

*Straight talk: Transformative actions dealing with synergies and trade-offs  
(with special emphasis on the goals under review (6, 7, 9, 11 and 17)) –  
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**2022**  
**Sustainable  
Development  
Transformation  
FORUM**

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**Accelerating the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full  
implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels**



25 – 28 October 2022 | Incheon City, Republic of Korea

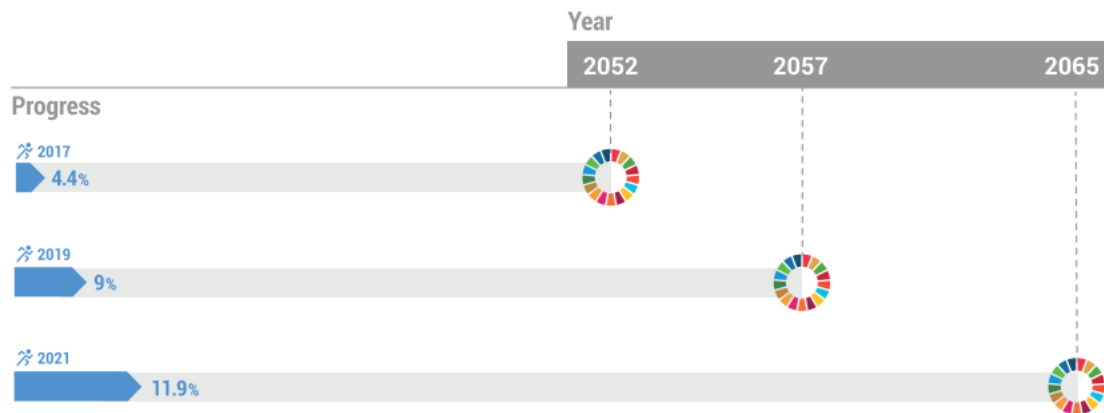
# Outline

1. Context :
  1. Progress on SDGs is lagging and uneven across countries and across SDGs.
2. Preliminary results of VNR Review
  1. Countries' SDG performance and correlations.
  2. Some SDGs are 'means to achieve' others
  3. SDGs' governance approach is very market-oriented
3. Some messages on synergies and trade-offs

# SDG trends AP region

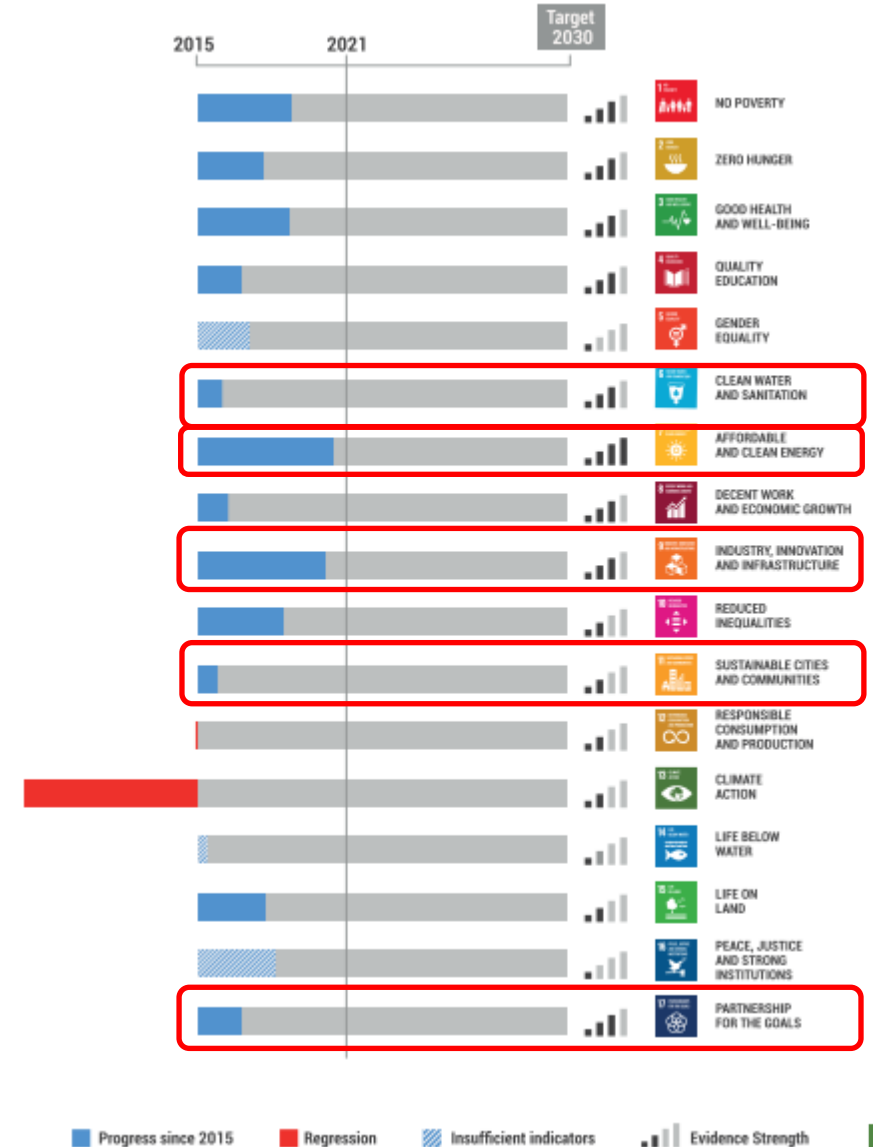
- NOT on track to achieve the SDGs
  - AP region may -achieve no more than 10% of the 169 SDG targets (UNESCAP, 2021, 2022).
  - World currently on track to achieve SDGs by 2065.
  - What determines performance?

