



**United Nations Department of
Economic and Social Affairs**

Guidance Note for the 2014 National Voluntary Presentations

**Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations**

1 November 2013

Contents

Introduction	3
The NVP process and its outcomes	4
NVP detailed guidelines	5
Sharing lessons learned and best practices	5

1. Introduction

The Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) is a key function of the Economic and Social Council. It was established by Heads of State and Government at the 2005 World Summit and mandated as an instrument to track progress and step up efforts towards the realization of the internationally agreed development goals (IADGs).¹

In its resolution 61/16 entitled *Strengthening of the Economic and Social Council*, the General Assembly invited Member States to make National Voluntary Presentations (NVPs) as part of the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review (AMR). The purpose of the NVPs is to assist countries to: (a) assess progress towards achieving the United Nations development agenda at the national level; (b) generate momentum for scaling-up and accelerating action to realize the agenda; (c) serve as a forum for exchanging lessons learned and successful practices; and improve implementation of development strategies and policies.

Since 2007, 68 developed and developing countries have made National Voluntary Presentations since 2007 as part of the ECOSOC AMRs. The NVPs have been a useful instrument and vehicle for promoting exchanges of lessons learned and best practices. ECOSOC has also emphasized that the NVPs should not be one time events and that countries also need to further follow-up on the implementation of policy recommendations.

Through its recently adopted resolution 67/290, the General Assembly decided to continue voluntary, state-led reviews. In particular, the General Assembly requested that the High-level Political Forum, meeting annually at the ministerial level under the auspices of ECOSOC, conduct regular reviews on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable development commitments and objectives, including those related to the means of implementation, within the context of the post-2015 development agenda. It further decided that those reviews would begin in 2016.

The 2014 ECOSOC AMR will serve as an opportunity to begin transitioning the NVPs to this next level of engagement. The 2014 AMR theme is “*Addressing ongoing and emerging challenges for meeting the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and for sustaining development gains in the future*”. The 2014 NVPs could thus include an increased emphasis on sustainable development and the balanced integration of its three dimensions, a stronger analytical approach and format, and a move towards rigorous, standardized reviews for deeper insight and enhanced effectiveness in advancing sustainable development.

These guidelines therefore aim to not only give relevant information about the 2014 NVP process, but also to strengthen that process in anticipation of the transition to the regular reviews that will begin in 2016. The guidelines also provide recommendations for effective follow-up beyond the NVP Presentation at the ECOSOC High-level Segment.

In this context, some of the 2014 NVP countries may wish to structure their presentations within an analytical approach that focuses on sustainable development integration and with the possibility of mutual reviews.

There are eight Member States and Observers who have volunteered to give NVPs at the 2014 ECOSOC High-level Segment as part of the Annual Ministerial Review. The eight volunteers are Gambia, Georgia, Mexico, Qatar, State of Palestine, Sudan, Thailand and United Kingdom. The NVP presentations and discussions on country-level experiences will inform and strengthen synergies between the AMR, the DCF and the HLPF, all of which will occur during that week.

¹ A/RES/60/1, Para. 155 (c).

The ECOSOC Secretariat stands ready to support the President of ECOSOC, the ECOSOC Bureau and the 2014 NVP Member States and Observers in designing a fruitful and productive 2014 substantive session.

2. The NVP process and its outcomes

NVPs and sustainable development

The Outcome Document of the Rio+20 Conference mandated ECOSOC to play a key role in achieving the balanced integration of the three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – of sustainable development. To this end, the ECOSOC NVPs can enrich the global discussion on integration by sharing insights on ways to fulfill this important task at the national level.

The interconnectedness of the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development has been well studied. However, a balanced and integrated national implementation of the resulting insights has proved to be a challenging task for policy makers. Identifying the appropriate mix of policy measures, trade-offs and instruments that ensure a balanced integration of the three dimensions has been challenging, at best.

The NVP process provides an instrument to capture national lessons learned on sustainable development. Using national case studies and best practices drawn from policy analysis, the NVPs can identify ways in which integrated policy actions, many of which may involve both short-term and long-term trade-offs, may result in longer-term benefits in all three dimensions in the pursuit of a sustainable development path.

