

Parallel Session: How to ensure the reflection of local realities in national reporting (focus on the Voluntary National Review process)?

14 March 2019 (afternoon)

Objective(s):

- Participants have a good understanding of how the Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) processes works in practice and the opportunities it presents
- Participants conduct a critical assessment of the effectiveness of the VNR process at including the points of views of civil society organisations (CSOs) and local authorities (LAs)
- Participants discuss improvements or alternatives to the current reporting system

Expected results:

- Suggestions for the VNR process, particularly in light of the upcoming HLPF review
- Assessment of at least one voluntary national review and how the process included multiple stakeholders at national level
- Lessons learned on the involvement of multiple stakeholders in the VNR process, including suggestions for better EU support

Background:

The progress that countries make in nationalising and achieving the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is reported at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), where countries volunteer to present their national report. While the HLPF focuses on a certain number of SDGs annually, the VNRs are supposed to cover all SDGs. To date, there has been a high willingness by countries to present VNRs – about 150 countries by 2019 – but there is neither a clear understanding of how to use this review process effectively, nor a clear vision on how to support and ensure CSO/LA involvement. Currently, discussions are ongoing on the possible reform of the HLPF, including the VNR process. The EU is expected to present information on how it is implementing the SDGs, including in partner countries through development policy. Voluntary reports have been used to monitor other UN commitments and stocktaking around such reports has been undertaken. Specifically, the issue of the quality of inclusion of multiple stakeholders in the drafting of the reports at national level has sometimes led to civil society engaging in alternative or “shadow” reports to those of the government. This session aims to look at the process further around the 2030 Agenda and draw lessons on the quality of the inclusion of PFD partners for reporting with a focus on developing countries.



Methodology:

A moderated panel in which speakers will give short inputs to stimulate discussion and reflection. The discussion will then be open to all participants and the panellists.

Guiding questions:

- What can we learn from four years of experience with the HLPF (or past reporting processes), in terms of efficiency, inclusivity and follow-up of the process?
- How and for what can CSOs/LAs make (better) use of existing reporting processes?
- Can we suggest ways, in terms of reforming the process, to make it more efficient and inclusive?
- What role can the EU play to support CSO involvement in the VNR process?