

Republic of Palau
First Voluntary National Review of the SDGs 2019

Main Messages

“Progressing with Our Past Toward a Resilient, Sustainable, and Equitable Future”

Introduction

Palau actively participated in formulating the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Accordingly, Palau welcomes the VNR as an opportunity to reflect on achievements and acknowledge vulnerabilities while accelerating progress toward a global development paradigm characterized by resilience, sustainability, and equity – an Era of Sustainable Development.

Over the 25 years since independence, as a small island but large ocean state, Palau has established governance and infrastructure supportive of modern nationhood and evolved from a low-income country in 1994 to a high-income country in 2017. Palau achieved seven of the eight MDGs and has played a leadership role in safeguarding the environment for future generations. Other achievements include universal access to quality health care and education, reduction of poverty amidst a growing economy, a sustainably financed nationwide network of protected areas, and enduring regional and global partnerships. Nonetheless, challenges remain due to vulnerabilities as a small island developing state, global economic forces, and climate change.

Means of Implementation

Palau embraces the SDGs at the highest political level. After mapping global targets and indicators against domestic priorities, Palau identifies 89 targets that comprise the national SDGs framework. The 2019 VNR presents a baseline report against the national framework and outlines a pathway to 2030 and beyond. Next steps include integration of the nationalized SDGs into planning and budgeting framework to facilitate monitoring and timely implementation while building ownership of the SDGs at the grassroots.

Sustainable Development

Palau’s sustainable development is the intersection of four interlocking pillars – people, prosperity, planet, and partnerships. In the People Pillar (SDGs 2-4) Palau envisages happy, healthy, and purposeful lives supported by the Prosperity Pillar (SDGs 1, 8, 10) characterized by equitable, inclusive, and sustainable growth in harmony with nature – the Planet Pillar (SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11-15). The fourth pillar, Partnerships and Governance (SDGs 5, 16-17) reflects the interdependence of all pillars and the continuing need for effective governance and partnerships both domestically and internationally. For achieving 2030 goals and targets, Palau has identified challenges in closing gaps, improving quality, and enhancing resilience – especially climate resilience.

Closing gaps: There are many SDG targets that Palau is on track to realize but for which additional effort is needed to maintain good progress. Having achieved universal education, more is needed to ensure quality education for a globalized future (Target 4.1). Having achieved universal access to water, more is needed to ensure safety and drought resilience (Target 6.1). Having created a national network of marine protected areas, more is needed to protect especially sensitive ecosystems still underrepresented in the network such as mangroves (Target 14.5), to conserve near-shore fish stocks (SDG 14.4), and to sustainably manage terrestrial ecosystems while achieving food security (Targets 2.3 and 2.4) and inclusive economic growth (Target 8.5) in harmony with nature.

Improving quality: Having achieved basic services, Palau now focuses on quality. No one goes hungry but many do not have an optimal diet and as a nation, Palau is overly dependent on food imports resulting in dangerous insecurities (Target 2.2). Everyone enjoys modern energy, but Palau aspires toward modern renewable energy (Targets 7.1 and 7.2). Palau has built roads but aspires to complete transportation infrastructure that incorporates sidewalks and public transport (Target 9.1).

Building resilience: Climate change, and associated natural disasters, impact all aspects of life and without climate-informed development, threaten Palau's economy, infrastructure, environment, health, and culture. It is imperative that planning adapt to new climate realities - climate-proofing infrastructure, relocating communities where necessary, and building human capital for life in a climate-altered world.

Progressing with Our Past

Palauans have called our islands home for generations, adapting to change, and evolving values and traditions that are foundations for sustainability. As Palau progresses in this Era of Sustainable Development, we look to our past to guide our future and commit to progress together, leaving no one behind, linked by our common heritage and values. We seek genuine partnerships with the global community to support us to access technologies, develop innovations, and identify financing that supports a resilient, sustainable and equitable future for today and for generations yet to come.