12. ALIGNING VNRS WITH OTHER REPORTING AND REVIEW MECHANISMS

What Is It?
SDG 16 and the SDGs encompass just one framework that governments, civil society organizations and others have signed onto that support, directly or indirectly, peace, justice, inclusion and strong institutions. Aligning the VNR with related reporting and review mechanisms and frameworks not only allows for greater policy coherence, coordination and impact, but may also broaden the number of stakeholders engaged and make better use of data generated by National Statistical Offices and other data sources.

Far from exhaustive, examples of such initiatives and review mechanisms include the Open Government Partnership (national action plans); the Universal Period Review (UPR); UN Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures; the UN Convention Against Corruption; and others. Regional organizations also have a role to play in supporting SDG 16 at national levels and how data and input generated for the VNR might be used in support of related conventions and treaties backed by regional organizations and vice versa.

Why Is It important?
Synchronizing relevant frameworks for strengthened SDG 16 impact and reporting provides a useful and tangible opportunity to scale impact, mainstream implementation and make efficient use of resources, human or otherwise, already being utilized. Reporting can often seem burdensome to governments and other stakeholders. By aligning the VNR with other reporting mechanisms, or by mapping when the VNR and other reporting opportunities take place and the data required for each, governments and other stakeholders can optimize these processes for better data, policy coherence and multi-stakeholder engagement.

As noted in the UN DESA’s
2020 VNR Handbook
existing national platforms and processes, such as the UPR and other international treaties, can contribute to VNR production and analysis. However, and particularly given the complementarity between the
complementarity between the UPR
and the VNR
more can be done in operationalizing these links through post-VNR processes for stronger SDG 16 implementation. The pledge to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first represents a commitment to the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination.

How Can This Be Used?
The below section offers potential tools and opportunities for more coordinated and impactful reporting and improved policy coherence.

DIHR identified more than 90 percent of the 169 SDG targets as directly linked to human rights instruments and labour standards. In identifying overlap, DIHR’s SDG-Human Rights Data Explorer allows users to explore the links between human rights and the SDGs. Users can explore recommendations in relation to all 17 SDGs and 169 targets to help identify priority areas for national SDG action plans, measures to tackle discrimination and exclusion, and vulnerable groups that may require additional support.

286 Human Rights Data Explorer. https://sdgdata.humanrights.dk/
The database uses an algorithm to automatically identify links between the SDG targets and over 150,000 recommendations and observations from international human rights mechanisms, including the UPR, UN Treaty Bodies and the Special Procedures under the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). The database identifies 30,519 recommendations related to SDG 16, including 15,582 from the UPR, 2,595 from special procedures and 12,342 from treaty bodies.

Similarly, some states have started linking SDG and human rights reporting and implementation processes through national online databases (such as the 287, 288

National Recommendations Tracking Database

Universal Human Rights Index (UHRI)

or the 289

Simore+

The Open Government Partnership

has found that a number of commitments made under OGP national action plans relate to SDG 16 targets and means of implementation. 290 Every two years, OGP members are required to submit concrete commitments every that are co-created between government reformers and civil society organizations. Every year, an independent assessment of progress is conducted by OGP’s Independent Reporting Mechanism. These reports are public and provide a learning and accountability tool that ensures progress is tracked. OGP Action Plans are effective in getting time-bound, independently monitored commitments from governments on policy reform towards many SDG 16 related issues, for governments and civil society.

288 UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) Universal Human Rights Index (UHRI)
Canada: Translating SDG 16 Commitments Through OGP and the Access to Justice Secretariat, cont.

Interdepartmental taskforce, which seeks to share information and engage with equity-seeking communities to ensure the federal response to COVID-19 is adapted where possible to the needs of these communities.

Recognizing that access to justice and open government are mutually supportive, Justice Canada has proposed that an Open Justice commitment be included in Canada’s upcoming National Action Plan on Open Government (NAP). The key principles of open justice – transparency, accountability, innovation and partnership – are embedded throughout the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDG 16 specifically urges us to develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. The NAP process brings with it a particularly useful engagement factor, a multi-stakeholder forum and an independent review mechanism that engages civil society. The OGP has been useful for alignment, particularly in terms of the Joint Declaration on Open Government for the Implementation of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and concrete resources to advance justice policy work.

Given its commitment to access to justice, internationally and domestically, Justice Canada has been able to effectively bridge foreign and domestically focused justice work. While this new engagement strategy through the OGP NAP process has not yet been fully put in place due to delays related to COVID-19, it may inform how OGP NAP reporting can be more effectively applied to future VNRs.

* This case study draws from interviews with Open Government, Justice Canada, Government of Canada.

Regional organizations also offer an opportunity to align SDG 16-related reporting for more coherent and impactful policymaking and stakeholder engagement. For example, regional organizations, such as the

Council of Europe,

can support SDG 16 advancement and reporting, through such conventions, by highlighting the overlap in subject matter and data used by governments, members or otherwise, in following up on these conventions.

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293 Council of Europe. 16 Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Council of Europe Contribution to the United Nations 2030 agenda for sustainable development goals. https://www.coe.int/en/web/un-agenda-2030/goal-16
Council of Europe: Regional Organizations, VNR Processes and SDG 16

Rather than creating new activities, programs or projects, the Council of Europe (CoE) has framed and labelled its on-going work in SDG terms. As a regional organization of 47 member states founded on the principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, its reporting mechanisms and subject matter provide an opportunity for member states that are reporting on SDG 16 to pull from Council of Europe data and vice-versa. For example, and though not exhaustive, the following is a listing of conventions as related to SDG 16: the European Convention on Human Rights, the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data Framework, and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Conventions are legally binding treaties, if ratified, though with varying degrees of follow-up depending on the context).

To this end, and in reporting progress in adherence to a convention, the Council of Europe may then offer concrete recommendations through their advisory committees to one of its member state.

The CoE has created a website that provides key information for each SDG. Member States can use this information to illustrate that their participation in the CoE also contributes to national implementation of the relevant SDG and this can be referred to in the VNRs. While Member States themselves are primarily responsible for implementing the SDGs, the CoE, as an international organization, is there to assist and help facilitate the process.

* This case study draws from interviews with the Directorate of External Relations within the Council of Europe.

Similarly, UN conventions, such as the

**UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC)**

as well as historic anniversaries, such as **Beijing +25** offer additional opportunities to leverage data and reporting mechanisms for more coherent and coordinated policy and programming across institutions. Many of these processes, from the UPR to the UNCAC, will continue beyond the 2030, so engaging and linking with these processes will be important for sustainability.

**Key Resources:**

- Council of Europe Contribution to the United Nations 2030 agenda for sustainable development goals; SDGs and Cooperation Activities, Council of Europe;
- Democracy and Peacebuilding in the Framework of SDG 16, International IDEA (2020);
- National Human Rights Institutions as a Driving Force for Sustainable Development, DIHR;
- NMRFs – A key State structure for effective reporting, coordination and implementation of human rights recommendations, Universal Rights Group, Geneva (2016);
- Forthcoming guidance for UNCTS on UPRs (OHCHR)

**Interviews:** Catherine McKinnon, Justice Canada; Max Gilbert, Council of Europe, Armend Bekaj, International IDEA.

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