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Agenda Item 4: Implementation of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)

Draft Paper – Structures and Processes for Implementing the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Mediterranean Countries

Note by the Secretariat

Following the interactive session on “Implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) at the National Level” held at the 18th Meeting of the MCSD (Budva, Montenegro, 11-13 June 2019), the Secretariat consulted remotely the Members of the Commission representing Contracting Parties to collect inputs from their respective experiences at the High-level Political Forum (HLPF).

Most Contracting Parties provided inputs on the three following elements: one transformational thing done in terms of transposition, implementation and monitoring of the SDGs at national level; one challenge encountered for transposing, implementing or monitoring the SDGs, and possible solutions; one lesson learned from the Volunteer National Review (VNR) experience at the HLPF. Those inputs are included in Information Document UNEP/MED WG.493/Inf.8.

Based on the evidence collected from Mediterranean countries, the Secretariat drafted this synthesis paper, which identifies commonalities among Mediterranean countries in terms of transposing, implementing, and monitoring SDGs at national level (achievements, challenges, lessons learned), as well as national specificities that can be useful for other countries, following a peer learning approach.

This draft synthesis paper is submitted for consideration and comments by the 19th Meeting of the MCSD towards its finalisation and dissemination.

Draft Paper – Structures and Processes for Implementing the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Mediterranean Countries

Background

1. In the Mediterranean, the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system is equipped with mechanisms for sustainable development that echo the global ones, namely:

Global	Regional (Mediterranean)
2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD)
High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)	Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)
Volunteer National Review (VNR)	Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER)
SDG Indicators; SDG Index and Dashboards	Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard

2. The **Mediterranean Commission on Sustainable Development (MCSD)** was created in 1995 in the aftermath of the Rio Conference (1992), as the multi-stakeholder advisory body of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (i.e. 21 riparian countries and the European Union / EU) and as a forum for experience sharing and peer learning. The MCSD gathers on an equal footing not only government representatives (22) but also stakeholders (18) from various categories: local authority networks, civil society/Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), socioeconomic actors, Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs), the Scientific community, and Parliamentarians. The MCSD assists the Contracting Parties in their efforts to integrate environmental issues in their socioeconomic programmes and to promote sustainable development policies in the Mediterranean region. The MCSD was instrumental in integrating the principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD).

3. The **Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) 2016-2025** was adopted by all Mediterranean countries at the 19th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 19) (Athens, Greece, 9-12 February 2016) (Decision IG.22/02) as a strategic guiding document for all stakeholders and partners to translate the 2030 Agenda at the regional, sub-regional and national levels. The MSSD provides an integrative policy framework for securing a sustainable future for the Mediterranean region consistent with the SDGs. The MSSD Vision is the following: *“A prosperous and peaceful Mediterranean region in which people enjoy a high quality of life and where sustainable development takes place within the carrying capacity of healthy ecosystems. This is achieved through common objectives, strong involvement of all stakeholders, cooperation, solidarity, equity and participatory governance”*. As highlighted in its subtitle *“Investing in environmental sustainability to achieve social and economic development”*, the MSSD is underpinned by the conviction that investment in the environment is the best way to secure long-term sustainable job creation and socio-economic development.

4. The **Simplified Peer Review Mechanism (SIMPEER)** is an innovative incentive for promoting dialogue between volunteer Mediterranean countries on national structures, processes and policies for sustainable development. This peer review mechanism supports Contracting Parties in streamlining their work for implementing in synergy sustainable development policies and environmental obligations, the MSSD and SDGs. SIMPEER and peer learning experiences facilitate the transposition, implementation and monitoring of the MSSD and SDGs at the regional and national level, improving effective coordination between governmental departments. SIMPEER has the potential to support the preparation and follow-up of the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) presented by Contracting Parties at the UN High-Level Policy Forum (HLPF), which aim at facilitating the exchange of national experiences, successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to mobilizing multi-stakeholder support and

partnerships for accelerating the 2030 Agenda and SDGs implementation. SIMPEER helps Contracting Parties to identify common obstacles in the implementation of their national strategies on sustainable development, such as the existing silos between the various ministerial departments, and find possible solutions, such as the establishment of an integrated governance framework at national level and an effective coordination mechanism to implement the 2030 Agenda.

5. The **Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard** is a living list of indicators, most of which corresponding or being linked to SDG Tier I Indicators, aiming at monitoring the implementation of the MSSD. The indicators are regularly populated by Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre (UNEP/MAP), using existing sources of information and data, to showcase observed trends, produce analytical factsheets, and prepare regional assessment and foresight studies on the interactions between environment and development. On-going work on the dashboard includes the integration of SCP indicators related to circular, green and blue economy.

