**THE DANISH
INSTITUTE FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS**

REPORT ON COUNTRY EXPERIENCES WITH HR-SDG INTEGRATED NATIONAL MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION, REPORTING AND FOLLOW-UP

July 2021

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ACRONYMS

CED   The Committee on Enforced Disappearances

CEDAW   Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

CERD   Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

CPED   International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforce Disappearance

ICERD   International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

CRC   Convention on the Rights of the Child

CRPD   Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

CSO   Civil society organisation

FAO   Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN

ICCPR   International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICESCR   International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights

NHRI   National human rights institution

NMRF/

NMIRF   National Mechanism for (Implementation,) Reporting and Follow-up

NRTD   National Recommendations Tracking Database

OHCHR   Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

OSCE   Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

SDG   Sustainable Development Goal

TB   Treaty Body

CAT   Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

UNCT   UN Country Team

UNDP   UN Development Programme

UNICEF   United Nations Children's Fund

UPR   Universal Periodic Review

VNR   Voluntary National Review

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH AND AIMS OF THE REPORT

States' reporting and follow-up requirements relating to international human rights treaty obligations are manifold and multifaceted, relating to numerous sectors. In order to fulfil these requirements, many states have begun to adopt more comprehensive approaches to reporting, engagement and follow-up through the establishment of mechanisms sometimes referred to as National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-up (NMIRFs).

NMIRFs are national public mechanisms or structures mandated to coordinate and prepare reports to and engage with international and regional human rights mechanisms, and to coordinate and track national follow-up and implementation of states' treaty obligations, and recommendations from these mechanisms. NMIRFs may be ad hoc., ministerial, inter-ministerial or institutionally separate and can be established by legislation, formal regulation or a policy mandate.[1]

In a similar vein and given their broad coverage, reporting and following up to 2030 Agenda commitments also requires systematic and effective coordination and an institutional framework at the national level. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) follow-up and review at national level takes many forms and structures, and is intended to build on or improve existing mechanisms (including human rights monitoring) and structures for coordination between a large variety of institutions across numerous sectors.

The Danish Institute for Human Rights wished to explore whether there is potential for enhancing reporting quality and coherence, and ultimately greater accountability for 2030 implementation and perspectives for human rights realisation by connecting these structures given the high level of complementarity between the 2030 Agenda and human rights frameworks.

This report considers whether NMIRFs:

- Improve reporting quality and coherence through improved institutional coordination for more systematic reporting on, and follow-up to, human rights obligations and their corresponding SDG commitments.

- Ensure that sustainable development planning and implementation is more systematically informed by advice from human rights bodies, based on human rights obligations and that human rights are more effectively integrated into sustainable development and sectoral programming.

This research focused on case studies, through select NMIRFs which could give a snapshot of activities, experiences and challenges in the integration of human rights and sustainable development. The intention was not to compare. The choice of countries was dictated by a number of factors including:

- those that have self-identified as NMIRF;

- the breadth of their composition and inclusion of sectors such as health, education and planning;

- their remit and whether these included explicit reference to SDGs or sustainable development;

- whether they had incorporated Agenda 2030 into their work;

- whether they had a database which measured implementation of human rights recommendations and SDGs;

- whether the NMIRF coordinated or had been involved in drafting the VNR; and

- logistical constraints, including our ability to make contacts with the NMIRF or other key persons.

From our pool we then attempted to ensure some regional representation. The final group of case studies included were: Mauritius, Morocco, Niger, Paraguay, Portugal, Samoa, Serbia and Uruguay.

We did make efforts to contact countries where it was known that the integration was limited but we were unable to follow up these any further.

The methodology involved desk-based research of documents of the NMIRF, reports to the UN TBs, UPR, national action plans on development matters and strategic planning. Contacts were also made with NMIRF focal points, representatives of OHCHR and others in select countries, developing questionnaires and seeking information via written input and online/phone interviews.

When analysing these documents and interviews to determine the extent to which human rights and sustainable development are integrated in the practices of NMIRF and those bodies involved in leading Agenda 2030, the following points were considered:

o The extent to which there was explicit and mention of SDGs, Agenda 2030 and sustainable development in reports to the UN human rights system or in the NMIRF's own documentation, and conversely, mention of human rights issues, specific human rights instruments, reports and other documents in the VNR and other national development strategies and plans.

o Whether these issues across respective reports were included implicitly, for example, whether a human rights-based approach helped structure the content of a document, or the SDGs provided a framework for presenting human rights issues.

o The actors involved in the drafting of these documents.

There are a number of limitations with the research. Firstly, the findings are based on these specific countries and are therefore context-specific, the research was not comparative, and therefore their application to other NMIRFs may not be possible. Secondly, the task was specifically to speak primarily with the NMIRFs themselves, or the OHCHR contact for that country. Given this focus on NMIRFs, if they had not had any particular interaction or involvement in sustainable development of Agenda 2030 processes (which was the case for several of them), then what they may be able to discuss on these issues would inevitably be limited. Furthermore, desk-based research was helpful in terms of identifying the extent to which human rights was integral to national action plans on development issues, for example, but would similarly would only provide an incomplete picture. Thirdly, due to the short timing, other stakeholders such as government officials, NHRIs and CSOs, were not contacted and, consequently, this report relies principally on the perspectives of the NMIRFs.

The report starts with an introduction to NMIRFs and their links to Agenda 2030 and the rationale for greater integration (Part I). Part II then provides key findings, before explaining in detail the factors that impact on improved reporting quality and coherence and whether sustainable development planning is informed by human rights advice and the NMIRFs. Part III presents a number of conclusions. The Annex contains case studies of each of the NMIRFs that were the focus of this research. Information from these case studies is also included in the main text of the report. Sincere thanks must go firstly to all those representatives of NMIRFs and the OHCHR who gave their time in interviews, provided documents and checked earlier drafts of the case studies and report. In addition, my gratitude to staff of the DIHR for their insightful and invaluable comments.

1   PART I: BACKGROUND TO NMIRF AND AGENDA 2030

1.1   NATIONAL MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION, REPORTING, AND FOLLOW-UP (NMIRFS)

It was with the UN High Commissioner's report in 2012[2] where the idea of states creating national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up gained particular traction. Here the High Commissioner recommended States create or strengthen a mechanism with a mandate to respond to international and regional reporting obligations and communications procedures, as well as ensure engagement with stakeholders.

UN General Assembly Resolution 68/268[3] then further recommended that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) 'support States parties in building the capacity to implement their treaty obligations [...] by providing direct assistance to States parties at the national level by building and developing institutional capacity for reporting and strengthening technical knowledge through ad hoc training on reporting guidelines at the national level'.[4]

A Project and Practical Guide were adopted by the OHCHR in 2016 giving advice for states when creating or strengthening NMIRFs.[5] Around the same time a Group of Friends was created by Portugal and the Universal Rights Group at the Human Rights Council to enable states to share ideas.

A further resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council at its 42nd session in September 2019 encourages states 'to establish or strengthen national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up for further compliance with human rights obligations or commitments, and to share good practices and experiences in their use for the elaboration of public policies with a human rights approach'.[6] There are now estimated to be around 40-50 NMIRFs or similar bodies across the world.[7]

1.2   AGENDA 2030 AND HUMAN RIGHTS

With respect to sustainable development, in September 2015 the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by the UN General Assembly. Intended as a framework to address various dimensions of sustainable development and a roadmap for change, included in the 2030 Agenda were the 17 SDGs as well as 169 related targets. These were accompanied by 232 indicators. Resources and partnerships are set out in the Means of Implementation (MoI) and monitoring is through a Follow-Up and Review (FUR) process. As part of this, states submit reports for regular review: Voluntary National Reviews (VNR).

The 'convergence, convenience, complementarity, coherence and consensus'[8] between human rights and the 2030 Agenda have been recognised, with the 2030 Agenda itself referring to human rights treaties and over 90% of the SDG targets reflect standards in international human rights instruments. The DIHR has produced a tool to link human rights standards to SDGs http://sdg.humanrights.dk/

As the DIHR has noted of the 169 SDG targets:

- 156 are linked with international human rights instruments and labour standards.

- 132 are linked with Inter-American regional human rights instruments.

- 135 are linked with African regional human rights instruments.

- 68 are linked with European regional human rights instruments.

- 79 are linked with international environmental and climate change instruments.[9]

1.3   LINKAGES BETWEEN NMIRF AND AGENDA 2030

Consequently, links have been developed between Agenda 2030 and NMIRFs. The UN Human Rights Council has noted, for example, that 'the implementation of the 2030 Agenda must be consistent with a State's obligations under international human rights law', and that promotion and protection of human rights and implementation of the 2030 Agenda 'are interrelated and mutually reinforcing'.[10] In addition, it is important to ensure that implementation of both human rights commitments and those under Agenda 2030 do not contradict or undermine each other. Greater integration, it is argued, can increase the effectiveness of respective commitments, ensure an 'holistic and integrated' approach and build upon existing good practices.[11]

Speaking with the NMIRFs involved in this research, there was a willingness for greater integration, with some NMIRF being particularly enthusiastic, albeit in general terms, in taking on a greater role with respect to Agenda 2030. Some saw the advantages of more integration as that it allowed the NMIRF to have a clearer idea of the state of implementation of the SDGs which would assist in the drafting of its own reports on human rights issues. In addition, greater linkages would provide some coherence in drafting those reports and ensure a 'uniformity of response', thereby improving the efficiency of reporting through a 'common approach' and avoiding duplication or contradiction. Better integration would facilitate increased attention to particular groups and risks and strengthened the mainstreaming of the principle of 'leave no one behind'. Furthermore, involving bodies with expertise in human rights issues in Agenda 2030 processes can ensure that indicators and statistics developed by the latter are sufficiently nuanced to capture hidden inequalities, and facilitates measurement of achievements under both Agenda 2030 and human rights. The benefits of NMIRFs being composed of many or all ministries and therefore include those who lead on Agenda 2030, we were told, enabled sharing of

information, increased awareness of the linkages and consequently more integration in the respective content of the reports. Furthermore, involving the NMIRF in the drafting of the Voluntary National Review (VNR) can ensure cross fertilisation of knowledge through, for example, the NMIRF providing direct reference to relevant reports submitted to the UN human rights system.

There was overall positivity among those we spoke with for greater integration and indeed some did not consider there were any disadvantages in doing so. However, they did note the need for greater capacity and continuous support for NMIRF if this were to occur. This was particularly the case if the NMIRF is composed of, or and therefore having to coordinate, many ministries thus necessitating more staff in the NMIRF with relevant expertise in Agenda 2030 issues. In addition, others pointed to the importance of mutual respect for the work of the NMIRF and bodies coordinating Agenda 2030 and the need for proper discussion to consider integrated ways of working. Finally, others have recognised the work involved in trying to identify which specific SDG is relevant to a human rights recommendation, particularly if the UN treaty body (TB) or other mechanism does not frame their recommendations around SDGs.

