



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2020
VNR Lab 5
Innovative approaches to spur action and delivery on the 2030 Agenda:
lessons from the regions.

THURSDAY, 9 JULY, 7:00 - 8:00 am (NY EST)

Mr. Taher Belhassan, Director General of the Institute of Planning,
Head of the Sustainable Development Committee,
Ministry of Planning, State of Libya

Ladies and gentlemen,

- It gives me great honor to briefly present, on behalf of my country Libya, our journey to conduct the 1st Voluntary National Review, under difficult circumstances due to the critical situation in Libya and the ongoing implications of the Covid-19 pandemic. I will also say a few words on the support we have benefited from.
- In Libya, we have adopted a national participatory approach since we embraced the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The VNR process has reflected this approach.
- We wanted the VNR to mirror the national development efforts aimed to achieve integrated sustainable economic, social and environmental development, and securing a better life for the people in line with the country's priorities at this delicate stage of its history.
- Inspired by the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Committee, under the leadership of the Ministry of Planning, organized "Libya Forum for Sustainable Development" as a platform for dialogue, interaction, exchange of experiences and coordination of efforts among all stakeholders through a series of seminars and national workshops.
- In this framework, the government developed several national plans, strategies, and initiatives to achieve the SDGs. It launched the "Libya Development Agency" as a non-governmental institution with the participation of the private sector and civil society.
- Young people, women, and entrepreneurs were also encouraged to participate in sustainable economic activities through a dedicated "National Platform for Entrepreneurship".
- On the other hand, many ministries' functions were delegated to municipalities to support decentralization and enhance the role of local authorities and municipalities.
- However, we faced many difficulties during the VNR process. The drafting committee worked in extremely difficult and complicated circumstances due to the deteriorating security situation due to the armed clashes around Tripoli. It was hard to maintain the communication between the committee and the SDG task forces. The situation got worse after the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak with curfews and shortened office hours. The ongoing interruptions of power, telecommunication, and Internet services made the mission more difficult.

- Like other countries, we received support from the UN Country Team. We had continuous communication and a series of consultations and technical support meetings with them. They provided training to some members of the Sustainable Development Committee on the preparation of VNR. The World Bank also offered some support and expertise.
- Along with other Arab countries, we have also received technical support from the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the League of Arab States, and UNDESA through regional and global workshops on VNRs. These workshops provided a space for knowledge exchange and peer learning on the VNR process.
- It is worth noting that the second VNR workshop in the Arab region on partnerships, held in February 2020 in Cairo, was a unique opportunity to harmonize our understanding and concepts around the VNR process. Like sustainable development efforts, reviews require effective partnerships between the government, civil society, the private sector, legislative institutions, and others. These partnerships will eventually enhance transparency, accountability, and inclusion.
- The Community of Practice on VNR in the Arab region, established under the auspices of ESCWA at the end of 2019, has been also an important source of knowledge and venue for learning and exchange. We thank ESCWA for the support over the past few months as has been providing the community with tools and guidance on relevant regional and international processes.
- We look forward to the launch of the online platform dedicated to the Community of Practice in the coming weeks as a virtual dialogue forum for experts and practitioners in the VNR process in the Arab countries to pursue consultations, cooperation, exchange of knowledge and experiences.
- We acknowledge that the road to sustainable development is still long both for our Arab region in general and for Libya. Political instability, the fragility of the security situation, irregular migration, the alarming increase in displacement, in addition to the rentier nature of our economy, weak data and information, and so on, all represent serious challenges. Yet, we also believe in our ability to address these challenges through national efforts on the one hand, and international and regional support on the other.
- Finally, let me invite you to follow the presentation of our VNR on Thursday 16 July during the morning session.

Thank you.