Introduction

6. The 18th Meeting of the MCSD (Budva, Montenegro, 11-13 June 2019) addressed the implementation of the MSSD and SDGs at the national level through a governance perspective. The interactive session focused on national structures, processes, and experiences for sustainable development, in particular through SIMPEER experiences and VNRs presented at the HLPF. Representatives of Contracting Parties reported on transformational initiatives undertaken to transpose, implement and monitor SDGs and the MSSD at national level, as well as on challenges encountered and lessons learned.

- The Contracting Parties that went through SIMPEER pilot and second editions are the following: France, Montenegro and Morocco in 2016-2017, and Albania, Egypt and Tunisia in 2018-2019.

- All Contracting Parties went through the VNR process at the HLPF:

Albania (2018)	Greece (2018)	Montenegro (2016)
Algeria (2019)	Italy (2017)	Morocco (2016, 2020)
Bosnia and Herzegovina (2019)	Israel (2019)	Slovenia (2017, 2020)
Croatia (2019)	Lebanon (2018)	Spain (2018, 2021)
Cyprus (2017, 2021)	Libya (2020)	Syrian Arab Republic (2020)
Egypt (2016, 2018, 2021)	Malta (2018)	Tunisia (2019, 2021)
France (2016)	Monaco (2017, 2020)	Turkey (2016, 2019)

7. After the 18th Meeting of the MCSD, the Secretariat consulted remotely the Contracting Party-MCSD Members to collect inputs around the three following questions:

- i. One transformational thing done in terms of transposition, implementation and monitoring of the SDGs at national level?
- ii. One challenge encountered for transposing, implementing or monitoring the SDGs, and possible solutions?
- iii. One lesson learned from the VNR experience at the HLPF?

8. Based on collected inputs (Document UNEP/MED WG.493/Inf.8) and on SIMPEER Draft Summary Report 2016-2019¹, the purpose of this document is to highlight synthesis elements, covering commonalities among Mediterranean countries in terms of transposing, implementing and monitoring SDGs (achievements, challenges, lessons learned), as well as national specificities that can be useful and inspirational for other countries, following a peer learning approach.

¹ Plan Bleu (2020). Simplified Peer Review Mechanism of Sustainable Development Strategies in Mediterranean Countries. Summary Report 2016-2019 – Paper No 20.

Lessons learned and challenges of governance for sustainable development in the Mediterranean

9. The key synthesis elements are the following:
- Among national governmental bodies, the Ministries or departments in charge of environmental affairs remain the most aware and active national bodies to promote and implement SDGs and the MSSD.
 - Contracting Parties experienced common challenges in implementing SDGs at the national level, including those related to coordination and effective mobilization of all governmental actors. There is a need to strengthen inclusive and institutional set-up towards efficient multi-stakeholder governance frameworks to break the “silo effect” (vs. integrated and systemic approaches).
 - There is a need to strengthen capacities and resources in national administrations to address the SDGs adequately, in particular for monitoring programmes to follow SDG indicators. To this aim, a better interaction among reporting processes on SDGs related to UNEP/MAP mandate and on the Mediterranean Sustainability Dashboard should be encouraged for the benefit of both processes.
 - Multi-stakeholder partnerships, national/local fora on sustainable development, and engagement of civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental actors and other stakeholders are critical to overcome the above-mentioned challenges.

Departments and ministries in charge of environmental affairs remain the most aware and active national bodies to promote and implement SDGs at national level.

10. In the countries which voluntarily participated in the SIMPEER exercises, sustainable development and the environment explicitly feature in national constitutions. National Strategies on Sustainable Development (NSSD) or similar strategies are backed by the highest State authority and administered by a national body; the higher ranked the latter is, the more the other ministerial departments feel accountable to deliver the strategy.

11. SIMPEER pilot edition (2016-2017) reported the following elements:

- In France, the National Strategy for Ecological Transition towards Sustainable Development 2015-2020 (SNTEDD) was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 4 February 2015. In 2018-2019, a community of about 300 public and private stakeholders from various categories took part in jointly drafting a national roadmap, taking into account the SDGs. This work was supervised by a steering committee, involving the national government and CSOs, and co-chaired by the Ministry for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition and the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.
- In Montenegro, the NSSD until 2030 was adopted in 2016 by the government, as the result of a 4-year multi-stakeholder dialogue process initiated after the Rio+20 Conference (2012). The NSSD is led by the Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism under the supervision of the National Council for Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), which is chaired by the Prime Minister.
- Adopted in 2017, Morocco’s NSSD 2016-2030 is part of a proactive national policy framework defined by clear institutional references, i.e. the 2011 Constitution and Framework Law N°99-12, that make sustainable development an explicit goal for the country’s development policies. The NSSD was prepared under the supervision of the Delegated Ministry in charge of the Environment. An inter-ministerial platform gathering all government departments facilitates the monitoring of the implementation of the sectorial action plans and the Administration Exemplary Pact.

