

BPW NZ: Voluntary National Review of the Sustainable Development Goals



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Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade

Online submission

- The New Zealand Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW NZ) is a leading organisation focussed on women's rights and gender equality. Our aim is to link professional and business women throughout the world, to provide support, to lobby for change and to promote the ongoing advancement of women. Our vision is to achieve a just and equal status for women in all levels and areas of society where decisions are taken in true partnership with men, based on a mutual respect, for a more balanced and peaceful world.
- Given BPW NZ's work focusses on gender equality and women's rights; this is where our submission concentrates, particularly in answering question 2.
- It highlights the ways in which the New Zealand Government could strengthen its approach to the SDGs through a focus on gender equality and women's empowerment across the SDGs, demonstrating the interconnectedness of the goals and the continuing need to take holistic approaches to achieving them.

Q1. Are there high-level topics you would have expected to see in New Zealand's first progress report (or VNR) on the Sustainable Development Goals, which are not covered in the draft report?

Clearer direction on VNR Consultation Process and Stakeholder Engagement

- Paragraph 79 of the 2030 Agenda calls on Member States to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, drawing on contributions from civil society, marginalized groups and others.
- Furthermore, the voluntary common reporting guidelines for VNRs suggest that countries provide information about the methodology and process for preparation of the review, including how different levels and sectors of government contributed to the review and how stakeholders from civil society, academia and the private sector were involved.
- We were expecting a description of the phases of the VNR process, into greater detail, describing the specific stakeholders involved and the mechanisms of engagement included.

- For next iteration, a set of principles for ensuring an inclusive VNR process, including making schedules available to stakeholders, a public campaign, online and offline channels, publication of documents to ensure transparency, and use of accessible language to reduce the information gap would be opportune.



Institutional Arrangements, Governance and Accountability

- Together 2030 calls for strengthening of the accountability framework for VNRs: "The governance arrangements for national SDG accountability should be detailed by countries volunteering for national reviews and a clear accountability cycle should be presented, including how the outcomes of the HLPF discussions will be brought back to the national level."
- We were expecting description or at least the aspirations of the institutional arrangements established for oversight, implementation, coordination and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda at the national level, and clarity on engagement and commitment from the highest levels of government.
- Also, narrative in reporting progress on identifying priority goals, targets and indicators, aligning and integrating the SDGs with national development plans, including the Wellbeing Framework, its dashboard and adapting global indicators to the national context.

Participation of Civil Society in Implementation of the 2030 Agenda

- The theme for the HLPF 2019 is "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality". Ensuring a people-centred approach to the SDGs is a shared responsibility, accordingly VNR should report on coordination and implementation mechanisms that facilitate and integrate all 17 goals. Participation by stakeholders is both a means and an end in the context of the 2030 Agenda. As a means, participation allows the expertise and contributions of all groups to accelerate and enhance the quality of SDG delivery, leading to better policies with greater support and ownership.
- Participation and inclusion are also included in the goals and targets themselves, and space for accountability and monitoring of commitments is fundamental to effective follow-up and review.
- Accordingly, 'Together 2030' calls on governments to "report on how they are creating clear, open, coherent, transparent and regular spaces for the participation of stakeholders in the planning, implementation and accountability of the 2030 Agenda at all levels." Government is encouraged to involve stakeholders in the national voluntary reviews in accordance with paragraphs 78 and 79 of General Assembly resolution 70/1.
- Information about policies and programmes contributing to the SDGs, it appears that many of the activities and achievements were in place before the agenda was adopted, rather than being implemented as part of the SDG response. This is not to diminish the value and importance of these ongoing efforts, but to emphasize that the 2030 Agenda should be a transformative framework to accelerate progress

toward sustainable development. Business as usual is not enough to match the ambition of the agenda.

Q2. What information would you like to see included in the next VNR?

- In the next VNR, BPW NZ would like to see the Government work with sectors, Local Government New Zealand, non-governmental organisations (NGO's), businesses and communities to empower them to develop strategies for anticipating and responding to opportunities and challenges in implementing the SDGs.



Government structure and accountability mechanism

- A whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach and coordination across government, civil society, academia, business is key to ensuring New Zealand's meets both its national and international obligations under the SDGs. This approach must include a mechanism for coordination as well as resourcing to support this coordination function.
- To this end we recommend the establishment of a secretariat at the level of Prime Minister Office to guide SDG work within government, civil society and business. Alternately, an independent agency responsible for coordination, communication, implementation of a plan for national follow-up to the SDGs which is linked to the wellbeing framework and the budget process.
- To this end, we recommend that the Government considers funding a multi-sectoral secretariat to coordinate action on the SDGs and input into government processes beyond the VNR. This secretariat will enable coordination of the SDGs across government as well as providing a hub for facilitating engagement with civil society organisations, business and academia. It would also provide a mechanism for coordinating with other cross-government mechanisms.
- This approach could maximise collaboration, reduce transaction costs and position New Zealand as a leader in resourcing SDGs coordination. It is important that cross government coordination is resourced, both in terms of human and financial resources.

