

Handbook on Integrating South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the Voluntary National Reviews

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS

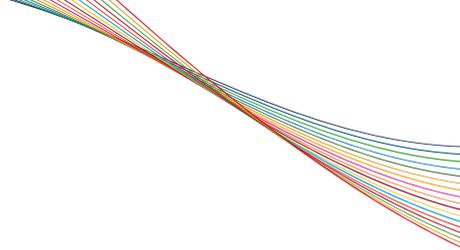


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JOINT FOREWORD

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As we approach the mid-point of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the global COVID19 pandemic, conflicts, impacts of climate change, disasters and other crises have set back progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and reversed human development for the first time in decades.

Amidst these multiple challenges, solutions and innovative strategies from the global South have and are delivering lasting results around the world. South-South and triangular cooperation – among countries facing similar challenges – continues to make a meaningful difference in countries' COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery, including toward achieving our overarching goal of eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions.

South-South and triangular cooperation are a valuable catalyst in galvanizing political will and in enhancing know-how to implement the much needed economic and social reforms to rescue the SDGs. Recognizing this, countries are increasingly integrating South-South and triangular cooperation in the preparation and presentation of their voluntary national reviews (VNRs).

The integration of South-South and triangular cooperation perspectives in the VNRs helps in tracking progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda more comprehensively and inclusively, and generating valuable evidence of South-South and triangular cooperation contributions toward achieving the SDGs.

The Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of VNRs and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) are committed to supporting developing countries in integrating South-South and triangular cooperation perspectives into the preparation and presentation of their VNRs. With this handbook, the Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of VNRs and UNOSSC are jointly responding to the 2022 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development Ministerial Declaration and the latest intergovernmental resolutions on South-South cooperation. The handbook provides step-by-step guidance, drawing from good practices, and examples, on integrating South-South and triangular cooperation in the preparation and presentation of VNRs. It was developed in close collaboration with Member States, UN Entities and relevant stakeholders. The handbook also complements the existing proposal of the Secretary-General for voluntary common reporting guidelines for VNRs at the High-Level Political Forum, the UN DESA Handbook for the Preparation of VNRs, and other VNR resource packages.

We take this opportunity to thank Ms. Leila Lora Santos and Mr. Dennis Bregala from Permanent Mission of the Philippines to United Nations, Mrs. Meriem El Hilali and Ms. Meryem Hamdouni of the Permanent Mission of Morocco to United Nations, for their valuable support during all stages of the preparation of this handbook, including organizing consultations with and gathering feedback from Member States. We are grateful to Mr. Bhushan Shrestha at United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation for his leadership and coordination of the development of the handbook in a highly consultative manner. Special thanks also go to Ms. Pytrik Oosterhof, Senior Sustainable Development Consultant at O-Land Consulting for her dedicated research and content development work in close collaboration with stakeholders. We extend our gratitude also to Member States, UNRCs, ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA, PAHO, FAO, IAEA, ILO, UNDESA, UNDP, UNIDO, UNOSSC, and other UN entities for their valuable inputs during the development of the handbook.

MESSAGE

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With the Outcome Document of the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, or BAPA+40, Member States recognize the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation in the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We do not however, appear to be reaching the milestones at this halfway point to 2030. It is therefore imperative that urgent and effective collaborative actions are taken to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs – including their monitoring and review. This handbook is a practical response to Member States demand, expressed in our 2022 HLPF Ministerial Declaration. Notably, in our resolution A/RES/77/185 we have encouraged United Nations entities to support developing countries in integrating development cooperation perspectives, including, in particular, South-South and triangular cooperation perspectives, into the preparation and presentation of the voluntary national review reports on sustainable development. This handbook is very timely and will surely help to facilitate the acceleration and review of the SDGs.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
CCA	Common Country Assessment
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
HLPF	High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development
INFF	Integrated National Financing Framework
IPRT	Integrated Planning and Reporting Toolkit
LAC	Latin America and Caribbean
LDC	Least developed country
NDC	National Determined Contribution
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SSC	South-South cooperation
SSC & TrC	South-South and Triangular cooperation
VNR	Voluntary National Review
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UN DESA	United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNOSSC	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
VLR	Voluntary Local Review

Handbook to Support Integrating South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the Voluntary National Reviews

1. Introduction

South-South and triangular cooperation (SSC & TrC) can greatly benefit the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as was reflected in the outcome document of the 40th anniversary of the 2nd High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation, which was held in Buenos Aires in 2019. Halfway to 2030, it has become clear that it will take urgent and additional efforts to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to the latest SDG progress report, the world is far from meeting many of the SDGs by 2030. To find lasting solutions, international cooperation is a must.¹

As highlighted by the United Nations Secretary-General,² the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development cannot be achieved without the contribution of SSC & TrC, indicating that “innovative forms of knowledge exchange, technology transfer, emergency response and recovery of livelihoods led by the South are transforming lives”. SSC & TrC shares the comprehensive vision of development embedded in the 2030 Agenda including the overarching goal of eradicating poverty. Investing in SSC & TrC can help accelerate the implementation of the SDGs by strengthening policies and institutions of governments, as well as by mobilizing multi-stakeholder support and partnerships. To this end, SDG 17 specifically calls for SSC & TrC in three of its targets:

Target 17.3

Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources (Indicator 17.3.1: Foreign direct investments, official development assistance and South-South Cooperation as a proportion of total domestic budget).³

Target 17.6

Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation, and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism.

Target 17.9

Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all Sustainable Development Goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation.

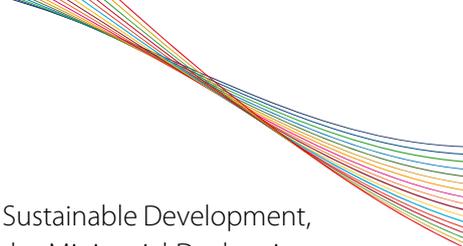
Recent global frameworks aimed at delivering on the SDGs, such as the Doha Programme of Action 2022–2031 (DPoA),⁴ have echoed the importance of SSC & TrC and called for increased efforts in this area. To help accelerate progress on the SDGs, this Handbook aims to strengthen action towards achieving the SDGs by integrating SSC &

1 United Nations, 2022.

2 2018 Global South-South Development (GSSD) Expo, New York.

3 As an increasing number of countries are engaged in South-South cooperation (SSC), the United Nations Statistical Commission welcomed the development of an initial conceptual framework for the measurement of SSC. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) leads the work on developing the common method to measure. The framework identifies criteria for reporting, i.e. sustainable development purpose; concessional nature; provision through official channels and voluntary reporting.

4 The Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2022–2031 introduces a new generation of strengthened commitments grounded in the principle of leaving no one behind (LNOB). The programme reaffirms the need to scale up global support to the least developed countries (LDCs).



TrC in the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).⁵ Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, countries are increasingly including SSC & TrC in the VNRs. This trend was recognized in the Ministerial Declaration of the 2022 High-level Political Forum (HLPF)⁶ as well as in the 2022 Report of the Secretary-General on the State of South-South Cooperation, which both stressed the importance of taking SSC & TrC into account in the VNRs.⁷ Moreover, the 2022 United Nations General Assembly Resolution on South-South Cooperation encourages United Nations entities to support developing countries in integrating development cooperation perspectives, in particular, SSC & TrC perspectives, into the preparation and presentation of the VNR reports.⁸ In response, United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), in collaboration with the Co-chairs of the Group of Friends of the Voluntary National Reviews (Philippines and Morocco), Member States, United Nations entities and other stakeholders, prepared this Handbook, which provides step-by-step guidance, drawing from good practices and examples on integrating SSC & TrC into the preparation and presentation of the VNRs.

1.1 Why integrate SSC & TrC into the voluntary national reviews?

The VNRs have become an important mechanism through which countries can accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Box 1.1). One of the main goals of the VNRs is to facilitate the sharing of experiences on SDG implementation and review efforts, including successes, challenges and lessons learned. Over the years, the VNR processes and national approaches to the follow-up and review of the SDGs have matured. By 2022, a total of 187 countries had presented VNRs to the United Nations High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF). To date, an increasing number of countries have conducted their second, third or fourth VNRs, and many are applying a systemic approach to measure SDG progress, making the mechanism a success in its own right.

Box 1.1 The Voluntary National Reviews

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process has been fundamental part of tracking progress on the implementation of the SDGs. The Agenda encourages countries to regularly conduct VNRs. These should be “inclusive reviews of the progress at national and subnational levels, which are country-led and country-driven”. The Agenda moreover calls for the Reviews to provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of relevant stakeholders.

To support countries in carrying out a VNR, the United Nations Secretary-General [Voluntary Common Reporting Guidelines](#) provide a framework for certain common elements within reports while allowing for flexibility, thus enabling countries to adapt to their own circumstance. In addition, the [Handbook for the Preparation of VNRs](#) supplements the reporting guidelines, and provides elementary building blocks and the basic, practical information on the steps that countries may take when preparing VNRs. This Handbook supplement and builds on the structure and recommendations provided from these guidance documents.

Sources: United Nations, 2015.

5 The UNOSSC Strategic Framework 2022–2025 aims to strengthen action towards achieving the SDGs, including by developing a handbook to support integrating SSC & TrC in the VNRs.

6 United Nations Economic and Social Council, 2022.

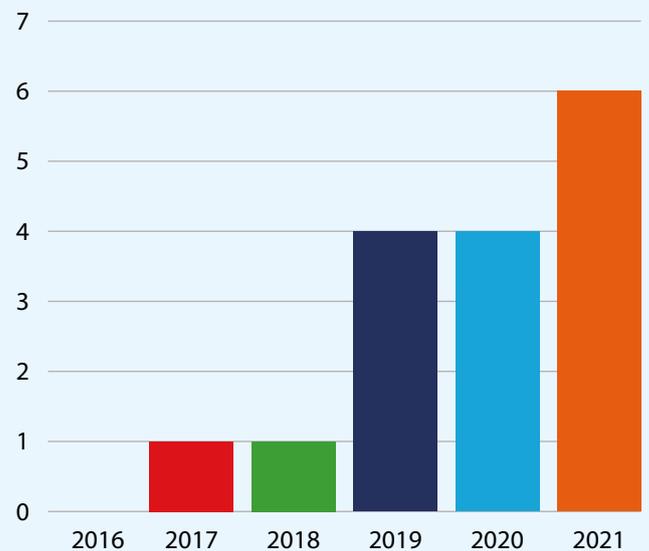
7 United Nations General Assembly, 2022.

8 Ibid.

In addition, a growing number of VNR countries are applying SSC & TrC initiatives, such as twinning, peer review and knowledge-sharing efforts during their VNR processes (Box 1.2).⁹ These can help accelerate the achievement of the SDGs by facilitating the sharing of experiences, best practices and lessons learned of national SSC & TrC approaches that have been applied during the VNRs and contribute to the SDGs (Annex III).

Overall, the integration of SSC & TrC approaches in the VNRs can help track progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development more comprehensively and inclusively while generating evidence of SSC & TrC's contributions to achieving the SDGs. Hence, the Handbook aims to provide support to Member States in advancing integration of SSC & TrC in the VNRs. A number of countries already report on SSC & TrC. For these countries, the Handbook can help apply a step-by-step approach to strengthening reporting on SSC & TrC going forward. For the countries that have not yet reported on SSC & TrC, the Handbook suggests key entry points to integrate SSC & TrC into the VNR process and report in a comprehensive manner.

Box 1.2 No. of reported twinning and peer review initiatives in VNR processes (2016/2021)



Source: Oosterhof, 2022.

1.2 What is the purpose of the Handbook?

The UNOSSC Handbook aims to support the Member States in advancing the integration of SSC & TrC in the VNRs. It also aims to support the Member States in reporting in the VNRs on how SSC & TrC has been leveraged and how it has contributed to the achievement of the SDGs, including through evidence and examples. These examples also highlight the potential of SSC & TrC to accelerate progress towards the SDGs, serving as an inspiration to other countries. The Handbook moreover aims to foster collaboration and peer learning among VNR countries during the VNR process. This can strengthen VNR preparation, promote knowledge sharing and peer learning, and introduce new approaches that can help accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.

The Handbook will serve as a companion to the tools already in use to guide VCR process, including the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) [Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews](#)¹⁰ as well as the [UN DESA voluntary common guidelines](#)¹¹ (Box 1.1).¹² The use of the UNOSSC Handbook will contribute to achieving several results, such as advancing the integration of SSC & TrC perspectives globally in VNRs in various ways (Box 1.3).

⁹ An assessment was carried out of the 2016–2021 VNR reports in preparation of the Handbook.

¹⁰ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), 2023.

¹¹ UN DESA, 2021.

¹² Other guidance and training can also be considered, for example, the E-course: Agenda 2030, the UN Reform and Decent Work with a South-South approach, which was developed by the International Labour Organization and other United Nations agencies.

Box 1.3 Expected results from the use of the Handbook

- More Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) submitted to the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) integrate the SSC & TrC cooperation perspectives.
- More Member States receive capacity development and technical advisory support from the United Nations system to integrate SSC & TrC perspectives in VNRs.
- Tracking progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including towards achieving the SDGs and SDG targets becomes more comprehensive and inclusive, and generates evidence of SSC & TrC's contributions to achieving the SDGs.
- More Member States consider integrating SSC & TrC as a modality where appropriate to accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

The Handbook offers suggestions and recommendations on how Member States can strengthen SSC & TrC in the VNR process as well as the VNR report. It outlines various elements to consider in the VNR process, as well as ways to include SSC & TrC content in the VNR. It can thereby help build capacities for national VNR processes moving forward. Prior to developing the Handbook, the VNR reports of 2016–2021 were reviewed to assess how SSC & TrC has been reported on by VNR countries. The development of the Handbook was coordinated in close collaboration with the Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of the Voluntary National Reviews, the Member States, UN DESA, United Nations Regional Commissions, the United Nations Inter-Agency Mechanism for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, and other relevant stakeholders.

2. What is understood by South-South and Triangular Cooperation?

SSC & TrC's important role in the global cooperation architecture for sustainable development is to drive and complement North-South cooperation. This role has been recognized by a number of multilateral agreements, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.¹³ In addition, the scale, scope, volume and number of stakeholders of SSC & TrC continue to grow, including by promoting partnership initiatives through mutual learning and the sharing of knowledge, experiences and best practices.¹⁴ The many comparative advantages of SSC & TrC are listed in Box 1.4.

Box 1.4 What are the advantages of SSC & TrC?

- has low transaction costs;
- emphasizes speed of service and project delivery;
- offers greater flexibility;
- embraces the use of national systems, capacity and demand-driven approaches;
- offers complementarity of capacities; and
- promotes the sharing of relevant solutions among partners facing common development challenges in similar contexts.
- More Member States consider integrating SSC & TrC as a modality where appropriate, accelerates progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, hence more Member States consider integrating it.