2 PART II: LESSENS LEARNED

2.1 KEY FINDINGS

The first aim of this research was to understand if improved institutional coordination for more systematic reporting on, and follow-up to, human rights obligations and their corresponding Agenda 2030 commitments led to better reporting quality and coherence. The second aim was to analyse the extent to which sustainable development planning and implementation is more systematically informed by advice from human rights bodies, based on human rights obligations and whether human rights are more effectively integrated into sustainable development and sectoral programming.

The research found the following:

- Integration between human rights and Agenda 2030 can be enhanced by a close relationship between the ministries on the NMIRF and those involved in sustainable development. The NMIRF will need to be involved in the institution and processes for Agenda 2030 and drafting of the VNR, and the body involved in coordinating Agenda 2030 should be represented on the NMIRF. It would also appear that mere involvement of the same ministries may not be sufficient and what is necessary is that these are the same individuals. More integration has been shown where the NMIRF is the one who is also responsible for coordinating Agenda 2030.

- Government awareness of the importance of Agenda 2030 and of integration of human rights is key in facilitating greater linkages.

- In some of our case studies, the linkages were sporadic. This can be explained in part by the fact that the NMIRF and institutions and processes for Agenda 2030 developed at different times and in parallel; and that the processes of integration are often in the early stages of development. Consequently, integration has not always taken place systematically or consistently.

- OHCHR, the UN Country Teams (UNCT) and other organisations can be very helpful in providing the necessary support, technical assistance and capacity to enable the NMIRF to greater integrate Agenda 2030 in its work.

- Civil society organisation (CSO) engagement with the NMIRF can facilitate greater integration, by providing additional channels for dialogue and raising awareness with the state authorities.

- Databases for human rights reporting and implementation are in an embryonic stage and their inclusion of SDGs even more so. Consequently, it is difficult to come to clear conclusions on the extent to which they have facilitated greater linkages between Agenda 2030 and human rights.

These findings will now be explained in detail.

2.2 COMPOSITION OF THE NMIRF AND BODY RESPONSIBLE FOR AGENDA 2030

2.2.1 SAME INDIVIDUALS

In countries where the same individuals were involved in both the NMIRF and had responsibility for Agenda 2030, one can see evidence of greater coherence. Conversely, where the same ministries were involved but not necessarily the same individuals, the linkages were less apparent. Consequently, understanding the root causes and specific contexts of these relationships is key to greater integration. The NMIRF/NMRF that were the subject of this research are composed of most ministries, if not all. They often have focal points or designated representatives from among the ministries and organisations on the NMIRF whose responsibility it is to provide information to the NMIRF on a regular basis.

For all of our case studies, with the exception of Samoa, the NMIRF was not the entity responsible for coordinating reporting and monitoring activities on Agenda 2030, in part, as seen below, because the processes developed in parallel.

- In **Samoa** the National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow Up (NMIRF) was set up with the purpose of coordinating all national reporting on various international commitments including SDGs. The NMIRF is not only the body responsible for coordinating SDG implementation, but also for the human rights conventions and therefore drafts both the reports to the UN human rights system and also the VNR. Indeed, it acknowledged in its second VNR that as Samoa was in the process of finalising its reports under the ICCPR, CED and CRPD, 'so the VNR process has been an important platform for those reports including the next Universal Periodic Report for Samoa in 2021'.[12]

In a similar vein, in **Serbia**, it has been suggested in the context of the VNR that the Council, the NMIRF, 'could take the leading role in ensuring that international recommendations and guidelines are translated into national legislation, policies, strategies and action plans'.[13] The NMRF in Mauritius is fully conscious of the role it can play in respect of Agenda 2030 but there is need for a greater synergy.

For the other NMIRFs in our research, because of the breadth of membership of the NMIRF which usually included many if not all ministries, then there was some overlap with those who were involved in the VNR and Agenda 2030 processes. In two cases, **Mauritius** and **Portugal**, either the Secretariat of the NMRF was involved in the drafting of the VNR Report, by providing input to the Steering Committee (Mauritius), or the jurisdiction was sufficiently small that the same individuals represented the ministries at both the NMIRF and SDG processes (Portugal). In both these countries as well as in **Samoa**, one can see that there is greater reference in the VNR to human rights issues. For most of the other NMIRFs in our research, although some of the ministries in the NMIRF were also involved in Agenda 2030 and VNR, they did not tend to be the same individuals, and this corresponded with fewer references in the VNR.

- In **Niger**, the Interministerial Committee is in charge of drafting reports for treaty bodies and the UPR (Comité interministériel chargé de la rédaction des rapports aux Organes des traités et de l'EPU). It is composed of 18 representatives from different ministries responsible for human rights (the ministries of justice, foreign affairs, agriculture and livestock, health, the interior, population, education, promotion of women and protection of the child, and employment) and representatives of the cabinet of the Prime Minister, the Secretary General of the Government and the Institute for National Statistics. The Ministry of Planning is responsible for coordinating the drafting of the VNR. The report was drafted by a Technical Committee composed of the General Directorate of Planning and Foresight, the National Institute of Statistics, the Executive Secretariat of the National Environment Council and of Sustainable Development (CNEDD), the Ministry in charge of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, representatives of CSOs including a representative of youth organizations, a representative of women's organizations, a representative of people's organizations living with disabilities and the United Nations System Agencies (UNDP, FAO, UNICEF).[14] The NMIRF does not include a representative from the body responsible for Agenda 2030, and neither does it have any particular relationship with this body, although it would like to. The integration across the reports is inconsistent.

2.2.2 INVOLVING THE NMIRF IN DRAFTING THE VNR OR ITS COORDINATION

The VNRs for the countries that are the focus of this research were often patchy in terms of their references to the UN human rights mechanisms and human rights standards. However, where the NMIRF was involved in the drafting of the VNR, one can see greater references to human rights.

- The Secretariat of the NMRF in **Mauritius** provided input to the SDG Steering Committee during the drafting of the VNR 2016. Drafting the VNR involved examining the reports that had been given to the various UN human rights treaty bodies and their relationship with the SDGs. The VNR aligns specific SDGs with its obligations under UN treaties, for example, linking the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) with SDG4, and Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) with SDG5.[15] It included within the VNR reference to a human rights-based approach to HIV/AIDS, and details awareness arising on human rights issues generally.[16] The VNR has an SDG Progress Tracker which sets out a status for each of the goals, linking these also with human rights.[17]

- In **Portugal**, the 2017 VNR has extensive reference to human rights standards, including UN instruments.[18]

- With the dual aims of preparing the VNR as well as the creation of a national monitoring mechanism for SDGs, the **Moroccan** government set up in

2018 the "Commission Nationale pour le Développement Durable" that is presided over by the Head of Government and composed of all the ministerial departments, national and public institutions, professional organizations and NGOs. The DIDH is therefore a member of this Commission. In the VNR, in the context of SDG5, CEDAW is briefly noted, as are action plans (such as the Governmental Plan for Equality, ICRAM) which themselves refer to human rights issues.[19] SDG16 mentions reports submitted to the UN TBs. The DIDH provided information specifically on these issues to the VNR drafting process.

Furthermore, where the NMIRF is the one coordinating the reporting and monitoring of both the VNR and UN human rights commitments, then one can see much more inclusion. Thus, for **Samoa**, it is difficult to make an assessment on extent to which the NMIRF incorporated SDGs in UN reporting, but in its report to CEDAW in 2017 it was making reference to the SDGs, for example, citing SGD 5 in the context of strengthening enhancement of community development and safety.[20] However, the fact that the NMIRF coordinated the drafting of the VNR is reflected in the detailed reference to and integration of human rights conventions, standards and mechanisms throughout the Review. For example, it notes 'with a human rights approach to SDGs implementation, Samoa embeds SDG 16 implementation in line with its human rights obligations under conventions it is a party to including the CEDAW, CRC, CRPD, UNCAT, CED and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)'.[21] When commenting on the lack of access for persons with disabilities to health care and education, it refers to the CRPD, [22] as well as citing various reports to the UN TBs.[23] Crucially a separate section in the VNR outlining its 'human rights approach to sustainable development' identifies various ways in which it links its human rights obligations to SDGs.[24] Focusing on vulnerable groups, it also highlights progressive developments as well as challenges faced by women and girls, citing its commitment to eliminate discrimination in SDG5 and under CEDAW. [25]

2.3 GOVERNMENT AWARENESS AND LEADERSHIP OF AGENDA 2030 AND THEIR LINKAGES WITH HUMAN RIGHTS

One of the challenges with making greater linkages, we were told, was the lack of knowledge among government departments about Agenda 2030 or its importance, or how they link with human rights. This may be particularly prevalent at certain levels of government and some noted that interest in Agenda 2030 among government officials may not have reached its full potential.

- In **Serbia**, the drafting of the VNR was coordinated by the Inter-Ministerial Working Group for Implementation of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (IMWG), a mechanism created in December 2015.[26] Coordination of Agenda 2030 issues is relatively new and this has been a particular challenge in ensuring that this and any linkages with human rights are seen as a political priority.

- In **Niger**, limited reference to Agenda 2030 in the human rights reports, for example, can be attributed, in part, to members of the NMIRF not being familiar with it.

- In January 2019 the Court of Auditors (Cour des Comptes) undertook a review of the **Moroccan** government's measures taken to implement the SDGs.[27] The assessment exercise and the related report is a good example of how to strengthen government accountability towards Agenda 2030.

Furthermore, the NMIRF and Agenda 2030 bodies may not always be under the same ministerial direction. Leadership of the NMIRF is often with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or equivalent, and this may be shared with that for the 2030 Agenda. But for some, this was different (e.g. Ministry of Planning, in **Niger** and in **Portugal,** shared with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the Head of Government or President, in both **Morocco** and **Uruguay**, the latter shared with two other agencies). The examples from our research do not show a clear picture in terms of a correlation between better integration of human rights and Agenda 2030 in respective reports when the same ministry leads both. However, for the NMIRFs in our research that displayed stronger linkages (and where the institutions responsible for each were separate) both the NMIRF and Agenda 2030 processes were overseen by the same entity.

- In **Mauritius**, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (MFARIIT) coordinates both the NMRF and SDG Steering Committee. Its VNR, for example, shows integration of human rights standards and commitments. However, even though both bodies looking at the NMRF and SDGs lie within the same Ministry, it is acknowledged that there is still a need for greater synergy.

In **Morocco**, the National Commission on Sustainable Development overseen by the Head of Government[28] ensures oversight of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, thus ensuring the alignment of sectoral policies and programmes and their linkages with the SDGs. The DIDH, like various ministerial departments, contributes to the work of this Commission, notably by overseeing the integration of Morocco's international human rights commitments in policies and programmes for sustainable development.

