

Draft speaking notes - Gunn Marit Helgesen

Workshop on the contribution of regional authorities to national reviews on the implementing the Agenda 2030 - How can regions deliver on voluntary reviews?

Friday 29 October 2021 09.15 – 10.15 - Siège Region Grand Est - 1, Place Adrien Zeller - 67000 Strasbourg

Thank you for this opportunity to share with you some reflections and experiences.

I will congratulate UCLG for connecting associations which developed Voluntary Subnational Reviews and for providing support and facilitating peer reviews. We – KS - the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities - found this very helpful and hope we have been able to contribute to UCLG offering better processes and tools.

Norway's SDG reporting changed significantly for 2016 to 2021. Through consultation and dialogue with the government, we achieved an inclusive reporting process covering "the whole of government". Localizing the SDGs is a crucial factor for the success of Agenda 2030. Norway's 2021 VNR underpins this.

I have three key messages:

- Firstly – coordinated reporting on SDG progress and achievement at national and sub-national level provides for policy synergies and actions across levels of governments.

Norway has in 2021 undertaken voluntary reviews of how we are working towards a sustainable future at the national (VNR), sub-national (VSR) and local (VLR) level. This has provided a unique opportunity to demonstrate how the Norwegian multi-level governance model delivers on Agenda 2030.

The sub-national report addresses how Norwegian municipalities and regional authorities work towards the goals and how the sector contributes to achieving them. It provides many good examples from all over the country. It has been an ambition to deliver an honest and

transparent report, so that we can learn from the shortcomings and take the proper actions.

Local reports - VLRs - are excellent case studies on the work in individual municipalities. It provides the municipality a wealth of knowledge on how they are doing, how to succeed and what it takes to move ahead.

Sub-national reports - VSRs - aggregate achievements by local and regional authorities. They also reveal inconsistency in policy, strategic gaps, lack of tools, or incomplete sets of data across tiers of government.

Together they make a powerful instrument for transformation. National reports tend to fall short in understanding and expressing local and regional progress towards the SDGs. Through combining a VNR with a VSR and several VLRs as Norway now has done, we can move from knowledge to action and thus foster a deeper transformation.

- Secondly – monitoring and reporting is not sufficient. We need to act – together!

In Norway, we are taking concrete steps to secure action across tiers of government, through a political agreement with the Government on joint action for SDG implementation. This agreement secures that we can translate the knowledge from the voluntary reports to joint action across the different levels of government. Good relations with the government allowed for KS' considerable contribution to the Norwegian government's SDG action plan which was recently submitted to the Parliament

- Finally – Regional authorities are central to achieving the SDGs.

However, our VSR demonstrates that regional authorities lack adequate mechanisms and tools to mobilize and engage the municipalities, such as appropriate SDG indicators for local and regional authorities. The municipalities often seek guidance from the regional level, which again

seek support from the national level. It is therefore necessary to further develop competences and capacities at regional level.

Several Norwegian regional authorities are developing regional networks to speed up the needed sustainable societal transition and contribute to achieving the SDGs. The regional collaborations aim to facilitate joint action, share knowledge, and translate potential for smart and sustainable development into opportunities.

In conclusion

We are in the Decade of Action. Local and regional governments have the knowledge – and they are acting now! They have demonstrated that they can deliver. To enhance transformation, they need proper authority and instruments for consultations and finances – and trust and respect from national governments and international institutions.

Thank you!