



DEBATE PACK

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UK Voluntary National Review on the Sustainable Development Goals

Main Chamber
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General debate

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The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

1. Background

The 2015 UK [aid strategy](#) did not refer to the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs – also known as the [Global Goals](#)), which were approved at the UN in September 2015. The 17 goals, with 169 associated targets for human development, are to be achieved by 2030. The rallying cry throughout the negotiations was ‘leave no one behind’.

The SDGs are the successors to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – eight goals with 18 associated targets for human development, which were agreed in 2001, most of which were to be achieved by 2015.

The Goals were briefly mentioned in the December 2016 Bilateral and Multilateral Development Reviews, where the UK said it would “[drive forward](#) the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.”

For a while, there was [criticism](#) that details about how the UK was going to do this remained sparse. However, in March 2017 the UK government published [Agenda 2030: Delivering the Global Goals](#), outlining the government’s approach to implementing the SDGs in the UK and internationally.

Then, in December 2017, the UK government published [Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals](#). This report set out some of the ways that the government is supporting the delivery of the SDGs, showing how this was now reflected in updated Single Departmental Plans for all relevant government departments.

Over the last year Penny Mordaunt on several occasions [reiterated](#) the importance the government places on achieving the SDGs. In late-2018 she [said](#) that it would be conducting a “national conversation” with “British savers and pension holders” about how they can invest in developing countries to help meet the SDGs and that the results will be [announced](#) at a UK-Africa Investment Conference in 2019.

In October 2018, DFID [stated](#) that the UK was “well placed” to deliver the SDGs by 2030 and had made “significant progress” towards some of them. Later this month, the government is due to submit a [report](#) to the UN (called a ‘Voluntary National Review’ [VNR]) assessing its performance on the SDGs. The International Development Committee is currently conducting an [inquiry](#) on UK progress in implementing the SDGs.

2. Press and media articles

The following is a selection of press and medial articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the view or accuracy of external content.

[Not one single country set to achieve gender equality by 2030](#)

The Guardian
Liz Ford
3 June 2019

[Sustainable Development Goals in the UK: Not as rosy as the Government wants you to believe](#)

Open Democracy
Imogen Richmond-Bishop and Koldo Casla
7 May 2019

[UN Secretariat Issues Questions and Answers on 2019 VNRs](#)

SDG Knowledge Hub
Nathalie Risse
18 April 2019

[MPs to probe progress on UK SDG Review](#)

Business Green
Madeleine Cuff
22 March 2019

[Does the UK need a minister for the SDGs?](#)

Business Green
Madeleine Cuff
20 November 2018

[Businesses urged to contribute to UK SDG review](#)

Business Green
James Murray
11 October 2018

[51 Countries Preparing to Present National SDG Reviews at HLPF 2019](#)

SDG Knowledge Hub
Lynn Wagner
4 October 2018

[Measuring up: How the UK is performing on the UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

UKSSD
3 July 2018

3. Press releases

[What is the Voluntary National Review?](#)

Department for International Development

19 December 2018

Get all the facts about the UK's Voluntary National Review of the Sustainable Development Goals.

What are the Sustainable Development Goals?

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (also known as the Global Goals) were adopted by 193 member states attending the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in New York in 2015. The Goals are part of the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. The Sustainable Development Goals comprise a total of 169 targets, which seek to tackle a wide range of issues facing both developed and developing countries. These issues include poverty, inequality, climate change, inclusive societies and access to health and education.

What is the Voluntary National Review?

All 193 member states are expected, at least once, to review national progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and present the report to the United Nations High Level Political Forum. This process is called a Voluntary National Review and is part of Agenda 2030. In 2018, 47 countries presented a Voluntary National Review including Canada and Spain. The UK will be presenting its Voluntary National Review in July 2019 at the High Level Political Forum alongside 50 other countries.

Why is the Voluntary National Review important?

The Voluntary National Review will be our opportunity to use evidence from across the UK (government, civil society and the private sector) together with data on the global indicators to assess UK progress on all 17 Goals. It is a stepping stone towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

What information will be in the Voluntary National Review?

The Voluntary National Review will cover all 17 Goals. It will demonstrate the UK's domestic and international activity and will be underpinned by data. The United Nations has set five focus Goals for 2019. Our report is expected to go into more depth on these Goals. The Goals are:

- 4 (education)
- 8 (work and economic growth)
- 10 (reduced inequalities)
- 13 (climate action)
- 16 (peace and justice)

How can I contribute to the Voluntary National Review?

The Government is committed to ensuring the Voluntary National Review is inclusive and transparent. The Sustainable Development Goals are for everybody and we want to hear from a wide range of stakeholders either through our Voluntary National Review website or directly through a variety of events that will take place across the country. The Government encourages any group, organisation, or individual contributing to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the UK to [share what they are doing](#).