2.4 PARALLEL DEVELOPMENTS AND EMBRYONIC OR WORK IN PROGRESS

One of the reasons why there may be fewer linkages between Agenda 2030 and human rights, is that the issues are usually dealt with in parallel by different institutions. Where there has been either integration of reporting and implementation on both Agenda 2030 and human rights commitments, as in **Samoa**, then one can see elements of full incorporation and reflection on human rights in the VNR. In contrast, where NMIRF and Agenda 2030 processes have developed in parallel and there is lack of overlap in those individuals involved in drafting and monitoring the human rights and SDGs, one can see this reflected in the limited reference to Agenda 2030 in reports submitted to the UN treaty bodies.

Several of those spoken with in the course of this research indicated that the process of creation of the NMIRF and the process for developing monitoring of Agenda 2030 had tended to occur in parallel. The NMIRF and the institutions leading on Agenda 2030 were often created at different times and therefore were at different stages in development. Any consideration of making the links between them, we were told, may only have arisen years after the NMIRF was established. Until that stage, the respective bodies may not see the relevance of each others' work.

Thus, they may be at different levels of development and the processes by which they monitor reporting and implementation elaborated side-by-side rather than collaboratively.

Furthermore, some of the NMIRFs are still at an embryonic stage, may be focused on coordinating of reporting and yet to consider implementation. Consequently, this is very much work-in-progress.

- In **Uruguay**, initial discussions around linking Agenda 2030 and human rights only arose a couple of years after the NMIRF had been established. The relationship between the NMIRF and SDG processes has been limited, and this is reflected in the fact that Uruguay's reports to UN TBs and UPR do not always make reference to Agenda 2030 matters.[29] One exception is its report to CERD - it comments in general on commitments in the 2030 Agenda when outlining its National Strategy on Policies for Persons of African Descent 2030, and the SDGs in the context of the National Gender Equality Strategy 2030.[30]

- **Niger**'s Interministerial Committee in charge of drafting reports for treaty bodies and the UPR (Comité interministériel chargé de la rédaction des rapports aux Organes des traités et de l'EPU) does not include a representative from the body responsible for Agenda 2030. Neither does it have any particular relationship with it, although it would like to. This limited engagement is reflected in the reports to the UN treaty bodies which provide little information on Agenda 2030, other than brief reference to sustainable development.[31]

Where integration is at an early stage, then this can explain inconsistencies in approach.

- In **Samoa**, despite the NMIRF being responsible for both the human rights monitoring and reporting and that on Agenda 2030, and the detailed reference to human rights in the VNR, other policies, such as the Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2021-2025 do not always make the same linkages.

- In **Morocco**, the reports to UN TBs, with the exception of CEDAW, make only brief reference to SDGs and Agenda 2030.[32] The report to CEDAW displays a much more integrated approach.[33] Sustainable development and relevant national strategies are acknowledged in the report, as are sustainable development indicators and measures to ensure gender mainstreaming. It notes a partnership with UN-Women in March 2018 which resulted in the adoption of guidelines which, among other things, 'institutionalizes gender

units and promotes gender equality in practices, behaviours, programmes and action plans in the area of environment and sustainable development'. The national sustainable development strategy is referenced in the context of a green economy. In addition, the report also refers to national surveys carried out by the HCP in 2009/2010 and again in 2019 to gather information on violence against women and 'to obtain updated data and statistics on this phenomenon and to measure indicators of violence under the Sustainable Development Goals'.[34] This cohesive report could be explained in part by the inclusive approach that the DIDH systematically adopts in the preparation of all reports, and which thus permits the implication of various government actors as well as the HCP. The HCP provided assistance by asking questions and making specific points on SDGs and their targets.

In addition, the UN TBs themselves do not always frame their recommendations around SDGs or refer to them. This explains in part why some NMIRFs have found it difficult to make linkages between, for example, certain human rights recommendations and a specific SDG. Conversely, in **Morocco**, for example, there is some indication that the mention of SDGs in the report could have led to the CEDAW Committee referring to them in its subsequent List of Issues in relation to this report. Thus, the Committee requested additional information on the Authority for equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination the 'impact of the implementation of various national and regional plans for equality, the involvement of civil society in their development, and questions on gender-responsive budgeting'.[35]

Finally, depending on when the NMIRF was set up, and when reporting cycles are due under the UN human rights system as well as VNR, there may be limited opportunities to analyse the extent to which there has been integration, or indeed for any integration to occur. Importantly, the National Strategy for Equality and Non Discrimination in **Portugal**'s timeline is framed by Agenda 2030 and 'around three four-year-long periods which will each be subject to evaluation.[36]

2.5   SUPPORT FROM OHCHR AND OTHERS

Many in our research pointed to the assistance and technical support of OHCHR and UNCTs, particularly in the capacity-building of the NMIRF, increasing awareness of SDGs, and in developing databases. Where there has been more advanced integration of SDGs by the NMIRF, in some jurisdictions, this has been partly because of the support offered by the OHCHR and UNCTs, as well as others such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Firstly, the OHCHR, UNCT and others can provide assistance in the development and capacity building of the NMIRF and in encouraging it to make links with Agenda 2030.

- The UNCT in **Serbia** assisted in the establishment of the NMIRF, the Council for Monitoring the Implementation of the Recommendations of the United Nations Mechanism. Although its report to the UPR in 2017 provides no

reference to SDGs, Agenda 2030 or sustainable development,[37] the OHCHR has been working with Serbia to ensure a strong relationship with SDGs and Agenda 2030 is made in the mid-term report. This is reflected in its content which notes the Recommendation Implementation Plan and the relationship of specific SDGs with particular clusters. There is a specific cluster on sustainable development which makes note of Agenda 2030, indicators developed by the Statistical Office and the VNR.[38]

Practical assistance can also be provided with the creation of databases.

- The OHCHR has stated that '**Mauritius** is the first country in Africa to have instituted an National Recommendations Tracking Database (NRTD). Experience to date demonstrates that using an NRTD requires the institutionalization of existing structures and processes for engagement with human rights mechanisms and the implementation of recommendations issued by NMRFs'.[39]

- The OHCHR have been involved in various ways in **Samoa** and its NMIRF links with Agenda 2030, including supporting the NMIRF's participation in discussions on VNR at the SDG High Level Political Forum, and providing resources to develop the SADATA database. This was in the context of preparing for the UPR whereby a volunteer designed this database to support the NMRF.[40]

Other UN agencies, such as UNICEF, have supported the government in making these links.

Technical cooperation from OHCHR has been important in capacity building of the NMIRF and making linkages to Agenda 2030. The OHCHR has also advocated for the TBs to link their work with the SDGs and for the UNCT to develop these links.

- UNCT and UNICEF, with the NMIRF in **Uruguay**, have supported the government, in the implementation and reporting on the right to education, and obligations under the CRC and ICESCR. Thus:

  'Against this background, education, as an inclusive right and as part of the sustainable development principle of 'leaving no one behind', has long been a priority for the State and the UNCT. As part of that prioritization, the Government of Uruguay has been notably open to leveraging its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to promote the right to quality education without discrimination, and to use its engagement with the three main United Nations human rights mechanisms to drive and direct progress. This approach, supported by the UNCT, including UNICEF, is particularly powerful in Uruguay because of the Government's commitment to human rights and its significant institutional capacity, aided by its NMIRF, which allows it to efficiently implement and report on recommendations delivered by the United Nations mechanisms'.[41]

This has had an impact, namely:

> 'the fact that the Country Team acts as one to integrate the recommendations of the United Nations human rights mechanisms into Uruguay's [United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework] undoubtedly helps both the State and the United Nations to secure progress on both the improved enjoyment of human rights, including children's rights, and the achievement of the SDGs – "leaving no one behind"'.[42]

In addition, as noted above, some NMIRFs indicated challenges in understanding which SDG should link to a particular recommendation. In this regard, it was noted that other resources, such as those provided by the DIHR, offer useful advice and tools on how to make these connections.

2.6   PARTICIPATION OF CSOS IN THE NMRF

NMIRFs often enable the participation of NHRIs and other statutory bodies, parliamentarians and the judiciary, often on a standing invitation basis. They all also recognise the need for civil society engagement.

- In **Uruguay**, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will draft UN human rights reports from the database, updating them as it goes along. There is a timetable for drafting reports and an email list of all NMIRF members. Roundtables on women, disability and children take place every 2-3 months which provide opportunities for civil society to highlight key issues. In addition, once reports to the UN have been validated by the ministries they are then shared with CSOs for their input.

This engagement can provide another avenue for interaction with government and for different actors to raise awareness with them around the importance of human rights commitments, Agenda 2030 and their linkages.

- In **Serbia**, the NMIRF, the Council, has signed a Memorandum on Cooperation with CSOs and networks to facilitate monitoring of implementation.[43] In addition, the OSCE mission in Serbia and UN Human Rights Team in Serbia also assisted in establishing a Platform of 18 CSOs for cooperation with the UN human rights system,[44] and the OHCHR is trying to ensure that CSOs are involved in developing the national policy. As CSOs have themselves integrated Agenda 2030 into their own work, they can then also advocate for integration by government. CSO engagement, we were informed, provides different entry points for dialogue with government. For example, various initiatives, supported by the UN, have resulted in greater engagement of the youth in Serbia with Agenda 2030. This included, in 2019, as part of the development of the VNR, a consultative process led by UNICEF through youth panels, use of social networks and engagement with schools to enable them to provide input and their views on the progress of SDGs.[45]

It is important to ensure that such processes, however, are sustainable beyond donor support.

2.7   DATABASES

Numerous databases, platforms and other e-tools have been developed by the UN, OSCE, EU, Council of Europe and NHRIs. Our case studies indicate that some NMIRFs have created, or are in the process of developing, databases that attempt to capture recommendations from UN TBs, UPR and the regional systems into a coherent and user-friendly format.

Paraguay's coordination of reports and monitoring of recommendations is carried out through the online tool SIMORE Plus. Created by presidential decree,[46] and with the support of the OHCHR, the tool includes recommendations from the UPR, UN special procedures and TBs, as well as the Inter-American human rights system. It operates through a network of 180 focal points within 80 public institutions of the three State Powers and extra-power bodies, and it is these that are in charge of following up on the recommendations assigned to them, as well as uploading to SIMORE Plus the measures they have taken to implement the recommendations. The recommendations are classified into themes / populations. The focal points are distributed in groups called «thematic or population tables», and must identify in each recommendation the Mechanism from which it comes, the year, the subject or right to which it refers, the affected population, the institution(s) responsible to take the implementation measures, the related SDGs, the public policy, the relevant program or project and the indicators to measure compliance, if any.