The national report

Preparing for the NVP typically entails two key activities: (1) drafting a national report as a background document for national consultative dialogues/meetings and the National Voluntary Presentation at the ECOSOC High-level Segment, and (2) convening national consultative dialogues and/or a national workshops² to discuss the draft national report.

The national report serves as the basis for discussion and multi-stakeholder inputs at the national-level consultations. The report assesses progress achieved and gaps remaining with the aim to identify good policies, as well as those that have not worked well, and to highlight challenges. The report discusses the state of implementation of a country's national development strategy by highlighting the key features of the strategy or policies that have worked well and those are less successful. The report can highlight those policies/projects which have been successful in a country and could be replicated elsewhere.

The final reports are submitted to the President of ECOSOC and made available to all Member States and Observers. At ECOSOC, the national report serves as a basis for the national presentations made at the Council's High-level Segment, providing important background information for the Reviewers of the NVP and for the interactive, moderated dialogue that follows the presentations.

² Additional information about DESA-supported NVP workshops for developing countries will be provided separately.

The reports submitted to ECOSOC provide a platform for knowledge sharing and an exchange of information and strengthen accountability for sustainable development. They stimulate dialogue anchored in Member States' experiences in implementing strategies and policies towards sustainable development and serve to enhance accountability for commitments.

National reports have also included assessments of financing needs. A brief overall assessment of the support of the international community can be made, which includes the United Nations system and development partners, and the report can identify areas of need for scaling-up efforts to promote national priorities. The report can also shed light on the issue of national policy space and the extent to which such space may be constrained by international obligations and commitments.

National Consultative Meetings and National Workshops

An initial draft of the national report is the main input for the national dialogues. NVP countries hold consultative dialogues or, in the case of programme countries, national workshops to undertake multi-stakeholder reviews. Such national consultations aim to contribute to improving public and intra-governmental debate on issues relating to the implementation of the development strategy and priority-setting in pursuit of sustainable development objectives.

National workshops assist countries in assessing progress towards their development objectives and the implementation of their national development strategies with the broad participation of key stakeholders. Participants have included policy makers, government representatives and representatives from the non-state sectors, including think-tanks and academia, civil society and the private sector. Such broad participation is expected to facilitate engagement and ownership, identification of successes and gaps and contribute to sharpening policy recommendations. The workshops can also be used to assess national best practices and lessons learned.

NVPs and the regional dimension

Regional consultations that are held in preparation for the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review will invite NVP countries from the region to participate and present initial findings from their national reviews. Regional level consultations can facilitate exchange of development experiences that are region-specific and enable various regional stakeholders to present views on how lessons learned from other countries can be incorporated into the implementation of the respective national development strategies or policies. NVP countries could also host or actively participate in other regional meetings and use existing regional cooperation arrangements to improve policies.

Support of the United Nations system

The United Nations system support to the NVP process could take the form of the identification, selection and analysis of relevant data, guiding the preparation of national reports and supporting the convening of national consultations. Such support should be progressively strengthened at the country level. The UN Country Teams' assistance in the preparation of the NVPs has been greatly acknowledged by previous developing NVP countries. In the case of the NVP developing countries, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) can be a crucial vehicle for integrating policy recommendations from the global presentation and discussion

into national policy instruments and strategy.

Dissemination of national reports

The national reports are published by the United Nations as official submissions from the NVP countries and become part of the official record of ECOSOC. They are also placed on the ECOSOC NVP webpage and “Development Strategies that Work” websites. To enhance the visibility and impact of the NVP, the national reports are published and widely disseminated. Initial draft report should be made available to the NVP Reviewers who are designated by each NVP country.