Source: UNOSSC, 2022a.

Box 1.5 Priority objectives of United Nations support to SSC & TrC

- Support and align with national plans and priorities 
- Respond to the specific development challenges of developing countries 
- Align with the UNSDCF 
- Align with international, regional and normative frameworks 
- Leverage the unique role and comparative advantages of United Nations entities 
- Ensure long-term engagement and sustainability 
- Strengthen human, technical and institutional capacity development 
- Improve exchange of experiences, resources and know-how 
- Apply results-focused programming, monitoring and impact 

Source: UNOSSC, 2022a.

¹³ United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), 2020.

¹⁴ Ibid.

2.1 Objectives, definitions and principles

The main objective of SSC & TrC is to develop mutually benefiting initiatives between developing countries aimed at achieving their own national development goals, including the SDGs. These are supported by the United Nations in various ways (Box 1.5). The definition of SSC & TrC is broad and based on the acknowledgement that no one size fits all. The basis, rationale, principles and key actors of SSC & TrC were set out in the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (1978), reaffirmed in the Nairobi Outcome Document of the High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation (2009), and further reaffirmed in the Buenos Aires Plan of Action Plus 40 (BAPA+40) outcome document. The 2016 framework of operational guidelines on United Nations support to SSC & TrC provides working definitions that capture the broad understanding of SSC & TrC among Member States and stakeholders at all levels. These working definitions are also reflected in the United Nations System-wide Strategy on South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development, 2020–2024.

The definitions of SSC & TrC applied in this Handbook are provided in Box 2.1.

Box 2.1 What is South-South and Triangular Cooperation?

- **South-South cooperation** is a form of partnership whereby two or more developing countries pursue, through concerted efforts, their individual and/or shared national capacity development objectives through exchanges of knowledge, skills, resources and technical know-how and bilateral, regional and interregional collection actions. This involves partnerships involving governments, regional organizations, civil society, academia the private sector and other relevant stakeholders, for their individual and/or mutual benefit within and across regions while taking into account the principles of South-South cooperation.
- **Triangular cooperation** involves Southern-driven partnerships between three or more developing countries, or between two or more developing countries supported by a developed country or developed countries, or multilateral organization(s), in the services of peoples and peace among States. It builds partnerships and trust, and combines diverse resources and capacities, under ownership of the requesting developing country, to achieve the SDGs – including in the context of multilateral development cooperation initiatives. It adds value by leveraging and mobilizing technical and financial resources, sharing experiences, promoting new areas of cooperation, and combining affordable, context-based development solutions under flexible arrangements and agreed shared modalities.

Source: UNOSSC, 2020, 'United Nations System-Wide Strategy on South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development'

2.2 Principles

What are the guiding principles of South-South cooperation?

The guiding normative and operational principles of South-South cooperation (SSC) were formulated in the Buenos Aires Plan of Action of 1978 and reiterated in the 2009 Nairobi Outcome Document of the High-Level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. Since SSC is based on, *inter alia*, the principles of national sovereignty and ownership, it is the prerogative of developing countries to initiate, organize and manage SSC activities, as well as their programming and mobilization of inputs and financing. Developed countries and United Nations development system organizations play promotional and catalytic roles (Annex I).

Source: UNOSSC, 2022b.

Box 2.2 South-South cooperation's guiding principles

Normative

- Solidarity
- National ownership and leadership
- Mutual benefit
- Partnerships among equals
- Non-conditionality
- Complementarity
- Respect for national sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs

Operational

- Mutual accountability and transparency
- Development effectiveness
- Coordination of evidence and results-based initiatives
- Multi-stakeholder approach

Source: UNOSSC, 2022b.

2.3 Examples of South-South and Triangular Cooperation

SSC & TrC increasingly takes different and evolving forms, including:

- Technical cooperation
- Experience, information and knowledge exchange
- Training
- Capacity building
- Partnership development.

The above are aimed at achieving sustainable development through the promotion of, *inter alia*, economic cooperation, including trade, investment, infrastructure development and connectivity; agriculture and rural development; social security; food security and nutrition; food safety; health; energy; disaster risk reduction; addressing climate change; mutual learning; and the coordination of development policies and strategies among developing countries.¹⁵ SSC & TrC also played an important role during the COVID-19 pandemic in, for example, vaccine distribution, supporting socioeconomic responses to the pandemic and in sharing good practices on socioeconomic measures during lockdown (Box 2.3).

15 United Nations, 2019.

Box 2.3 Example of SSC & TrC' s contribution to the SDGs: Towards universal access to COVID-19 vaccines and a global response to end the pandemic

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Azerbaijan, chairing the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Turkic-Speaking States, was among the first countries actively engaged in mobilizing efforts of the wider international community, in the spirit of multilateralism, cooperation and solidarity, to address the pandemic and its negative consequences by:

- setting an international agenda to fight COVID-19 in developing and least developed countries;
- providing financial support to international organizations; and
- delivering medical items, equipment and financial support to foreign governments.

Financial and humanitarian assistance to around 80 countries both directly and through international organizations was provided to support the fight against COVID-19 in various areas, included health, education and social well-being as well as food and security. Approximately 60 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and other regions were provided with medical items and equipped to deliver public health services to their citizens. The initiative aims to contribute to SDG 3 (targets: 3b, 3c and 3.3) and SDG 17 (targets 17.6, 17.14 and 17.16).

Source: UNOSSC, 2022b.

Together with political dialogue and financial cooperation, SSC & TrC has promoted many knowledge and expertise exchanges through programmes, projects and initiatives that have helped solve specific problems in the countries of the Global South (Box 2.4).

Box 2.4 A platform for South-South Cooperation – the Centre of Excellence for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Based in Aruba, the Centre of Excellence for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) offers a platform for South-South cooperation (SSC) serving all SIDS as they address their common sustainable development challenges. Established by the Government of Aruba, UNDP and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Centre helps to facilitate exchanges of knowledge and experiences to stimulate innovation and resilience in small, insular developing countries. SSC enables these countries to cooperate on sustainable practices in areas such as energy, public-private partnerships, water management, the environment, tourism and public health. Its initiatives include online courses on renewable energy and the development of an online repository of knowledge on the Sustainable Development Goals in Small Island Development States, including Antigua, Jamaica, the Seychelles and Vanuatu.

Source: Kingdom of the Netherlands, 2017.

Good practices of SSC & TrC that contribute to the SDGs highlight the spirit of multilateralism and can take various forms, for instance: the 'One Belt, One Road' initiative (Box 2.5), a training centre in Indonesia partnering with a food authority in the United Kingdom to share food packaging and labelling skills with technicians in several African, Caribbean, Central American and South American countries; a United Nations-sponsored project for Chinese private investment in Africa that transformed into a permanent South-South chamber of commerce; and training of medical personnel in regional centres in Asia and the Pacific who in turn train their peers in neighbouring countries.¹⁶ Another example of cooperation is the India, Brazil and South Africa Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation (IBSA Fund),

¹⁶ UNOSSC, 2022.

whose purpose is to identify replicable and scalable projects that can be disseminated to interested developing countries as examples of good practices in the fight against poverty and hunger. Since it became operational in 2006, the Fund has supported 42 projects across 35 developing countries on a demand-driven basis.

Many of these initiatives contribute to specific SDGs and should be featured in the VNR reports in addition to foreign investment and other multilateral activities that can be classified as SSC & TrC. Moreover, SSC & TrC can be applied during the VNR process in the form of VNR countries, or groups of VNR countries, partnering with each other to carry out twinning or peer review activities. Considering these examples, the following section outlines two perspectives that can help integrate SSC & TrC in the VNRs.

Box 2.5 SSC & TrC: The One Belt, One Road initiative

The Algerian 2019 Voluntary National Review (VNR) highlights a 2018 agreement with China on affordable energy and other areas as well as 'The Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road in the 21st Century' initiative, which aims to strengthen political ties and economic partnerships between countries throughout the economic belt and the silk road, facilitating connectivity of infrastructure networks, the development of resources as well as industrial cooperation and financial integration between countries concerned. The 'One Belt, One Road' initiative is based on all existing bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation mechanisms.

Source: Le Gouvernement de la République algérienne.

3. Two ways to integrate SSC & TrC in the VNRs

Based on the above definitions and guiding principles, the Handbook focuses on fostering SSC & TrC from two perspectives. First, and as mentioned, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encourages countries to conduct VNRs regularly in order to document progress on all the SDGs and the principles. The second perspective is more process-related and includes the 2030 Agenda's call for the review process to provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of relevant stakeholders. Based on these two perspectives, the next sections look at strengthening SSC & TrC in the VNRs in terms of:

- 1. VNR process:** Applying SSC & TrC activities/approaches as a part of the VNR preparations
- 2. VNR content:** Reporting on SSC & TrC efforts and achievements in the VNR report.



3.1 Process: Applying SSC & TrC activities as a part of the VNR preparations

The VNR process is considered most meaningful when it involves an inclusive, participatory, transparent and thorough review. The process must be evidence-based, produce tangible lessons learned and solutions, and must be followed by concrete action and collaboration that drives SDG implementation.¹⁷ VNR countries are partnering with each other during their VNR process or with groups of countries in twinning or peer review efforts. Knowledge sharing and learning are also provided by the United Nations system, including UN DESA and the Regional Commissions through global and regional VNR workshops (Box 3.1).

Box 3.1 Applying SSC & TrC activities as a part of the VNR preparations

SSC & TrC can be practised in various ways during the VNR process:

- twinning of two or three VNR countries in the same region conducting a VNR in the same year
- peer reviewing of country VNR drafts;
- participating global and regional United Nations workshops and capacity-building and peer learning activities;
- VNR collaboration among several countries.

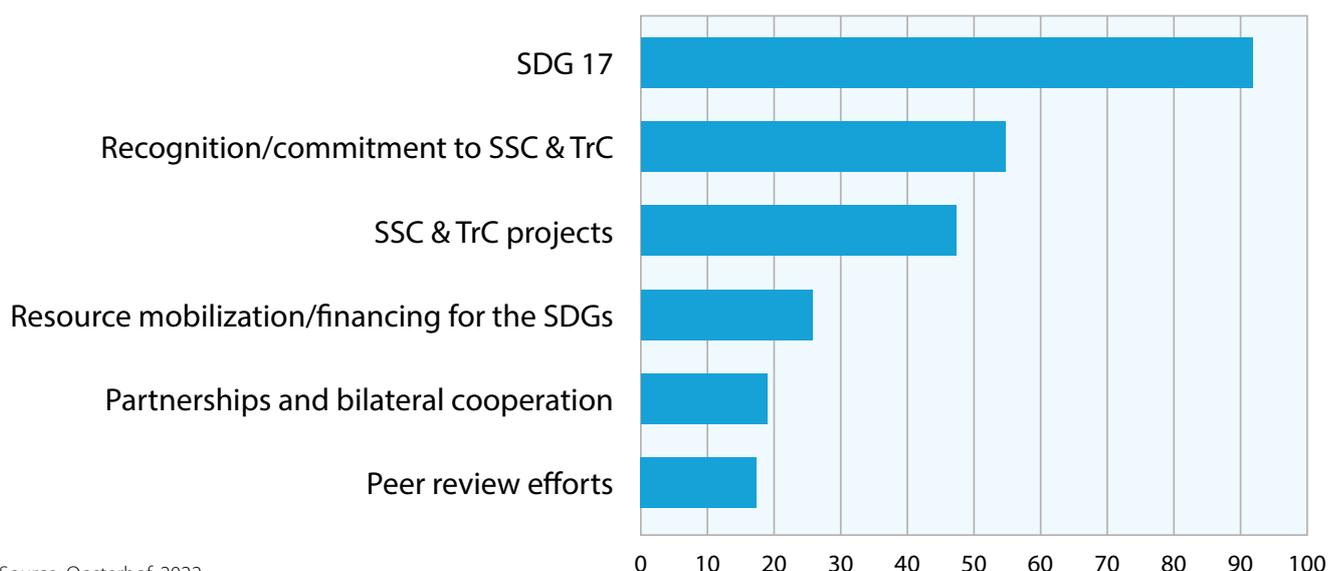
VNR Preparation Process



3.2 Content: Reporting on SSC & TrC efforts and achievements in the VNR Report

VNR reports feature a variety of information, often following the Voluntary Common Guidelines.¹⁸ Countries are encouraged to share experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A review of the VNR reports 2016–2021¹⁹ showed that information on SSC & TrC in the VNR reports takes a variety of forms, such as in the context of SDG17 or the means of implementation. Other forms are reporting on SSC & TrC projects and initiatives, feedback from peer review or twinning efforts, and follow-up from earlier VNR cycles that were carried out by the country. Some countries include a chapter on SSC & TrC in their VNR report (Box 3.2).

Box 3.2 Content on SSC & TrC reported in the VNR reports, 2016–2021



Source: Oosterhof, 2022.

¹⁸ UN DESA, 2021.

¹⁹ Oosterhof, 2022.