Some of the other databases in our research are modelled on SIMORE. Drawing upon SIMORE, the OHCHR have also developed the National Recommendations Tracking Database which can automatically download recommendations from the UN human rights system.[47] These databases include features such as the ability to identify relevant government ministries, timelines, links to implementation or action plans and for information to be regularly updated and indicators to measure implementation. Some group recommendations together.

- In **Portugal**, a database is modelled on SIMORE and updated twice a year.

- In **Uruguay**, each ministry and institution who is a member of the NMIRF is asked to appoint a focal point who has responsibility for uploading the information on to the database.

- In **Serbia'**s database, recommendations from the UPR and TBs are mapped out, identifying the responsible ministries, a timeline for reporting and human rights indicators, as well as inter-sectoral coordination.

In the case studies in this research, some of the databases linked recommendations to specific SDGs, although for many of those databases that tended to be in an early stage of development, SDGs have yet to be fully integrated.[48]

- In **Paraguay**, the development of the previous platform, SIMORE, to SIMORE Plus allowed the inclusion of links to the SDGs and their goals. This same process required the participation, in many cases for the first time, of a wide range of public institutions and the creation of links between them. It also reflected high level political commitment for the integration of human rights and sustainable development.[49] In addition, Paraguay's reports to the UN TBs acknowledge SIMORE Plus as the tool used in their compilation and specifically to link the recommendations of the TBs to SDGs.[50] One of the benefits of combining human rights and SDGs in SIMORE Plus, we were told, was that it 'generated a new dynamic within the State, which fostered, in addition to networking, an innovative approach in terms of the methodology used, the use of technology, transparency, citizen participation and accountability, and reorientation of state actions from a human rights and development perspective'.

- The SADATA database in **Samoa** (https://sadata-production.firebaseapp.com/overview) provides links to the recommendations of the UN TBs and UPR and SDGs. Although there is limited information yet on the database, it enables the user to search across different issues which then lists related recommendations and SDGs as well as progress achieved. It has been noted that this database helped the NMIRF develop a National Implementation Plan 'by clustering recommendations, identifying implementation gaps and regularly collecting data and we aim to use this to eliminate duplication of efforts by tracking information against all relevant recommendations, SDGs and the development priorities'.[51] Indeed, SADATA specifically includes an 'Implementation Plan' identifying 56 Government Actions.

- The NMRF Secretariat in **Mauritius** proposes to use the National Recommendations Tracking Database to make greater links of SDGs to human rights.[52] The system also provides various features to generate an implementation plan for the recommendations and will be used as a tool for monitoring and reporting.

- In **Uruguay**, SIMORE is used but the database is relatively new and SDGs are currently not referenced. However, with the move to SIMORE-Plus, there are plans to include them.

- The DIDH in **Morocco** has put in place an information system to ensure follow-up of implementation of recommendations issues by the three main UN human rights mechanisms (UPR, treaty bodies and Special Procedures), in collaboration with other stakeholders. This facilitates a more integrated approach to human rights and sustainable development..

Currently, many of these databases are not made available to the public, although in Uruguay it is (https://simore.mrree.gub.uy/buscador/home/), and the intention is to do so in some of the other examples studied (e.g. **Serbia**).

Given the embryonic stage of these databases, and their inclusion of SDGs, it is difficult to draw any clear conclusions on whether databases improve coherence of reporting and monitoring. However, **Samoa**'s database is one which does include SDGs and, in addition to other factors, its VNR makes extensive reference to human rights standards and mechanisms.

Those we spoke with, even where the databases existed, recognised that government officials may not always be aware of the database and not provide it with the regular updates required. This relates to the importance of overall government commitment, not only at the highest level, to both human rights and sustainable development as well as their integration. In addition, more is needed to be done to avoid duplication and repetition across the human rights databases and those for sustainable development.

3 PART III: CONCLUSIONS

3.1 THE POTENTIAL FOR ENHANCING REPORTING QUALITY AND COHERENCE AND THE SYSTEMATIC INFORMING OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

The aim of this research was to explore whether there is potential for enhancing reporting quality and coherence, and ultimately greater accountability for 2030 implementation and perspectives for human rights realisation by connecting these structures given the high level of complementarity between the 2030 Agenda and human rights frameworks.

The first hypothesis was whether NMIR 'improve reporting quality and coherence through improved institutional coordination for more systematic reporting on, and follow-up to, human rights obligations and their corresponding SDG commitments'. As noted above, in Part II, the findings indicate that institutional coordination can improve reporting coherence, but whether this is achieved depends on a number of factors, such as closeness of the relationship between those involved in human rights reporting and reporting on Agenda 2030, and the extent to which respective bodies were part of the drafting teams. Awareness among various levels of government of the importance of integration, the extent to which processes had developed so far, support from the OHCHR and other external bodies, as well as CSO commitment, are further relevant features.

Whilst there was enthusiasm, among the NMIRFs in this research, to undertake this role, or to expand their work in this area, it was with a note of caution. Thus, there would need to be more resources, in particular expert staff, to support them to do so. In addition, although the mandates of the NMIRFs tended, on the whole, not to include express reference to SDGs, for some their remit was drafted sufficiently broadly that it could be interpreted as including SDGs within their work. Such an interpretation may not always be feasible, however. Consequently, any further drive towards greater engagement by NMIRFs with Agenda 2030 will need to be accompanied by increased resources and clarity on their mandates.

It is also crucial, when considering the benefits and logistical possibilities of NMIRFs creating greater linkages with Agenda 2030, whether this may detract from their core mandate of reporting, monitoring and follow-up on human rights reporting. As the OHCHR have noted, an effective NMIRF is one that will 'lead to timely reporting and a reduction in backlogs in periodic State reports'.[53] A brief snapshot of the reporting burdens and records of the NMIRFs in our research revealed a mixed picture. For some, the reports were less delayed or indeed up-to-date after the NMIRF was created (e.g. Mauritius, Niger, Portugal), yet for others there was little or no discernible difference in the reporting record (e.g. Morocco, Paraguay, Samoa). The extent to which this can be attributed to the establishment of the NMIRF is difficult to conclude without further research.

What this superficial glimpse and the research does reveal is that for some of the states, the NMIRFs still have considerable work to do in ensuring that the basic core element of their mandates, the submission of up-to-date reports, is fulfilled. Furthermore, the next stages in human rights reporting, the monitoring and subsequent implementation of recommendations, is for many NMIRFs still very much work-in-progress. Consequently, it is important to ensure that linkages with Agenda 2030 are there to support and enhance the quality of the reports and ultimately the rights of those in the state, rather than to detract from the achievement of their core functions. Indeed, it is interesting that **Samoa**, as the only NMIRF in this Report that currently has a joint mandate for both human rights and Agenda 2030, has a relatively poor record in human rights reporting, raising questions about whether it is overstretched in its ability to deliver this aspect of its mandate.

The second hypothesis for this research was whether NMIRF 'ensure that sustainable development planning and implementation is more systematically informed by advice from human rights bodies, based on human rights obligations and that human rights are more effectively integrated into sustainable development and sectoral programming'. The focus of this research was on the role of NMIRF, principally their perceptions in undertaking more integration and coordination. Their involvement in the VNR, and national development plans is apparent in some of our case studies. However, because integration was still embryonic, further detailed consideration on how integration could be achieved had yet to occur. Consequently, conclusions on this second hypothesis were more difficult to reach and further research is needed to involve the perspectives of government, those bodies responsible for drafting the VNR and leading on Agenda 2030 and other national development plans and processes.

3.2   THE OBSTACLES TO GREATER INTEGRATION

In addition to the challenges in ensuring greater integration, such as staffing and mandate, the research exposes a number of other barriers. Proper analysis of the relationships between respective bodies responsible for human rights and Agenda 2030, whether there is a mutual appreciation for their work, and further analysis of their interactions needs to be carried out. Consideration of the internal workings of relevant ministries, their priorities, timelines and practices, is also needed if one is to get to the heart of why further integration can or cannot occur.

Although the focus of this research was on the role of NMIRFs, it is apparent that greater integration is also dependant on linkages being made at a number of different levels. These include by: those actors coordinating Agenda 2030, if different from the NMIRF; those who are responsible for feeding information to the NMIRF and for implementation; and by high-level political actors. CSOs and other non-state entities can offer different avenues for interaction and points of contact for the NMIRF. Finally, UN TBs themselves can facilitate greater linkages by also explicitly including reference to SDGs in their own recommendations, thereby creating a clearer framework and points of reference to which the state authorities and NMIRF have subsequently to respond.

3.3 WHAT SHOULD NMIRFS BE DOING?

As noted at the start of this report, this research focused on analysis of reports to the UN human rights system and in respect of Agenda 2030, documents produced by the NMIRF, and national development plans, and collating, through interviews, further information on perspectives and involvement in drafting, other processes and institutions.

It is helpful to consider, going forward, how one defines what is ideal in terms of better integration and linkages between human rights and Agenda 2030 in the context of an NMIRF's work.

There is the use of relevant language, reference to human rights treaties and their provisions, the content of TB reports, specific SDGs, their targets and indicators in respective reports. Yet superficial inclusion of these citations is insufficient. Using SDGs and human rights to frame respective reports can assist. The example in Portugal where the National Strategy for Equality and Non Discrimination timeline was framed by the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and structured in three action plans on gender equality, violence against women and LGBTI rights,[54] illustrates such an approach.

Embedding individuals with expertise and knowledge of human rights and sustainable development in each other's structures for drafting reports and plans, meetings, and access to databases, as well as in the institutions themselves also appears to be important.

Taking concrete and discret examples of particular SDGs and properly connecting them with the standards, interpretation and analysis from relevant UN TBs, could be one step to greater comprehension of what precisely the NMIRF and state authorities need to do to ensure better integration.

ANNEX: CASE STUDIES

MAURITIUS

Lessons learned:

- Consulting the NMRF Secretariat during drafting of the VNR resulted in various reference to human rights in the VNR.

- There is a willingness in the NMRF to increase integration of Agenda 2030 in its work, but this is still at an early stage of development.

- Greater awareness of the importance of Agenda 2030 is needed among government officials to take integration further.

The NMRF for Mauritius is an inter-ministerial body responsible for engagement, drafting reports and following-up on recommendations adopted by the UN treaty bodies, special procedures, UPR and regional human rights systems. Its functions also include developing 'follow-up plans, including time-lines, with relevant ministries/departments to facilitate, coordinate and manage the process of implementation of recommendations from all human rights mechanisms linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a view to preparing the next Universal Periodic Report (Fourth Report) of Mauritius'.[55]

Chaired by the Minister responsible for the subject matter of Human Rights, it is composed of members of all ministries, National Human Rights Institutions, and civil society. Each ministry selects officers as focal points and they are expected to provide updates to the NMRF.

