

Shrinking civic space: Practical guidance for bridging the divide between civil society and government HLPF 2025

Conveners: Global Forum for National SDG Advisory Bodies

Date: Tuesday 22 July, 9-10am, UN building, S-1522-1523

Title: Shrinking Civic Space: Practical Guidance for Bridging the Divide Between Civil Society and Government

[Registration](#)

Abstract: As civic space continues to narrow in many parts of the world, ensuring inclusive and effective implementation of the SDGs requires stronger, more resilient collaboration between governments and civil society. This VNR Lab, hosted by the Global Forum, will present the first findings from its new research project, *From Local Realities to Global Goals*, which explores the challenges faced by whole-of-society engagement mechanisms in evolving political contexts and offers practical guidance for bridging the gap between government and civil society.

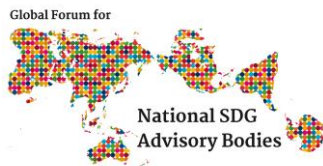
Speakers will include members of the Global Forum, alongside a representative from the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC).

The session will allow discussion and debate on how VNR's can become more inclusive by learning from what has worked well up to now and where there have been challenges. This, in turn, will help shape the next phase of the Global Forum research so that it can best support practitioners in future VNRs and other development activities.

Global Forum speakers:

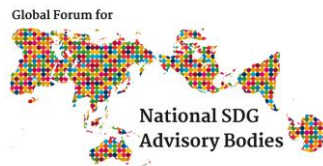
Norichika Kanie: Norichika is a Professor at the Graduate School of Media and Governance, Keio University in Japan, and Director of the xSDG Lab., Keio SFC Research Institute. He was chief editor of Chapter 6 of Japan's VNR being presented in 2025. The chapter is exclusively devoted to a stakeholder review of national actions. Norichika can report on the relationship between civic society and the government in Japan and how this is reflected in the VNR.

Marichu (Maria Rosario R. Lopez) is Board Adviser at the Jaime V. Ongpin Foundation, Inc. in the Philippines. She will explain the Foundation's involvement in both local and national SDG initiatives, including membership in the SDG Chamber organized by the national government. She will report on how these structures were used in preparation of the VNR and on whether the Foundation's initiatives, such as translating SDGs to the local level, have helped to the VNR processes to be more inclusive. She will reflect on this aspect of the VNR in the light of her the context in the country, in which political risks and low awareness of SDGs among newly elected local officials are key challenges.



Miriam Rosa Gonzalez, RNE, Germany Miriam will talk about the VLR experience in Germany and explain how mechanisms such as reporting standards cities and the municipalities have assisted SDG reporting at the local level and then to draft material for international levels afterwards. She will also explain how mayor's dialogue with about 40 mayors from all around Germany meeting and a platform where they can exchange. She will reflect on how, despite these innovative mechanisms for inclusion, the reduction in financial support available is making it challenging to sustain them and to maintain a whole-of-society approach to the VNR and other development processes.

James Chapman: The Partnering Initiative, Global Forum secretariat. James will share insights from the Global Forum research so far that highlight the role that the country context plays in whole-of-society engagement mechanisms, and some examples of how National Councils and other kinds of advisory body have been able to promote engagement despite the gaps that exist between government and other sectors of society.



Tentative agenda tbc:

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