



Partners for Review (P4R)

A transnational multi-stakeholder network for a robust review process of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Sixth network meeting, 22-23 May 2019, Oaxaca, Mexico

Brief report¹

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List of abbreviations

BMU	German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CGD	Citizen-generated data
CSO	Civil society organization
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
HLPF	United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
LNOB	Leave no one behind
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSO	National Statistical Office
P4R	Partners for Review
SAI	Supreme Audit Institution
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TAP Network	Transparency, Accountability and Participation Network
UN	United Nations
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
VNR	Voluntary National Review
VSR	Voluntary State Review

Summary and Key Messages

The sixth meeting of the Partners for Review (P4R) network took place in Oaxaca, Mexico and brought three key observations to the surface.

First, a general frustration with **slow progress in implementing the SDGs**, especially in light of challenges recently brought into focus by the 2019 Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, weekly protests by young people advocating for climate action and other triggers motivated an emphasis on transformation.

Second, while this wide view of the SDGs represents the ambition driving P4R participants, a more specific, concrete transition was observed during the two-day meeting: the **need to move “from reporting to review.”** Discussions showed how the follow-up and review process must entail evidence-based reflection, account for diverse stakeholders’ viewpoints and be linked to national policy change.

Third, 13 working groups were held to support active involvement with key topics revolving around SDGs and their follow-up and review process. These group discussions in parallel workshops focused on **identifying “jewels”, or what is working, and “hurdles,” or what is holding efforts back**, along with recommendations for **next steps**. The meeting yielded insights about both the **whole-of-government** and **whole-of-society approach**, the **data challenge**, sub-national government involvement, multi-stakeholder and municipal governments engagement as well as data and statistics. These actions could help facilitate the role that SDG review, including **VNRs**, plays in driving SDG implementation.

Sub-national SDG reporting

In line with the current trend towards greater involvement of the sub-national level in the follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda, there have been various discussions on this topic.

Discussions included the challenge of data collection at the local level and the vertical coordination of the various levels of government, i.e. between the national and sub-national levels. It was emphasized that local reporting provides an opportunity to engage with many different stakeholders and raise awareness.

Whole of Government

Numerous discussions about policy coherence underscored the importance of a whole-of-government approach and pointed at the need for both, high-level political support and scientific evidence-based information to support managing trade-offs.

It was noted that, although it is challenging to localize the SDGs in a centralized political system such as Afghanistan, many successes and tools exist for making indicators complementary across different levels of government and for building the capacity of public servants to work together.

Whole of Society

Discussions frequently emphasized the importance of including all public stakeholder groups in VNR preparations, as well as in reporting back the experiences from the HLPF presentation.

The engagement of all parts of society was also stressed in statements about the need for transformation. As one participant said, “everyone must change – business, government, and the whole society.” Two parts of society that were noted to still lack sufficient engagement are foundations and the private sector.

Data Challenge

Two key points made on data are the need for governments to draw on outside sources of data and that SDG 16 is a particularly challenging goal on which to collect appropriate, adequate data. Several workshops explored aspects of these needs, as citizen-generated data was emphasized to be of special importance in this field, since it can close the gaps left by traditional sources of data.

Background of Partners for Review

Partners for Review (P4R) is a network for government representatives and stakeholders from civil society, academia and the private sector who are involved in processes to review and monitor action by countries around the world to achieve the SDGs. P4R was initiated in 2016 by Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU). The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH has been commissioned to implement this joint initiative.

The network's bi-annual meetings – as well as communications between the in-person meetings – serve to gather practical, inclusive solutions for delivering on the global commitment to review progress on the 2030 Agenda at national level. In effect, P4R coordinates the demand for and supply of policy advice among practitioners of countries joining the P4R network.

The sixth P4R network meeting took place in Oaxaca, Mexico, from 22-23 May 2019. It was convened by GIZ on behalf of BMU and BMZ and was co-hosted by the government of the State of Oaxaca. Previous meetings took place as follows: inception meeting in November 2016 in Bonn, Germany; second meeting in March 2017 in Bogotá, Colombia; third meeting in October 2017 in Kampala, Uganda; fourth meeting in April 2018 in Tbilisi, Georgia; and fifth meeting in November 2018 in Berlin, Germany. Since the first meeting, a total of 371 participants have taken part in at least one of the six meetings, with 146 having attended more than one meeting. As of now, over 250 members have joined the P4R online community.

