

APRM POLICY BRIEF

3

APRM VIRTUAL DIALOGUE ON VNRS-HLPF 2020 Civil Society and Youth support for the continent's Response to COVID-19 and SDGs implementation:

Voices from Ghana, Senegal, Tanzania, and Morocco

- Ms. Sara Hamouda, SDGs & Agenda 2063 Researcher, APRM.

Executive Summary

The High-level Political Forum (HLPF) 2020 took place virtually from 7-16 July 2020 due to the unprecedented consequences of COVID-19, including suspension of flights and restrictive measures on people's movement worldwide. The HLPF is the highest institutionalized gathering among countries, United Nations (UN) organs, civil society organizations, and youth representatives to assess progress towards Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is committed to supporting peer-learning between African countries in the preparation for and evaluation of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the APRM organized a series of virtual dialogues with AU member-states, which were scheduled to submit VNRs in the HLPF 2020. The virtual conversations provided an opportunity to evaluate the readiness of African countries to submit VNRs, in the context of an unprecedented pandemic, on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as Agenda 2063.

Scope of discussion

The COVID-19 crisis reveals fragilities and lack of institutional capacities in many countries all over the globe, including developed countries (DCs), to respond effectively to the pandemic. The ramifications of COVID-19 for the imple-

mentation of SDGs as well as Agenda 2063 "The Africa we want" are far-reaching, especially goal 3 - Good Health and Well-being, which lies at the core of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. The latter goal is aligned with Aspiration 3, Healthy and Well-Nourished Citizens, of Agenda 2063.

Most importantly, the national response to the pandemic hinges on the country's progress towards the domestication and monitoring of SDGs at national and municipal levels. Further, it heavily relies on the institutional capacity of the state to develop adaptability mechanisms and posits transformation scenarios to mitigate the crisis. The following countries shared with the APRM, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and African Union Commission (AUC) experts their insights on national responses to the pandemic and preparations for the HLPF 2020.



GHANA

Dr. Felix Addo- Yobo, Director, Policy Division, National Development Planning Commission & Ms. Beauty Narteh, Executive Director of the Anti-Corruption Coalition

Ghana submitted its VNR in 2019 after various

consultations at national, regional, and international levels. One of the exceptional actions taken by Ghana to ensure the domestication of SDGs and Agenda 2063 is reviewing the policy and regulatory environment at the government level as well as thematic consultations on each SDG. Ghana has made use of the VNR process to widen the awareness campaign on SDGs besides supporting innovative ideas introduced by youth and women to get engaged in policy discussions on the domestication of SDGs.

Ghana alluded to the significant partnerships between the private sector, government and academia for developing sub-national capacity for the effective implementation of SDGs. Based on internal discussions between different social groups, coordinating arrangements are currently being revised to accelerate progress. A Voluntary Local Review (VLR) for the city of Accra has been done in collaboration with the UNECA, and data quality assurance is also reviewed to aggregate data from non-state actors, i.e., civil society organs.

In response to COVID-19, Ghana took various preventive measures such as a state protocol on treatment and isolation of affected cases. Mitigation measures and social packages have been provided to support the most vulnerable and tariffs for essential services stayed the same for three months. A fund has been established to provide credit-facility to young entrepreneurs and small businesses. Government also sought to mobilize domestic industries to address medical needs such as masks and other equipment. In addition, it adopted a post-COVID recovery strategy that is adapted to make the economy more resilient.

Ghana's civil society associations are vital in the implementation and monitoring of Agenda 2030 at the national level. The SDGs platform in Ghana also provided inputs in the VNR 2019 presented by the country. However, some issues have surfaced since the COVID-19 outbreak. Child labour will likely increase due to the loss of jobs by many families. The Anti-corruption coalition and other groups exert efforts to engage the Government in fulfilling its commitment towards the Abuja protocol for expenditure in the health sector. Attempts are being made to reduce domestic violence against women who are particularly vulnerable in times of downturn. Besides the gov-

ernment fund, a new COVID-19 fund has been set up by civil society from contributions by partners to support young projects with identified vulnerable needs. The fund focuses on educating people on health matters. Some initiatives have also been launched to fight fake news on the pandemic.



SENEGAL

Mr. Moustapha Ly

National Director of Monitoring & Evaluation - Good Governance policies, representative of the APRM National Focal Point, Ministry of Justice

Senegal has been leading the continent's medical resilience to curb the spread of COVID-19. The government's preparedness also indicates the country's progress on the implementation of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063. The country puts in place rigorous national monitoring systems to assess progress in each sector besides the integration of both agendas into the National Development vision "2030 plan for the emergence of Senegal" and plan of action 2019-2023 emergent Senegal". Senegal also held extensive awareness campaigns on both agendas. Based on the presidency follow-up, the government is working on thematic pillars to report on all SDGs.