12. SIMPEER second edition (2018-2019) reported the following elements:

- The Albanian government adopted the second National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI-II 2015-2020) in 2016. This strategic document reflects the vision, priorities, targets and resources towards social and economic development, together with the country’s ambition to join the EU. Albania also launched the process of establishing a national roadmap for the SDG implementation, identifying roles and responsibilities of key institutions and other stakeholders;

- “Egypt Vision 2030” for a better future follows the political roadmap based on the new constitution. The overall objective is to secure a competitive, balanced and diversified economy based on innovation and knowledge, founded on justice, social integrity and participation. The Strategy calls for a balanced and diverse system of ecological governance that invests in both natural resources and human capital to deliver sustainable development and improve the quality of life. Egypt established a national committee chaired by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development for the institutional transposition, implementation and monitoring of the SDGs;

- In Tunisia, based on key articles on the environment and natural resources of the new Constitution (2014), the NSSD 2016-2020 reflects the focus areas of the SDGs, including the green economy. The NSSD was built on a participatory process called “The Tunisia we want”, in parallel of international consultations on post-2015 targets. The NSSD was produced in new social and political circumstances featuring a policy of decentralization, with local democracy and the emergence of a collective local governance captured into the Constitution.

13. Experiences reported by Malta may be exemplary:

- Malta’s experience with SDG implementation shows that the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs results in coordination challenges at every level of the decision-making process often leading to divergences arising from different sectoral interests. It therefore requires the strengthening of existing mechanisms, with the establishment of clear mandates for vertical coordination (between national and local levels) and horizontal coordination (between Ministries and departments). The commitment of Malta to align its budget measures with SDGs was announced by the Prime Minister in September 2019, whereby the Maltese government expressed its commitment to ensure that, as of Budget 2020, the measures therein will be aligned to SDGs.

14. Other relevant experiences from Document UNEP/MED WG.493/Inf.8 include the following elements:

- In Algeria, SDGs are included in the 2017-Government’s Development Plan. In 2016, an inter-ministerial coordination committee was set-up under the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

- Bosnia and Herzegovina raised the challenge of harmonization due to the complexity of the constitutional organization, with many ministries, various institutions and levels of decision-making;

- In Croatia, the National Committee for Sustainable Development (NCSO) was constituted by the government to coordinate and monitor the 2030 Agenda and SDGs implementation. The NCSO is chaired by the Prime Minister and gathers all Ministers. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs is the national coordinator and administrative body of the Committee;

- Cyprus has appointed the Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development as the competent authority responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs;

- In Greece, a key transformation is related to the institutional mechanism set up to coordinate efforts for adapting the SDGs at national level. The visibility that the SDGs received through the VNR experience provided the opportunity to truly anchor sustainable development at the highest political level;

- In Israel, a governmental decision prepared by the Prime Minister’s Office required the incorporation of relevant SDGs into national strategic priorities. An inter-ministerial committee was set up by the Prime Minister and headed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Environmental Protection to prepare the VNR;

- In Italy, the NSSD was adopted by the Council of Ministers and officially approved by the Inter-ministerial Committee for Economic Programming; the drafting of the NSSD was a collective effort, coordinated by the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea (IMELS) in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and all line Ministries, including other national authorities, civil society representatives and relevant stakeholders;

- In Libya: *to be completed*

- In Lebanon, the government’s engagement towards the 2030 Agenda has accelerated after presidential election and a national conciliation government was formed in 2016. Established in 2017, the National Committee chaired by the Prime Minister for coordinating national efforts to integrate SDGs in

sectoral strategies is complemented by thematic sub-committees and a Parliamentary Committee for monitoring progress;

- In Monaco: *to be completed.*
- In Slovenia: *to be completed.*
- In Spain, the Secretary of State for 2030 Agenda (under a Vice-presidency) oversees the implementation of SDG-oriented policies at national and sub-national levels. The NSSD 2021-2030 is under preparation, with the involvement of all relevant actors across the Government (line-ministries and sub-national governments) and engagement of non-state actors.
- The Syrian Arab Republic prepared the first national report on sustainable development (VNR 2020) in cooperation with various government agencies, private sector and civil society organizations;
- Turkey reported that the VNR experience was transformative to get a high-level political ownership of SDGs, perform stocktaking analysis, build partnerships with UN organizations, public and private sectors, local authorities, NGOs, academia and citizens, and develop a National Database for Best Practices and Projects in the context of a wide national consultation.