Sensing and scene-setting – Key messages of the parallel dialogue visits

Four parallel dialogue visits were organized prior to the network meeting on May 21st for participants to learn about selected institutions involved in the sub-national implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda in Oaxaca and to discuss common challenges and solutions. The key messages of the peer dialogue sessions are summarized below:

Sub-national government involvement

- Localization of SDGs and SDG reporting is a key process in achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda, as the main part of implementation of the goals takes place at the sub-national level.
- Policy interventions and targets at the sub-national level need to be aligned with national SDG implementation and review.
- There is a need to undertake more awareness-raising and capacity-building efforts for sub-national government actors on the 2030 Agenda.
- It is key to integrate the work of various committees at the sub-national level in order to effectively implement and review the 2030 Agenda.

Multi-stakeholder engagement

- The private sector needs to be more involved in implementation and review processes.

- There is a need for a better participation and involvement of civil society organizations in SDG review processes, also with a view to “leaving no one behind” (in particular isolated communities, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities).
- It is helpful to organize state-wide events to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. This can also help to lay the foundation of actors from civil society, academia and the private sector to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Municipal governments engagement

- Greater citizen participation is needed in municipal planning processes.
- Key mechanisms for localizing the SDGs include: aligning state development programs, sectoral plans and budgetary programs to the SDGs and its indicators and developing mechanisms to monitor indicators for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the municipal level.
- Municipalities need a larger budget for social projects.

Data and statistics

- It is key to share and assign clear responsibilities in managing and generating data among statistical agencies and to create safeguards against data manipulation.
- State agencies and municipalities can be data providers, but information has to be checked and validated.
- Provision of data can be a highly political issue. Often times, data does not reflect the reality. In many countries, there is a political unwillingness to make data more transparent.
- Data should be synchronized and made accessible to different users. The lack of an interface between different data ecosystems (across administrative levels and/or across sectors) needs to be addressed by most countries. Applications that integrate different data systems could be a solution.
- Capacity building is also necessary for the systematization of data at the local level.
- At the municipal level, little statistical data is produced.

Short overview of the Sixth P4R Network Meeting

The Oaxaca meeting marked the first time the P4R network has been hosted by a sub-national government. The meeting placed a special focus on sub-national action to implement, monitor and review the SDGs and report on them through voluntary reviews.

Opening the meeting, the facilitators welcomed participants and the distinguished guests from the government of the State of Oaxaca, BMZ, BMU, UN DESA and the Mexican Presidency. An organizer noted that the sub-national level is “where the 2030 Agenda is being implemented.” The government of Oaxaca announced plans to release a voluntary state review (VSR) in partnership with GIZ and said it is working to align its development plan with the 2030 Agenda.

Opening statements also highlighted that heads of state and government will gather in New York in September 2019 for the first such meeting of the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) since the 2030 Agenda as adopted. Speakers said a “key signal” from this SDG Summit should be on the need to review and strengthen the HLPF itself.

Among other opening remarks, the VNRs were described as “an unexpected success” with “nearly universal compliance.” A speaker noted how, while the mechanism was created to allow governments to share their experiences at the global level, the VNRs also generate opportunities at the national level. Furthermore, as more countries present their second or third VNRs, the process grows in value. In an analogy that participants returned to during the meeting, a speaker highlighted that SDG implementation is “not about taking a photo, but making a movie” – the process and ongoing learning

are important and we should not only focus on the current point in implementation. Speakers said the countries that participate in the VNRs are amassing a “growing body of experience” but there remains a need to connect the VNR process to “political reality.”

The two-day meeting included a panel discussion on sub-national SDG reporting and 13 workshops led by participants. The workshops covered topics such as: citizen-generated data; using VNRs to drive national change; the role of foundations in the VNRs; the role of the private sector in the VNRs; the role of Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) in follow-up and review; achieving policy coherence in a multi-level governance system; monitoring and reporting on SDG 16; and inclusive national consultation processes – both before and after the HLPF.

Also during the meeting, the ‘SDG Accountability Handbook’ – a resource created by the Transparency, Accountability and Participation (TAP) Network – was officially launched. Civil Society Organization (CSO) representatives noted that the guideline supports enhancement of civil society reports’ visibility alongside governments’ official VNR reports and their comparability.