The NMRF currently operates under the Human Rights Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (MFARIIT) and its Secretariat coordinates all activities and follow-up. It disseminates, among its members, a table of recommendations from the UN and regional human rights mechanisms and carries out updates on implementation of the recommendations at least every six months.

Reference has been made to SDGs in the reports to UN TBs. For example, in its report to CEDAW, it noted that:

> 'Since the adoption of the SDGs, the Gender Unit has aligned its policies and programmes towards attaining the set targets of Agenda 2030, in particular SDG 5: "Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all girls and women" and the MGECDFW organised a National Dialogue pertaining to the same subject on International Women's Day 2016. A Training of Trainers on the

Sustainable Development Goals was also held on 22 April 2016 and around 30 participants were trained on the goals of the SDGs so that they may disseminate the information amongst the public'.[56]

With the assistance of the OHCHR, Mauritius is in the early stages of implementing its National Recommendations Tracking Database.[57] The system also provides various features to generate an implementation plan for the recommendations and will be used as a tool for monitoring and reporting. The OHCHR note that:

'Mauritius is the first country in Africa to have instituted an NRTD. Experience to date demonstrates that using an NRTD requires the institutionalization of existing structures and processes for engagement with human rights mechanisms and the implementation of recommendations issued by NMRFs'.[58]

The OHCHR also provided support to building the capacity of the NMRF through two workshops - on state reporting, and the key elements of an NMRF.

With respect to reporting and implementation of Agenda 2030, this is coordinated by the MFARIIT. An SDG Steering Committee, chaired by the MFARIIT, is composed of the public and private sector including CSOs.[59] A drafting team was set up within the MFARIIT which worked in collaboration with the SDG Steering Committee and ministers were identified to lead on certain SDGs.[60] The Human Rights Division, in which the NMRF is represented, sits on the Steering Committee. When the VNR was being drafted the various reports to the human rights TBs were analysed in the context of each SDG. Stakeholder engagement, including with NGOs, was achieved through dissemination of questionnaires and validation workshops[61] and more generally, the government adopted a Stakeholder Engagement Plan as well as an SDG Communications Strategy.[62] However, a report in 2019 by the National Audit Office noted that more needed to be done to 'seek the commitment of NGOs and business communities involved in the implementation of SDGs'.[63]

The VNR aligns specific SDGs with its obligations under UN treaties, for example, linking CRC and CRPD with SDG4, and CEDAW with SDG5.[64] It included within the VNR reference to a human rights-based approach to eliminating discrimination against those with HIV/AIDS, and details awareness arising on human rights issues more generally.[65] It also acknowledges the role of the NMRF and that it has become 'the platform for consultations with NGOs and Civil Society on a regular basis', and that the country is among those pioneering the National Recommendations Tracking Database.[66] The VNR has an SDG Progress Tracker which sets out a status for each of the goals, linking these also with human rights.[67] The report also noted that Mauritius 'is committed to ensuring that its national legislation is fully compliant with international human rights provisions' and that these norms are 'incorporated in the domestic legal system and Mauritian Courts'.[68]

Some other sustainable development policy documents, such as Mauritius' Roadmap for SDG Implementation, make only passing references to rights.[69] The integration of human rights and Agenda 2030 as well as development of the

database are still embryonic and consequently consistent synergy in reporting is yet to happen. If the NMRF were to take on a greater role with respect to Agenda 2030, and it considers that 'instead of duplication, the two mechanisms should work hand in hand',[70] then it would require more resources to do so.

MOROCCO

Lessons learned:

- The National Commission for Sustainable Development, chaired by the Head of Government[71], is overseeing the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda, by ensuring that the programmes and sectoral policies in their report are aligned with the SDGs. Following the example of a number of ministerial departments, the DIDH is contributing to the Commission's work, primarily by ensuring that international human rights commitments are better integrated into sustainable development programmes and policies.

- The contribution of the DIDH and other departments and institutions to the work of the National Commission for Sustainable Development is clearly documented in the 2020 national report on SDG implementation.

- The Haut-Commissariat au Plan (HCP) is the body responsible for coordinating monitoring of and preparing reports for the SDGs. The DIDH has also involved the HCP in preparing various reports which the Kingdom of Morocco submits to United Nations human rights mechanisms. These reports cover Morocco's commitments to the 2030 Agenda in terms of producing reports and liaising with the UN's human rights mechanisms.

- The DIDH monitors the implementation of international human rights commitments. It has therefore set up a reporting system to ensure that the recommendations made by the three UN human rights mechanisms (Universal Periodic Review, treaty bodies and special procedures) are followed up and implemented, and that stakeholders are working effectively together.

- The National Plan of Action on Democracy and Human Rights (Plan d'Action National en matière de Démocratie et des Droits de l'Homme, PANDDH) whose implementation is coordinated by the DIDH, has set several objectives in line with the Sustainable Development Goals which might facilitate the establishment of an integrated monitoring and reporting of human rights and sustainable development.

The Délégation Inter-ministérielle aux Droits de l'Homme (DIDH) was established in 2011 in response to the need for a government entity to prepare and implement government policy on promoting and protecting human rights.[72] It is also tasked with ensuring that Morocco engages with the United Nations human rights mechanisms, and therefore with preparing reports and maintaining dialogue with these mechanisms, in conjunction with national stakeholders.[73] Part of its mandate

includes undertaking 'any action and initiative likely to promote respect for human rights in the implementation of public policies'[74] and to 'respond to consultation requests presented by ministerial departments during the preparation of draft texts or action programs that may have implications for human rights and international humanitarian law'.[75]

There are three directorates which cover the missions and tasks assigned to the DIDH. They are:

- The Directorate of legal studies and international cooperation which interacts with the supranational bodies and international NGOs and helps to harmonise national laws with international commitments;

- The Directorate of coordination and human rights promotion which helps government departments to implement international human rights commitments. It is therefore tasked with incorporating the human rights approach into public policy, and with promoting human rights.

- The Directorate of dialogue and partnership with national associations and bodies, tasked with engaging with NHRIs and civil society organisations.

- The DIDH also includes a separate division responsible for administration and financial affairs, attached to a General Secretariat. The Decree establishing the DIDH also states that alongside the DIDH, there should be a standing inter-ministerial human rights commission composed of representatives of relevant ministerial departments.

Article 31 of the Moroccan Constitution considers sustainable development among the fundamental rights of citizens, and Article 35 provides for the State striving for the achievement of human and sustainable development. Article 136 emphasizes the principles of citizen participation in the management of public affairs and facilitates their contribution to integrated and sustainable development. In 2014, Morocco adopted Framework Law No. 99.12, titled "National Charter for the Environment and Sustainable Development", which emphasized the need to take into account the sustainable development component in development policies, to unify the strategic vision of public action and to engage all stakeholders in development policies.

With the dual aims of preparing the VNR as well as the creation of a national monitoring mechanism for SDGs, the government set up in 2018 the "Commission Nationale pour le Développement Durable" that is presided over by the Head of Government and composed of all the ministerial departments, including the DIDH, the national and public institutions, professional organizations and NGOs. Ministerial departments nominate focal points and the Commission is led by the Haut Commissariat au Plan (HCP). The HCP is the national institution responsible for statistics. Within the Commission is a committee for follow-up and monitoring.

There is a platform for SDGs which falls under the HCP, (http://plateforme-odd.hcp.ma/ODD_HCP/fr/), and is separate from that for the human rights recommendations. It lists each SDG and its targets and indicators.

The national report for the third UPR, presented in 2017, details a number of national plans including the National Sustainable Development Strategy 2015-2020 (SNDD), as part of its 'realization and consolidation of sectoral policies on human rights'. Particular attention is also drawn to these issues in discussion around the right to a healthy environment. The national mid-term report for this third UPR cycle links the SDGs to the right to health, and the right to an environment and sustainable development.[76]

Please also note the reports to the United Nations treaty bodies submitted since the 2030 Agenda was adopted in September 2015, which all contain various degrees of reference to the SDGs and 2030 Agenda. The shared basic document, which was updated in 2020 and is an integral part of the reports submitted by Morocco, refers to the 2030 National Strategy for Sustainable Development in its overview of public human rights policy.[77]

The CEDAW report displays a far more integrated approach. Sustainable development and relevant national strategies are acknowledged in the report, as are sustainable development indicators and measures to ensure gender mainstreaming. It notes a partnership with UN-Women in March 2018 which resulted in the adoption of guidelines which, among other things, 'institutionalizes gender units and promotes gender equality in practices, behaviours, programmes and action plans in the area of environment and sustainable development'. The national sustainable development strategy is referenced in the context of a green economy. In addition, the report also refers to surveys carried out by the HCP in 2009/2010 and again in 2019 to gather information on violence against women and 'to obtain updated data and statistics on this phenomenon and to measure indicators of violence under the Sustainable Development Goals'.

This cohesive report could be explained in part by the DIDH systematically adopting an inclusive approach when preparing all of its reports, which above all enables the engagement of other government development actors as well as the HCP. The HCP provided assistance by asking questions and making specific points on SDGs and their targets. There is also some indication that the mention of SDGs in the report could have led to the CEDAW Committee referring to them in its subsequent List of Issues in relation to this report. Thus, the Committee requests additional information on the Authority for parity and combating all forms of discrimination, and on the 'impact of the implementation of various national and regional plans for equality, the involvement of civil society in their development, and questions on gender-responsive budgeting'.[78]

On the other hand, in the VNR, in the context of SDG5, CEDAW is briefly noted, as are action plans (such as the Governmental Plan for Equality, ICRAM) which themselves refer to human rights issues.[79] The Governmental Plan for Equality (ICRAM 2)[80] includes a number of thematic axes, one of which is human rights. It explains that the Plan takes 'a human rights-based approach', and the indicators used to measure progress 'have been designed to allow measurement of the degree of achievement

of international indicators, particularly those of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda or those relating to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)'.

Again in the VNR, SDG16 mentions reports submitted to the UN TBs. The DIDH provided information specifically on these issues to the VNR drafting process.

In February 2021, the DIDH organized a parallel event on "Achieving alignment between human rights and the sustainable development goals: Sharing experiences and good practice", on the fringes of the 46th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. During the meeting, the Kingdom of Morocco was able to highlight its actions in many areas linked to the 2030 Agenda, thanks to structural projects implemented as part of the national human development initiative and within various sectoral programmes. It also emphasised the new development model recommended by King Mohammed VI, which sets out a new social contract.