Hence, content on SSC & TrC can be reported as follows:

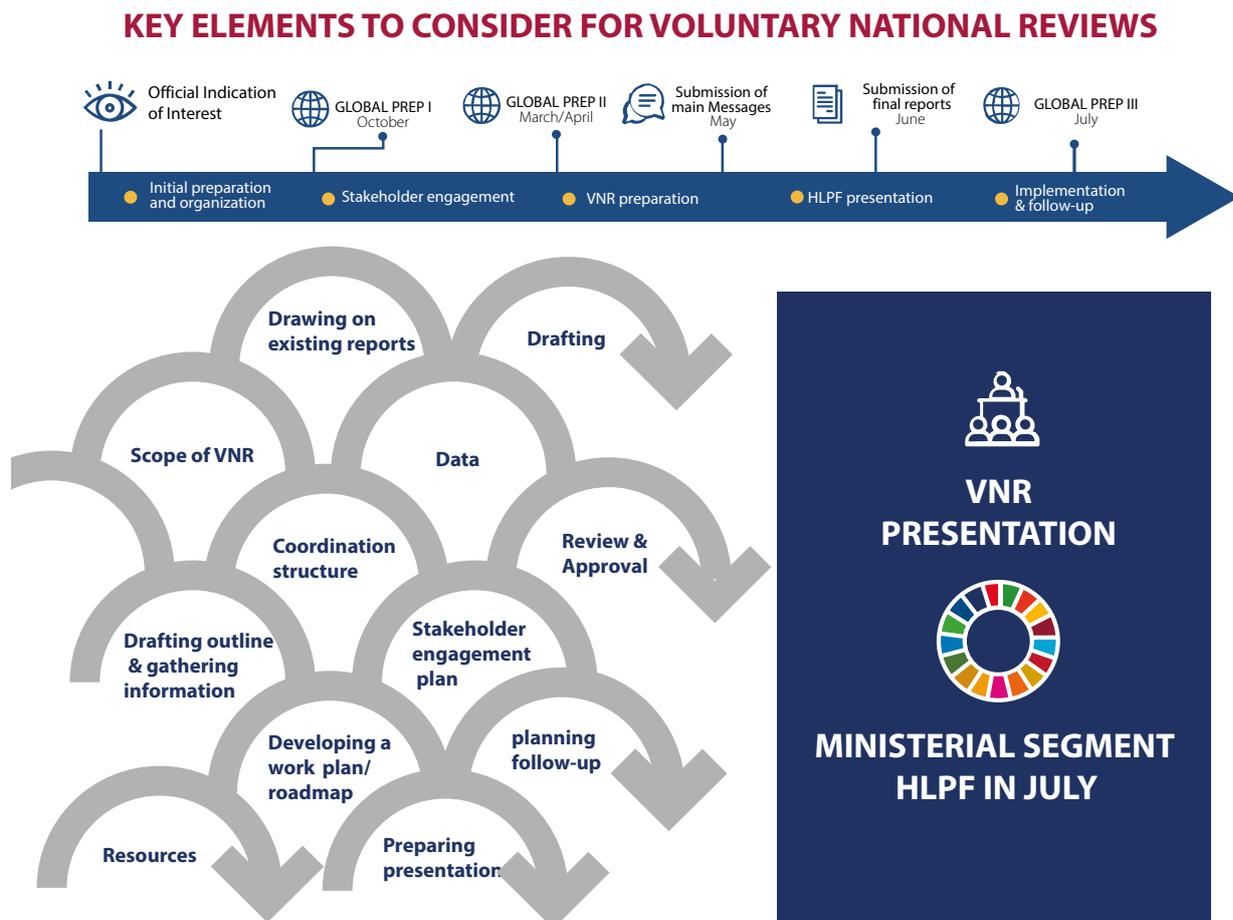
- as a part of SDG 17 reporting efforts, including partnerships and bilateral/international cooperation agreements;
- in the context of SDG implementation, resource mobilization and securing financing for the SDGs;
- in SSC & TrC projects and initiatives (and their contribution to specific SDGs);
- in a chapter on SSC & TrC;
- in highlights of peer review efforts;
- in follow-up from SSC & TrC reporting from the country's previous VNR reporting cycle.



4. Entry points to integrate SSC & TrC in the VNRs

The decisions on the choice of SSC & TrC content to report on and whether to apply SSC & TrC in the VNR process are subject to early VNR planning efforts. To strengthen SSC & TrC in the VNRs from the two perspectives indicated above, the following VNR preparation timeline should be established. As shown in Figure 1, the review typically consists of several broad phases, with some occurring at the same time. These occur within a timeframe from the official indication of interest to submission of the final report and the VNR presentation at the HLPF.

Figure 1. Key elements to consider for the VNR preparation



Source: UN DESA, 2023.

Within this timeframe, a first phase consists of initiating the VNR process, followed by efforts to prepare and organize the VNR process. At the start of the VNR preparation, the country is encouraged to establish a coordination structure,²⁰ for example, a task force or coordination team. Once the team has been established, decisions regarding the scope of the VNR need to be made as well as setting aside resources for the VNR process. The team can then start to look at drafting an outline and developing a work plan for the VNR process. As a part of this stage, information and data need to be reviewed and gathered that can help substantiate the content of the report. Moreover, stakeholder engagement activities need to be planned. The team then can recommend how SSC & TrC can be incorporated in the outline and the VNR process.

²⁰ In some cases, coordination structures have already been established as a part of a previous VNR or is built on existing institutional structures.

Based on this sequence of events, the Handbook suggests focusing on specific elements of the VNR process that provide for useful entry points to ensure the strengthening of SSC & TrC in the VNRs, including by featuring SSC & TrC content as well as applying SSC & TrC in the VNR preparatory process. While many of these entry points reflect a chronological order, some, for example, twinning, may already have to be considered in the early stages; some entry points may be found in two or more stages at the same time. The next sections illustrate when and how SSC & TrC can be incorporated in the process following these entry points (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Entry points to integrate SSC & TrC in the VNRs



4.1 Kick-off

Generally, the VNR process starts at the initiation phase, when the decision to carry out a VNR has been made and communicated to the President of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).²¹ Already at this stage it is important to consider how SSC & TrC will be applied during the VNR process (see section 3.1) and what content on SSC & TrC is intended to be included (see section 3.2). Considerations should be made if the country wishes to enter into a twinning, peer learning or triangular cooperation exercise with other VNR countries as a part of its process. More on the options to engage in these activities is provided in sections 4.2 and 4.3. However, since twinning is implemented throughout the VNR preparation, with joint activities during a 6–9-month period, ideally a decision should be made if the country wishes to participate in SSC & TrC during the VNR process, and on what mechanisms it wishes to apply.



Partnering with other VNR countries in a twinning exercise during the VNR process can help assess, review and provide feedback on the VNR process and draft report, and can have various learning and performance-related benefits (Box 4.1.1).

21 UN DESA, 2023.

Box 4.1.1 What is twinning and what are the benefits?

Twinning connects two or more countries in the region that are preparing their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) in the same year. The aim of twinning is to strengthen the preparation of VNRs through peer learning. By promoting the exchange of good practices, lessons learned and knowledge among partner countries, twinning can support partnerships and cooperation that can strengthen the VNR process, improve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation, and enhance leadership on the SDGs.

The United Nations Regional Commissions can support the twinning approach. For instance, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) provides financial, facilitation and coordination support to link the countries during their VNR process. The programme involves study tours, online workshops and joint presentations and side events at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) and regional forums.

The benefits of twinning

- better VNR preparation: 'live' learning from peers and exchange of approaches;
- shared problem-solving: tips; advice on navigating the VNR process and tricky issues;
- improved tacit knowledge of reforms undertaken by peers: visiting institutions and meeting officials in charge of social economic reforms can support SDG acceleration;
- increased profile of VNR presentation: joint events at the HLPF and regional forums can increase the profile and outreach of the VNR;
- improved confidence: Increased momentum in implementing a multi-stakeholder approach to the VNR and SDG monitoring and implementation;
- stronger connections with stakeholders and counterparts in the country and beyond.

Source: ESCAP, 2023b.

Based on the group of VNR countries that will report to the next HLPF, it is recommended to discuss the criteria to be considered when partnering with other VNR countries and potentially engage the relevant United Nations Country Team (UNCT) or Regional Commission²² to explore partnering options (Box 4.1.2).²³ Considerations should be made regarding what the country would like to learn in the process as well as key approaches and reforms.

Box 4.1.2 Starting a twinning process

There are two ways to start a twinning/peer review exercise:

1. Reaching out to the Regional Commission, United Nations Country Team or the Resident Coordinator in your country to discuss interest and support to convene twinning partnerships
 - Regional Commission: www.dagdok.org/un-system/economical-and-social-council/regional-commissions
 - United Nations Country Teams: <https://unsdg.un.org/un-in-action/country-level?tab=countries-listing>
 - United Nations Resident's Coordinator's: <https://un-dco.org/meet-resident-coordinators>

22 DagDok. Guide to the UN documentation. Regional Commissions. www.dagdok.org/un-system/economical-and-social-council/regional-commissions

23 See also section 4.3.

Examples of criteria*

- Twinning countries should belong to the same region or sub-region.
- There should be language and cultural similarities, or a similar economic context (e.g. least developed country graduation).
- Twinning countries should be committed to multi-stakeholder approaches to the VNR.
- Countries should identify common challenges and priorities for SDG implementation.
- Engagement and interest of United Nations Resident Coordinator Offices should be present.
- There should be engagement and interest of learning from other countries and sharing their good practices.

2. Country-owned decision to partner

- Explore the list of countries that plan to submit a VNR in the year in question: <https://hlpf.un.org/countries>
- Decide on the criteria applied for the partner selection.
- Contact the respective VNR team, SDG focal point or the entity responsible for the VNR coordination in the country in question.
- Explore the list of countries that plan to submit a VNR in the year in question: <https://hlpf.un.org/countries>
- Decide on the criteria applied for the partner selection.
- Contact the respective VNR team, SDG focal point or the entity responsible for the VNR coordination in the country in question.

Examples of criteria*

- The country needs to have a similar economic status.
- The size of the country needs to be comparable.
- The country should have carried out a similar number of VNRs.
- The country should be in the same region.
- The country intends to follow the voluntary guidelines and/or the DESA VNR Handbook.

*These criteria are applied by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

Recommendations – Kick-off

- Consider the mechanism that can be applied to foster SSC & TrC during the VNR process, e.g. twinning, peer learning or United Nations VNR workshops.
- Consider partnering with VNR countries to help assess, review and provide feedback on the VNR process and the draft report. Based on the group of VNR countries that will submit a report in the same year, discuss what criteria can be considered when partnering with other VNR countries.
- Express interest in joining a formal twinning programme or connecting with another VNR country during the VNR process, either bilaterally or by engaging the United Nations Country Team or Regional Commission to explore partnering options.
- Consider what you would like to learn in the process and key approaches and reforms you would like to share.



4.2 Organization and preparation of the VNR

After the initial kick-off phase, the next step is to organize and prepare the review, which consists of various elements²⁴ (Box 4.2.1).

Box 4.2.1 Elements of the organization and preparation of the VNR

- developing a work plan and roadmap;
- establishing a coordination structure for the VNR;
- developing draft outline, storyline/narrative of the VNR and information gathering;
- ensuring a multi-stakeholder engagement process, and engagement at different levels of government and with diverse stakeholders;
- gathering data and evidence and conducting analyses; and
- drawing on existing reports.

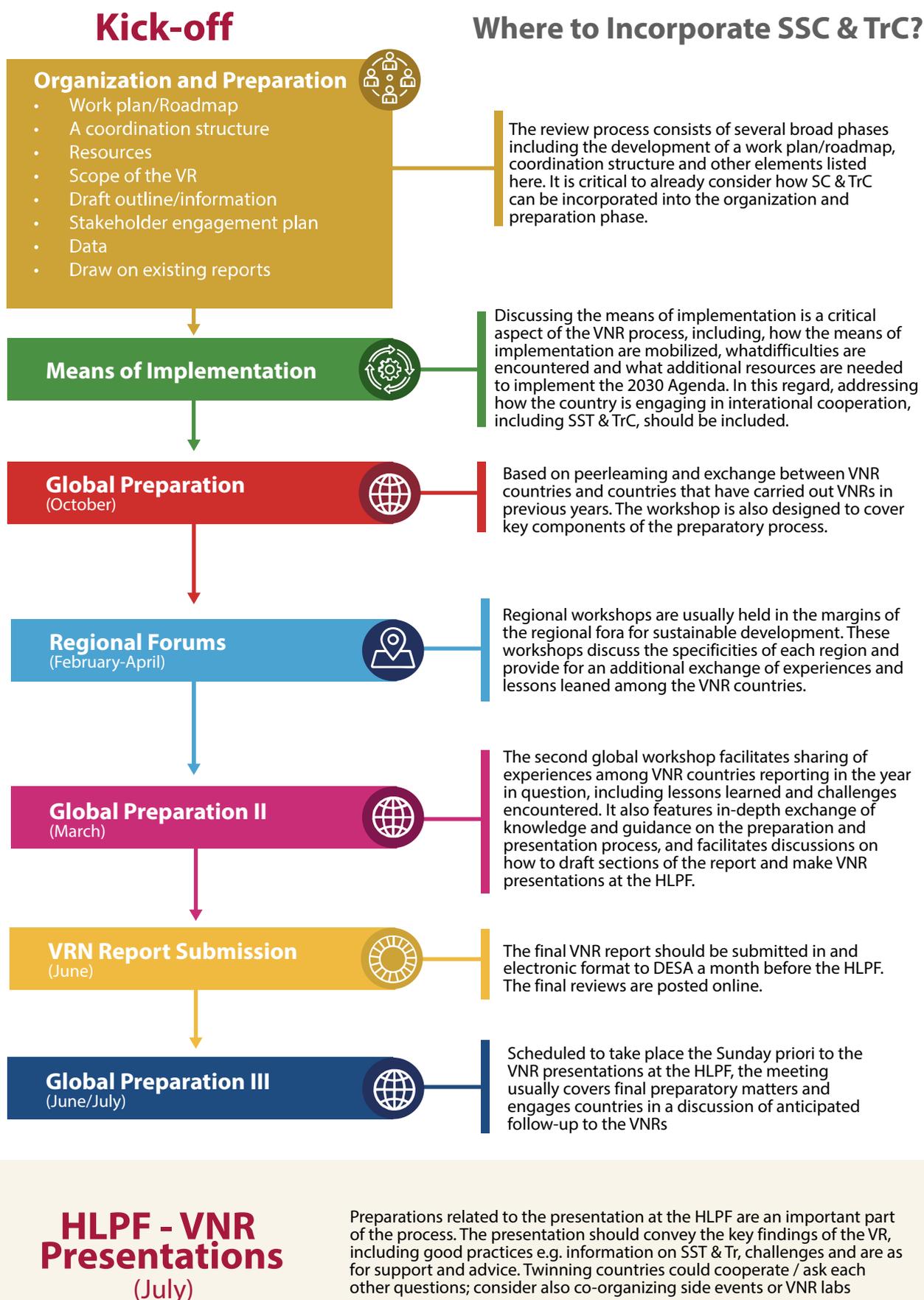
Entry points to integrate SSC & TrC in the VNRs	Kick-off
	Organization / preparation
	Engaging in SSC & TrC activities
	Preparatory workshops
	Report writing / Content of SSC & TrC
	Presentation at the HLPF
	Post-VNR

4.2.1 Work plan and roadmap

Countries are encouraged to develop a work plan, roadmap and/or inception report with key VNR deliverables. These should be aligned with the HLPF deadlines, including the delivery of main messages and the submission of the VNR report. Any SSC & TrC activity, including twinning, peer review or workshops, should be formally included in the work plan. The timeline (Figure 3) presented here can be considered, which highlights when and how SSC & TrC can be applied:

24 UN DESA, 2023.

Figure 3. Voluntary National Review timeline and where to incorporate SSC & TrC



As indicated in the timeline,²⁵ key activities to consider in the work plan, roadmap or inception report are the capacity-building support provided by the United Nations system. These are provided at the global, regional, subregional and country levels, and provide an opportunity for knowledge and experience sharing. Aligning the VNR work plan or roadmap with the timeline as suggested by the United Nations is strongly encouraged to enable SSC & TrC in the context of the capacity and peer learning offered by UN DESA and the Regional Commissions (Box 4.2.2).

