



UNDESA



UCLG
United Cities
and Local Governments

REGIONAL FORUM

ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE UNECE REGION

2-3 APRIL 2025 | PALAIS DES NATIONS | GENEVA



From Planning to Action: Accelerating Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs)

As part of the 2025 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, this dynamic side event invites local, regional and national governments, policymakers, and SDG practitioners to explore how Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) can be leveraged as powerful processes to accelerate SDG implementation and drive sustainable urban development.

It is organized by: UNECE; UNDESA; UCLG; UN-Habitat (as part of the UNDA 14th tranche project “Voluntary Local Reviews: Evidence for Greener, Resilient and Sustainable Urban Recovery in Eastern European and Central Asian Countries in Transition”).

3 April 2025

1.15 – 2.45 PM

Hybrid event:

Room H-200, H-Building

Palais des Nations, Geneva (Switzerland)

To access the Palais, please register at <https://indico.un.org/event/1011679/>.

To join the meeting online click [here](#).

English only

Why attend?

As cities worldwide face the challenges of post-pandemic recovery, climate change, and rapid urbanization, the need for actionable, localized strategies to achieve the SDGs is more urgent than ever. VLRs have emerged as transformative frameworks for local governments to align their development strategies with the SDGs, fostering greener, more resilient, and inclusive cities. This event will reflect on the lessons learned from recent VLR experiences and provide insights into what comes next—turning assessments into actionable outcomes that create lasting impact.

It will demonstrate how enhanced VLRs can serve as a bridge between local, national and global goals, fostering multilevel governance, stakeholder collaboration, green growth, resilient transition and innovative solutions for a sustainable future.

Join us to exchange ideas, share best practices, and collaborate on advancing the transformative power of enhanced VLRs for greener, more resilient, and inclusive urban development.

Who should attend?

This event is ideal for:

- Local, regional and national government officials.
- Policymakers, urban planners, and SDG practitioners.
- Civil society representatives and development partners.
- Private sector and financial institutions interested in sustainable urban investment.
- Experts supporting local, regional and national governments in their plans and strategies.

What to expect?

Panel 1: Lessons learned from VLRs

Discover key takeaways from cities that have produced VLRs, including:

- Innovative approaches to integrating VLRs into local urban planning and SDG localization.
- Lessons learned on how to strengthen the action-oriented component of the VLR, bridging the recommendations to tangible actions and policies.
- Strategies for aligning VLRs with local, national, and regional plans, including Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs) and Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).
- Challenges faced and solutions for building sustainable, resilient urban environments.
- VLRs as means for promoting green growth and resilient transition towards the SDGs.

Panel 2: The road ahead

Explore how VLRs can evolve beyond diagnostic tools to actionable frameworks:

- Innovative financing mechanisms and partnerships to support sustainable urban development and the implementation of the recommendations contained in the VLR.
- Insights on sustaining momentum and implementing tangible, impactful projects post-VLR publication.
- Insights on enhanced VLRs that are linked closely to local government planning, budgeting and reporting, as well as informing the means of implementation.

Guiding questions for speakers

Panel 1: Lessons learned from VLRs

1. What innovative strategies have you used to integrate VLRs into local urban planning and financing and align them with SDG localization efforts?
2. How do you ensure VLRs are effectively aligned with national and regional frameworks, such as Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)?
3. What key challenges did you face during the VLR process, and what creative solutions helped overcome them?

Panel 2: The road ahead

1. What innovative financing mechanisms or partnerships have you successfully leveraged to support sustainable urban and local development and implement VLR recommendations?
2. How can cities sustain momentum and turn VLR findings into tangible, impactful projects that drive long-term local and national progress?
3. What key strategies or lessons learned can help ensure the effective implementation of VLR recommendations in alignment with local and national goals?

Detailed programme

13:00 - 13:20 *Welcome light lunch*

13:20 – 13:30 *Opening and welcome*

- Ms. Paola Deda, Director, Forests, Land and Housing, UNECE
- Mr. Telman Maharramov, Partnerships and Programme Management Officer, SDG Localization and Local Governments Team, Urban Practices Branch, Global Solutions Division, UN-Habitat
- Mr. Sami Areikat, Sustainable Development Officer, UNDESA

13:30 – 13:40 *Keynote Speech* by Mr. Stefano Marta, PhD, Head of Unit, Smart and Sustainable Cities, OECD

13:40 – 14.30 **Panel 1 - Lessons Learned from VLRs**

Moderator: Mr. Telman Maharramov, Partnerships and Programme Management Officer, SDG Localization and Local Governments Team, Urban Practices Branch, Global Solutions Division, UN-Habitat

- Mr. Ljubiša Petrović, Mayor of Bijeljina, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Mr. Vakhtang Lomjaria, Head, Municipal Department of Economic Development, Tbilisi City Hall
- Ms. Natia Tsikaradze, Head, Strategic Planning and Coordination Unit, Policy Planning and Coordination Department, Administration of the Government of Georgia
- Ms. Manuchehra Madjon Mirzoali, PhD in Economics, Head of General Department on Investment Policy and Regional Development, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, National Coordinator for SDGs Coordinator for Development Council under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan

Panel 2 - The Road Ahead

Moderator: Ms. Paola Deda, Director, Forests, Land and Housing, UNECE

- Mr. Mirlanbek Baigonchokov, First Deputy Mayor, City of Bishkek
- Mr. Tchoro Seyitov, First Deputy Minister of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic
- Mr. Dragoslav Pavlovic, Mayor, City of Niš
- Mr. Siniša Trkulja, PhD in spatial planning, Agency for Spatial and Urban Planning of the Republic of Serbia

14:30 – 14:40 Q&A

14:40 – 14:45 Closing