The DIDH devotes a section of its website to information on the 'integration of human rights into public policies', one of the aims in its 2012-2016 Strategic Plan, where it presents activities as a result of a programme with the UNDP. This includes the drafting of the UPR report, and the follow-up of recommendations from this and the UN TBs; setting up a 'national "follow up and assessment" system of human rights approach in public policies', and capacity building.[81] Among the completed actions as at 2016 were drafting of the UPR mid-term report, workshops on human rights indicators, thematic workshops around follow-up of recommendations, for example on migration, asylum, women's rights and cultural rights; and an 'information system on monitoring the follow up of UN human rights' recommendations'.[82]

The National Action Plan on Democracy and Human Rights (PANDDH) 2018-2021 (also mentioned in the VNR under SDG5) makes general reference to sustainable development throughout, but not to SDGs or Agenda 2030 specifically. With respect to the environmental policy, for example, it cites as a specific object the implementation of the National Sustainable Development Strategy 2030.

The DIDH also noted instances where their input had been important, for example, in providing nuance to statistics and indicators around inequality and other rights. They recognize the challenges of greater coordination and that much more can be done to ensure synergies between Agenda 2030 and human rights.

In January 2019 the Court of Auditors (Cour des Comptes) undertook a review of the Moroccan government's measures taken to implement the SDGs. Within this review it is noted that some institutions contributed towards this implementation through awareness raising and training, including the NHRI, CNDH. Human rights provisions in the constitution are also cited, but there is no mention of the DIDH or its work. There is recognition that government departments may need to work more to harmonise their work around SDGs and human rights, and that greater synergies can be developed with the DIDH to ensure SDGs are more visible in reporting.

Lessons learned :

- Limited interaction between the Interministerial committee and the body responsible for sustainable development explains, in part, the little reference to Agenda 2030 in the human rights reports.

- Members of the NMIRF need to be familiar with Agenda 2030 in order to ensure greater integration.

- Representation of the body responsible for SDGs on the Interministerial Committee would assist in developing further integration.

- The body responsible for coordinating and drafting the VNR has a broad composition, including representation of UN agencies.

There is an 'Interministerial Committee in charge of drafting reports for treaty bodies and the UPR' (Comité interministériel chargé de la rédaction des rapports aux Organes des traités et de l'EPU). Created in January 2017,[83] it is composed of 18 representatives from different ministries responsible for human rights (the ministries of justice, foreign affairs, agriculture and livestock, health, the interior, population, education, promotion of women and protection of the child, and employment) and representatives of the cabinet of the Prime Minister, the Secretary General of the Government and the Institute for National Statistics. Its mandate does not make reference to SDGs.

The Ministry of Planning is responsible for coordinating the drafting of the VNR. The report was drafted by a Technical Committee composed of the General Directorate of Planning and Foresight, the National Institute of Statistics, the Executive Secretariat of the National Environment Council and of Sustainable Development (CNEDD), the Ministry in charge of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, representatives of CSOs including a representative of youth organizations, a representative of women's organizations, a representative of people's organizations living with disabilities and the United Nations System Agencies (UNDP, FAO, UNICEF). The drafting was intended to be 'participatory and inclusive.[84]

When drafting the reports to the UN as well as implementing any recommendations, the NMIRF informed us that it involves those responsible for Agenda 2030, to the extent of collecting information about the SDGs which is then used to inform the reports. The Committee will, however, write to the ministry in charge of implementing the SDG to remind them of the recommendation that concerns them and their obligation to implement it.

The NMIRF was not involved in drafting the VNR.
There is no database to monitor the recommendations from the UN system.
The NMIRF does not include a representative from the body responsible for Agenda 2030, and neither does it have any particular relationship with this body as yet, although it would like to.

This limited interaction between the NMIRF and the bodies responsible for Agenda 2030 is reflected in the inconsistent approach to integration. Reports to the UN treaty bodies provide little information on Agenda 2030, other than brief references to sustainable development.[85] In addition, we were informed that one of the challenges of ensuring greater integration is that the members of the NMIRF are not familiar with the SDGs.

The VNR, in contrast to the human rights reporting, does make some reference to human rights issues. Goal 5 on gender equality notes that Niger has ratified a number of international instruments including CEDAW and the CRC. In addition, it refers, under Goal 16, to the various reports due before the UN TBs and UPR, and also acknowledges the role of the Interministerial Committee in ensuring Niger is up to date with its reporting obligations.[86]

Policy documents and plans on sustainable development are sporadic in their inclusion of human rights, although some would appear to have human rights as a core issue. For example, its Economic Social and Development Plan 2017-2021 lists among one of its programmes, ten sub-programmes, of which one is promotion of the rule of law, democracy and human rights.[87]

The OHCHR has provided support to the Government including strengthening the technical capacity of the Committee and the UPR Working Group, and assisting in developing a national action plan for the implementation of recommendations from the UPR.[88]

PARAGUAY

Lessons learned:

- Coordination of follow-up to recommendations on human rights is carried out mainly through the SIMORE Plus mechanism. The process of creating this system and the links between human rights and the 2030 Agenda helped to strengthen relationships between the relevant institutions.

- This online tool provided an efficient way of managing bureaucracy associated with developing relationships between different government sectors.

- Despite the sophistication of SIMORE Plus and its links to the SDGs, there is another system for the 2030 Agenda processes. It is recognized that there must be greater integration and synergy between the two.

- These different systems for Agenda 2030 and human rights, as well as the fact that SIMORE Plus, which explicitly includes SDGs, is relatively new, may explain the inconsistency with respect to inclusion of Agenda 2030 in reports.

- A CSO platform enables organisations to enter comments and engage with relevant government focal points, although greater integration between this and SIMORE Plus is needed.

- SIMORE has been used in the development of national action plans.

The coordination of reports and monitoring of recommendations in Paraguay is carried out through the online tool SIMORE Plus. Created by presidential decree,[89] and with the support of the OHCHR, the tool includes recommendations from the UPR, UN special procedures and TBs, as well as the Inter-American human rights system. It operates through a network of 180 focal points within 80 public institutions of the three State Powers and extra-power bodies, and it is these that are in charge of following up on the recommendations assigned to them, as well as uploading to SIMORE Plus the measures they have taken to implement the recommendations. The recommendations are classified into themes / populations: People in poverty; Institutional Strengthening and LGBTI; Older Adults and People with Disabilities; Women, Children and adolescents; People deprived of their Liberty, and Indigenous people, Afro-descendants and Migrants. The focal points are distributed in groups called «thematic or population tables», and must identify in each recommendation the Mechanism from which it comes, the year, the subject or right to which it refers, the affected population, the institution(s) responsible to take the implementation measures, the related SDGs, the public policy, the relevant program or project and the indicators to measure compliance, if any.

This network of focal points has a series of meetings every three months, and additional meetings when new recommendations arise, or when it is time to draft or present a report.

SIMORE Plus is administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice and is available on the servers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is public. Work is being done to link SIMORE Plus with the UN Universal Human Rights Index. Civil society organizations, through a CSO platform, can enter comments on the follow-up and interact with relevant focal points. However, it was observed that it was necessary to promote its greater use by civil society organizations, and improve interaction with civil society organizations through this platform, in accordance with the Transparency Law.

We were told that the use of an online tool provides an efficient way to facilitate engagement and interaction and 'simplifies the […] complex procedures of […] state bureaucracy'.

The development of the previous platform, SIMORE, to SIMORE Plus allowed the inclusion of links to the SDGs and their goals. This same process required the participation, in many cases for the first time, of a wide range of public institutions and the creation of links between them. It also reflected high level political commitment for the integration of human rights and sustainable development.[90] In addition, Paraguay's reports to the UN TBs acknowledge SIMORE Plus as the tool used in their compilation and specifically to link the recommendations of the TBs to SDGs.[91]

One of the benefits of combining human rights and SDGs in SIMORE Plus, we were told, was that it 'generated a new dynamic within the State, which fostered, in addition to networking, an innovative approach in terms of the methodology used, the use of

technology, transparency, citizen participation and accountability, and reorientation of state actions from a human rights and development perspective'.

Coordination of Agenda 2030 and drafting of the VNR is led by the Inter-institutional Commission on SDGs for Paraguay.[92] There is a technological follow-up and monitoring tool, administered by the National Institute of Statistics,[93] and this platform generates information that can feed into human rights reports. In addition, it was also noted that as each recommendation in SIMORE Plus is linked to specific SDGs, then it can be used to generate information for the VNR. However, ensuring synergy between SIMORE Plus and the National Institute of Statistics' SDG platform has been identified as a challenge. SIMORE Plus does not have indicators that allow quantitative measurement of progress and therefore it is not easily linked to the goals and indicators of the SDGs on the platform of the National Institute of Statistics. Paraguay's VNR refers, at numerous points, to a rights-based approach, identifies a range of human rights issues and notes the CRPD, for example.[94] It provides a detailed explanation of SIMORE Plus, the various human rights mechanisms to which it relates, and the close relationship between SDGs and human rights. The VNR notes that SIMORE Plus gives 'greater visibility about the transversality of Human Rights in the 2030 Agenda, as well as the inclusion from the Human Rights perspective in the generation of public policies for the growth'.[95]

References in the human rights reports to Agenda 2030 and the extent to which sustainable development is integrated is variable. On the one hand, for example, the follow-up report on Concluding Observations to CAT makes no reference to Agenda 2030.[96] Similarly, the report to the Human Rights Committee of November 2018 makes brief observations on the platform that links human rights and development, as well as, in the context of women's rights, it highlights initiatives on gender violence 'within the framework of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals'.[97]

On the other hand, some of the reports are much more cohesive. The report to the Committee on Migrant Workers in December 2019, for example, notes various initiatives on data collection in the context of national plans of action, the role of the Technical Secretariat for Economic and Social Development Planning, and matrices and indicators' links with SDGs.[98] Furthermore, it cites a project on international migration

> 'in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. The idea is to improve the availability of data related to international migration, in line with the new demands for information and the need for follow-up on different public policies and international commitments'.[99]

Similarly, the report to CEDAW on following-up on Concluding Observations links equality with Agenda 2030 and SDG5, as well as strategies and frameworks developed by the government on sustainable development.[100] It also cites the Gender Atlas developed with UN-Women, highlighting inequalities which the government considers to be 'part of an effort to ensure the highest possible quality

of gender statistics for the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals', and makes reference to SDG8 when discussing child labour.[101]

Interestingly, the National Human Rights Plan was merged with the National Development Plan which, and this, the government noted, enabled it to 'develop a dashboard of indicators and goals' launched as the Human Rights Dashboard in September 2017.[102] It sees this as 'a tool for monitoring and following up on the National Human Rights Plan and placing it on the 2030 Agenda'.[103]

In addition, SIMORE has been used in the development of national action plans, and these display an integrated approach to sustainable development and human rights. The National Secretariat for the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities (SENADIS), for example, is framed around both the CRPD and SDGs.[104]

We were told that further developments needed to improve the system and the linkages between Agenda 2030 and human rights include: a budget to provide for staff who can be dedicated to operating the system; and more involvement of both local government, but also senior officials to ensure the implementation of some recommendations. In addition, ongoing training is required for coordinators and focal points so that changes in staffing do not risk losing experience and knowledge; and there is a need to identify ways to encourage focal points to «own» the system. Another challenge is to maintain the political-institutional commitment for the sustainability of SIMORE Plus in the face of changes in government.