Box 4.2.2 United Nations Voluntary National Review Capacity-Building Support – An opportunity for practising SSC & TrC

SSC & TrC can be practised by, inter alia, participating in the Voluntary National Review (VNR) capacity-building workshops. These workshops offer the opportunity to exchange information and learn from each other. They are held at the global and regional levels during the VNR preparatory phase:

Global workshops

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) organizes workshops for all participating VNR countries. They are designed to facilitate peer learning about the VNR preparations. Additional capacity-building support is made available by the United Nations system.

Regional and subregional workshops

The Regional Commissions support countries in the VNRs as well as the preparation for the High-level Political Forum (HLPF). Each year, most Regional Commissions organize regional or subregional VNRs workshops in the margins of the regional fora for sustainable development. The specificities of each region are discussed at these fora, and experiences and lessons learned are shared among the VNR countries. They serve an important role in the follow-up and review architecture, and often include peer review round tables discussing the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) progress. They also provide an opportunity to discuss SSC & TrC initiatives and how they contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The fora usually take place from February to April each year.

Source: UN DESA, 2023.

If the country has decided to engage in twinning/peer review, steps to set up a twinning arrangement need to be taken into consideration in the work plan and/or roadmap (Box 4.2.3).

Countries can share the work plan, roadmap or inception report, and attend each other's initial meetings. Details on the roadmap and stages of the VNR preparation can be shared in the VNR report, for instance, as an illustration, as in Denmark's VNR report of 2021 (Figure 4).

25 The timeline was developed based on the elements introduced in the DESA VNR Handbook.

Box 4.2.3 What steps are involved in a twinning exercise?

Twinning arrangements vary between countries depending on their interests. The steps could include the following:

Identify twinning partners

1. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) identify the new VNR countries interested in the Twinning Programme in coordination with Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) and national counterparts (Kick-off phase, section 4.1);
2. Countries propose suitable partners according to national priorities and interests.
3. Twinning countries are identified and finalized with the assistance of ESCAP and the RCOs.

Identify key stakeholders

4. Key stakeholders are identified to be involved in the twinning. Stakeholders could include representatives from the SDG Coordinating bodies/VNR units, representatives from the VNR working groups, local government, national statistics offices, civil society organizations, the private sector and parliamentarians, among others.

Twinning plan and study tour

5. An online community platform for twinning countries to communicate and share information is set up.
6. A joint twinning plan with specific activities and objectives is created.
7. If feasible, dates are set for the study tour and start planning in cooperation with the Resident Coordinator Office

Online workshops
and connecting
stakeholders



Peer review of
VNR drafts

Study tour to visit
key institutions and
exchange good
practice



Joint side-events at APFSD
and the High-level Political Forum
(HLPF) at the Asia and Pacific Forum
on Sustainable Development (APFSD)

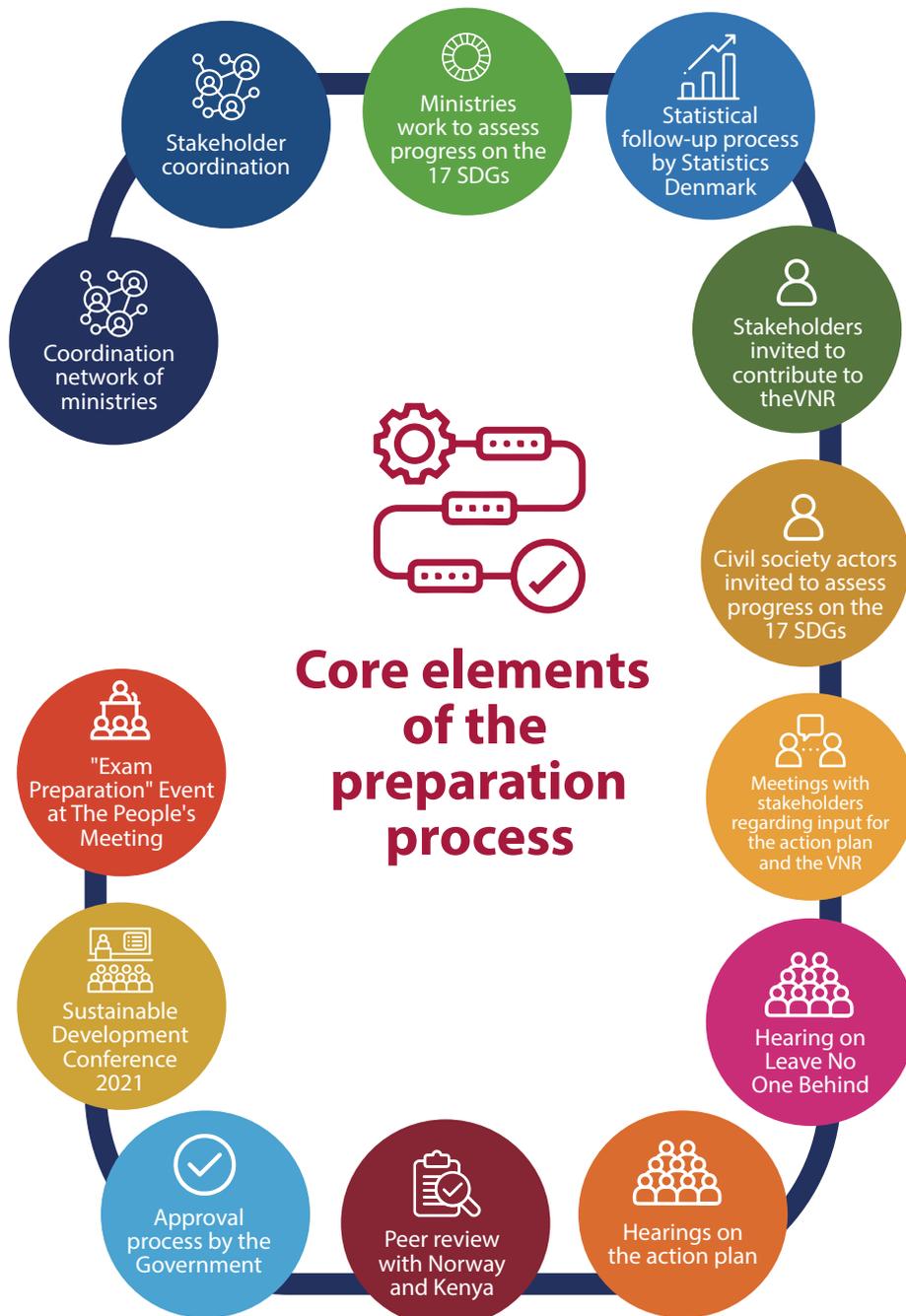


Source: ESCAP Twinning programme.

Recommendations – Work plan or roadmap

- Align the work plan or roadmap with the VNR timelines indicated by the United Nations.
- Ensure participation at the VNR workshops offered by the United Nations because these workshops provide for an opportunity for knowledge and experience sharing with other VNR countries.
- Plan for twinning or peer review exercises (with other VNR countries) during the VNR preparation process (follow the steps indicated in Box 4.2.3).

Figure 4. Overview of events, including triangular cooperation in the form of a peer review exercise



Source: Denmark, 2021 VNR.

4.2.2 Coordination structure

Countries are encouraged to appoint an entity within the government, which needs to be responsible for the overall coordination of the VNR. Setting up a small multidisciplinary advisory group is encouraged to lead the writing process. Collaboration with other relevant government ministries, agencies and relevant stakeholders is needed to provide information and data.²⁶ It is recommended that the drafting process be led by the government with the engagement of other stakeholders from the very beginning of the process.

To strengthen the integration of SSC & TrC, it is recommended to include a representative in the coordination team or in the advisory group that is responsible for SSC & TrC (Box 4.2.4).

Box 4.2.4 What should be the responsibilities of the SSC & TrC representative?

The representative should be responsible for:

- including SSC & TrC information in the VNR process;
- managing SSC & TrC-related information and data for the VNR and mapping it against the VNRs;
- ensuring that the agreed content and practices of SSC & TrC are included in the VNR process and report;
- liaising with the entities responsible for SSC & TrC aspects;
- coordinating twinning/peer review activities if envisaged

Recommendation – Coordination structure

- Identify a representative in the coordination team or in the advisory group who is responsible for including SSC & TrC in the VNR process and ensuring that information on SSC & TrC is reported in the VNR.
- The representative should ensure that the agreed information, data content and practices of SSC & TrC are included in the VNR process and report, and work closely with the entities responsible for these aspects (see Box 4.2.4).

4.2.3 Draft outline and information gathering

Countries are encouraged to develop a draft outline of the VNR report and decide on the length and structure of the review.²⁷ The voluntary common reporting guidelines aim to support Member States in conducting VNRs and make suggestions on the structure of the report that are helpful in developing a draft outline (Annex II).²⁸

To gather inputs, a list of bodies and agencies that provide data and information for the VNR should be prepared. Potential information of relevance for strengthening SSC & TrC in the VNRs depends on availability and can consist of a number of sources (Box 4.2.5).

²⁶ UN DESA, 2023.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ UN DESA, 2021.

Box 4.2.5 What sources of SSC & TrC information should be included?

- If there is any national framework or legislation related to SSC & TrC, they should be included in the VNR assessment process.
- If a national exercise on trends and opportunities for SSC & TrC* was carried out, the outcome and recommendations should be included in the information-gathering exercise.
- The United Nations Common Country Assessment (CCA) and country analysis or data from the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) can also serve as sources of information if they contain information related to SSC & TrC.
- Any SSC & TrC projects, initiatives or activities should be included.
- Any information regarding SSC & TrC in the context of Voluntary Local Review (VLR) should be considered.
- Financing related to SSC & TrC should be included.
- International partnerships/bilateral agreements should be included.

* In 2021, the UNOSCC Division for Arab, Europe States and the Commonwealth of Independent States developed the national stocktaking exercise that equip national partners and United Nations entities to leverage SSC & TrC for greater impact, especially in building back better from COVID-19 and meeting the commitments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The exercise aims to: (i) take stock; (ii) identify main challenges and opportunities; and (iii) develop a set of practical recommendations on SSC & TrC for national stakeholders and United Nations country teams.

Recommendations – Draft outline and information gathering

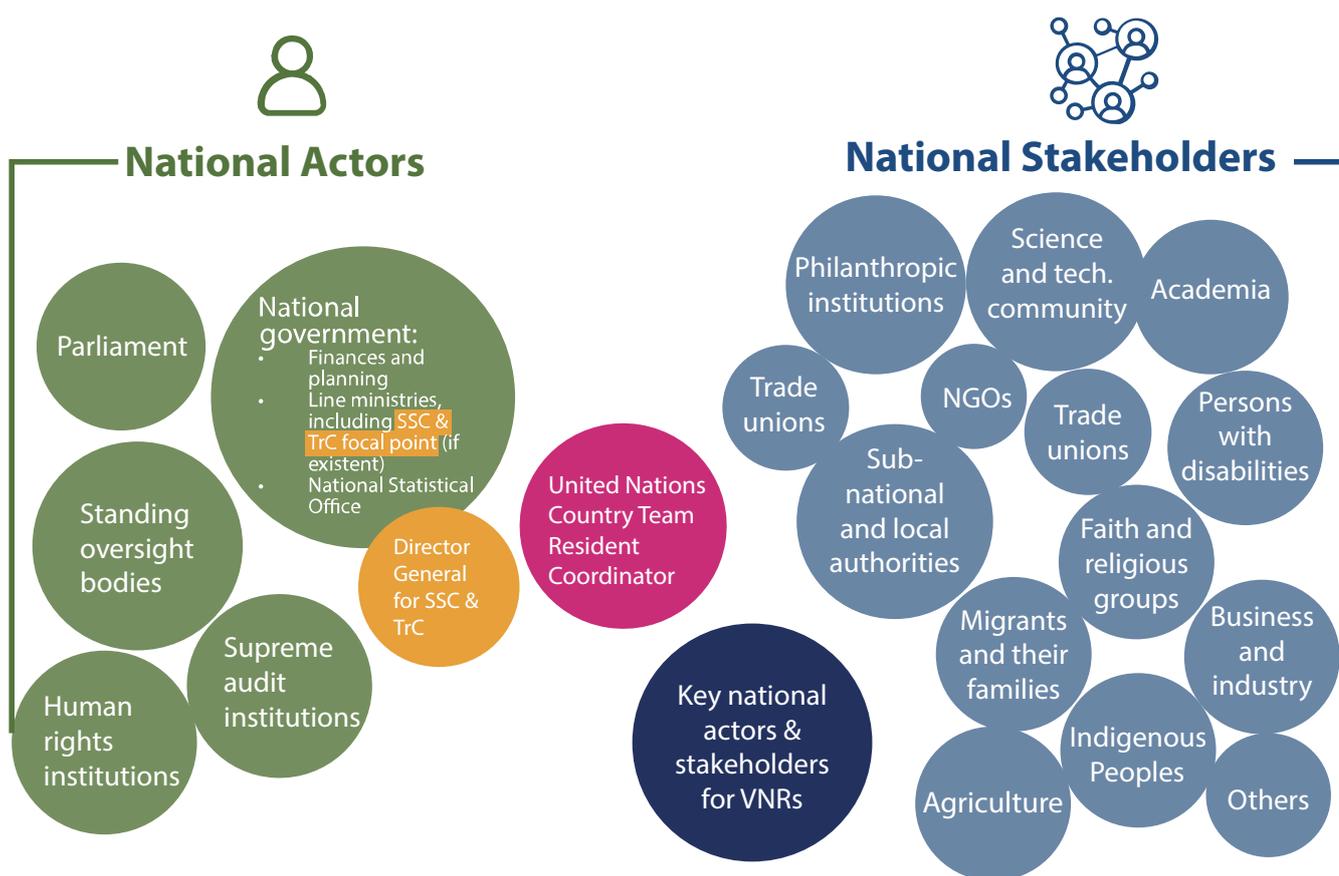
- Map and identify information, projects and initiatives on SSC & TrC.
- Consider what information on SSC & TrC should be included in the report, for example:
 - › information in the context of SDG 17, including partnerships (including indicators);
 - › information on resource mobilization and securing financing for the SDGs, in the context of ‘SDG means of implementation’;
 - › SSC & TrC projects, initiatives including bilateral/international cooperation agreements as well as exchange of good practices (potentially reported per SDG);
 - › a chapter on SSC & TrC;
 - › highlights of peer review efforts.
- Use the United Nations Common Country Assessment (CCA) and the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) as sources of information if they contain information related to SSC & TrC.
- Include national frameworks or legislation related to SSC & TrC in the VNR assessment process.
- Ensure that inputs and data on SSC & TrC are gathered, for example, financing, projects, Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), or other content.
- Review the outcome and recommendations if a national stocktaking exercise on trends and opportunities for information on SSC & TrC was carried out.
- Analyse the material and identify challenges and opportunities that may need to be reported.