Senegal appreciates its membership of the APRM. The Senegal APRM Country Review Report was proudly launched on 31 January 2020. The government has commended the Report as a learning experience for Senegal. Therefore, it takes seriously the recommendations formulated vis a vis its National Plan of Actions and strives to improve national governance practices for the realization of SDGs. In tackling COVID-19, early warning mechanisms have been adopted to alert citizens. The government also mobilized funds to contain the pandemic through expanding medical testing and investing. Also, it uses technology and innovative tools, like the "Alerte Santé Sénégal" application, to raise awareness on the pandemic threats and first-aid precautions. Further, the economic relief package has been adopted to assist the most vulnerable groups with the assistance of the private sector.



MOROCCO

Dr. Mehdi Rais, Senior officer, Konrad Adenauer Foundation & founder of Sustainable Development Academy

Morocco is presenting its VNR for the third time since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. It is one of the leading North African countries in promoting coherence between sectors for the implementation of SDGs. Especially health and environment.

Thanks to the renewed economic plan and investment in renewable energy, the Moroccan economy witnessed a steady growth of 4% until 2019. Efforts have also been made in expanding essential services delivered to Citizens. In order to better socio-economic development in Morocco, a national index has been developed to encourage dialogue with the citizens and civil society.

Institutional reforms like the new constitution has taken into consideration various commitments to protect women, youth, and preserve the environment. In a trial to consider the lessons learned from the 2016 & 2018 VNR processes, Morocco worked on improving national consultations with the private sector and youth organs supported by the UNDP

The pandemic offers an opportunity for all Civil Society organs to collaborate closely and smartly. A new approach is being discussed to link the youth across the region and even the continent. Morocco also recognizes the value of South-South cooperation to assist developing countries in post-pandemic recovery.

As Morocco was one of the first countries to be affected by COVID-19 in North Africa, the government developed packages to support three sectors;

1. Healthcare: the government raised funds to accelerate local medical production and increase the availability of industrialized products.
2. Preserving social order: initiatives were launched to curb the pandemic, i.e., producing masks and other health equipment.
3. Accelerating the digitalization of many services, i.e., banking and increasing flexibility in the decentralization approach to some administrative functions.



TANZANIA

Abel Koka, Program coordinator, youth-led accountability for gender equality and family planning, Restless Development.

Tanzania submitted its VNR in 2019 for the first time. Civil society organs, including Restless Development organization, have been engaged in the sectoral revision of the VNR submission and national consultations on SDG progress. Young people, though, are still not regarded as beneficiaries in that process. There is a lack of a national framework to engage youth in the implementation of SDGs. Tanzania still needs to have an official platform, like the youth council, to express youth views. Therefore, it is challenging to monitor some segments of social engagement in SDGs. COVID-19 introduced an opportunity for some youth and women to contribute to fighting the pandemic. With the support of donors, Restless Development changed its capacity-building engagement to offer training for champions in the community on how to fight the pandemic and misinformation. Also, some entrepreneurs are supported to produce masks and hand sensitizers locally. ‘Youth against COVID-19’ is one of the campaigns supported by Restless Development and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to raise awareness concerning gender violence and encourage social inclusion and promote people’s mental health.

Conclusion and recommendations

reflections on the four countries' presentations were offered by the UNECA representative as follows:

Allan C.K. Mukungu, Ph.D., Officer in Charge, Economic Governance, and Public Finance Section (EGPFS), at the UNECA, commended the four countries' rich inputs. He also stressed the APRM's progress on the continent on promoting good governance and remedying governance challenges. He indicated that the excellent collaboration between the UNECA and APRM will help prepare African countries for the HLPF and encourage peer-learning on VNRs through regional events over the year. The APRM-UNECA shall further collaborate with the AUC on offering the integrated tool to report on both agendas during the upcoming period.

The UNECA also has a vital role to play in combatting COVID-19 on different operational, knowledge sharing and monitoring levels. Dr Mukungu stressed that the VNRs are not an end in and of themselves. The quality of preparing the report and lessons learned ought to be used for implementation.

The UN Decade of Actions spells the necessity of mobilizing further resources and efforts to assist African countries to meet the SDGs and Agenda 2063. Meaningful engagement with donors is therefore important.

For further information on the HLPF 2020 and AU member-states' reports, please visit

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2020>

Towards Universal Accession

African
Union



African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)
230 15th Road, Randjespark
Midrand, South Africa
Tel: +27 (0) 11 256 3401
www.aprm-au.org