Evaluating the meeting in a discussion before closing, participants expressed appreciation for the variety of formats used and said they had noticed an evolution in how the meetings have been conducted in order to account for participants’ feedback. They also welcomed the networking benefits and the ability to support each other across stakeholder groups. A commitment to bringing the lessons learned during the meeting to their own work was expressed.

A total of 83 participants attended the Oaxaca gathering, representing 30 countries, the UN and other regional and international organizations. Network members are invited to use the online community platform to share stories and reflections from the meeting.

Results of discussions

The following sections summarize the main results of the 14 sessions of the network meeting in Oaxaca.

Panel Discussion: Sub-national SDG Reporting

Based on experiences from Afghanistan, Brazil and Mexico, participants said challenges with sub-national reporting include: developing sub-national indicators; securing the participation of public servants and improving capacity at the municipal level; engaging the public; coordinating among different interest groups within government and society; and localizing the 2030 Agenda in a country with a centralized government structure.

As examples of approaches and solutions, a network of municipalities in Brazil reported on the launch of 28 indicators using different ministries’ and national institutes’ data, which made it unnecessary to collect additional data. The indicators were framed in a way that “a mayor who is new to the SDGs could understand” how they align with the local situation. In this case, the indicators are shown in a dashboard so mayors can see what their municipalities’ needs are. The tool also feeds national reporting.

In a centralized country, presenters said the government has crafted a sub-national structure of eight regions, which are responsible for identifying their own priorities. Next steps are the alignment of the regional priorities with national plans and the development of a national ten-year SDG framework.

The panelists agreed that communication and an easy to understand narrative has helped significantly increase public engagement. Using regional and indigenous languages to share the SDGs has been crucial and matching the language of the SDGs with needs that communities have already expressed has been helpful.

2019 VNR Presentations at the HLPF: Do's and don'ts

In a discussion aimed at guiding countries who have not yet conducted a VNR, participants mentioned that a successful presentation at the HLPF be an honest one. They said the presenting official should be a dynamic speaker and that videos should be kept to three minutes or less. If using slides, the text should be minimized. In addition, the presenting official should engage with questions from the floor, both friendly and critical.

The group said civil society can play a role in the preparations by supporting the creation of a multi-stakeholder forum, amplifying the voices of the most marginalized and asking critical questions about data. Participants said sub-national governments also should be included in the preparatory process and consulted to determine the contents of the report.

To ensure coordination within the government for preparing the report, speakers suggested that a focal point in each ministry/agency could be appointed to report to the high-level leadership. On using data in a meaningful way, it was suggested governments explore ways to integrate local data and statistics into official national data. Speakers discussed the need to use qualitative data to supplement quantitative data, including case studies. It was suggested that governments work with institutions that specialize in qualitative data.

It was also suggested that the VNR should be presented domestically before being presented to the HLPF using a special report tailored for the national audience, as has been done in Finland and Slovakia. Though, a certain weakness in shadow reports caused by limited capacities has been observed, which is why the quality of both the VNRs and the shadow reports need to be improved. Furthermore, participants highlighted the need for governments to report truthfully.

VNRs follow-up activities: How can VNRs become a driver for national change?

Participants widely emphasized that the VNRs should discuss challenges (“big issues”) – and not only focus on achievements. By this, governments can learn from the discussion and the process. Another key message of the workshop was that VNRs should reflect the country’s progress since its previous report, in particular in relation to those identified as “left behind” in earlier reports.

VNRs also should:

- Include all 17 SDGs, not just the sub-set under thematic review at that year’s HLPF session;
- Be evidence-based; and
- Report on capacity building efforts, both national and sub-national – not only outputs.

The discussion emphasized that governments should hold CSO consultations to gather public input for the VNR. Furthermore, governments should provide CSOs and the private sector tools for their meaningful participation, including capacity-building for stakeholders to collect data and for connecting with the governments’ reporting needs. It was also suggested to ensure that national and sub-national consultations and the VNR presentations are accessible for persons with disabilities to follow the LNOB principle.

Speakers also noted the need for governments to involve the national statistical office (NSO) in the VNR process, especially since many reports highlight data challenges. One speaker said, “it’s not always clear where the NSO is.”