4.2.4 Ensuring multi-stakeholder engagement

VNRs enable the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned. They are most meaningful when they involve inclusive, participatory, transparent and thorough review process at the national and sub-national levels, as well as through twinning or peer partnering. SSC & TrC is highly valuable for strengthening stakeholder engagement. For instance, experience from the Regional Commissions shows that connecting stakeholders in twinning and peer review efforts often results in their greater engagement beyond the VNR and in SDG monitoring.

In the context of the domestic VNR efforts, the identification of key stakeholders and methods of engagement is called for in the DESA Handbook.²⁹ All sectors and levels of government, civil society, private sector, trade unions, members of Parliament and national human rights institutions should be considered. In addition, SSC & TrC focal points of the government, if any, the Director General for SSC & TrC or Development Cooperation, and potential SSC & TrC representatives of the UNCT should be included as stakeholders in the VNR process (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Indicative map of key national actors and stakeholders



29 UN DESA, 2023.

It is recommended to develop a stakeholder engagement plan,³⁰ which should include stakeholders that can inform and share knowledge and experiences on the SSC & TrC efforts in the country, both at national and sub-national levels. If there are no SSC & TrC representatives, as mentioned above, a number of questions can be posed to identify SSC & TrC stakeholders (Box 4.2.6).

If the country is twinning, the stakeholder plans can be shared with the partner country/countries as a part of a twinning or peer review exercise.

Box 4.2.6 Guiding questions to identify SSC & TrC stakeholders

- Who are the key stakeholders, i.e. government, development partners, civil society, private sector, academia and international organizations, as well as other actors who shape development priorities and influence SSC & TrC policies and initiatives, and who have knowledge of the potential SSC & TrC in sustainable development?
- Who among these actors would champion SSC & TrC integration in VNR and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation efforts?
- Have any of these actors had or do they currently have SSC & TrC activities and/or plans of engagement with other actors or parties? If so, which ones and with whom?
- Is there a common understanding among the Joint National-United Nations Steering Committee members, the United Nations country team, and other actors of the need for and benefits of SSC & TrC and its integration in the VNRs and SDG implementation?

Recommendations – Multi-stakeholder engagement

- Map and identify potential SSC & TrC cooperation partners and stakeholders at the country level as a part of the development of a stakeholder engagement plan.
- Apply guiding questions to identify SSC & TrC stakeholders.
- Promote the documentation of good practices on SSC & TrC to facilitate reporting and knowledge sharing.
- Share the stakeholder plan with the twinning partner (if there is one).

30 UN DESA, 2023.

4.2.5 Data

Access to high quality, up-to-date and disaggregated data is vital for developing an evidence-based VNR. While data on the SSC & TrC-related targets (17.3.1, 17.6 and 17.9) may still not be available, it is important that they will be as comprehensive as possible. While data availability is a key challenge in the review process, it is also an opportunity for applying innovative solutions that can benefit other cases through lesson sharing.

As an increasing number of countries are engaged in SSC & TrC, a common method is currently being developed to measure SSC. The new conceptual framework to measure SSC is an opportunity to start quantifying SSC flows and reporting through the VNRs (Box 4.2.7). The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has been supporting the development of a common method to measure SSC under the leadership of Southern countries and relying on country-owned mechanisms.

Box 4.2.7 Framework to measure South-South cooperation

The Monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires data on the contribution of South-South Cooperation (SSC), as defined in Indicator 17.3.1 of Target 17.3 (SDG 17). As an increasing number of countries are engaged in SSC, the United Nations Statistical Commission welcomed the development of an initial conceptual framework for the measurement of SSC. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has been supporting the development of the common method to measure SSC. The framework is developed by developing countries themselves, considering the actual practice of SSC. It identifies criteria for reporting, i.e. the sustainable development purpose; the concessional nature; and provision through official channels and voluntary reporting. The conceptual framework presents three sets of SSC that can be measured and reported independently:

Group A: Financial modalities of SSC (reported directly through monetization)

Group B: Non-financial modalities of SSC (including inputs that can be monetized)

Group C: Non-financial modalities of SSC (same items as Group B, however quantified by non-monetized methods: inputs and outputs).

The framework was endorsed globally and is currently subject to pilot testing and technical refinement.

Source: Points presented at the Inter-Agency Meeting on South-South Cooperation, December 2022, New York

In addition, identifying data gaps and challenges in SSC & TrC efforts can provide an opportunity for enhancing data collection on SSC & TrC in the future. In order to collect the required data and to identify data challenges, it is recommended to draw on existing systems, evaluations and reports to determine what official data are available, as follows:³¹

- Some of these data can be obtained from the United Nations Common Country Assessment (CCA) and country analysis, or data from the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSCDF).
- Some of these data can be obtained from relevant ministries or government offices, the national statistical offices and providers of data on SSC & TrC.
- Multi-stakeholder engagement can be applied to locate sources of non-official data that can be reviewed and incorporated into the VNR. These can be data collected by civil society or other stakeholders.

31 SDG indicators. Metadata repository. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata>

In addition, data analysis of the collected data can be carried out to help identify trends as a result of SSC & TrC reporting over time (i.e. since last VNR) as well as key successes and challenges in SSC & TrC monitoring, reporting and implementation.³² It is important to ensure that the methodologies used for all data in the VNR conform with the methodological and data collection frameworks approved by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators. It is recommended to highlight the availability of data and/or progress on SSC & TrC in the VNR report, for instance, on the respective targets (Box 4.2.8).

SSC & TrC can also be used to strengthen data collection and improve the VNR process. For instance, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has involved national statistical offices from twinning countries as part of a study tour. Each country presented their approach to data collection for the VNR and also more broadly on data analysis for SDG monitoring. ESCAP's twinning approach also involves online workshops on data collection, and statistical staff are part of peer processes. They exchange good practices in data collection and analysis, highlight key reforms in improving statistical systems, and share how they are communicating data in the VNR.

Thematic axis: Science, technology and innovation

Target 17.6

Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation, and enhance knowledge-sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism.

Indicator 17.6.1

Number of science and/or technology cooperation agreements and programmes between countries, by type of cooperation

Type of cooperation	2016	2017	2018
Traditional	3	2	2
South-South	1		1
Triangular	1		
Total	5	2	3

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRREE).

Note: Other agreements were not calculated because they do not contain an ICT component

32 Global Alliance, 2020.

It is necessary to continue working on methodology to build and improve available data in order to take into account all agreements that include scientific, technology and innovation

Supplementary indicator: Quantity of cooperation initiatives that have as a main or secondary sector science, technology and innovation, and/or cross-cutting lines of research or technology, by starting year, according to cooperation modality

Box 4.2.8 Quantity of cooperation initiatives that have science, technology and innovation as a main or secondary sector and/or research or technology as cross-cutting areas

Type of cooperation	Year of start		
	2014	2015	2016
Traditional	20	16	17
South-South	15	5	6
Triangular	2	1	1
Regional and multi-country	20	6	10
Total	57	28	34

Source: Presidencia República Oriental Del Uruguay, 2018

Recommendations – Data

- Ensure that the desk review and data collection includes an SSC & TrC perspective.
- Gather data on SSC & TrC efforts and achievements, including financial contributions from partners, or progress made on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets 17.3.1, 17.6 and 17.9.
- Draw on existing systems, evaluations and reports to determine what official data are available. Reference the UNStats database, metadata and work plans for TIER II indicators, e.g. data from the United Nations Common Country Assessment (CCA) and country analysis, or data from the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSCDF).
- Engage with relevant ministries or government offices, the national statistical offices, and providers of data on SSC & TrC in the data collection process.
- Draw on support from the United Nations Regional Commissions and the United Nations Country Team.
- Use multi-stakeholder engagement to locate sources of non-official data that can be reviewed and incorporated into the VNR.
- Ensure that the methodologies used for all data in the VNR conforms with the methodological and data collection frameworks approved by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata>).
- Carry out a data analysis of the collected data and identify:
 - › trends as a result of SSC & TrC reporting over time (i.e. since the last VNR);
 - › key successes and challenges in SSC & TrC monitoring, reporting and implementation.
- Highlight the availability of data and/or progress on SSC & TrC in the VNR report.

4.2.6 Draw on existing reports

It is suggested to use existing national platforms and processes that could contribute to the VNR writing and analysis process.³³ The DESA VNR Handbook refers to national frameworks such as national development plans and sustainable development strategies, reports submitted to international bodies, e.g. the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the National Determined Contributions (NDCs); or SDG reports prepared at the national level together with the UNCT and the UNDP if applicable. Also, if Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) are carried out in the country, they should be considered.

In this context, any reporting on SSC & TrC that is available should be considered, for instance:

- any regional reports on SSC & TrC, for example, the African South-South Cooperation Report (if applicable);³⁴
- research on SSC & TrC carried out by the UNCTs; cooperation programmes on SSC & TrC (if any);
- information related to United Nations lead sectoral/thematic regional programmes.

Many countries have mainstreamed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and/or SSC & TrC activities into their national development plan. In this case, the VNR should reflect the SSC & TrC perspectives that were integrated in the national development plan (Box 4.2.9).

Box 4.2.9 Country example – Incorporating the SDGs and SSC & TrC into the National Development Plan, Colombia

The alignment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the government roadmap is one of the priorities in Colombia's preparation of the National Development Plan for the presidential term that began in August 2022. In this context, consideration is given to identifying objectives in which no further progress has been made as well as helping to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs through the exchange of experiences, best practices and lessons learned that can be reflected in the VNR. In this regard, integrating SSC & TrC contributes to strengthening national implementation, including strategies, and helping to identify gaps in reporting. The implementation of development strategies, which in the case of Colombia corresponds to the National Development Plan, is essential to define specific guidelines that inform the action necessary to achieve the SDGs. The Colombian Government's roadmap has provided spaces and mechanisms that facilitate the interaction and articulation of the actors for the fulfillment of the SDGs, including international cooperation actors. One of these mechanisms is the SDG Corporate Tracker, an initiative that seeks to measure the progress of the private sector towards the SDGs, and which to date has 12 implementing partners and more than 600 reporting companies. Similarly, committed to achieving an effective engagement mechanism for dialogue with non-governmental actors, and to ensure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the High-level Inter-institutional Commission on Sustainable Development Goals designed and launched the multi-stakeholder platform convening all of the actors that are part of the ecosystem of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs.

Source: Feedback provided by the Colombia during consultation.

33 UN DESA, 2023.

34 UNDP & NEPAD, 2019.

Recommendations – Drawing on existing reports

- Use existing SSC & TrC national platforms and processes that could contribute to the VNR analysis and writing process.
- Identify reports that can be considered and ensure that findings of reporting on SSC & TrC are included:
 - › any regional reports on SSC & TrC, for example, the African South-South Cooperation Report;
 - › research on SSC & TrC carried out by the United Nations Country Teams;
 - › information from cooperation programmes on SSC & TrC (if any);
 - › information related to United Nations lead sectoral/thematic regional programmes.



4.3 Engaging in SSC & TrC activities

As mentioned in section 4.1, the VNR process offers a variety of opportunities to incorporate SSC & TrC; countries can engage in SSC & TrC efforts during the VNR processes through experience-, learning- and knowledge-sharing opportunities in various ways, including twinning. VNR countries are increasingly engaging in these types of SSC & TrC (Box 4.3.1 and Annex 3).

While the scope of twinning may vary according to the needs of VNR countries, for various reasons it is recommended to collaborate with other VNR countries during the VNR preparatory process (Box 4.3.2). First, these events provide an opportunity for troubleshooting on the VNR process and performance checking. They also provide an opportunity to share approaches to SDG monitoring and implementation, share reforms and tacit knowledge, learn about the VNR process of the other country, help countries to problem-solve together, and provide a platform to demonstrate leadership of the SDGs.

Entry points to integrate SSC & TrC in the VNRs	Kick-off
	Organization / preparation
	Engaging in SSC & TrC activities
	Preparatory workshops
	Report writing / Content of SSC & TrC
	Presentation at the HLPF
	Post-VNR

Box 4.3.1 Country example – Twinning during the VNR process, Georgia and Uzbekistan

In Georgia and Uzbekistan, a first twinning programme was launched in 2019, which proved to be an excellent demonstration of South-South cooperation (SSC). Through two study tours to both countries, country representatives explored each other's institutional structures and reform agendas. Since the Government of Georgia was conducting its review for the second time, it was able to share with Uzbekistan its experience of utilizing the voluntary national review to advance social policy reforms. By including civil society, the media, and oversight institutions such as parliaments in the review and twinning process, Georgia was able to highlight to Uzbekistan these stakeholders' important role in monitoring the goals. The 'learning by doing' element of SSC was evidenced by Uzbekistan, which included diverse stakeholders without prior experience working on the goals, as part of its study tour delegation to Georgia. These included think tanks, parliamentarians and bloggers. Participants became part of the review process in Uzbekistan. In addition, Uzbekistan will host a second study tour as part of the 2023 twinning programme and share with Mongolia and Tajikistan the social reforms it has implemented since its last review and twinning programme. This highlights the continuous and long-term impact of the twinning programme and the social reforms that it can bring about in support of accelerating the achievement towards the goals.

Source: ESCAP, 2023a.

Box 4.3.2 Benefits of engaging in SSC & TrC

Voluntary National Review (VNR) countries are increasingly engaging in SSC & TrC activities in the form of twinning, peer learning or triangular capacity-building exercises. These activities are strongly encouraged because:

- they provide an opportunity to learn from others' practices and challenges and avoid repeating similar mistakes in their own VNRs;
- they provide an opportunity for troubleshooting;
- they provide a valuable learning opportunity for learning from peers;
- they provide a valuable, rapid replicability of some good practices potentially identified through peer learning;
- they provide an opportunity to carry out a performance check;
- they provide an opportunity to share own experiences and foster motivation for other VNR countries;
- they can help build capacities for national VNR processes moving forward.

Various mechanisms are available that can support countries in partnering with other countries to carry out SSC & TrC, most of which are supported by regional efforts, such as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) (Box 4.3.3).