15. The integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the SDGs requires an in-depth reflection on the inter-connection between the various goals and targets at national level. The cross-cutting nature of the SDGs results in coordination challenges at every level of the decision-making process often leading to divergences arising from different sectoral interests. It therefore requires the strengthening of existing mechanisms, establishing clear mandates for vertical coordination (from national to local levels) and horizontal coordination (between Ministries and sectors).

16. The governmental action is also hampered by internal constraints of the state administration. The internal functioning is often compartmentalized and lacks a transverse momentum, while environment and sustainable development affairs are systemic by definition. Links between the state administration and local authorities should be also strengthened towards a common culture on sustainable development and transformative actions on the ground, at the scale of territories and communities. Public administration should seize opportunities to be exemplary in social and environmental matters, e.g. greening public procurement. They can adopt organizational and operating approaches that are more sober in their material consumption and respectful of the environment.

17. The Pact on the exemplarity of public administration developed in Morocco represents an inspirational good practice:

- The first strategic axis of the NSSD aims at encouraging the public administration to deploy an exemplary eco-responsible approach in order to encourage and promote sustainable development practices among all economic and social stakeholders. Several actions have been undertaken under the Administration Exemplary Pact, including: the development of a methodological guide and a toolbox for ministerial departments; the adoption of the Pact during the first meeting of the Strategic Committee for Sustainable Development (22 February 2019) under the leadership of the Head of Government; the distribution of the Circular No 08/2019 from the Head of Government to all public administrations urging them to prepare environmental audits of their buildings; the introduction of a new section in the Hassan II Prize for the Environment dedicated to administrations which have made the Pact a reality; the introduction of green vehicles in the public administration fleet to reach at least 10% of new acquisitions from 2019. Actions undertaken by the Department in charge of the Environment focused on environment-friendly use of resources such as energy, water and paper; the Department reduced consumption of water by 50% by installing taps with infrared sensors; produced 22% of its electrical energy consumption from renewable energies; reduced fuel consumption by purchasing electric cars; contributed to recycling by setting-up a paper sorting system at source.

18. SIMPEER experiences demonstrated the ability of the national authority in charge of the environment and/or sustainable development to mobilize other public entities, local authorities, civil society organizations, academic circles and the private sector – the latter being the most challenging to engage with. Similarly, all the participating countries shared a firm commitment from the national authority responsible for the environment, coupled with the proactive and voluntary involvement of national teams tasked with designing, implementing and monitoring the NSSDs.

19. However, most of the Contracting Parties which replied to the online consultation (see Document UNEP/MED WG.493/Inf.8) reported issues in terms of effective coordination between governmental departments. Among the common difficulties and obstacles in the implementation of their NSSDs, there are still silos between the various ministerial departments, calling for the establishment of a unique governance framework at national level and an effective coordination mechanism to implement the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

Contracting Parties experienced common challenges in implementing SDGs, in particular those related to coordination and effective mobilization of all governmental actors, and the enhanced engagement of civil society organizations and other stakeholders to address these challenges.

20. Beside the fact that the 2030 Agenda and SDGs benefit from an unprecedented commitment, it is critical to strengthen inclusive and institutional set-up towards efficient multi-stakeholder governance frameworks to break the “silo effect” created by thematic/sectoral approaches.

21. NSSDs are generally integrated and can be considered as “umbrella strategies”; they strengthen or influence sector strategies to ensure the incorporation of sustainable development principles into public policies, providing a common, shared vision of development sustainability. In view of successfully going beyond NSSD conception towards its actual implementation, the procedures should feature in sector-specific policies via various mechanisms and instruments: e.g. regulations, economic instruments, information strategies and communication campaigns, and working arrangements for public and private stakeholders. When the government defines these measures, this provides an institutional and legal basis and the required mandate to mobilize all the public sector stakeholders to jointly deliver the NSSD. There also needs to be an action plan setting out priorities, as well as responsibilities and budgets to enhance stakeholder involvement when delivering the NSSD.