Participants recommended sharing the VNR report at the national level, long before the HLPF. After the presentation at the HLPF, a feedback process should then take place, both to create a sense of ownership of the process by national actors and to ensure accountability of the government from the national to the local level. Key groups to be engaged in this process should also include the most

marginalized, left-out parts of society and the private sector. The reporting-back should be aimed at the respective stakeholder group and put into their language so that they can understand and act on the messages, participants said. Furthermore, many tend to stick to the habit of leaving "business as usual". In order to adequately follow-up on VNRs, the media needs to be involved a lot more, just as much as all stakeholders.

A CSO participant from Africa shared how their network has produced a series of advocacy points following the governments' VNR and they actually were successful in that the government then appointed a water minister. For Europe, Germany launched a "dialogue platform" has been convening government officials and relevant stakeholders of civil society each year to discuss the SDGs from a national level perspective. To intensify the process, the first "national HLPF conference" will be held this year.

A message voiced in multiple workshops emphasized the need for anchoring SDG objectives in legislation to ensure that objectives and implementation will continue, despite political changes. Also related to formalizing institutions and processes, participants from several countries noted that their governments conduct internal assessments each year, even if they do not report to the HLPF annually.

Governance for Sustainable Development: Experiences in addressing SDG linkages and enhancing institutional and policy coherence

Three countries' experiences were highlighted in this workshop: Argentina, Mexico and Spain. Among the messages from their common experiences, participants said political commitment at the highest level is a precondition for policy coherence, which requires increased coordination. It is important to set a clear mandate to make sure that coordination takes place, especially in case of tensions and competing interests. One country has a high-level official with a clear mandate to address political conflicts encountered in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Participants also stressed that public administration needs to evolve to work across aspects of development, in order to address the transboundary and intergenerational nature of the SDGs. In this regard, one speaker reported that at least half of the SDGs have a transboundary component.

Different dimensions of sub-national SDG reporting

During this workshop, it was noted that two thirds of the SDG targets must be achieved at the city-level. Presentations on efforts to track local progress in Brazil, Germany, and the USA (New York), demonstrated approaches monitoring and encouraging municipal action.

Online platforms were presented and discussed as models that could be applied by others. One platform compares the performance of multiple cities using a "red, yellow, green system" to indicate the municipalities' performance for each indicator. The platform uses a dashboard to shows interrelations between indicators and each participating municipality can suggest indicators. Another tool focuses on issues that negatively affect at least 10% of the population and can be solved at municipal level. This tool allows the user to compare municipalities by SDGs and indicators.

Hurdles identified included data challenges due to the lack of unified systems, funding and data availability. The need to ensure that such platforms result in real impacts on the ground was also discussed. As next steps, strengthening of statistical capacity at the national level and sharing best practices through the P4R network had been identified.

Citizen-generated data: Exploring the use of citizen-generated data for official SDG review process

Speakers during this workshop noted that CGD is often used in the course of implementing the SDGs. However, it has been more difficult to incorporate it into the review process.

In defining CGD, participants argued that business activities or any involvement of the NSO in the collection or processing of the data are not accounted for. Participants said the purpose of CGD should be to hold governments accountable and to fill information gaps, help provide a common good and add more voices to the process.

To begin a CGD process, the citizen group should engage with the NSO to find out what it needs. Speakers put forward the following examples on a government's use of CGD in their SDG reports or VNRs: Netherlands on female genital mutilation (SDG 5) and sexual violence (SDG 16); Germany on corruption (SDG 16), and Uruguay on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SDG 3).

In regard to the hurdles, it was noted that NSOs face challenges in using CGD, as the data often does not comply with applied (traditional) quality standards or may lack clear definitions and methodologies. Another challenge is how governments can coordinate with these new actors in the data ecosystem. Next steps include technical capacity building for NSOs to understand CGD and for citizens to understand data, complex indicators and the SDG framework.

Accelerating progress on peaceful, just and inclusive societies: A multi-stakeholder take on the opportunities to implement, monitor and review SDG 16

Participants said that governance indicators can be subjective, which is why the respective government should not be the one to evaluate its own country's governance. In doing assessments on transparency and anti-corruption, presenters at this workshop said the government should be asked to also use data from other sources and not solely rely on government-generated data.