Box 4.3.3 Application of the African Peer Review Mechanism

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) on the Voluntary National Review Report and Agenda 2063 aim to support national capacities of African Union member states in preparing the VNRs. It provides a regional platform for peer learning on best practices of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063, and integrating them into national development planning, means of implementation, and monitoring and evaluation tools to report on both agendas. APRM pays specific attention to SDG 16, aiming to contribute to strong efficient and effective institutions and peaceful societies. It applies peer learning through presentations, focus group discussions and annual surveys on governance mechanisms. In addition to knowledge management on VNR and Voluntary Local Review (VLR) guidelines, other reports are incorporated into the programme. Efforts include regional workshops and learning opportunities, including through side events during the High-level Political Forum (HLPF).

Source: Africa Peer Review Mechanism. www.aprm-au.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/RE-Endorsed-final_APRM-2022-VNR-Report_-1.pdf

Various types of support are offered by the Regional Commissions, including knowledge sharing, capacity building, twinning and peer learning opportunities. Each Commission practices its own approach. In some cases, ad hoc support is provided to Member States during the VNR process, whereas in other cases, specific approaches were developed to encourage knowledge sharing, peer learning and capacity building during the VNR process. Most Regional Commissions provide targeted support and technical assistance to Member States in the process of drafting the VNR reports upon request and in consultation with the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office and the UNCT.

Box 4.3.4 Country example: Ghana's engagement in the African Peer Review Mechanism

The National African Peer Review Mechanism Governing Council (NAPRM-GC) has provided Ghana with important resources and platforms for expanding awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). During the preparations of the 2019 Voluntary National Review (VNR), it was a member of the SDGs Implementation Coordinating Committee and took part in meetings that were organized to validate the VNR report. The VNR also highlights the role of NAPRM-GC in the context of the broader SDG implementation efforts in Ghana. The VNR report highlights the important resources and platforms that will be provided to the country for expanding awareness of the SDGs.

Source: Republic of Ghana, 2019.

In terms of knowledge sharing, most Regional Commissions offer some type of support. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) developed the Integrated Planning and Reporting Toolkit (IPRT), which helps measure gaps between national development plans, the regional Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. It serves as a tool for comparison with other countries and the onboarding of lessons from past IPRT countries for the VNR process. In terms of peer learning, capacity building by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia' (ESCWA) is carried out on an ad hoc basis, in close collaboration with the Regional Commissions. In both regions, communities of practice are organized. These offer an informal space for exchange among peers and sharing of good practices with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in general, and on the preparation of VNRs, in particular (Box 4.3.5).

Box 4.3.5 The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean's Community of Practice on Voluntary National Reviews for Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) Countries

The [Community of Practice](#) was established in 2019 by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and has become an important regional platform for peer-to-peer learning, collaboration and exchange of experiences, knowledge and best practices on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) in particular. Between December 2019 and April 2023, 50 virtual meetings of the Community of Practice were held to support Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries. The Community of Practice has 188 regular members from the 33 countries of the region and is composed (61 percent women and 39 percent men). It includes a diverse group of government officials, professionals, researchers and technicians, together with representatives of ECLAC and the rest of the United Nations system, including the offices of the Resident Coordinators. Occasionally, representatives of civil society, youth, the private sector and academia, together with local authorities and other key actors for the achievement of the SDGs are also invited. The topics of the monthly discussions are guided by the demands of the countries in the region and include a wide range of areas relevant to the SDGs, such as: localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement, planning and budgeting aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda with an emphasis on financing for development, data and statistics; the impact of climate change; and the socioeconomic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the points most frequently highlighted in evaluations conducted in 2020 and 2021 is the Community of Practice's strength in providing an informal and trusted space for peer-to-peer exchange that respects confidentiality (Chatham House Rule) and provides constructive feedback in the preparation stages of the VNRs. Many LAC countries also mentioned the importance of the Community of Practice in the VNRs; for example, Argentina highlighted the work of ECLAC in its 2022 VNR presentation at the High-level Political Forum.

Source: Consultations with representatives from the United Nations Regional Commissions in preparation of the Handbook.

In addition, the SDG Gateway, the Regional Knowledge Platform on the 2030 Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean, is an online portal developed by ECLAC together with the United Nations system in the region, where all information related to the SDGs can be found, including activities, information resources, statistics, regional data, specific analytical tools and knowledge products.

Several Regional Commissions are supporting, or are planning to support, twinning programmes. In Asia and the Pacific, several twinning exercises have already taken place under ESCAP's twinning programme, which was initiated in 2019 (Box 4.3.6).

Box 4.3.6 VNR twinning support by the Regional Commissions

United Nations support for twinning varies per region. The twinning programme established by United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in 2019 is part of its technical assistance on the Voluntary National Review (VNR) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The objectives of the programme are to support VNR countries in their VNR preparation through peer-to-peer support and exchange best practices and approaches for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The programme aims to strengthen VNR preparation; enhance partnerships through South-South cooperation (SSC), and strengthen leadership on the SDGs.

The main components of the twinning programme include:

1. Study visits among VNR coordinating teams and stakeholders
2. Peer review workshop on first drafts of the VNR
3. Online workshops on key thematic topics and approaches of interest to twinning countries
4. Organization of joint side events at the ESCAP Asia and Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) and the High-level Political Forum (HLPF), and side-by-side presentations of their VNR at the HLPF.
5. Sharing of VNR stakeholder engagement plans and VNR road maps.

The VNR twinning is an ESCAP flagship programme, which is evolving over time. ESCAP is developing publications focusing on lessons learned as well as a leaflet and a webpage/online platform. The twinning approach as designed by ESCAP follows a number of steps (Box 4.3.6).

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) formally launched the first twinning exercise between the Syrian Arab Republic and Oman at the end of 2022, and in other regions, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and ESCWA have expressed interest in supporting twinning efforts.

Source: ESCAP. Voluntary National Reviews. www.unescap.org/2030-agenda/voluntary-national-reviews

Recommendations – Engagement in SSC & TrC activities

- Collaborate with other Voluntary National Review (VNR) countries during the VNR preparatory process to enable sharing of approaches to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) monitoring and implementation, sharing reforms and tacit knowledge, learning about the VNR process of the other country, helping countries to problem-solve together and providing a platform to demonstrate leadership of the SDGs.
- Participate in VNR knowledge-sharing and capacity-building support offered by the Regional Commissions or other mechanisms available in the region.
- Express interest in joining a formal twinning programme or connecting with another VNR country during the VNR process (during the kick-off phase, section 4.1).
- Consider what you would like to learn in the process, and key approaches and reforms you would like to share.



4.4 Preparatory workshops

The United Nations offers VNR preparatory workshops at the global and regional levels. These workshops are based on countries' previous experiences in participating in the VNR process. The workshops are organized by UN DESA or the Regional Commissions, and are designed to facilitate peer learning and interaction, providing a space for exchange of views, lessons learned and experiences in preparing VNRs.³⁵ All of the latter can be considered SSC & TrC, and should be attended to when aspiring to strengthen SSC & TrC in the VNR.

The workshops are intended for working-level officials who are closely engaged in the VNR preparatory process. Subject to availability of funding, UN DESA may in some cases support one representative from a developing country to participating.³⁶ The preparatory process generally includes the following workshops:

First global workshop (October):

Based on peer learning and knowledge-sharing between countries conducting VNRs in a specific year, and countries that have carried out VNRs in previous years, the first workshop is designed to cover key components of the preparatory process.

Second global workshop (March – May)

The second global workshop generally facilitates a sharing of experiences among the VNR countries, including on lessons learned and challenges encountered in the process. It also features more in-depth knowledge-sharing and guidance on the preparation and presentation process, and will facilitate discussion on how to draft sections of the report and make VNR presentations at the HLPF.

Regional VNR events (February – April)³⁷

In the context of the Regional Sustainable Development Forums, most Regional Commissions organize VNR workshops that support countries in conducting a VNR (Box 4.4.1).

Third global workshop (Prior to the HLPF in New York)

Scheduled to take place prior to the presentation of the VNRs at the HLPF in New York, the third global workshop is a last opportunity to gather with peers. It covers final preparatory matters and engages countries in a discussion of anticipated follow-up to the VNRs.

Entry points to integrate SSC & TrC in the VNRs	Kick-off
	Organization / preparation
	Engaging in SSC & TrC activities
	Preparatory workshops
	Report writing / Content of SSC & TrC
	Presentation at the HLPF
	Post-VNR

35 UN DESA, 2022.

36 Ibid.

37 This timeframe is suggested in the DESA Handbook; however, ESCWA also organizes a VNR workshop in October.

Box 4.4.1 Regional VNR Workshops

The regional workshops are considered useful platforms for practising SSC & TrC because they provide opportunities to learn and exchange knowledge and lessons learned among Voluntary National Review (VNR) Country Teams. Each region has a specific approach to the workshops:

United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) organizes regional capacity-building workshops for Latin American and Caribbean countries preparing their VNRs on an annual basis. The goal of these technical workshops is to strengthen the knowledge and capacities of countries in the formulation of their VNRs as part of their national strategy to implement and monitor the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The latest [regional in-person workshop](#) was held in the margins of the [sixth meeting of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development](#) at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago on 25 April 2023, and jointly organized with UN DESA.

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

A [VNR Workshop](#) is usually held during the [African Regional Forum for Sustainable Development \(ARFSD\)](#), which is jointly organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the host government in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and other entities of the United Nations system. It brings together ministers, senior officials, experts and practitioners from United Nations Member States, the private sector, civil society, academia and United Nations organizations.

United Nations Commission for Europe

The [Regional Forum for Sustainable Development](#) follows up on and reviews the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the United Nations Commission for Europe (UNECE) region. Focusing on practical value added and peer learning, it creates a regional space to share policy solutions, best practices and challenges in SDG implementation, and helps identify major regional and sub-regional trends.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Since 2019, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) has been organizing [a series of regional workshops focused on Voluntary National Reviews \(VNRs\)](#). During each cycle, two workshops are organized, in October and in February or March during the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development. The workshops provide a platform for dialogue and peer learning to enhance VNR processes in Arab States. During the first regional VNR workshop, a [Community of Practice \(CoP\) on VNRs in the region](#) was established. It serves as an informal platform to engage members in continuous and focused knowledge and experience-sharing on various VNR topics. The second workshop typically includes a VNR roundtable in the aim of bringing VNR issues to a wider multi-stakeholder audience.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) supports countries at [VNR Clinics](#), which are workshops that aim to facilitate the exchange of good practices in preparing VNRs. The event provides an informal opportunity for countries to ask questions and for ESCAP to provide information and guidance on the VNR process. The VNR Clinics are associated events of the [South-East Asia Multi-Stakeholder Forum on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals](#). Moreover, attention is dedicated to the VNRs during the annual Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD).

Source: Consultations with representatives from the United Nations Regional Commissions in preparation of the Handbook.

Recommendations – Preparatory workshops

- In order to optimize learning and knowledge sharing, it is encouraged to plan to attend the VNR workshops and other meetings organized at the global, regional or subregional level.
- Participating in the global, regional and subregional VNR workshops enables the exchange of peer learning between technical teams in charge of the VNR.
- The workshops are an opportunity to strengthen knowledge and capacity in the preparation of the VNR.



4.5 Report writing – Content on SSC & TrC in the VNR report

Writing the VNR report is one of the last phases of the preparatory process. At this stage, the various elements that have been introduced in this Handbook are recommended to be considered in the report, including the suggested SSC & TrC content (Box 4.5.1).

Reporting on SSC & TrC content in the VNRs relates to some extent to whether or not it has been considered a modality in SDG planning and implementation efforts. If not, an analysis of how SSC & TrC is incorporated in SDG frameworks and action plans may be considered. This is important to enable reporting on SSC & TrC in a systemic manner moving forward.

Entry points to integrate SSC & TrC in the VNRs	 Kick-off
	 Organization / preparation
	 Engaging in SSC & TrC activities
	 Preparatory workshops
	 Report writing / Content of SSC & TrC
	 Presentation at the HLPF
	 Post-VNR

Box 4.5.1 SSC & TrC content to consider when writing the VNR report

Content may include:

- information regarding Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17, including partnerships;
- SSC & TrC projects and initiatives, and the exchange of South-South or triangular cooperation good practices, either in a specific chapter or throughout the report, with respect to specific SDG reporting;
- means of implementation: information regarding how SDGs are implemented, resources mobilized and financing secured for the SDGs;
- a chapter on SSC & TrC;
- highlights of peer review efforts;
- follow-up on SSC & TrC content from previous VNR.

The following section elaborates on the specific content suggestions provided in Box 4.5.1. In addition, it elaborates on the suggestion to engage in a facilitated peer review process to provide feedback on the VNR draft.

Before delving into the specific content categories, Box 4.5.2 provides an example of where the content can be featured in the outline.

Box 4.5.2 Suggested SSC & TrC content in accordance with the VNR reporting structure, as recommended by the voluntary common reporting guidelines

- Opening Statement
- Highlights
 - › If SSC & TrC activities such as twinning, peer reviewing or other efforts were carried out, they should be reported and elaborated on here.
 - › Other significant SSC & TrC contents including achievements can be featured here.
- Introduction
- Methodology and process for preparation of the review
 - › If SSC & TrC activities, such as twinning, peer reviewing or other efforts were carried out, they should be highlighted and elaborated on here.
- Policy and enabling environment
 - › Ensuring ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the VNRs
 - › Integration of the SDGs in national frameworks
 - › Integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions
 - › Leaving no one behind
 - › Institutional mechanisms
 - › Systemic issues and transformative actions
 - › Highlight any SSC & TrC-related activities that contribute to the sections suggested.
- Progress on SDGs and SDG targets, evaluation of policies, and measures taken so far
 - › Report on SDG 17 and the SSC & TrC specific targets. A chapter on SSC & TrC can be included here.
 - › Highlight SSC & TrC efforts and achievements in the reporting on SDGs and targets, and explain how these efforts contribute to the respective SDGs.
- New and emerging challenges
 - › Highlight SSC & TrC-related activities, for instance, results of peer review, twinning or other efforts.
- Means of implementation
 - › Report how SSC & TrC is relevant for the means of implementation, for instance, by featuring contributions, collaborative initiatives and other SSC & TrC efforts that contribute to the means of implementation.
- Conclusion and next steps
 - › Indicate SSC & TrC follow-up from previous VNR processes and address what the follow-up will be.