Figure 1.1 Estimated year to achieve the SDGs at the current pace in Asia and the Pacific, 2017–2021



Sources: ESCAP (SDG Progress Reports 2021;2022)

Figure 1.2 Snapshot of SDG progress in Asia and the Pacific, 2021



# Rationale and background

- Focus

- Review of Asia-Pacific countries VNRs
  - (2016-2021)
- 50 VNRs prepared by 36 countries.

- Objectives

- Harness knowledge and experiences on VNRs production
- Extract common elements, good practices, challenges, lessons learnt,
- Particular attention was placed on the **environment and challenges, governance, and data and indicators.**

## STRENGTHENING THE ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION OF THE VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

in Asia-Pacific

Lessons Learned and Ways Forward



UN  
environment  
programme

Source: United Nations Environment Programme (2022). Strengthening the Environmental Dimension of the Voluntary National Reviews in Asia and the Pacific: Lessons Learned and Ways Forward. Bangkok.

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# SDG performance is correlated with GDP & Ecological Footprint

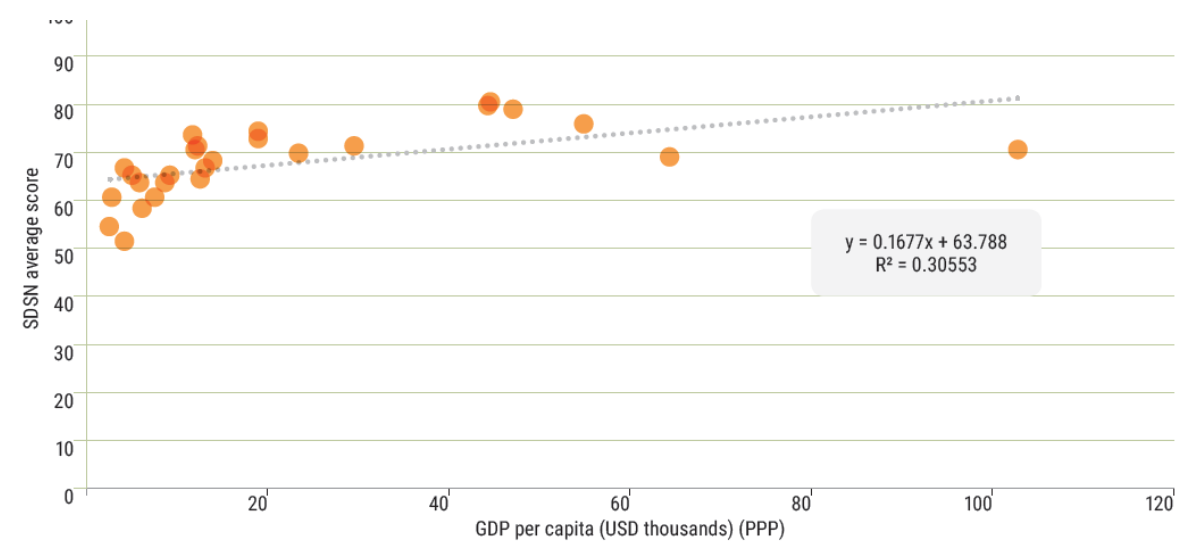


Figure 3 GDP per capita PPP compared to SDSN average score

→ Countries with higher GDP per capita perform better on SDGs (SDSN's SDGs Index)

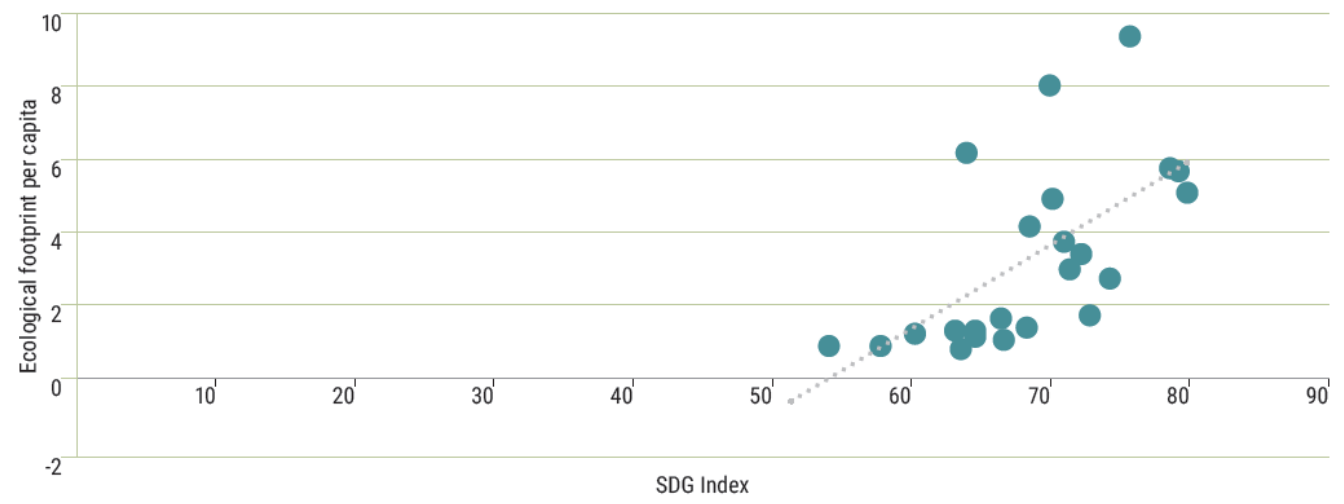
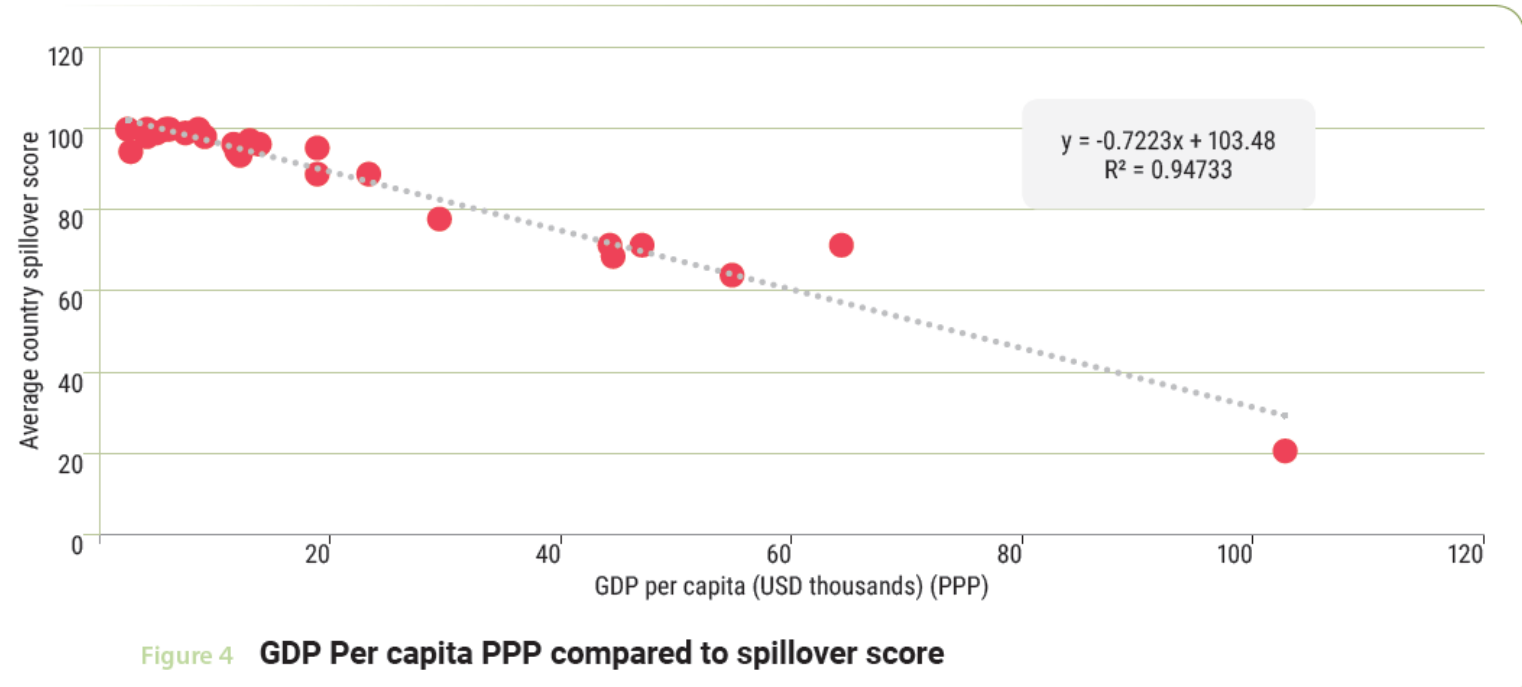