In general, speakers noted that SDG 16 calls for more qualitative data than other goals, as it covers areas that are less measurable with fact-based data. Participants also suggested large international companies' actions should be addressed in SDG 16. Also, a lack of information and transparency was observed, as well as the shrinking of civic space. The lack of capacity within civil society to produce independent data and the lack of coordination of institutional processes were mentioned as challenges as well.

The discussion highlighted that, although the SDGs do not explicitly promote human rights and democracy, they put a country "on the road" towards those outcomes. To learn more about the connection between human rights instruments and the SDGs, participants were encouraged to visit the large database that the Danish Institute for Human Rights has made available online.

Participants were reminded that, in the Latin American and Caribbean region, the Escazú Agreement provides a legal framework for implementing SDG 16.

The Role of Foundations in the VNRs

Participants in this workshop discussed special characteristics of foundations, their importance for the VNRs and opportunities for foundations to get involved in SDG implementation. As observed, foundations have a number of different options to get involved in the follow-up and review process: contributing technical expertise as well as figures and stories on SDG-relevant budget spending and impacts achieved; supporting stakeholder engagement; and conducting advocacy and awareness raising campaigns.

Participants expressed strong support for foundations to play a more prominent role in the follow-up and review process. Participants also noted that foundations are very diverse, making it more challenging to set indicators and compile data around their activities.

Until the end of 2019, two strategic planning meetings organized by the Association of German Foundations will aim at developing next steps for foundations' contribution to the VNRs, beginning with a focus on German foundations.

Monitoring and Reporting on SDG 16

Participants at this workshop said political will is lacking for the implementation of SDG 16, including with regard to incorporating sources of data beyond national official statistics. Presenters pointed at recent reports that illuminate how much data is missing for SDG 16: only 60% of its targets can be measured and in the expanded area of SDG 16+, only four of the measurable indicators have data for all countries. However, it was noted that "there is a lot of data out there." Speakers said the question is how to integrate available data with data of national official statistics. Participants acknowledged that perception data and other qualitative indicators can be relatively expensive to produce but should still be incorporated.

Participants also questioned whether non-official data should be fully integrated, or if it should complement the official data instead. Case studies within a VNR report were suggested as an option for the latter approach. Another approach could be to refer to outside groups' findings, such as the Disabilities Barometer, which was reported to have been cited by a country's NSO.

One speaker stressed that data and indicators should be considered as "just a conversation-starter" since what matters is policy development and implementation. Other reflections included:

- Before statistics can be improved, a common concept of governance is needed;
- NSOs should consider governance statistics from outside sources;
- The best institutional frameworks for monitoring and implementing the SDGs are cross-cutting ones; and
- "Planning is back": planning institutions are being re-created in countries where they had almost disappeared, and they are gaining attention at the sub-national level as well. One presenter said, "If you have no planning, I assure you that you will have bad implementation."

Inclusive national consultation processes before and after HLPF: Recommendations on how to create inclusive processes by reaching the furthest behind

Participants in this session focused on the need to make the VNRs more inclusive at national, sub-national and local levels. There was a strong call to the municipalities and local governments to include persons with disabilities in decision-making processes.

Speakers highlighted the 'Washington Group' set of questions that can be used to do assessments on including persons with disabilities. The group noted that persons with disabilities are often not able to participate in neither national or sub-national consultation processes on the SDGs, nor in international fora like the HLPF due to lack of interpretation facilities, inclusive and accessible transport and other barriers. If disabled persons are unable to fully participate, they cannot influence decision-making. They are not only left behind, they are invisible. In addition, participants reported a lack of data and statistical information on disabled persons.

In Zimbabwe, a civil society reference group on the SDGs was created, bringing together different actors from civil society across sectors. It was an effective way of ensuring that persons with disabilities are not "left behind." It was noted that most ministries have a unit on disabilities, which could potentially serve as a connection point between the government and vulnerable groups more broadly.

Building guidelines for SDG reporting at the sub-national level: Country case of Mexico

The inclusive process to develop an SDG plan in Mexico's Yucatan State was discussed in this session and participants provided ideas for how Yucatan could share its plan with the UN as a voluntary state review (VSR). Participants stressed the importance of using data that is credible and high-quality, as well as meaningful in local contexts and understandable by citizens. They also recommended ensuring that a state-level plan "talks to" the national plan. Next to the need to localize SDGs, it was also mentioned how important, yet difficult, it is to align national and sub-national data.