Recommendations – Report writing and content on SSC & TrC in the VNR report

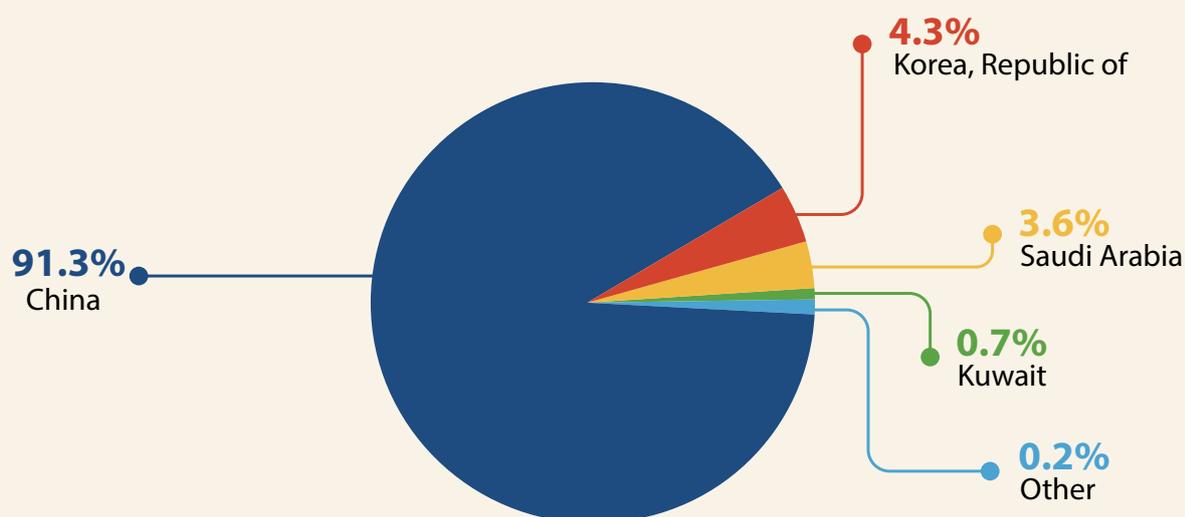
- Ensure that SSC & TrC is considered a modality in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) planning and implementation efforts.
- Carry out an analysis of how SSC & TrC contributes to the SDGs and include the results in the VNRs.
- Consider the suggested content recommendations provided in Box 4.4.2
- Review the reporting structure suggested in the Voluntary Guidelines and explore where to incorporate SSC & TrC content (Box 4.4.3).

4.5.1 Reporting on SDG 17

SDG 17 aims to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. The Goal highlights the importance of global macroeconomic stability and the need to mobilize financial resources for developing countries from international sources, as well as through strengthened domestic capacities for revenue collection. Reporting on SDG 17 can include information on concrete partnerships and cooperation agreements, i.e. examples of multilateral arrangements, bilateral cooperation agreements between countries, support from countries (Box 4.5.3), as well as partnership initiatives that were established between governments and United Nations entities including UNOSSC.

Box 4.5.3 Country example – Data on SSC & TrC support from different countries, Uganda 2020 VNR report

Reported in the context of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17, Uganda’s 2020 Voluntary National Review (VNR) report highlights that SSC & TrC is largely dominated by China, followed by Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and includes a figure demonstrating SSC support coming from various partner countries.



Source: The Republic of Uganda, 2020.

Detailed reporting is encouraged, for instance, reporting on the progress on the three targets that concern SSC & TrC:

Target 17.3

Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources (Indicator 17.3.1: foreign direct investments, official development assistance and South-South Cooperation as a proportion of total domestic budget).³⁸

Target 17.6

Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation, and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular, at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism.

Target 17.9

Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all Sustainable Development Goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation.

National progress on these targets can be reported in various ways, i.e. as part of a statistical annex or as a part of a monitoring framework that measures the progress on the targets over the years. A common challenge may be a gap in data availability, which hinders reporting on the respective targets and indicators.

Moreover, the use of multi-stakeholder engagement is recommended to locate sources of non-official data that can be reviewed and incorporated into the VNR by the statistical office or other responsible government office to fill the gaps in meeting these targets, including from non-governmental stakeholders.

Recommendations – Reporting on Sustainable Development Goal 17

- Include information on concrete partnerships and cooperation agreements, i.e. examples of multilateral arrangements, bilateral cooperation agreements between countries, support from countries as well as partnerships initiatives that were established between governments and United Nations bodies, including the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC).
- Explain the monitoring used to inform progress on SSC & TrC in the context of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17.
- Use multi-stakeholder engagement to locate sources of non-official data that can be reviewed and incorporated into the VNR by the statistical office or other responsible government office in order to fill the gaps of these targets, including from non-governmental stakeholders.
- Report on progress on the SSC & TrC-related targets and indicators in detail (SDG 17.3.1, 17.6 and 17.9).
- Ensure that reporting on SSC & TrC in the context of SDG 17 focuses on trends, successes, challenges, emerging issues, best practices and lessons learned.
- Describe what actions have been taken to address existing gaps and challenges.

38 Member States are encouraged to apply the framework developed to measure SSC (See Box 4.2.7).

4.5.2 SSC & TrC projects and initiatives

One of the sections recommended by the United Nations voluntary guidelines in the common structure for the content of all SDGs is entitled 'Progress on Goals and Targets' (Annex II).³⁹ This is where the bulk of reporting on SSC & TrC is likely to appear, including on SDG 17. Countries are, however, encouraged to review all 17 SDGs. The consideration of the Goals can focus on trends, successes, challenges, emerging issues and lessons learned, and describe what actions have been taken to address existing gaps and challenges. It could support the identification of gaps, solutions, best practices, synergies, trade-offs and spillovers, as well as areas requiring advice and support from other countries or institutions.⁴⁰

Currently, most countries report on broader SSC & TrC initiatives without linking them to specific SDGs (Box 4.5.4 and 4.5.5). However, including reporting on SSC & TrC initiatives and mentioning their contribution to specific SDGs can be featured here, including how actors are utilizing SSC & TrC to accelerate progress toward the attainment of all 17 SDGs (Box 4.5.6).

Box 4.5.4 Country example: Collaboration on the SDG Tracker, Bangladesh 2020 VNR Report

To facilitate results-based monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an innovative Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) tracker was introduced in Bangladesh. The tracker is a web-based data repository system which facilitates the tracking of progress against each SDG and target over the period of time. Collaboration with Peru was initiated with Bangladesh to implement its own SDG tracker after the successful launch of Bangladesh's SDG tracker. Paraguay, Tunisia, Brazil, Namibia, Malawi, Nigeria, Colombia, Morocco, Uganda and Ecuador have also expressed interest in implementing their own SDG tracker.

Source: Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2020.

Box 4.5.5 Country example – SDG-specific peer learning between the Zambian National Assembly and Austria's Parliament, Austrian 2020 VNR Report

The Austrian Voluntary National Review (VNR) report of 2020 features an example on the Parliamentary dialogue. Under this project, the Austrian Parliament and the National Assembly of Zambia entered into a close collaboration from the start of 2017 to the end of 2019, focused entirely on strengthening democratic institutions. Numerous activities were carried out as part of the project. Taking a peer-to-peer approach, experts from the Parliamentary Administration teamed up with their Zambian counterparts to develop a democracy education strategy, *Bringing the Spirit of Democracy to Zambian Learners*, tailored especially to school children. Members of the Zambian and Austrian Parliaments founded a Joint Parliamentary Peer Group to tackle Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4. A central instrument in these efforts was an event series that focused on professional and vocational qualifications in Zambia, and on the involvement of young people in the implementation of the SDGs in Austria. Austria also reports that ongoing networking on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with annual peer learning platforms and peer learning visits are carried out.

Source: Republic of Austria, 2020.

39 UN DESA, 2021.

40 Ibid.



Box 4.5.6 Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development

The Good Practices series expands on how development actors are utilizing South-South and triangular cooperation to accelerate progress towards the attainment of all 17 SDGs, showcasing over 130 development solutions that have demonstrated cross-boundary cooperation and knowledge transfer between countries.

The report aims to support efforts in adopting and scaling up innovative solutions and establishing strong collaborations that will advance the achievement of the SDGs. The examples mentioned can inspire the VNR process by showing which SSC & TrC efforts can contribute to specific SDGs. Other good practices can be found at: www.southsouth-galaxy.org/knowledge-sharing/good-practices

Note: UNOSSC together with partners has already published four different volumes of 'Good Practices in South-South and Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development'

Recommendations - SSC & TrC projects and initiatives

- Map SSC & TrC efforts, specific projects and initiatives against each SDG
- Feature SSC & TrC efforts, projects and initiatives in the reporting on the SDGs and explain how they contribute to progress on the respective SDG.

4.5.3 Means of Implementation

Discussing the means of implementation is a critical aspect of the VNR process, including: how they were mobilized; if Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs) were established,⁴¹ what difficulties were encountered; and what additional resources were needed to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In some cases, countries are reporting on the portion of SSC of the national budget. This can provide a good sense of SSC's contribution to the SDGs, if the SDGs have been mainstreamed into the budget.

Generally, countries are encouraged to develop a financing strategy or an IFNNs to implement the SDGs. As a part of these efforts, countries are also encouraged to prepare a multi-modality strategy to implement SSC & TrC that considers financial and non-financial means of implementation, including capacity development, infrastructure, data access and technology transfer and development, public, private, domestic and/or international sources, as

41 Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs) provide a framework for financing national sustainable development priorities and the SDGs at the country level. A country's sustainable development strategy lays out what needs to be financed. INFFs lays out how the national strategy will be financed and implemented. <https://financing.desa.un.org/what-we-do/other/integrated-national-financing-frameworks>

well as partnerships, taking into account national capacities in developing countries. Partnerships, including public, public-private and multi-stakeholders' partnerships, are considered effective vehicles to implement the SDGs, which could be elaborated on (Box 4.5.7).⁴²

Box 4.5.7 Country example – SSC & TrC initiatives as a means of implementation, India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund – Micronesia 2020 VNR report

As a part of South-South cooperation (SSC) for realizing the 2030 Agenda, India supports developing countries through the US\$150 million India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund. The Fund is a dedicated facility, which was established in 2017 within the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation (UNFSSC). It is supported and led by the Government of the Republic of India, managed by United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), and implemented in collaboration with the United Nations system. The fund supports Southern-owned and -led, demand-driven and transformational sustainable development projects across the developing world, with a focus on least developed countries and Small Island Developing States. United Nations agencies implement the Fund's projects in close collaboration with partnering governments.

Source: Federal States of Micronesia, 2020 and <https://unsouthsouth.org/partner-with-us/india-un-fund>

For SSC & TrC reporting on the means of implementation, countries can reflect on various questions (Box 4.5.8). These questions are seen as opportunities to identify specific needs for the country and should include considerations regarding SSC & TrC.

Box 4.5.8 Which SSC & TrC content can be reported under the means of implementation?

- How is the country engaging in international cooperation, including South-South, North-South, triangular and other forms of cooperation?
- How did engaging in VNR twinning help strengthen partnerships and regional cooperation?
- What partnerships is the country involved in and with which actors? Are there opportunities to expand partnerships for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?
- What capacity development services does the country need for more effective implementation of the SDGs

Recommendations – Means of implementation

- Consider SSC & TrC in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 targets through the SDG financing strategy or Integrated National Financing Frameworks.
- Highlight what partnerships the country is involved in. Are there opportunities to expand partnerships for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?
- Feature what capacity development services the country needs for more effective implementation of the SDGs.
- Show how the country is engaging in international cooperation including SSC & TrC.

42 UN DESA, 2023.

4.5.4 Chapter on SSC & TrC

Some countries feature a chapter on SSC & TrC in their VNR report (Box 4.5.9).⁴³ A chapter on SSC & TrC should include a detailed narrative of the state of play, progress, as well as how the reported content on SSC & TrC relates to the achievement of the SDGs. Moreover, identification of areas in which SSC & TrC would be required, for example, a needs assessment, can be included. The chapter should also include the main results of the data analysis and lessons learned on SSC & TrC. It is critical to address challenges associated with SSC & TrC to demonstrate mutual accountability and transparency.⁴⁴ The chapter can address trends, successes and challenges in SSC & TrC efforts, share key results that illustrate progress on SSC & TrC and describe why it is important for the 2030 Agenda. Moreover, it can showcase concrete examples of how SSC & TrC, has enabled progress across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and describe mechanisms or approaches in place for follow-up on monitoring, reporting and implementation of SSC & TrC efforts, including plans to improve and ensure follow-up until the next VNR (Box 4.5.).

Box 4.5.9 Country example – Chapter on SSC & TrC, Indonesia 2017 VNR

Indonesia's 2017 Voluntary National Review includes a section on South-South cooperation (SSC). In addition to expressions of commitment to SSC, the chapter highlights a national coordination team on SSC, which involves academics, community organizations and the private sector, as well as information on knowledge-sharing activities, a funding allocation for capacity building, data and statistics. In addition, a number of challenges related to SSC & TrC are listed, including:

- Coordination
- Accuracy of budget allocation for SSC & TrC implementation
- Limited domestic funding
- Quality of SSC & TrC.

As measures to improve SSC & TrC, it mentions evaluating the implementation of SSC & Tr C as well as improving communication strategies. Innovation and key efforts in SSC & TrC are creating incentive models for private sector involvement as well as knowledge sharing. The emerging issues on SSC & TrC are how to strengthen the regulatory framework for SSC & TrC business model and the institutional framework, and increase funding. In terms of lessons learned, it indicated that Indonesia had benefited from playing a dual role as recipient and provider. Moreover, SSC & TrC is considered a two-way process on knowledge-sharing and has become an instrument for bringing to international fora political and economic issues to international fora, politically and economically.

Source: Republic of Indonesia, 2017.

43 Oosterhof, 2022.

44 Outcome document of the 2019 Buenos Aires Conference, para. 29: "We acknowledge the need to enhance the effectiveness of South-South and triangular cooperation by continuing to increase their respective mutual accountability and transparency, in accordance with national development plans and priorities.

Box 4.5.10 The possible contents of a SSC & TrC chapter

- The results of a needs assessment, i.e. identification of areas in which SSC & TrC would be needed.
- Key results that illustrate progress on SSC & TrC and describe why it is important for the 2030 Agenda.
- The main results of the data analysis and lessons learned on SSC & TrC.
- Trends, successes and challenges in implementing SSC & TrC efforts.
- Challenges to be addressed associated with SSC & TrC to demonstrate mutual accountability and transparency.
- Concrete examples of how SSC & TrC has enabled progress across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- A description of mechanisms or approaches in place for follow-up on monitoring, reporting and implementation of SSC & TrC efforts.
- Plans to improve and ensure follow-up on SSC & TrC efforts until the next VNR.

Recommendations – Chapter on SSC & TrC

The chapter on SSC & TrC in the VNR should include the following:

- a review the information and data gathered on SSC & TrC;
- identification of trends, successes and challenges in SSC & TrC efforts;
- key results that illustrate progress on SSC & TrC and describe why it is important for the 2030 Agenda;
- concrete examples of how SSC & TrC has enabled progress across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- description of mechanisms or approaches in place for follow-up on monitoring, reporting and implementation of SSC & TrC efforts, including plans to improve and ensure follow-up till the next VNR;
- other suggestions included in Box 4.5.10.