Who is leading the Voluntary National Review?

The Department for International Development (DFID) is leading co-ordination and the overall drafting process for the Voluntary National Review. DFID is being supported by the Cabinet Office and other UK Government Departments to prepare for the Voluntary National Review. DFID is also working closely with the Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to ensure the Voluntary National Review reflects activity across the whole of the UK.

What are the key dates associated with the Voluntary National Review?

Below is a list of key activities and deadlines for the UK's Voluntary National Review:

- Ongoing engagement to inform initial drafting between October and December.
- Sharing case studies of how people and organisations are contributing to delivering the Sustainable Development Goals through the Voluntary National Review website
- Engagement events with different groups of stakeholders on emerging findings in March 2019. [Find out more on our events page](#).
- Submission of a main messages document to the United Nations by 17 May 2019.
- Submission of the full Voluntary National Review to the United Nations by 14 June 2019.
- Presentation of the Voluntary National Review at the ministerial meeting of the United Nations High Level Political Forum from 16-18 July 2019.
- The first Head of Government-level review of the Sustainable Development Goals at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2019.

Who can be contacted for more information on the Voluntary National Review?

If you have a have a query, please get in touch at SDGs@dfid.gov.uk.

Which UK government departments are involved in delivering the goals in the UK

If you have a Goal specific query on the UK's Voluntary National Review, please refer to the list below and contact SDGs@dfid.gov.uk to be put in touch with the relevant department

- Goal 1: No Poverty - Department for Work and Pensions
 - Goal 2: Zero Hunger - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
 - Goal 3: Good Health - Department for Health and Social Care
 - Goal 4: Quality Education - Department for Education
 - Goal 5: Gender Equality - Government Equalities Office
 - Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
 - Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy - Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
 - Goal 8: Decent work and Economic Growth - HM Treasury
 - Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure - Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
 - Goal 10: Reduced inequalities - Government Equalities Office
 - Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities - Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
 - Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
 - Goal 13: Climate Action - Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
 - Goal 14: Life Below Water - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
 - Goal 15: Life on Land - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
 - Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Security - Home Office
 - Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals - Department for International Development
- Goals 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 and 17 are goals under review at the UN in 2019.

How has the UK Government implemented the Sustainable Development Goals?

All UK Government Departments are responsible for delivering the Goals in those policy areas for which they have responsibility. Departments have highlighted how their priority programmes and activities will contribute to delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals in their Single Departmental Plans which provide the basis for the Government's planning and performance framework.

[High level summaries of Single Departmental Plans were published](#) on 23 May this year, together with examples of how Government policies are contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. PQs

[Sustainable Development](#)

05 Jun 2019 | 257582

Asked by: Preet Kaur Gill

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether the report of the voluntary national review will include a review of (a) progress towards the sustainable development goals and (b) the effect of UK policies on the achievement of those goals.

Answering member: Andrew Murrison | Department for International Development

The UK's Voluntary National Review (VNR) will take stock of the UK's domestic and international activity in support of all 17 Goals. The final report will have a chapter for each Goal which will include information on action the UK Government is taking in relation to each Goal, along with separate sections which highlight action being taken by the administrations in Scotland and Wales, and in Northern Ireland. The VNR will also include case studies throughout, which will shine a spotlight on activity by organisations beyond Government, including business and civil society.

[Sustainable Development](#)

05 Jun 2019 | 257578

Asked by: Preet Kaur Gill

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, if he will publish the full report of the Voluntary National Review in line with the Government's timescales.

Answering member: Andrew Murrison | Department for International Development

The Voluntary National Review (VNR) is currently being finalised. We intend to submit it to the UN on 14 June and publish it shortly afterwards. The VNR will then be presented to the UN High Level Political Forum in New York on 16 July.

[Government Departments: Sustainable Development](#)

05 Jun 2019 | 257577

Asked by: Preet Kaur Gill

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, pursuant to the Answer of 28 January 2019 to Question 211324 on Government Departments: Sustainable Development, if he will publish the names of each SDG champion for each Government department.

Answering member: Andrew Murrison | Department for International Development

Single Departmental Plans set out how Departmental objectives support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG Champions are Senior Civil Servants who are responsible for promoting the SDGs and

Voluntary National Review within their respective departments. While we do not intend to publish a list of names, each Department and their SDG Champion can be contacted via the SDGs mailbox: sdgs@dfid.gov.uk.