The discussion generated a list of items to be included in a VSR, namely:

- Be honest about areas of progress that are not ideal;
- Explain how the report was developed so others may follow it as a guide;
- Use the UN guidelines for VNRs as an outline for the VSR;
- Incorporate case studies and other special formats to highlight ingredients of success; and

Use media and communications to generate a "cascading effect" from the VSR: getting municipalities involved in the SDGs will start discussions about SDG implementation at other levels. After writing the VSR, present it at different levels and share it with leaders in other states.

Strengthening independent external oversight: Role of SAIs in the follow-up and review process for SDGs

This session considered the role of SAIs and their reporting on SDG implementation. Its thematic focus was on strengthening independent external oversight. In the session, the capacity within SAIs was criticized and presenters called for formulating audit reports in a simpler language and making them more accessible to ensure that CSOs can use them. Participants also suggested that SAIs could be more involved in developing VNRs.

Speakers said the public should be able to access audit reports, noting that SAIs and civil society share a similar role: to hold government accountable. Civil society can use results of audit reports to maintain pressure on the government to implement the audit recommendations.

A key message from the discussions was that SAIs typically audit effectiveness and efficiency, but there is a need to also audit inclusiveness and fairness in light of the 2030 Agenda. For the SDGs, some speakers suggested that SAIs should modify their approaches in order to:

- Move from sectoral to comprehensive audits;
- Increase stakeholder engagement (civil society and parliament); and
- Move from auditing output to auditing outcome.

How to achieve policy coherence in a multi-level governance system: The Water-Energy-Food-Nexus example

One presenter shared research from areas affected by water scarcity in Ethiopia, which showed that taking sustainable development to the local level effectively requires context analysis, support from the highest level of government, connection of administrative levels and effective participation of affected populations.

Participants said planning bodies can be path-dependent and continue with a siloed approach, even if tasked with a nexus situation. However, this risk could be reduced by a high-level mechanism to ensure communication between all parties and actors. For example, the Prime Minister or President could convene a national council of all relevant ministries.

It was noted that it is not enough to have a strong coordination mechanism. Effective coherence also requires a way to anticipate and resolve conflicts in the planning process. One participant said Spain's High Commissioner for the 2030 Agenda has been given the mandate to anticipate, prevent and resolve trade-offs. Participants discussed the need for such an official to have the tools – such as scientific

evidence – to analyze arising trade-offs. Mexico’s Presidency was reported to be working with the Environment Ministry, Climate and 2030 Agenda Officials to identify and quantify potential co-benefits of implementing both agendas simultaneously.

A discussion of Serbia’s VNR preparations highlighted their process of engaging people in different regions of the country, including by asking them to identify their own priorities. Participants explored the potential of the education system for including stakeholders in local-level implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Private Sector’s contribution to VNRs: Collectively setting the stage for global reporting

This session was split into two parts, where in the first part, Colombia shared a government-led pilot for private sector data gathering and reporting. It developed a platform to show private companies’ contributions to the SDGs in a standardized way and allow for analysis. Lessons learned from the government-led pilot include:

- A realistic work plan in terms of timing is essential;
- The governance structure should be clear in order to prevent false expectations: define roles, responsibilities and scope;
- Improve data quality by providing more technical support; and
- “Go beyond the VNR” to foster data collection as part of a culture of reporting between companies and local governments.

After that, participants provided inputs on their experience of good practices and lessons learned from different perspectives. A more mature pilot, the “SDG corporate tracker,” facilitates analysis and discussion of public policy and fosters action at the national, local and sectoral levels. The presenters said that to secure the private sector’s participation in the reporting initiatives, they began by approaching local initiatives that were already working with businesses.

Hurdles identified in this session included a lack of standards for private sector contributions to the VNRs and needing a better understanding of the “recipe” to involve businesses. As next steps, participants identified strengthening the role of private sector in shaping public policy and replication of good practices in other countries.

Continued exchange beyond the network meeting

During the feedback session at the end of the network meeting, participants praised the possibility of an intense and enriching exchange, which was also made possible by the extraordinary hospitality of the Government of Oaxaca. Various participants agreed to continue exchanging with other network members and took new partnership ideas back home as an impact of the network meeting.