4.5.5 Highlights of peer review efforts

If twinning or peer review efforts were applied during the VNR process, a good practice is to report on them and highlight how they strengthened the VNR report and benefited SDG implementation efforts. As a part of the peer review exercise, it is also recommended to make the final report fully available to partner countries that can review the content (Box 4.5.11).

Box 4.5.11 Country example: peer review collaboration between Denmark, Norway and Kenya, Denmark's 2021 VNR

Denmark commenced a peer review collaboration with Norway and Kenya in 2021. This collaboration involves sharing knowledge, comments and recommendations specifically relating to the first draft of the report, which was previously read by the Governments of Norway and Kenya. Denmark appreciates the comments and valuable recommendations on the VNR, which have been very useful in the process and will be very useful in future work. Denmark also regularly exchanged knowledge and experience with other countries, which supported the establishment of good practices in the preparation and authoring of the VNR. These practices are reflected in the structure of the 2021 VNR report and also provide a strong basis for the preparation of the next VNR.

Source: The Danish Government, 2021.

Recommendations – Highlights of peer review efforts

- Include information on SSC & TrC activities such as twinning or peer learning in the report writing stage.
- Include key messages and recommendations made by the twinning/peer review partners in the report and highlight useful feedback provided during the peer review process.
- Make the final report fully available to partner countries that can review the content. When sending the final report to UN DESA, a copy can also be sent to the partner country.

4.5.6 SSC & TrC follow-up from previous VNRs and the next VNR process

Follow-up from SSC & TrC reporting in the previous VNR report should be included in the VNR report, as well as how progress on SSC & TrC reporting can be ensured moving forward. If the country was engaged in a twinning programme during the previous VNR, it is recommended to highlight the impact of this engagement as well as lessons learned, which will be integrated into the VNR. The report can address how the government ensures SSC & TrC reporting moving forward and describe mechanisms or approaches in place for follow-up on monitoring, reporting and implementation of SSC & TrC efforts, including plans to improve and ensure follow-up until the next VNR.

The UN DESA VNR Handbook recommends reporting on how the country reviews progress in implementing the SDGs, including mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of policies and measures. The VNR report could also highlight whether and how the preparation and follow-up to VNRs are embedded in these ongoing processes, with a specific focus on SSC & TrC. This may include the preparation of national SDG reports, supported by the UNCT, where applicable, as well as the preparation of regional or international state reports.⁴⁵

If a chapter on SSC & TrC was included in one VNR, the next VNR should include a chapter that reports on how initiatives have progressed and what is planned to strengthen SSC & TrC. The report should describe mechanisms or approaches in place for follow-up on monitoring, reporting and implementation of SSC & TrC efforts, including plans to improve and ensure follow-up until the next VNR.

Recommendations – SSC & TrC follow-up from previous VNRs and the next VNR process

- Indicate the lessons learned from the SSC and TC activities in the previous Voluntary National Review (VNR) and how they will be integrated into the current VNR.
- Explain how the government ensures mechanisms for reporting and follow-up on SSC & TrC.
- Describe mechanisms or approaches in place for follow-up on monitoring, reporting and implementation of SSC & TrC efforts, including plans to improve and ensure follow-up until the next VNR.
- Aim to apply the same approach as in the previous VNR reporting; for example, if a chapter on SSC & TrC was included, the next VNR should do the same.
- See also the recommendations included in Section 4.7 (Post-VNR).

45 UN DESA, 2023.

4.5.7 Engage in a peer review process to provide feedback on the VNR draft

SSC & TrC can strengthen the report at the writing stage by engaging in a facilitated peer review process to provide feedback on the VNR draft. In some cases, these are organized by the Regional Commissions, whereas in others, countries have initiated a review with partner countries without the engagement of the United Nations (Box 4.5.12). In both cases, peer reviewing can help strengthen the next steps and recommendations for SDG implementation. For instance, in a twinning exercise, countries can connect in facilitated two-part peer review workshops and provide feedback on the draft.

4.5.12 Country example: Review of the draft VNR reports of Finland, Mozambique and Switzerland, Finland's 2020 VNR

The United Nations peer dialogue among Finland, Mozambique and Switzerland was carried out during the 2020 VNR process to review the draft report and the preparatory process. The process followed a light procedure, but the external review and recommendations were considered useful, as documented in Finland's VNR report. It gave an opportunity to exchange good practices and provide comments and recommendations to further improve the report and process.

A short summary of the main messages, comments and recommendations made by the review countries was included in the VNR report.

Source: Government of Finland, 2020.

Recommendation – Engagement in a peer review process to provide feedback on the VNR draft

- Engage in a peer review process with another VNR country or a group of countries to review each other's draft reports prior to submission to the United Nations.



4.6 Presentation at High-level Political Forum (HLPF)

When the VNR report has been finalized, focus is directed to the presentation of the report during the VNR session. The US DESA Handbook includes a number of details and requirements that should be considered at this stage, such as deadlines, time allocations and details related to the submission.⁴⁶

Countries are asked to submit the main messages, which should include highlights on SSC & TrC, for instance, the major SSC & TrC initiatives and whether or not this Handbook was applied, if the country engaged in twinning or peer review efforts.

Twinning or peer review countries can consider presenting their VNR reports side-by-side during the HLPF VNR session. They are also encouraged to pose questions to the other countries as a part of the Q&A. Co-organizing side events or VNR labs together with twinning partners is recommended.

Entry points to integrate SSC & TrC in the VNRs	Kick-off
	Organization / preparation
	Engaging in SSC & TrC activities
	Preparatory workshops
	Report writing / Content of SSC & TrC
	Presentation at the HLPF
	Post-VNR

46 UN DESA, 2023.

Recommendation – Presentation at High-level Political Forum (HLPF)

- Highlights on SSC & TrC should be features in the main messages, including process-related efforts if twinning and/or peer review was carried out.
- Twinning countries should consider presenting their VNR reports side-by-side during the HLPF presentation.
- Twinning countries can consider organizing a side event or VNR labs during the HLPF sharing experiences about their process.



4.7 Post-VNR

Once the VNR process and the presentation have been completed, it is important to maintain the momentum. The UN DESA Handbook makes suggestions to countries on what to consider after the presentation, such as ensuring a wide dissemination of the report, debriefing and other follow-up activities. It is important to ensure that SSC & TrC action contained in the VNR is also promoted at this stage.

The VNR process and report should not be considered a one-off product; instead, it should be viewed as a continuous effort. As a part of this effort, considerations should be made regarding M&E and SSC & TrC, and how SSC & TrC will be measured moving forward.⁴⁷ This can be measured through the SSC & TrC-related indicators and also as a part of applying a structured approach to VNR reporting, as described above (4.5.6). In turn, it should be ensured that the SDGs are incorporated into the performance M&E of SSC & TrC, if possible. To support the development of M&E efforts, countries can also draw on guidance and support provided by UNCTAD.

Moreover, continuous engagement of stakeholder engagement is critical in VNR and SDG efforts because it can promote effective decision-making and ownership, and ensure that SSC & TrC contributions are measured. To help maintain a focus on SSC & TrC contributions in the VNR and to the SDGs, it is recommended to maintain to the involvement of SSC & TrC focal points, for example, the Director General or other representatives who were identified in the development of the stakeholder engagement plan (Section 4.2.4).

Entry points to integrate SSC & TrC in the VNRs	Kick-off
	Organization / preparation
	Engaging in SSC & TrC activities
	Preparatory workshops
	Report writing / Content of SSC & TrC
	Presentation at the HLPF
	Post-VNR

Recommendations – Post-VNR

- Consider post-Voluntary National Review (VNR) activities and ensure that SSC & TrC efforts are included in the activities, for example, promoting SSC & TrC action contained in the VNR.
- Ensure that mechanisms established to monitor and evaluate progress on the SDGs consider measuring progress on SSC & TrC.
- Document follow-up from previous VNR reporting on SSC & TrC as well as how the next VNR should report on progress.
- Provide a continuous role in post-VNR and SDG-related efforts for the SSC & TrC focal points, for example, the Director General or others representing the topic of SSC & TrC.

⁴⁷ Effective monitoring and review processes are key to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Monitoring national implementation of the SDGs requires the collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of reliable, timely, accessible and sufficiently disaggregated data, including on the SSC & TrC-related indicators. This includes the global SDG indicator framework for the follow-up and review of progress, UN DESA, 2023.

Annex I: United Nations support for SSC & TrC at the country level



Source: UNOSSC, 2022a.

Annex II: Structure of the VNR report according to the United Nations common voluntary guidelines

- Opening Statement
- Highlights
- Introduction
- Methodology and process for preparation of the review
- Policy and enabling environment
 - › Ensuring ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the VNRs
 - › Integration of the SDGs in national frameworks
 - › Integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions
 - › Leaving no one behind
 - › Institutional mechanisms
 - › Systemic issues and transformative actions.
- Progress on the SDGs and SDG targets, and evaluation of policies implemented and measures taken to date.
- New and emerging challenges
- Means of implementation
- Conclusion and next steps

Annex III: Peer review efforts reported in VNR reports (2016-2021)

VNR country	Description	Countries involved
Togo (2017)	The country has voluntarily undergone a peer review during the High-level Political Forum for Sustainable Development (HLPF), which enabled it to share its experiences in the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in its national development planning instruments.	Not specified
Greece (2018)	As a part of Greece's review process, a Special Event on "Peer learning in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs" was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the participation of Diplomatic Missions of European Union Member States and countries of the Mediterranean region.	EU Member States
Ghana (2019)	The National African Peer Review Mechanism Governing Council (NAPRM-CG) was utilized and provided Ghana with important resources and platforms for expanding awareness of the SDGs and played a role in the Voluntary National Review (VNR).	Not specified
Vanuatu (2019)	A peer review team reviewed the initial draft of Vanuatu's VNR report and provided feedback and recommendations, providing an opportunity to share experiences (both good and bad) and to open up government planning and reporting efforts with neighbouring Pacific countries.	Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Australia and Fiji
Austria (2020)	The Austrian VNR report includes a section on 'Peer learning and international exchange of experience'. It mentions the participation in the global workshop organized by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), a workshop on Data for Statistics for Evidence-based Voluntary National Reviews, as well as cooperation with the Ban-Ki Moon Centre for Global Citizens. It highlights that ongoing networking on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes annual peer learning platforms and peer learning visits.	Not specified
Gambia (2019)	The VNR preparatory process includes peer engagement at the regional and global levels.	Not specified
Finland (2020)	Peer dialogue with Mozambique and Switzerland was considered an innovation in Finland's 2020 VNR. Finland asked the Governments of Mozambique and Switzerland to review the draft report and the preparatory process. The peer dialogue followed a light procedure, and the external view and recommendations were considered extremely useful for Finland in finalizing the report.	Mozambique and Switzerland

Mozambique (2020)	The National African Peer Review Mechanism played a crucial role in the VNR process, including through consultations.	Not specified
Nigeria (2020)	Nigeria has volunteered for international and regional peer review processes.	Not specified
Samoa (2020)	The Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and the Regional VNR Capacity Building Workshop for Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) contributed to the review process, allowing further engagement with national and regional stakeholders.	Cook Islands, Nauru, Federal States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu
Denmark (2021)	A new element in Denmark's 2021 VNR process was the peer review process, where Kenya and Norway supported the VNR process by reviewing the draft report and engaging in a peer dialogue on good practices and valuable recommendations. Key messages of the peer dialogue were included in the VNR report.	Norway and Kenya
Egypt (2021)	Egypt's 2021 VNR report highlights how participation in the African Peer Review Mechanisms has provided for a conceptual approach to reporting on governance issues related to SDG 16.	
Indonesia (2021)	During the 2021 VNR process, Indonesia engaged in bilateral cooperation with Norway. The VNR report highlights how the process helps to encourage transparency and sharing of innovations and lessons learned for both countries.	Norway
Norway (2021)	Norway conducted a peer review with the Governments of Denmark and Indonesia, which was based on a draft report. As a result, Norway received several recommendations and questions that were taken into account in the finalization of the VNR report. The main messages from Denmark and Indonesia respectively were included in Norway's VNR report.	Denmark and Indonesia
Sweden (2021)	Sweden participated in several activities to share experiences during the VNR process, including peer-learning with Colombia and Spain. The process was facilitated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and focused on sharing experiences on different working methods to improve inclusion. Another learning activity highlighted in the Swedish 2021 VNR was a virtual study trip to Finland.	Cambodia, Spain and Nordic countries
Zimbabwe (2021)	The 2021 VNR indicates that Zimbabwe has acceded the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). The report highlights that the decision to join APRM demonstrates commitment to entrench open, transparent, democratic and good governance in wider reforms.	Not specified

Annex IV: Scorecard to measure global progress on integrating SSC & TrC in the VNRs per year

Outcome indicator 2.3 of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) Strategic Framework (2022–2025) is defined as “percentage of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) on sustainable development that integrate South-South and triangular cooperation perspectives”. To this end, a 0–4 scale is used to score indicators:

0-4 scale:

Met 0 criteria:	SSC & TrC is not integrated
Met any 1 of the criteria:	SSC & TrC integration initiated
Met any 2 criteria:	SSC & TrC integrated to some extent
Met any 3 criteria:	SSC & TrC progressively integrated
Met all 4 criteria:	SSC & TrC is integrated.

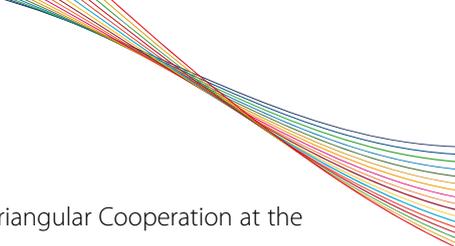
Calculation method: counting the Voluntary National Reviews that meet any of the 2 out of 4 indicated criteria.

Indicators to measure Integration of SSC & TrC in the VNRs

Meta indicators	Definitions
1. Report on SSC & TrC projects and initiatives	Reported on SSC & TrC projects and initiatives, including documenting to specific SDGs
2. Report on means of implementation	Reported on SSC & TrC in the context of ‘means of implementation’, resource mobilization and other development cooperation modalities for the SDGs, including SSC & TrC bilateral and/or international cooperation agreements.
3. SSC & TrC efforts during the VNR process	Engaged in twinning, peer review/international cooperation efforts, and knowledge-sharing efforts Reported on at least 1 of the following targets and indicators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Indicator 17.3.1: Foreign direct investments (FDI), official development assistance and South-South cooperation as a proportion of total domestic budget. II. Target 17.6: Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation, and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism. III. Target 17.9: Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all Sustainable Development Goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation.
4. Referencing of SSC & TrC in the VNR report in the context of SDG 17	

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