Employment

21 May 2019 | 253588

Asked by: Neil Gray

To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what progress his Department has made on achieving Sustainable Development Goal 8 to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Answering member: Robert Jenrick | Department: Treasury

The UK has made strong progress in recent years on key priorities within Goal 8, including delivering record low unemployment levels, championing small businesses, reforming the financial services sector, and enhancing the role of women in work.

A number of challenges remain, including raising the UK's productivity, tackling climate change, and ensuring Good Work for all.

The forthcoming Voluntary National Review will set out in greater detail the UK's progress against all of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Poverty

21 May 2019 | 253587

Asked by: Neil Gray

To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what progress her Department has made on achieving Sustainable Development Goal 1 to end poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Answering member: Will Quince | Department for Work and Pensions

The Department for Work and Pensions is leading work across Government to assess progress against sustainable development goal 1. The Prime Minister has committed the UK to undertaking a Voluntary National Review (VNR) on progress towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals Agenda. This will be presented to the UN's High Level Political Forum in July this year.

Poverty

01 May 2019 | 243555

Asked by: Danielle Rowley

To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities, which Department is responsible for monitoring and implementing policies relating to the targets under Sustainable Development Goal 10 on economic inequality.

Answering member: Victoria Atkins | Department: Women and Equalities

Goal 10 is to reduce inequality within and between countries, and so responsibility for delivery is shared across Government. For example, the Office for Disability Issues in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) leads on disability policy, the Race Disparity Unit in the Cabinet Office is key to our approach on race equality, DWP and HM Treasury are responsible for addressing income inequality within the UK, and the Department for International Development leads on tackling inequality between countries.

To aid transparency, all Departments are expected to set out how their activity aligns to the Goals in their Single Departmental Plans. The Government Equalities Office is coordinating reporting for Goal 10 across Government for the Voluntary National Review this year.

Sustainable Development**16 Apr 2019 | HL15013****Asked by: Lord Porter of Spalding**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what consideration they have given to the conclusion in the report by the Environmental Audit Committee Sustainable Development Goals in the UK, published on 26 April 2017 (HC 596), that they should do everything they can to support partners, including local government, to contribute towards delivering the Sustainable Development Goals.

Answering member: Lord Bates | Department for International Development

It is vital that all levels of Government, as well as civil society, business and others, continue to work together to deliver the Global Goals.

The UK Voluntary National Review (VNR) will be an important opportunity to highlight work across the country to support delivery of the Global Goals, and we are determined it will tell the story beyond Central Government. Last month the Government hosted a series of VNR engagement events, including two focussed on local delivery of the Goals in Leeds and Bristol. We have also received over 200 submissions from organisations to our VNR website, showcasing what they are doing to deliver the Goals. This included a number of submissions from local authorities.

The VNR is a stepping-stone rather than an end in itself and is an important tool to further galvanise action and activity across the UK in pursuit of the Goals.

Poverty**15 Apr 2019 | 243554****Asked by: Danielle Rowley**

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether the full report of the UK's Voluntary National Review on its progress towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals will include an

assessment of how the Government is working to address inequality between countries.

Answering member: Harriett Baldwin | Department for International Development

In July, the UK will present a Voluntary National Review (VNR) to the United Nations, setting out the UK's contribution to achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), at home and abroad. The report will include how the Government is supporting delivery of Goal 10 (reduce inequality within and among countries).

The UK's commitment to Leave No-one Behind means ensuring the inclusion of the poorest and most marginalised people. Furthermore, DFID's Data Disaggregation Action Plan and Inclusive Data Charter Action Plan set out our goal to increase the level of disaggregated data we collect, report and use to ensure a deeper understanding of who is at risk of being left behind, where they are, and why.

[Poverty](#)

20 Mar 2019 | HL14458

Asked by: Baroness Lister of Burtersett

To ask Her Majesty's Government what progress the Department for Work and Pensions has made in achieving sustainable development goal 1, End poverty in all its forms everywhere, for which it is the lead department; and what steps that department has taken to publicise its work on that goal.

Answering member: Baroness Buscombe | Department for Work and Pensions

The Prime Minister has committed the UK to undertaking a Voluntary National Review (VNR) on progress towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals Agenda. This will be presented to the UN's High Level Political Forum in July this year. The Department for Work and Pensions is leading work across Government to assess progress against sustainable development goal 1 and, as part of this, has been engaging with a broad range of external stakeholders.

[Sustainable Development](#)

18 Feb 2019 | 219403

Asked by: Matthew Offord

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what progress is being made on preparations for public involvement in the Voluntary National Review of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Answering member: Harriett Baldwin | Department for International Development

The Government is committed to an inclusive Voluntary National Review (VNR) that showcases activity across the UK. To date, 200 organisations and individuals have submitted case studies highlighting activity to support delivery of the Goals. We continue to welcome contributions which can be submitted via our VNR website. In March, we will host a

number of sector-focussed engagement events – including with the private sector, civil society, young people, local organisations, and trade unions. Details on how to get involved will be published shortly at: www.gov.uk/sustainabledevelopmentgoals.