Outcome and follow-up

The NVP presenting countries are anticipated to benefit from the interactions at the presentation made at ECOSOC and to make follow-up interventions at the national level through updating and improving national policies. The presentation and discussion are intended to yield policy guidance and recommendations for accelerating development. Presenting countries, with the support of international partners and the UN system, are expected to address suggested measures through changes in national policies and development strategies. The discussions and treatment of the AMR theme through the NVPs, the report of the Secretary-General, the High-level Segment, the general debate and Ministerial Declaration, also provides additional specific policy input to NVP countries and the wider UN membership.

The NVPs could also identify needed support from the international community and follow-up with donors. The UN system may be called upon to facilitate such change or adaptations and adjust their programmes as necessary.

Effective follow-up to the NVP process takes several forms — research, policy analysis, advocacy, promoting policy dialogue, sharing best practices, developing indicators and monitoring their implementation, as well as strengthening statistical capacities for tracking progress.

NVP alumni countries are encouraged to:

- (i) communicate any developments after the NVP to the ECOSOC President or to the UN Secretariat;
- (ii) make use of the network of global partners/experts supporting NVPs in assessing the implementation of the NDS and policies (see section 4 below); and
- (iii) undertake to report back to the Council on the results of the changes implemented following their initial national presentations.

3. NVP detailed guidelines

a. Commitment from presenting countries

- Preparing for NVPs entails three key activities:
 - (i) *drafting a National Report synthesizing analyses of progress in national development objectives;*
 - (ii) *holding a national consultative dialogue (or a workshop,³ in the case of developing countries) to discuss the draft national report; and*

³ Additional information about NVP workshops for developing countries will be provided separately

(iii) *giving a National Presentation to the High-level Segment of ECOSOC.*

- The national consultative dialogues or workshops, involving participants from government, civil society and the private sector, are an essential element in the preparatory process. The outcomes of these meetings provide inputs to the National Report, which is used as the main background document for the national presentation to ECOSOC.

b. National Report

- The National Report (8,500 words, including executive summary and any statistical annexes), highlights the main accomplishments in the implementation of national development strategies and policies, the country has undertaken. It can identify obstacles to implementation that require regional and global cooperation, and make proposals in this regard. The Executive Summary (1 page) should highlight the key findings.
- The report can include analyses at the national level on the thematic focus of the 2014 AMR theme: *“Addressing ongoing and emerging challenges for meeting the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and for sustaining development gains in the future.”*
- The report can expand on the Country’s efforts to integrate the three pillars of sustainable development in its policies.
- It can also draw attention to other key sustainable development issues relevant to the presenting country within the national, regional or global context.

c. Outline of the National Report

Executive Summary

The Executive Summary provides a brief overview of the implementation of national development strategies and policies. It could include the following:

- (i) *Highlights of progress made in the implementation of national development objectives;*
- (ii) *Identification of key challenges encountered and lessons learned; and*
- (iii) *Assessment of international development cooperation and the support of the international community, including the UN system, for scaling up efforts.*

Part A. Implementation of national development strategies and policies

This section could analyze progress made in the implementation of national development strategies and policies and their focus on the United Nations development agenda, including the Millennium Development Goals. It would draw out the major interventions, the challenges faced, and how the international community could assist in overcoming these challenges. Efforts to improve development cooperation for better results could be highlighted.

The following are a few suggested questions that this section could aim to answer:

- *What are the major policy interventions that have helped advance progress on the development goals? How were these devised?*
- *What role did various stakeholders play in developing and implementing these policies? What are the lessons learned?*
- *In which area did the country face challenges? How can these challenges be overcome?*

- *What are the next steps which you are planning to take? How can the international community assist in addressing these challenges?*
- *Which steps has your country taken to hold different actors accountable? How have accountability mechanisms played a role in ensuring that the various actors fulfill their commitments?*

Part B. Thematic focus

This section could be anchored on the 2014 theme of the AMR: “Addressing ongoing and emerging challenges for meeting the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and for sustaining development gains in the future”. It could also address the Country’s policies towards achieving a balanced integration of the three pillars of sustainable development under one of its development priorities.

Country Statistical Annex

A statistical annex and graphs could be included to provide relevant data.

d. Content of the national presentation at ECOSOC

National presentations, drawing from the National Report and consultative process, could focus on two to three key issues that the country would like to analyze in depth for discussions by the Council.