22. The role of the ministerial department tasked with overseeing the delivery of the NSSD (i.e. Ministry of the Environment, Sustainable Development, or other authority such as Prime Ministry or Ministry of Foreign Affairs) is crucial in the dynamic process to implement the NSSD. This role should be stepped up by a communication plan developed as a plea focused on the various ministerial department responsibilities and stakeholder interests. Since the NSSD goes beyond environmental concerns by also including social and economic dimensions, it requires increased ministerial joint-working arrangements. It also requires further coherency among various authorities tasked with coordination and dialogue, such as councils, commissions and other bodies with specific focus.

- The Committee of Senior Officials for Sustainable Development (HFDD: *Hauts Fonctionnaires au Développement Durable*) established by the Environmental Code in France may be inspirational. The process of drawing up the National Strategy of Environmental Transition Towards Sustainable Development (SNTEDD) was led by the General Commission for Sustainable Development (CGDD) under the Ministry in charge of the Environment, in association with the National Council for Ecological Transition (CNTE) and the Senior Officials for Sustainable Development. An Inter-Ministerial Delegation for Sustainable Development, placed under the responsibility of the Ministry of the Environment by the Prime Minister, manages the Committee of Senior Officials for Sustainable Development and serves as its permanent Secretary. In each ministry, those Senior Officials are responsible for applying the National Strategy within their respective ministries through sector-based strategies for sustainable development.
- Italy reported that one of the main areas for improvement is in the field of policy coherence and effectiveness to be strengthened at all levels. Italy has requested assistance to the European Commission and the OECD through the establishment of the Structural Reform Support Programme, supporting the development of an action plan for policy coherence for sustainable development. The outcomes will feed into the revision of the NSSD and will help equip policymakers and key stakeholders with the necessary institutional mechanisms and policy tools to enhance sustainable development.
- In Spain, the former High Commissioner for the 2030 Agenda fast-tracked the creation of a governance framework to promote the SDGs across key sectors, different levels of government and relevant actors. An Action Plan for the Implementation of SDGs was drafted, providing a master reference for the definition and pursuit of SDGs triggers and transformational policies. Currently, a similar scheme prevails, with the Secretary of State for the 2030 Agenda (under a Vice-Presidency) overseeing the implementation

of SDG-oriented policies at national and sub-national level. A long-term vision and cross-cutting approach have been adopted by all stakeholders. The adoption of this cross-cutting approach for the promotion of SDGs within institutional and policy frameworks was a major shift and has greatly facilitated a swift and smooth transposition of 2030 Agenda into Spain's post-Covid recovery reforms and investments plans.

- In Morocco, a new organization placed the National Committee on Sustainable Development under the presidency of the Head of Government, in addition of a follow-up committee and a committee for the promotion of the SDGs. All ministries are represented by focal points within this national platform.
- In Algeria, the most transversal strategy that covers almost all the SDGs is the National Strategy for the Environment and Sustainable Development 2019-2035 and its Action Plan 2019-2022 in the process of being adopted. The national strategy expresses a shared national vision for sustainable development, which brings together nineteen recently adopted sectoral thematic strategies, plans and programmes. The Strategy has the potential to serve as a reference framework to operationalize the SDGs implementation.

There is a need to strengthen capacities and resources in national administrations to address the SDGs adequately, in particular for monitoring programmes to follow SDG indicators.

- Albania: The process of implementing the SDGs would require adequate resources and mechanisms to use national indicators and data for monitoring purposes. Strengthening statistical capacities at the national level is an important challenge. Monitoring SDGs requires not only a well-coordinated institutional mechanism but also a robust monitoring system at national and local levels;
- Algeria: At the end of 2018, 71 indicators produced from national sources were available, representing 30% of the SDG indicators. The National Statistic Information System (NSIS) faced with a two-fold challenge: strengthen statistical production oriented towards the SDGs and set-up a national statistical platform on sustainable development. Thematic, scientific and technical working groups were set up to support the Inter-ministerial Committee for the coordination and monitoring of the SDGs.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: SDGs may be monitored via 45 nationally adapted SDG targets and 108 indicators. We are far of the 247 SDG indicators.
- Croatia: There is a lack of capacities and competences to monitor the SDGs. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics has launched a portal on SDGs and developed 30 indicators until now.
- Cyprus has set in motion the development of a national SDG strategy including a robust monitoring mechanism to strengthen the capacity of the Government and social partners to support the implementation of the SDGs.
- Egypt developed an environmental monitoring network to monitor and evaluate environmental indicators, and reported that SIMPEER is an effective tool for experience sharing, providing technical support for monitoring and evaluating the national progress for achieving SDGs;
- France: An Annual Report is prepared by the Environmental Observation and Statistics Department of the General Commission for Sustainable Development (Ministry of the Environment) supported by the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE); the annual report is sent to the Parliament after the submission to the National Council on Ecological Transition;
- Greece: A big challenge has been the setting up of a monitoring mechanism for tracking progress in implementing the SDGs. A list of around 160 indicators (selected from the global SDGs indicator framework and adjusted to national priorities and aligned with what Ministries could regularly measure) has been endorsed for the quantitative monitoring. These indicators are endorsed by all Ministries and by the National Statistical Authority;
- Israel: Major efforts were invested in compiling a comprehensive statistical annex of the VNR (2019). A comprehensive report, comprising around 50% of the indicators collated by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics can now serve as the basis for informed decision-making on national priorities for 2030. Another important tool is Israel's Wellbeing Indicators which are measured annually and presented to the government, and will continue to support policymaking in achieving the SDGs;
- Italy: The Ministry for the Environment is mandated on a yearly basis to report on the state of play and actions undertaken to implement the NSSD. The report is submitted to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, in particular the Department for Economic Planning and Coordination, and transmitted to other relevant national authorities. In 2018, the Ministry of the Environment set up a working group with the