Prosperity Fund: Sustainable Development Goals

07 Feb 2019 | 795 c1602

Asked by: Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale

My Lords, that is one of the clearest answers we have had yet from Ministers on the link between these funds and the sustainable development goals, and I welcome it. But will the Government take the opportunity, during the UK's voluntary national review to the United Nations this summer, to publish that detail in terms of monitoring and evaluation of these expenditures in relation to the goals? Will it do so not just for the prosperity fund but for the other funds that are being spent by departments outside of DfID?

Answered by: Baroness Stedman-Scott

The noble Lord raises a very important point. Transparency is critical, and I do not believe there is any desire not to be transparent on these matters. The CSSF is working hard to increase transparency and has made major progress. Over the past 18 months, the CSSF has listened to feedback and worked on publishing more information on its programmes, its objectives and how its programmes are performing. I have no doubt that if the noble Lord still does not think we are up to scratch, he will let us know.

Government Departments: Sustainable Development

28 Jan 2019 | 211324

Asked by: Preet Kaur Gill

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps she is taking to monitor progress of Government Departments in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Answering member: Harriett Baldwin | Department for International Development

The Government has embedded the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Single Departmental Plans and is working to produce a strong Voluntary National Review, which will be presented to the UN in July this year. The Voluntary National Review will take stock of the UK's domestic and international progress in delivering the SDGs. All Government Departments have nominated an 'SDG Champion' at Director level whose responsibility it is to promote the SDGs and the Voluntary National Review in their department.

Females: Equality

28 Jan 2019 | 211323

Asked by: Preet Kaur Gill

To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what additional (a) funding and (b) staff resources the Government has provided to each Department to enable them to implement Sustainable Development Goal 5.

Answering member: Harriett Baldwin | Department for International Development

Departmental budgets are allocated, through the Spending Review, against Single Departmental Plans. Each Department is responsible for supporting, resourcing, and reporting against achievement of the SDGs, as appropriate to its mandate. The UK's upcoming Voluntary National Review will provide a snapshot of the UK's contribution to Global Goal 5, both domestically and internationally, and will be underpinned by data to ensure that it is robust and credible. The UK played an instrumental role in advocating for the inclusion of Goal 5 in the Sustainable Development Goals and is a world leader in supporting international progress against the targets under this Goal.

5. Debates

[Universal Sustainable Developments Goals](#)

22 Nov 2018 | House of Lords | 794 cc332-358

Lords motion to take note of the progress made across government departments in integrating the Universal Sustainable Development Goals into domestic policy in preparation for the United Kingdom's Voluntary National Review presentation at the United Nations in September 2019. Agreed to on question.

6. Further reading

UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform

[Voluntary National Reviews Database](#)

As part of its follow-up and review mechanisms, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encourages member states to "conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven" (paragraph 79). These national reviews are expected to serve as a basis for the regular reviews by the high-level political forum (HLPF), meeting under the auspices of ECOSOC. As stipulated in paragraph 84 of the 2030 Agenda, regular reviews by the HLPF are to be voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and involve multiple stakeholders.

The voluntary national reviews (VNRs) aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The VNRs also seek to strengthen policies and institutions of governments and to mobilize multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

This online review platform is dedicated to compiling information from countries participating in the voluntary national reviews of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

HM Government publications

[UK's Voluntary National Review on the Global Goals: Emerging Findings and Further Engagement](#), 4 March 2019

Committee reports

[Sustainable Development Goals in the UK follow up: Hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity in the UK](#), Thirteenth Report of Session 2017–19, House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, HC 1491, 10 January 2019

Committee inquiries

[UK progress on the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#)

International Development Committee

Scope of the inquiry

In July 2019 the UK Government (HMG) will present its Voluntary National Review to the UN, detailing the progress it has made towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) since their adoption in September 2015. In advance of this, the International Development Committee is launching an inquiry to explore how far the Department for International Development (DFID) and HMG have advanced the agenda overseas since the publication of the predecessor Committee's 2016 report on 'UK implementation of the SDGs'.

[Voluntary National Review of UK progress against the Sustainable Development Goals](#)

Environmental Audit Committee

Scope of the inquiry

The Environmental Audit Committee holds a one-off evidence session to consider the domestic aspects of the UK's Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

[Oral evidence: Voluntary National Review of UK progress against the Sustainable Development Goals](#), HC 2108, 8 May 2019

[Written evidence submitted by the Department for International Development](#), April 2019

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