partnerships with associations or public-private partnerships

According to the UN Global Compact, about 81 percent of companies in their networks report taking some time of action around the 2030 Agenda, but only 20 percent report taking action on SDG16 specifically. This is a process that needs support and needs multi-stakeholder involvement.

The Global Compact is working through their local networks to support the VNR and post-VNR processes in some countries. The role of the local networks is to understand and raise awareness about the SDGs overall with the businesses they work with, communicate to the business community how progress is reviewed and how the VNR process is structured, and also provide the voices of sustainable business to government. This is really a two-way process, and the UN Global Compact and its networks are learning how to do this more effectively. There is an opportunity to work with Global Compact's local networks, business associations, chamber of commerce and other coordinating entities that will have the resource and the knowledge to more effectively contribute to the VNR and post-VNR processes.

While private sector has been engaged in number of VNRs, businesses are also asking how they can help ensure that there is action to follow-up at the national level to address priorities areas and gaps identified in the review processes. These types of efforts where the global community is looking to coordinate and enhance its support are particularly important.

UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Fred Soltau of UN DESA—the Secretariat of the HLPF and the VNR process—shared his thoughts on the VNR and post-VNR processes from DESA's perspective.

The VNRs is not an end in of itself. The efforts and all the work done to prepare for the VNRs should not end after a country's presentation in New York at the HLPF. Instead, governments should dive in after the VNRs to work on the gaps and find remedies.

With respect to integration, the VNRs often reference alignment which helps to identify gaps. However, the next step is to be more active and ensure that policies and laws contribute to achieving the SDGs. There needs to be more than just alignment on paper.

The VNRs give rise to collaboration but this tends to break-down or silo after the VNRs. There is a need to institutionalize this 'break-through' and the progress that has been made in terms of a whole-of-society approach. This collaboration must be capture those for the future.

Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR)
DIHR posed questions on the inclusion of non-official data in the open source platforms created by the UK and also whether countries are having dialogues and working with national human rights institutions (NHRI) on the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda.

Guatemala noted that it is looking to strengthen its engagement with its NHRI. To date, this institution has only been engaged via the VNR consultation processes.

The **UK** noted that it is open to using any type of data that aligns with the UN methodologies and is of sufficient quality. The majority of the data tends to be official statistics that is sourced from government departments. However, the ONS is looking outside of government for data, particularly for indicators where it has been difficult to find data. It is key for ONS that it adheres to the UK's Statistics Authority Code of Practice to ensure that it is being transparent, and the data is being collected according to its strict guidelines.

The ONS is partnering the University of Plymouth who is doing work with the Earth Observation to look at artificial water bodies. This is an example of a non-official data source that will be featured on the UK's open source platform. The ONS is also working with a private organization to collect and feature administrative data on the site.

Lesotho National Dialogue & Stabilization Project, UNDP
In **Lesotho**, the VNRs are being as a policy instrument to influence the country's intervention to stabilize the cyclical processes of instability and exclusion. It was found that these VNRs processes were an important opportunity to bring key actors and policy influencers together. However, during the implementation stage now, there is a great challenge in taking forward action on SDG16, in terms of standardizing measurements.

A question was posed about how other countries are standardizing measurements, particularly those that are qualitative in nature, so that Lesotho can measure 'real progress' during the next reporting cycle.

Article 19, Eastern Africa
Article 19, Eastern Africa—an organization that works across 14 countries on freedom of expression, access to information, and data privacy and engages on SDG16, as well as the SDGs and the VNRs processes more generally—noted that for many African countries, there is no timely or credible data available that can be used by governments to effectively measure progress on the SDGs.

Article 19 posed a question to the **UK** its open source data platform initiative is helping to streamline data collection processes in countries where governments do not have the capacity to report on all the indicators so that all data that is available, including non-official CSO data, is displayed on the website.

TAP Network
The TAP Network noted that SDG16 underpins the entire 2030 Agenda, and the issues within SDG16+ are linked with all other SDGs. The TAP Network posed a question about how governments and other stakeholders in practical terms explore these interlinkages in post-VNR processes.

Guatemala noted that the results from its 2019 VNR now to feeds into new policies in the country. For example, there is a new policy on universal health coverage, specifically to improve access to hospitals and health centers. Every short-term goal identified in the VNR helps to achieve one of the medium- or long-term goals also identified. The hope is that this will allow to the government to keep monitoring progress over the medium and long-term and follow-up on short term projects.

Next Steps:
The TAP Network and UNDP will host additional consultations to collect experiences and lessons learned on post-VNR activities for SDG16, including an online survey (deadline for inputs is 31 March 2020). In country workshops will take place in a select number of countries which have submitted or plan to submit a subsequent VNR.

The first draft of the Post VNR Best Practices will also be released in May 2020 and consulted with Member States and other SDG16 Stakeholders to ensure it provides helpful and needed guidance.

The final resource will be published in Fall 2020 with plans to implement national capacity building multi-stakeholder workshops on ways to incorporate VNRs in national planning and budgeting processes with a focused lens on SDG16.