Figure 5 Ecological Footprint compared to average SDSN score

→ But SDG performance is also correlated with increased ecological footprint (also material footprint).

# SDG performance also correlated with “spillovers”



- Spillovers are grouped in (i) environment, (ii) economy, finance, and governance and (iii) security.
- For the environment, spillovers refers to cross-border environmental externalities attributed to trade in commodities, products, services...

# SDGs focus

Table 6 Frequency of thematic key words across VNRs

Environment		Society		Economy	
Biodiversity	1584	Child	5468	Economy	8460
Climate	6242	Birth	1670	Business	3438
Environment	4148	Education	11116	Employment	3972
Forest	2776	Gender	3682	Finance	3836
Water	7456	Health	12298	GDP	2554
Green	1958	Human	3848	Growth	5434
Emission	1564	Justice	1634	Infrastructure	4402
Ecosystem	1454	Inclusion	4198	Technology	4018
Pollution	1356	Poverty	5901	Income	3188
Renewable	1346	Social	7484	Innovation	2630
<b>Total</b>	<b>29884</b>		<b>57299</b>		<b>41932</b>

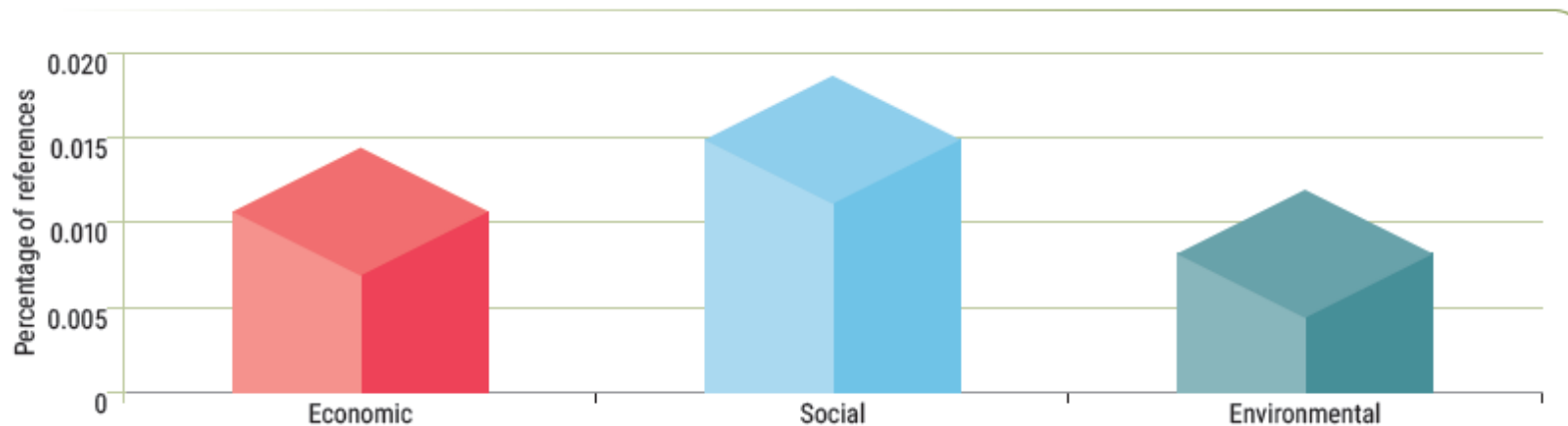


Figure 15 Average frequency for top ten words

→ A2030 interpreted as social development agenda (sDG)