objective of selecting indicators to monitor and measure the implementation of the NSSD within the broader framework of the SDG indicators used by the National Statistics Institute.

- Lebanon reported a challenge related to the lack of access to data;
- Libya: *to be completed.*
- Montenegro: In 2017-2018, the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism implemented the project “*Establishing an integrated system for reporting on the progress in the implementation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development*”, building on the UNEP Indicator Reporting Information System (IRIS) for 33 priority indicators. Montenegro reported difficulties in using IRIS;
- Morocco: The system for monitoring the NSSD implementation has been defined. Each NSSD objective includes a number of indicators. The publication of populated indicators is the responsibility of the High Commission for Planning (*Haut Commissariat au Plan*);
- Monaco: *to be completed.*
- Slovenia: *to be completed.*
- Spain highlighted the need for harmonization of national indicators’ frameworks and the international system for monitoring and evaluation of SDGs. This is an on-going process and the NSSD 2021-2030 will address these challenges with a new national framework of indicators.
- Syrian Arab Republic: Due to crises, it was not possible to extract statistic data in the last years to build a database for calculating SDGs indicators;
- Tunisia: There are only 50 indicators followed by the Tunisian Observatory of the Environment and Sustainable Development (OTEDD);
- Turkey: Availability of indicators is an important challenge. Responsibilities were assigned to ministries for 218 SDG indicators. TurkStat published a press release in February 2019, including 83 indicators selected from the global list.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships, national/local fora on sustainable development, and engagement of civil society organizations, non-governmental actors and other stakeholders are critical to overcome the above-mentioned challenges.

23. Despite participatory and inclusive processes experienced for drawing up NSSDs, the actual involvement of stakeholders beyond governmental actors remains a challenge to translate strategic documents into effective policies and actions. Leadership from the highest State authorities does not remove the need to ensure that other stakeholders are included in participatory governance mechanisms. Meeting the sustainability challenge implies innovative approaches that promote social dialogue and the participation of professionals and citizens. Partnerships with local authorities, socio-economic actors, CSOs and the scientific community need to be further strengthened, as well as citizen fora to raise awareness of the general public and initiate dialogue on critical sustainable development issues.

24. As per SIMPEER conclusions, involving all stakeholders in designing and delivering the NSSD helps overcome changes in political agendas. Defining action plans that specify achievable targets and set the pace of transition as part of an inclusive process is critical for making the strategy a public policy document which transcends electoral agendas and is not bound by the duration of political mandates.

25. The development of local (municipal) sustainable development strategies improves ownership of the principles promoted and actions recommended under the NSSD. Informing, training and raising awareness of local authorities and stakeholders is essential for local development planning, ensuring citizen engagement in actions for sustainable development. Involving local stakeholders in implementing strategic sustainable development instruments constitutes a major challenge related to the decentralization process. According to the subsidiarity principle, the role of local authorities no longer focuses solely on delivering policy and development plans devised centrally. Local stakeholders have responsibilities in development planning at a level where implementation of sustainability principles is more tangible. The systemic approach lends itself more easily to smaller areas as part of a bottom-up approach. Central

administration's role remains crucial to support local authorities in harnessing these new responsibilities by providing structural directions, capacity building, planning tools, funding, and review processes.

26. Being logically driven by the market and the intention to make profits, the private sector can contribute to NSSD implementation through considerations regarding profitability and improving production conditions. Incentives for businesses along with communication campaigns would facilitate ownership of sustainability considerations by the private sector. Promoting experiences of large corporations which have adopted sustainable development principles would generate a snowball effect within the national economic fabrics.