PORTUGAL

Lessons learned:

- Development of NMIRF and sustainable development processes have taken place in parallel and this has enabled greater integration.

- Integration has also been facilitated by the same individuals representing the ministries on both the NMIRF and the coordination of Agenda 2030.

- Portugal has been commended, during the UPR, for its integration of Agenda 2030 and human rights.

- The National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination provides an excellent example of integration of human rights and sustainable development by developing a timeline which is framed not only by Agenda 2030 but also specific rights.

The body that coordinates the reporting process for the UN and regional human rights system is the National Human Rights Committee,[105] created in March 2010.[106] Chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, all ministries are represented on the Committee. Other members include the National Statistics Office. The Public Prosecutor's Office, Parliament and the Ombudsman have standing invitation to the meetings. The Committee is supported by a secretariat, the Human Rights Division

of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There are email lists for CSOs who can also attend the meetings of the Committee and receive minutes of the meetings, and one of its three plenary meetings are open to civil society to attend. CSOs can also attend the working groups of the Committee. The validated final draft of a report will be shared with CSOs for their consultation.[107]

Portugal has been leading the Group of Friends of NMIRFs, making regular statements on behalf of the Group of Friends at the UN, during which it has also made reference to Agenda 2030.[108]

For each treaty and for the UPR, a table of recommendations is sent to ministry members who are then required to submit information to the Human Rights Division for preparation of the report. The final draft is sent to all members for their validation.[109] After the submission and examination of the report, concluding observations and recommendations from the treaty bodies are sent to all Committee members.[110]

A database is used by the National Human Rights Committee, based on the SIMORE model, and is updated twice a year. It is still in its infancy.

For Agenda 2030, this is coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Planning and Infrastructures, and through commissions responsible for inter-ministerial coordination on foreign policy.[111] Each SDG was given to a particular ministry who was then responsible for its coordination, and subsequent implementation. Civil society was involved, including through a seminar where the report for the VNR was presented.[112]

Given that all the ministries are involved in the National Human Rights Committee, there is inevitably overlap with those that draft the VNR. Informally, we were told that persons involved in the NMIRF and Agenda 2030 processes are the same.

This close, personal, interaction between the two institutions in part explains the integrated content of the reports. Portugal has been commended, for example, during the UPR,[113] for its attempts to integrate Agenda 2030 and human rights. In addition, reports to the UN treaty bodies have made reference to the VNR and Agenda 2030.[114]

- For example, the report to the UN Human Rights Committee noted that '[The Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG)] coordinated the V National Plan for preventing and combating domestic and gender violence 2014–2017. Upon its ending, the Government took a new approach of combining measures pertaining to gender equality and gender-based violence under a broader long-term strategy. The National Strategy for Equality and Non Discrimination timeline was framed by the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is divided into three four-year-long periods which will each be subject to evaluation. The new strategy is structured in three action plans covering gender equality, violence against women and LGBTI rights'.[115]

The VNR of 2017 contains extensive reference to human rights standards, including UN instruments.[116]

However, other sustainable development policies do not always include human rights. For example, the National Statistics Institute report on makes very little reference to them, and none to UN human rights treaties.[117]

SAMOA

Lessons learned:

- Providing the NMIRF with the mandate to also coordinate reporting on Agenda 2030 has resulted in greater references to the issues in the human rights reports and in the VNR.

- A database linking human rights and SDGs, albeit at an embryonic stage, has helped in the development of a national implementation plan.

- Integration is not always consistent and greater awareness of linkages is needed by government.

- Government needed to ensure that they submitted the necessary information for the database and that this was done regularly.

The National Mechanism for Implementation, Reporting and Follow Up (NMIRF) was set up in 2016 for the purpose of coordinating all national reporting on international commitments including human rights and Agenda 2030. It is chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) who is also the agency responsible for reporting on UPR, to the UN TBs and Agenda 2030. It is composed of all key government agencies/ ministries who are involved with the implementation of treaty obligations and other commitments. The ministries are represented on the NMIRF by their Chief Executive Officers who are responsible for reporting on progress of implementation. Representatives from the national human rights institution and from civil society also sit on the NMIRF as observers.

The NMIRF drafts both the reports to the UN human rights system as well as the VNR. In the words of the government, the process of consultations, for example, for the UPR,

> 'is connected and thus a continuation of the consultations held in 2019 and 2020 on Samoa's Second Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals'.[118]

In addition, Samoa acknowledged in its Second VNR that as it was in the process of finalising its reports under the ICCPR, CED and CRPD, 'so the VNR process has been an important platform for those reports including the next Universal Periodic Report for Samoa in 2021'.[119]

Furthermore, the SDGs Taskforce (the body that drafted the VNR) with the NMIRF have identified 'synergies between the Human Rights Conventions and their review recommendations, and the SDGs', noting a 'roadmap for review and reporting on the HR Conventions and processes with the SDGs and its sustainable development sectors to help also with planning and integrating related processes including using the Samoa Database on Human Rights Recommendations (SADATA) to mine data for SDGs monitoring'.[120]

It is difficult to make an assessment on extent to which the NMIRF incorporated Agenda 2030 in its reporting to the UN human rights system as there are no recent reports, but in its report to CEDAW in 2017 it was making reference to the SDGs, for example, citing SGD 5 in the context of strengthening enhancement of community development and safety.[121] Its report to UPR in 2016 similarly notes the National Development Strategy (2012-2016) and that it 'is the intention that the 2030 agenda inclusive of the SDGs as well as the S.A.M.O.A Pathway will be integrated into the new Strategy in the same way the MDGs were'.[122] SDG 3 is also mentioned in the context of sexual and reproductive health.[123]

Conversely, the fact that the NMIRF coordinated the drafting of the VNR is reflected in the detailed reference to and integration of human rights conventions, standards and mechanisms throughout the VNR. For example, it notes a human rights approach to SDG implementation – namely, that it

> 'embeds SDG 16 implementation in line with its human rights obligations under conventions it is a party to including the CEDAW, CRC, CRPD, UNCAT, CED and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)'.[124]

When commenting on the lack of access for persons with disabilities to health care and education, for instance, it refers to the CRPD,[125] as well as various reports to the UN TBs.[126] Crucially, a separate section in the VNR outlining its 'human rights approach to sustainable development' identifies ways in which it links its human rights obligations to Agenda 2030.[127] Focusing on vulnerable groups, it also highlights progressive developments as well as challenges faced by women and girls, citing its commitment to eliminate discrimination in SDG5 and under CEDAW.[128]

The SADATA database (https://sadata-production.firebaseapp.com/overview) provides links to the recommendations of the UN TBs and UPR and SDGs. Although there is limited information yet on the database, it enables the user to search across different issues which then lists related recommendations and SDGs as well as progress achieved. It has been noted that this database helped the NMIRF develop a National Implementation Plan 'by clustering recommendations, identifying implementation gaps and regularly collecting data and we aim to use this to eliminate duplication of efforts by tracking information against all relevant recommendations, SDGs and the development priorities'.[129]

Indeed, SADATA specifically includes an 'Implementation Plan' identifying 56 Government Actions.

We were, however, told that greater awareness was needed among relevant agencies to ensure that they track progress and report it to the NMIRF. Consequently, some data may not be captured on the database.

The OHCHR have been involved in various ways in supporting Samoa and its NMIRF links with Agenda 2030, including supporting the NMIRF's participation in discussions on VNR at the SDG High Level Political Forum, and providing resources to develop the SADATA database. This was in the context of preparing for the UPR whereby a volunteer designed this database to support the NMRF.[130]

Despite this progress in integration, we were informed that challenges included poor coordination among some agencies and that data is not comprehensive or even available. In addition, although the NMIRF is responsible for both the human rights monitoring and reporting and that on Agenda 2030, as reflected in the detailed reference to human rights in the VNR, other development policies, we were told, such as the Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2021-2025, do not always make the same linkages.

SERBIA

Lessons learned:

- OHCHR support has built the capacity of the NMIRF and enabled it to make basic links with Agenda 2030.

- Government interest in Agenda 2030 and the importance of linkages with human rights needs to be heightened and sustained to ensure that it is considered to be a political priority.

- CSO engagement in developing policies can facilitate linkages with human rights. The creation of a platform to enable CSO cooperation with the UN system as well as drawing upon their engagement with government can provide different entry points for dialogue by the NMIRF.

- Integration of Agenda 2030 and human rights is still very much work in progress and so whilst there is evidence of linkages being made, the approach is inconsistent.

The NMIRF in Serbia is the Council for Monitoring the Implementation of the Recommendations of the United Nations Mechanism. The Council was established in December 2014 following a recommendation in the second cycle of the UPR in 2013 that the government 'considers establishing a national organ to monitor implementation of the recommendations of UN human rights mechanisms'.[131] The Council acknowledges the assistance of the United Nations Human Rights Team in Serbia and the OSCE Mission to Serbia in its establishment. [132]

The Council is composed of key government departments, specifically the ministries of justice, foreign affairs, home affairs, labour, employment, veterans' and social affairs, education, science and technological development, health, culture and information, public administration and local self government, and for European integrations,[133] as well as representatives of parliament, independent human rights institutions, and CSOs.[134] It monitors the implementation of the recommendations from the UN Treaty Bodies and the UPR and its mandate includes that it 'propose measures to implement the recommendations received; give opinions on the progress of human rights in the reporting period; provide expert explanations on the human rights situation and the results achieved through the implementation of the recommendations',[135] without making express mention of SDGs. 'Expert and administrative-technical support' was provided by the Office for Human and Minority Rights,[136] and is now given by the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, a newly established Ministry within the Government since late 2020. This new arrangement, with the Ministry acting as secretariat, provides greater legal authority for the NMIRF's decisions. There is some indication that the role of the NMIRF may be extended into policy making and planning related to nationalization and implementation of Agenda.

The Council has signed a Memorandum on Cooperation with CSOs and networks to facilitate monitoring of implementation.[137] In addition, the OSCE mission in Serbia and UN Human Rights Team in Serbia also assisted in establishing a Platform of 18 CSOs for cooperation with the UN human rights system,[138] and the OHCHR is trying to ensure that CSOs are involved in developing the national policy. As CSOs have themselves integrated Agenda 2030 into their own work, they can then also advocate for integration by government. CSO engagement, we were informed, provides different entry points for dialogue with government. For example, various initiatives, supported by the UN, have resulted in greater engagement of the youth in Serbia with Agenda 2030. This included, in 2019, as part of the development of the VNR, a consultative process led by UNICEF through youth panels, use of social networks and engagement with schools to enable them to provide input and their views on the progress of SDGs.[139]

A website was created for the Council by the Office for Minority and Human Rights, with the assistance of the UNCT in Serbia.