Promote gender equality and women's empowerment as integral to progress across all the SDGs

- A focus on gender equality and women's empowerment provides a key mechanism for moving away from a siloing of the goals towards an approach driven by values and crosscutting priorities. The SDGs are interconnected and build on each other and focusing on key drivers, such as gender equality, is a means to ensure New Zealand's approach reflects this.
- As the New Zealand Government implements the SDGs, explicitly connecting targets across goals will provide the basis for effective action, this presents an opportunity to be deliberate about making these links and using the SDGs as an impetus to move away from working in silos.

- The New Zealand Government should champion the importance of investing in women’s rights organisations and movements to accelerate progress across the SDGs.
- International NGOs and private contractors implementing MFAT-funded programs related to gender equality and women’s empowerment should be working with local women’s organisations and this should be incorporated into MFAT’s contract conditions and selection and monitoring processes.
- The New Zealand Government has a role to play, domestically and through the NZ aid program, in promoting the role of diverse women and the importance of women’s rights organisations and machineries for gender equality as agents for change.



Engagement with civil society expertise and women’s groups

- Engagement with civil society is integral to implementing the SDGs, and the New Zealand Government must clearly articulate and formalise a mechanism for this engagement.
- In this respect, BPW NZ’s calls for a multi-sectoral mechanism comprised of members from Government, civil society, academia and the private sector. This mechanism should have both a domestic and an international program focus, to enable ongoing consultation and shared expertise. The objective of this multi-sectoral platform would be to collaborate in SDG implementation and inform New Zealand’s thinking and policies as integral to the 2030 Agenda and to provide expert opinion and advice to the Government.

Integration with existing cross-government plans, coordination mechanisms and commitments

- Efforts to achieve progress across the Global Goals should be integrated with existing cross-government coordination mechanisms and action plans. Integration of, and coordination with, inter-governmental gender-focused mechanisms, such as the OECD DAC GenderNet, is important.
- New Zealand’s approach to cross-government implementation of the SDGs must be informed by existing international commitments and language on women’s rights and gender equality such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, United Nations Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, the Cairo Programme of Action as well as various human rights treaties.
- Clear mention that the New Zealand Government’s focus on gender equality and women’s empowerment provides a pathway for connecting New Zealand’s domestic and internationally focussed progress in relation to the SDGs.

Working in partnership

- BPW International, through BPW NZ and its affiliates, is partnering with the United Nations system, other multilateral development banks, civil society, its knowledge

partners, and the private sector on the SDGs to monitor progress in the regions on the 2030 Agenda from a regional and global perspective.

- In the Pacific, BPW NZ is leading the establishment of the Pacific Women Alliance for the Sustainable Development Goals, an Alliance of regional and locally based organizations working with and for women across New Zealand and the Pacific that brings women from diverse sectors together to share experiences, network, advocate and influence through innovation initiatives and engagement with intergovernmental negotiations to contribute to the Goals in our region.



Resourcing SDGs implementation

- The New Zealand Government should commit funding support to women's rights organisations and networks. It is vital that resources to accelerate progress of the SDGs, support leadership development and women's organisations building, as well as programmes with specific, quantifiable outcomes.
- Challenges noted by BPW NZ and other civil society groups consistently reflect exclusion, disempowerment, reduction of diversity, lack of disaggregated data, separation of sectors, unilateralism, and lack of political will.
- Processes that brought about observed progress had at their core human rights, inclusion, empowerment, cultural and environmental sustainability, disaggregation of data, innovation, creativity, cooperation and true collaboration and integration across sectors. Progress occurred where there was not only will or commitment but where definite action was taken in conjunction with all stakeholders and where there was a human-rights focus at the centre.
- Member States, the UN System, and civil society have committed to people-centred and inclusive partnerships to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, BPW NZ calls upon NZ Government to ensure that civil society and those most affected by policy-making are guaranteed an active and meaningful role in the process of decision-making, planning, implementation, evaluation, and assessment ensuring accountability, empowering people to lead their own development, and leaving no one behind.
- Thank you for the opportunity of this submission. BPW NZ will continue to work with the New Zealand Government and contribute to the advancement of women's rights in the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in New Zealand and at international level.

On behalf of
New Zealand Federation of Business and Professional Women Inc.

Hellen Swales
President
027 528 6799
President@bpwnz.org.nz

Dr Barbara Bedeschi-Lewando
Vice President, Issues
021 288 1010
vpissues@bpwnz.org.nz