- Albania: One of the priorities of the Government is the transformation of services delivery through the citizen-centric approach. The overall framework for the modernization and transformation of institutions and practices of public administration supports the achievement of SDG 16 "Peace, justice and strong institutions". Consultation of the civil society, through a national council and specialized councils, is required to review strategies and programmes submitted for adoption by the government;
- Algeria: The VNR report was drafted following consultations with elected officials, including at local level, CSOs and the private sector, during awareness-raising workshops on the SDGs organized in partnership with the UN system.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: *"At the heart of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Agenda 2030 efforts is the elaboration and adoption of the SDG Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is being developed through an extensive and reiterative consultative process with various institutions, CSOs, the private sector, academia and citizens at large. (...) The 'Imagine 2030' initiative provided an opportunity for citizens across the country to co-create the future"* (Key messages from Bosnia and Herzegovina's VNR 2019, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/bosniaherzegovina>).
- Croatia considered *"closer collaboration with different stakeholders (academia, youth)"* as a solution towards the delivery of SDGs, and *"awareness about the importance of multi-stakeholder cooperation and partnerships"* as a lesson learned from the VNR experience;
- Cyprus: *"There are many challenges in transposing, implementing and monitoring the SDGs since it involves almost the whole governmental structure and many other stakeholders"*.
- Egypt provided capacity building for governmental bodies, NGOs and the private sector to ensure their participation in achieving SDGs, considering that *"coordination mechanism between all stakeholders can effectively accelerate the progress towards the implementation of sustainable development programs, plans, and policies"*;
- France: Act 2009-967 of 3 August 2009 requires consultation with five types of non-state representatives (local authorities, employers, trade unions, citizens, and parliamentarians), and consultation with qualified individuals (e.g. expert workshops) and the general public (online consultations) to draw up the NSSD. In addition, stakeholders are invited to promote their actions on the occasion of the Environment Week, which was introduced in 2003; since 2014, this event has merged with the EU Green Week, held on the UN World Environment Day, celebrated each year on 5 June.
- Greece: In preparing its VNR, Greece has endorsed a whole of society approach, with a strong stakeholder involvement in the mapping and stocktaking process for defining the national starting point and priorities for adapting the SDGs, enhancing transparency, partnership and accountability. Greece's VNR presentation at the 2018 HLPF was delivered not only by the Minister of Environment and Energy as the Government's representative, but also by the President of the Economic and Social Council of Greece, representing stakeholders, and by the Chair of the Environment Committee, an elected representative of the National Parliament.
- Israel: Stakeholders from all sectors participated in the inter-ministerial meetings to prepare the first VNR. Moreover, a broad coalition of civil society bodies was set up, including dozens of mainly social and environmental organizations which have organized consultations and provided a report on future cooperation with the government. A more intensive joint government and stakeholder process will be carried out during the coming phases of implementing the 2030 Agenda.
- Italy: In addition of a permanent parliamentary committee for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda set up in 2018, the preparation of the NSSD was instrumental in engaging governmental actors with the youth, civil society organizations and local authorities in the context of the National Forum for

Sustainable Development; this forum was established by the Ministry in charge of the Environment as a dialogue platform between the institutions and civil society organizations. The revision of the NSSD will commence in 2020, through an open-ended participatory process involving all levels of government (local and central) and main stakeholders, with the support of the academic and research sector.