Workshops on implementation issues held by the Council have focused on Agenda 2030. For example, a workshop on 'Indicators for the successful implementation of the recommendations of the UN human rights treaty bodies', in June 2019, had one session on 'linking the process of implementing the recommendations and the Agenda 2030'.[140]

The Council created a Recommendations Monitoring Plan which includes all the recommendations from the UN human rights system, setting out for each recommendation the institutions responsible for implementation, a timetable, a human rights indicator and the status of implementation.[141] An example is provided below:

Source: Council for Monitoring the Implementation of the Recommendations of the United Nations Mechanism, Implementation Of The Recommendations Of The Un Human Rights Mechanisms Experience Of The Republic Of Serbia, http://vladinsavetun.ljudskaprava.gov.rs/.

A Plan of Action of Recommendations was adopted by the Council and this links the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.[142]

An online (but not publicly available) database has been initiated which sets out recommendations from the UN human rights system, mapped against responsible Ministries, with a timeline for reporting and human rights indicators for implementation, budget implications, as well as inter-sectoral coordination. Focal points from each department update information and this is coordinated by the Council. Ultimately it would appear that it is intended that the database will be available to the public.[143] The development of the database was supported by the UN.[144]

Among priority areas, the Council has included 'the recommendations of the UN human rights mechanisms will be linked to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs (creating visible links between the recommendations received from the treaty bodies and the UPR process with the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, to support a common approach to prioritizing in human rights and other areas)'.[145]

The drafting of the Voluntary National Review (VNR) was coordinated by the Inter-Ministerial Working Group for Implementation of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (IMWG), a mechanism created in December 2015.[146] Coordination of Agenda 2030 issues is relatively new and this has been a particular challenge in ensuring that this and any linkages with human rights are seen as a political priority.

In its 2019 VNR, Serbia suggested that the Council in the future 'could take the leading role in ensuring that international recommendations and guidelines are translated into national legislation, policies, strategies and action plans'.[147]
The VNR includes extensive reference to human rights across the entire report and most SDGs, highlighting the role of the Council. Concluding Observations of the CRPD Committee, for example, are referenced in the context of progress for persons with disabilities. One of the six 'strategic paths' for achieving the 2030 Agenda is
> 'improving human rights and security, where Serbia seeks to reduce unequal opportunities, eradicate poverty, have greater inclusiveness, and achieve full gender equality. Commitment to human and minority rights, together with other reforms in this area, will contribute to achieving the principles of social justice and to building social cohesion, with the ultimate goal of integrating the right of every individual to sustainable development into the concept of sustainable development'.[148]

In addition, the Office for Human and Minority Rights noted that it has 'integrated all of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into its sectoral policies'[149]

as an indication of the inclusion of human rights into its broader sustainable development. Other policy documents on sustainable development, such as the Statistical Office's report on implementation of SDGs, refer, although briefly, to human rights issues.[150]

In contrast to the VNR, the reports to the UN TBs are very limited in their reference to Agenda 2030. Its report to CERD makes only one reference:

> 'The Council created a special Plan for the Implementation of Recommendations, which contains a total of 392 recommendations of the UN human rights mechanism which Serbia received, including CERD recommendations. The Plan contains information on their status, objective, deadline, as well as the competent authorities in charge of their implementation indicators, the linkage to SDGs'.[151]

Its reports to the CERD in December 2018, HRC in February 2019, CESCR in July and to CAT in October of the same year make no reference to Agenda 2030.[152]

In recognition of these limitations, the OHCHR has produced an analytical report, in Serbian and English, of a large number of the recommendations from the UN TBs,[153] to support the NMIRF in making these connections.

Although its report to the UPR in 2017 provides no reference to Agenda 2030,[154] the OHCHR has been working with Serbia to ensure a strong relationship is made in the mid-term report. This is reflected in its content which notes the Recommendation Implementation Plan and the relationship of specific SDGs with particular clusters. There is a specific cluster on sustainable development which makes note of Agenda 2030, indicators developed by the Statistical Office and the VNR.[155]

We were informed that there had been a gap in activity of the NMRF from the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 to present. Activities would be resumed in 2021, with the new structure and Secretariat.

URUGUAY

Lessons learned:

- Despite some overlap in the membership of the NMIRF and Agenda 2030 processes, the same individuals are not represented on both. This appears to influence the extent to which integrated reporting has occurred.

- A lack of understanding among members of the NMIRF and those coordinating Agenda 2030 of the relevance of human rights and sustainable development can limit integration.

- More time is needed to enable the database to be developed and include SDGs.

- Capacity is a challenge where the NMIRF is composed of many ministries.

- OHCHR and UNCT assistance has assisted in making greater links between human rights and Agenda 2030.

The National Mechanism for the Preparation of Reports and Follow-up of Recommendations is responsible for the coordination of recommendations from the UN TBs and special procedures. Created in 2016 it was considered necessary for the coordinating of reports to the various UN bodies. It meets every four months, depending on which report is being drafted, and is composed of nearly all the ministries including the Ministry of Foreign Relations, which coordinates the Mechanism, and the Ministry of Economic and Finance, as well as those on education and culture, labour and social security, health, housing land management and the environment and social development. Parliament and the judiciary are also represented on the National mechanism and the NHRI and other national institutions can participate, although it was not possible to find information on the extent to which they do so in practice. Each ministry and institution are asked to appoint a focal point/s.

There is a timetable for drafting reports and an email list of all NMIRF members. Roundtables on women, disability and children, take place every 2-3 months which provide opportunities for civil society to highlight key issues. In addition, once reports to the UN have been validated by the ministries they are then shared with CSOs for their input.

With respect to Agenda 2030 and the National Plan on SDGs, these are coordinated by the President, a National Institution for Statistics and the National Agency on Cooperation. These three are also members of the National Mechanism. Whilst this in theory enables them to remind other members of the National Mechanism of SDGs, in practice the representatives tend not to be the same people. In addition, we were told, they may not always interact and work together and consequently understand the relevance of each others' work.

Consideration of how to link Agenda 2030 and human rights started a couple of years after the NMIRF was set up.

UN human rights recommendations are inputted into the database, based on SIMORE. The database is public (https://simore.mrree.gub.uy/buscador/home/). Each ministry's focal point is expected to upload documents and information to regularly feed the platform. As SIMORE can take information from the OHCHR's Universal Human Rights Index, then, we were told, Concluding Observations and other recommendations from the UN TBs are automatically uploaded on to the platform. The database is relatively new. Currently SDGs are not included in the database, although as it moves to SIMORE-Plus then this will change. They do not use any database or tool for the VNR.

The relationship between the NMIRF and SDG processes has been limited, and this is reflected in the fact that Uruguay's reports to UN TBs and UPR do not always make reference to Agenda 2030.[156] One exception is its report to CERD - it refers in general to commitments in the 2030 Agenda when outlining its National Strategy on Policies for Persons of African Descent 2030, and to the SDGs in the context of the National Gender Equality Strategy 2030.[157]

With respect to the VNR, there is reference to human rights standards at various points. For example, when explaining the National System of Response to Climate Change and variability (NSRCC) it noted an approach based on human rights, gender equality and intra and intergenerational equity.[158] There is, however, no reference to the UN human rights system or specific human rights instruments. The fact that the NMIRF has not been involved in drafting the VNR may explain why human rights are not prominent or integrated within it.

For other development policies, there is some indication of reference to human rights commitments. For example, Uruguay's National Action Plan 2018-2020 identifies among the challenges, how to 'incorporate the rights-based approach into the commitments', and acknowledges CEDAW in the context of gender equality. It also notes that the government would be designing a National Plan for Access to Justice and Legal Protection of Persons with Disabilities, and this was being created:

> 'with the objective of eliminating the barriers and obstacles that impede the access of persons with disabilities to recognition as subjects of law and to the protection of these rights. In this sense, it aims to break down judicial, physical, institutional, cultural and social barriers that prevent access to justice and, especially, to address the issue of disability using the social model set out in the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, shifting from a model of substitution of persons with disabilities to a model of support'.[159]

As at 2016, it was noted that at the State level 'the body responsible for the implementation of the Convention is the National Disability Programme of the Ministry of Social Development. The implementation of the Convention is overseen by the Honorary National Commission on Disability, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs'.[160]

Technical cooperation from OHCHR has been important in capacity building of the NMIRF and making linkages to Agenda 2030. The OHCHR has also advocated for the TBs to link their work with the SDGs and for the UNCT to develop these links. UNCT and UNICEF, with the NMIRF, have supported the government (no mention is made on the role of the NHRI in these processes), in the implementation and reporting on the right to education, and obligations under the CRC and ICESCR. Thus:

> 'Against this background, education, as an inclusive right and as part of the sustainable development principle of 'leaving no one behind', has long been a priority for the State and the UNCT. As part of that prioritization, the Government of Uruguay has been notably open to leveraging its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to promote the right to quality education without discrimination, and to use its engagement with the three main United Nations human rights mechanisms to drive and direct progress. This approach, supported by the UNCT, including UNICEF, is particularly powerful in Uruguay because of the Government's commitment to human rights and its significant institutional capacity, aided by its NMIRF,

which allows it to efficiently implement and report on recommendations delivered by the United Nations mechanisms'.[161]

This has had an impact, namely:

'the fact that the Country Team acts as one to integrate the recommendations of the United Nations human rights mechanisms into Uruguay's [United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework] undoubtedly helps both the State and the United Nations to secure progress on both the improved enjoyment of human rights, including children's rights, and the achievement of the SDGs – "leaving no one behind"'.[162]

ENDNOTES

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3   UN General Assembly Resolution 68/268 on Strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, A/RES/68/268, 21 April 2014.

4   Ibid, para 17(d).

5   OHCHR, National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up. A Practical Guide To Effective State Engagement With International Human Rights Mechanisms, 2016; OHCHR, National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up. A Project Of State Engagement With International Human Rights Mechanisms, 2016.

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12   Samoa's Second Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, Government of Samoa, 2020, para 315.

13   Voluntary National Review Of The Republic Of Serbia On The Implementation Of The 2030 Agenda For Sustainable Development, 2019, p.24.

14   Deuxième Rapport National Volontaire Sur Les Objectifs De Developpement Durable Au Niger, 2020.

15   Voluntary National Review Report of Mauritius 2019, p.39 and p.44.

16   Voluntary National Review Report of Mauritius 2019, p.33 and p.104.

17   Voluntary National Review Report of Mauritius 2019, p.120 and p.131.

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