

**Going local**  
**Nelya Rakhimova, Thursday, July 8, 12:15 PM - 1:15 PM EDT**

Thank you chair(s),

My name is Nelya Rakhimova, and I am speaking on behalf of the ECE Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism.

We know that all countries choose their own model of preparation and engagement of stakeholders in the VNR and follow-up process. Within the UNECE region we observe different approaches from very good practices of engagement to complete exclusion of civil society.

Let me highlight some good practices first:

Finland plays a role model in terms of engagement of civil society, its official VNR report included civil society positions alongside official ones. Denmark this year has decided to follow the Finish model and incorporated civil society inputs to the report directly. These countries are also leading in the SDG achievements according to the SDG Index.

On the other side, when in 2020 Russia presented its first VNR we experienced another approach. The process was not announced widely, and only civil society organizations that work closely with the government were invited to contribute to the report. Remote regions were not included AS all consultations happened in Moscow.

In 2019 we launched a civil society Coalition for Sustainable Development of Russia in order to make sure that more voices could be heard. In June 2020 simultaneously with VNR we have released an independent civil society review or 'shadow report' which was inspired by our colleagues from around the world. Our report included an analysis of progress on all SDGs in Russia, with a detailed description of challenges we face and with recommendations to the government and civil society itself. We already recommended during the HLPF review that shadow reports must be better integrated into the HLPF and published alongside the VNRs.

After the first VNR, in Russia the Council of sustainable development within the Ministry of Economic Development was established, a presidential envoy for relations with international organizations on SDGs was appointed. THESE ARE steps in the right direction, but more needs to be done to ensure full participation of civil society in its diversity, also in other countries as we think it truly helps progress on SDGs.

We call on all governments to recognize the importance of civil society engagement in SDG processes and truly engage us at all stages as IN so many countries of our region it is not happening right now.