- Lebanon: A Parliamentary Committee reviews progress of SDGs implementation and oversees a mapping of the existing legislation against the SDGs. National workshops were conducted with government officials, the private sector and civil society organizations to raise awareness on the SDGs.
- Libya: to be completed.
- Malta: The Maltese Government is aware that “*establishing SDG implementation platforms composed of key stakeholders including civil society is essential in managing cross-sectoral coordination and overcoming difficulties and increasing accountability*”. The government has established a coordination mechanism underpinned by the Sustainable Development Act to create a framework through which sustainable development is mainstreamed across all workings of the government. Bodies, such as the Guardian of Future Generations and the Sustainable Development Network, also aim at fostering exchange of views and national dialogue on sustainable development in Malta.
- Montenegro: Stakeholder participation was planned in each phase of the development of the NSSD until 2030, in particular through consultative meetings and a public hearing. Representatives of two NGOs, three universities and three independent experts are members of the National Council for Sustainable Development. Challenges remain at the implementation stage to involve all stakeholders and to make them active and fully involved in implementing the NSSD, particularly the private sector.
- Morocco: The NSSD 2016-2030 development process involved all stakeholders through bodies such as the Economic, Social and Environmental Council and the Mohammed VI Foundation for Environmental Protection, including stakeholder consultation and workshops. The NSSD Objective 11 seeks to “*Strengthen the action of environmental and sustainable development NGOs and increase their involvement in implementation, monitoring and assessment processes for NSSD projects*”. The preparation of the VNR was based on a consultation process with all stakeholders; these consultations facilitated the awareness and ownership of the SDGs in Morocco.
- Monaco: *to be completed.*
- Slovenia: *to be completed.*
- Spain has a decentralized government model, where a large share of policies relevant to SDGs progress are to be implemented at sub-national level. This can mean different strategies, different timeframes and different approaches to pursue common goals. Alignment of implementation targets and coherence in policy approaches to gradually achieve the long-term goals the 2030 Agenda can prove challenging. Facilitating a constant participation process of all relevant stakeholders in the definition and monitoring of those common goals and nurturing an open and accessible governance scheme for the pursuit of the 2030 Agenda is an important part of the way forward. As is an ambitious awareness raising plan across the society and the engagement of younger generations in the pursuit of the SDGs, as a guarantee that the long-term priorities are kept at the fore front of policy implementation plans.
- Syrian Arab republic: “*Raising the Syrian society’s knowledge about the importance of SDGs and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, a positive experience in preparing the first national report for sustainable development reveals that the key to success in the implementation process is the engagement, commitment of all the stakeholders at the national and local levels, comprising the private sector, institutions, organizations, civil society, academia, development partners, and various government agencies*”.
- Tunisia: The body for sustainable development and protection of the rights of future generations established by the 2014 Constitution and created by Organic Law No 60/2019 represents an opportunity for the integration of the SDGs into development plans. Article 129 of the Constitution stipulates that “*The Authority for Sustainable Development and the Rights of Future Generations is imperatively consulted for draft laws relating to economic, social and environmental issues, as well as for development plans*”. The preparation of the VNR took place as part of a consultation process with all stakeholders: workshops and meetings allowed the awareness and ownership of the SDGs by all stakeholders.

- Turkey: As a transformational things done for VNR process, Turkey reported the following: “a high-level political ownership, performed stocktaking analysis, built partnerships with UN organizations, public and private sectors, local authorities, NGOs, academia and citizens, and done effective consultations, developed a National Database for Best Practices and Projects (400 good practices and projects from public and private sectors, academia, NGOs and municipalities so far)”.

Conclusions

The following conclusions builds on the SIMPEER Summary Report 2016-2019 (2020).

27. The circumstances in which NSSDs are implemented have considerably changed since the SDGs and the Paris Agreement were adopted. Most countries have stepped up the pace of change, prioritized and integrated sustainable development principles in their development planning processes. The importance UNEP/MAP puts on sustainable development through the work of the MCSD together with related actions and programmes could become a must for environmental integration, rather than a choice, to meet the needs of the Contracting Parties that would have to comply with far more stringent political conditions for sustainable development than in the previous decades.

28. The MSSD is very relevant to the discussion and delivery of the SDGs in the Mediterranean countries, which have aligned their development goals with SDGs and appropriate cross-cutting topics. As such, the MSSD forms a link between national and global levels, especially to fine-tune objectives, strategic guidelines and actions based on SDG targets. The same need for alignment also applies to the MSSD monitoring mechanism (and the NSSDs), as the indicators must be closely aligned with the global discussion on monitoring the implementation of the SDGs, while recognizing Mediterranean specificities.

29. The SIMPEER experience forms a major contribution from the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system in relation to broader debates about sustainable development in the region. It constitutes a solid base to use when developing the Barcelona Convention’s operational arrangements at Contracting Party level. SIMPEER can help the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system to further integrate its work with the SDGs. The core environmental aspects addressed by the Convention could be bolstered by social and economic considerations, by working jointly with partners likely to provide this added value, and by completing its environmental work with related social and economic aspects.

30. SIMPEER also highlighted that the private sector constitutes a specific stakeholder group of great importance to the future work of the UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system. The private sector could become a close partner to the system, contributing to making its work a reality by providing technological solutions and the means to implement them towards a more circular economy.

31. The UNEP/MAP – Barcelona Convention system could play a more active role in the transition to sustainable development in the Mediterranean. It can provide support and assist the efforts of the Contracting Parties to incorporate sustainable development principles into their national strategies and implement them. It can also provide a platform for monitoring purpose and peer learning, i.e. exchanging best practices and experiences.