# VNRs in AP region CC terms (2016-2021)

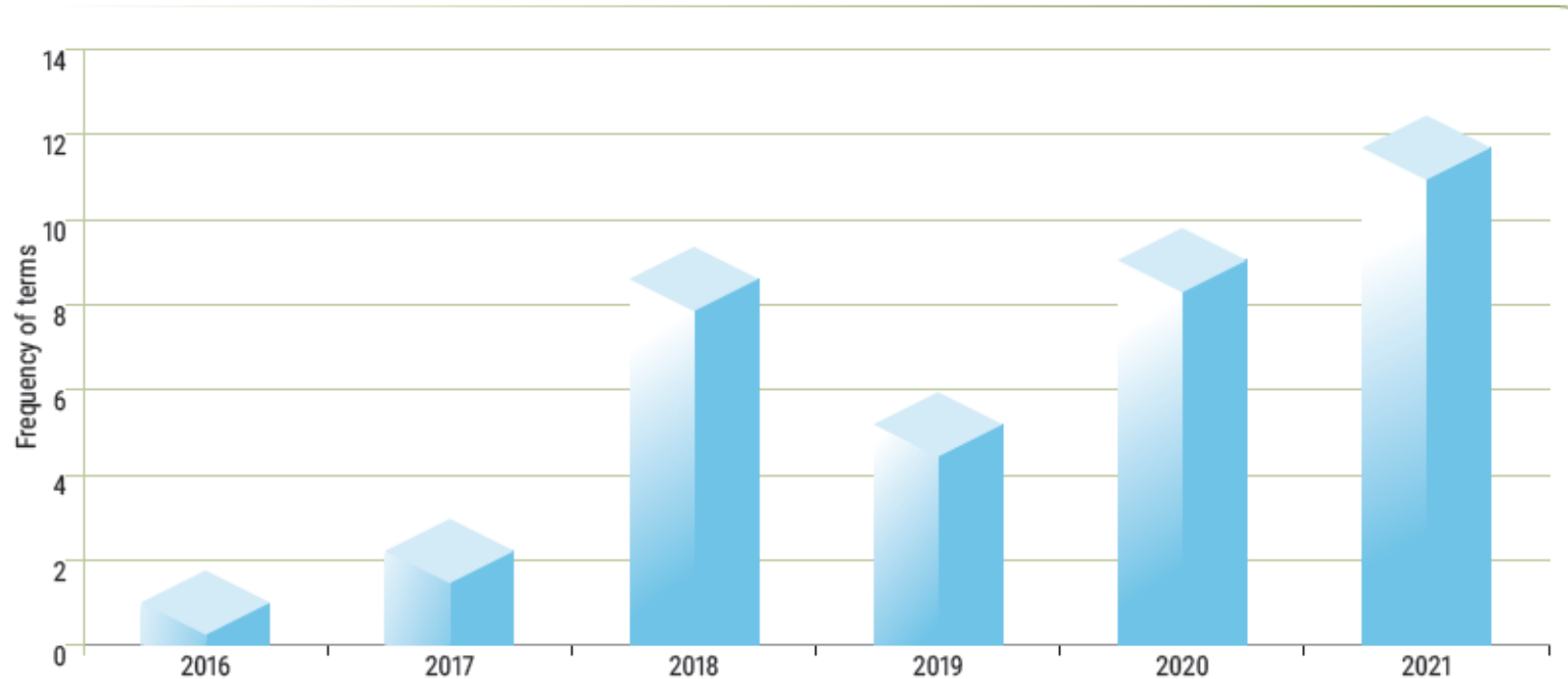


Figure 18 Climate agreement terms over time

→ Increased focus on climate change over time



# The Type of Governance May Influence Performance

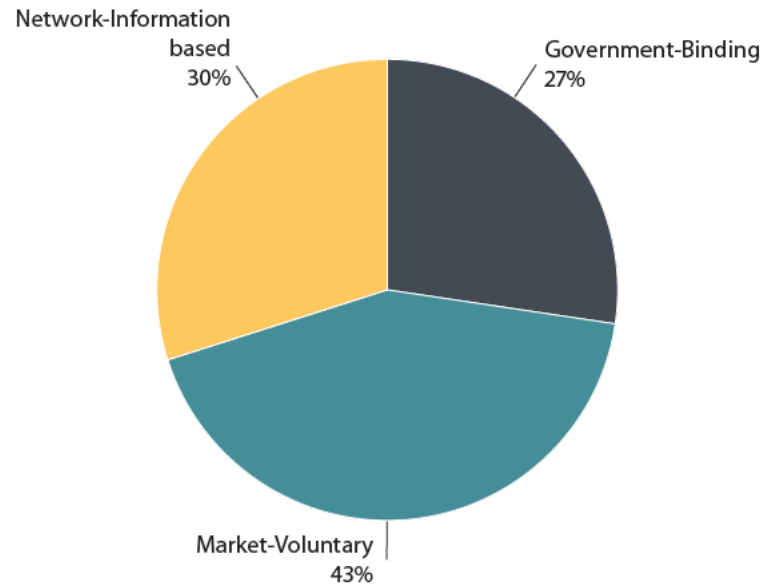


Figure 12 Share of governance focus across reviewed VNRs

Governance Styles Key Words		
Government - binding	Market - voluntary	Network – information based
Protect	Growth	Cooperate
Law	Corporate	Stakeholder
Conserve	Market	Engage
Monitor	Promote	Participate
Tax	Technology	Consultation
Enforce	Business	Network
Justice	Compete	Academia
Rule	Partner	Society

- Text analysis suggests the region favours using market-oriented governance styles for the SDG
  - Few exceptions include DPRK and Viet Nam
- But market oriented/voluntary approaches on their own may not be sufficient to improve performance on the SDGs, especially environment.
  - Gov't's not abdicate responsibility to private sector
  - Need regulatory approaches?

# Key messages: Recap

- Environment SDGs still the main trade-off
  - Environmental burdens some times 'spill over' to other countries
    - Calls for a global SDG-accounting system for natural resource accountability across international supply chains
  - Social and economic SDGs ahead of environmental SDGs.
    - Calls for a regular scientific report like GSDR focusing on synergies *and* trade-offs.
    - Calls for focus on synergies and trade-offs in key national policy documents (VNRs, NDCs, NBSAPs)
    - Calls for holistic measurement of SDG performance
  - Attention to climate change is increasing in SDGs, but resources missing
    - Financing earmarked for climate needs to tag also other SDGs to capitalize on synergies
  - SDG governance uses too much 'market logic'
    - Calls for a revival of regulatory approaches especially for environmental SDGs.
    - Requires capacity and increased stakeholder engagement
    - List stakeholders engaged in VNRs (not only capital-based groups)

Thank you!