



## CASE STUDY

# VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW: Azerbaijan

### Background Information

In 2017, Azerbaijan produced its first Voluntary National Review (VNR), detailing the country's efforts and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Azerbaijani government views the SDGs as the chance to empower a broad set of actors, while promoting participative dialog and enhancing collaboration as the nation pushes towards a sustainable future.

### Approach, Delivery, & Challenges

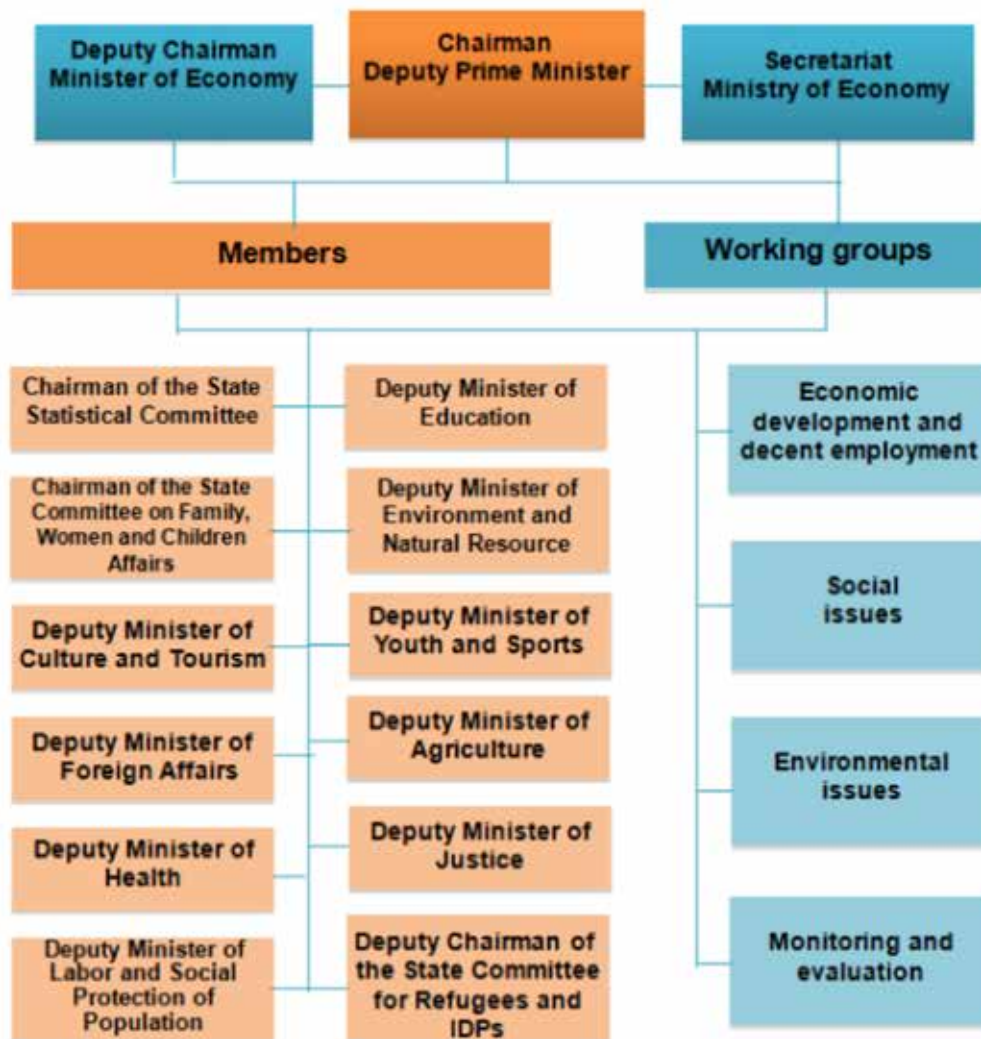
While Azerbaijan has stated a number of specific goals for its SDG-related efforts, including: early childhood development and education for all (SDG 4); improved health (SDG 3) especially for women (SDG 5); boosting agricultural productivity and food security (SDG 2); creating opportunities for displaced and migrant populations (SDG 8 & 10); promoting social inclusion and placing special emphasis on the needs of the most vulnerable segments, the country chose to report on all seventeen of the SDGs in its VNR.

In October 2016, Azerbaijan's President, Ilham Aliyev, created the National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development (NCCSD), a high-level government agency that would coordinate SDG efforts and integrate them with the country's development plans. The NCCSD was given broad authority to pursue the goals, including the ability to create relevant working groups, to engage with local and international experts, and to collaborate with international organizations and research institutions. The agency was also given a high profile as the country's Deputy Prime Minister, Ali Ahmadov, and its Economy Minister, Shahin Mustafayev, were asked to lead the new institution.

The primary aim of the NCCSD is to prioritize the country's efforts through 2030 in looking to ensure state programs and strategies align with the goals and target their achievement. The new organization is also responsible for drafting annual reports for President Aliyev on the country's SDG progress and challenges, to guide their efforts and feed into Azerbaijan's Voluntary National Reviews.



## The National Coordination Council for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Azerbaijan



### Benefits & Lessons Learned

All countries are being asked to share openly about the challenges they experience in implementing and tracking their SDG and VNR efforts to help facilitate cross-border learning and hopefully accelerate progress. With that in mind, the leaders of Azerbaijan's efforts have found the following to be their biggest challenges so far:

- Data collection
- Data analysis
- Dissemination of targets and indicators (including taking those down to the local level where the work is being done)

Further support from outside actors, be it UN agencies or other countries, is likely to be necessary to clear this hurdle.

Azerbaijan's SDG-related efforts will be supported by a partnership with the UN Development Programme (UNDP), which will help identify SDG "accelerators." These are policy opportunities which have beneficial connections between SDGs that can offer multiplier effects. UNDP also helped Azerbaijan build capacity



around SDG reporting, as they prepared their first VNR for the 2017 High–Level Political Forum (HLPF) for Sustainable Development.

In December 2017, Azerbaijan co-hosted the National Innovation Contest with the UNDP as its partner. Launched by the Ministry of Economy and the NCCSD, the program attracted nearly hundreds of applications with business proposals focusing on innovation, and research and development, that were designed to align with the SDG vision. The contest was part of the joint initiative with the UNDP that is aiming to raise public awareness of and interest in sustainable development. Alongside specific events and programs, UNDP is also providing capacity-building and advocacy support.

## Opportunities & Next Steps

The NCCSD has multiple efforts laid out for the near future. First, they'll finalize Azerbaijan's internal SDG targets, the measures they'll use to track their progress. They'll follow this in 2018 by co-convening a national SDG conference with the UN's country office to discuss implementation plans and to look for opportunities to drive transformative economic growth. This event has the ambitious goal of taking a comprehensive look at the country's economy, while seeking ways to have all Azerbaijanis engage with and benefit from these SDG efforts.

To get where they need to go, Azerbaijan's leaders believe a cooperative approach to sharing best practices is imperative. They stand ready to share their knowledge and expect to receive the same in return. One of the most important efforts that they'll have to undertake is the development of a system of SDG indicators for use in monitoring and reporting the country's progress. Delivering on this need will require the development of systems and capabilities to accurately collect, analyze, and distribute data. National and international cooperation towards this end is crucial and the NCCSD's leaders welcome continued help from UNDP.

Azerbaijan is also looking to make their SDG efforts more inclusive by expanding the program to universities (with help from UNICEF) in 2018. They're also looking to increase public awareness and enhance participation in general.

## Sources & Verification

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