A suggested structure for the presentations includes:

1. Key policy successes and lessons-learned;
2. Key policy challenges and constraints;
3. Emerging challenges and new opportunities; and
4. Recommendations for action by the country and regional and international partners.

To maximize the value of the presentation, it is recommended that the bulk of the presentation be focused on an analysis of two to three policy interventions that the presenting country wishes to share with the Council.

The content of the presentation does not need to cover the full breadth of the National Report, which is meant to be far more comprehensive. Speakers should focus on selected issues that are the highest priority for the country and, where possible, present specific examples or case studies.

e. Timeline

The first draft of the National Report should be ready by the time the national consultative dialogues (or workshops in the case of the developing countries) are held (during the period of December to February) and should serve as a background document. The outcomes of the consultation process should then be incorporated into the finalized report. The final report should be ready and submitted to the President of ECOSOC **by Friday, 4 April 2014**.

f. The presentation at ECOSOC

A professional moderator will conduct the presentation and the ensuing inter-active discussion to

ensure a vibrant and productive dialogue. The overall length of the NVP will be one hour if the country is presenting alone. Beginning in 2011, there were also jointly held NVP presentations by two countries, with a total length of two hours. In 2014, it is proposed that a limited number of countries be paired for a more in-depth review exercise, which would also mean a two hour session that includes both countries.

Cabinet Ministers will deliver the presentations. Governments are encouraged to also involve in the presentation representatives of other stakeholder groups that participated in the national consultation process.

Approximately three NVP Reviewers will be selected by each presenting country. To prepare for such an inter-action, NVP countries will share the national reports with the Reviewers in advance of the presentation and could organize a meeting with the Reviewers on the overall approach to the session.

The Reviewers will identify the key bottlenecks and, during the NVP session, pose questions to the presenting country arising from its review process, immediately following the national presentation (made by the Cabinet Minister of the presenting country and one or two other representatives, if any).

The discussion will then be opened to all the participants to make brief observations or put additional questions, after which the representatives of the presenting country will be given an opportunity to respond. At the end of the session, the moderator will draw main conclusions.

The comments by the Reviewers should provide feedback to the presenting country and guide the discussion in ECOSOC towards the most important issues or specific questions. The objective of the Reviewers is to initiate and stimulate the discussion based on the national report, setting the stage for further in-depth deliberations held in an interactive manner.

	Speaker	
Presentation	Cabinet Minister (15 minutes)	20 minutes
	1-2 Representative of Civil Society/Private Sector/other stakeholder (optional – 2-3 minutes each)	
Interactive discussion	Up to 3 NVP Reviewers (2-3 minutes each)	40 minutes
	Moderated inter-active discussion with the Members of ECOSOC (Interventions limited to 3 minutes each, followed by responses from delegations)	

g. Media

A media series leading up to the presentation could be planned with leading media partners. Newspaper/magazine articles could be written relating to the NVP, to be published in major local and international newspapers and magazines, and interviews and discussions could be arranged. Live broadcast of the national presentation at ECOSOC to a local audience could be planned, where feasible. The presentations will also be web-cast.

4. Sharing lessons learned and best practices

UNDESA has developed a “*Development Strategies that work*” website (<http://webapps01.un.org/nvp/>) for NVPs to capture the findings of the national presentations and to facilitate learning and mutual understanding among Member States, international organizations, development practitioners and other stakeholders.

The purpose of the website is for countries to benefit from the experience of other countries. The website disseminates the lessons learned presented through the NVP process via national reports and national presentations to reach practitioners who have the potential to benefit from such information.

The website also facilitates access to a network of global partners/experts to support Governments in the implementation of their national development strategies and policies.

NVP countries are encouraged to benefit from this site and contribute to its content. Information pertaining to policies that work can be sent to the ECOSOC Secretariat to be uploaded to the “*Development Strategies that work*” website. The national reports, statistical annexes and graphs can also be added to the database.