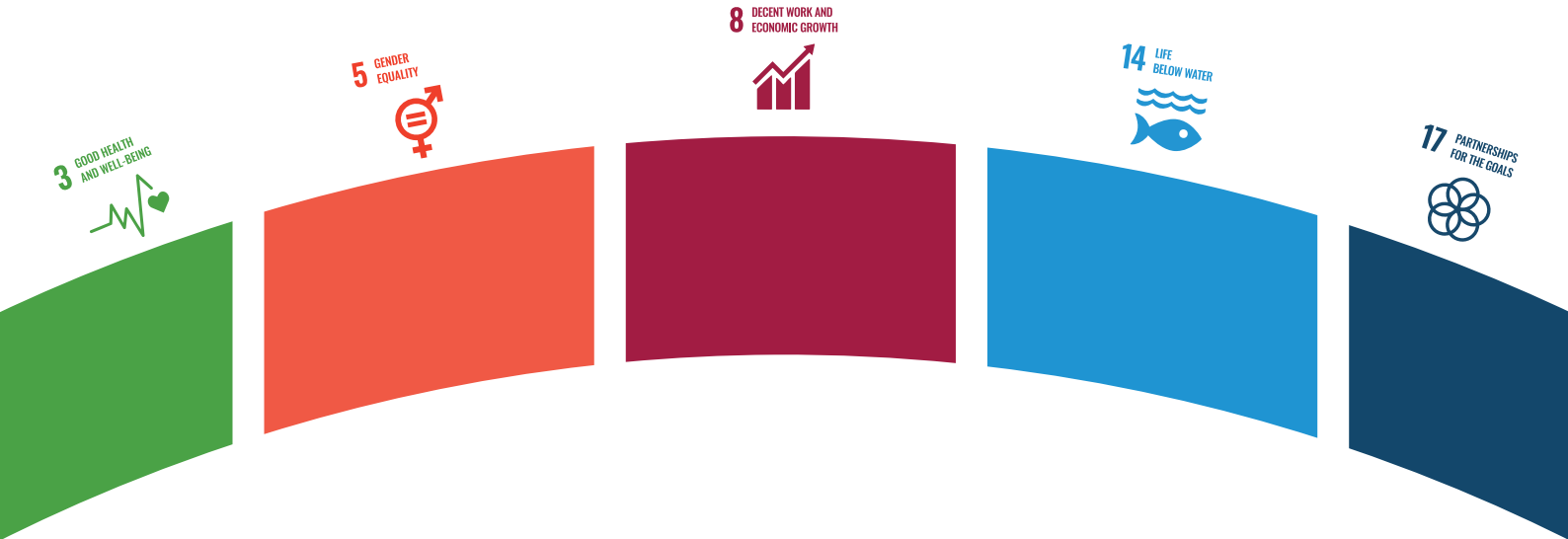
Republic of Ghana

REPORT ON GHANA'S PARTICIPATION AT THE 2025 UNITED NATION'S HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK

2025



1. BACKGROUND

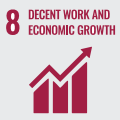
The 2025 United Nation High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (UN-HLPF) was convened under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) from 14 to 23 July 2025 at the UN Headquarters in New York. The Forum was held at a crucial moment in the global development agenda, with just five-years left in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The theme of the 2025 HLPF was *"Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for leaving no one behind"* In line with this theme, the Forum placed emphasis on transformative policies, science-driven strategies, and inclusive partnerships that could accelerate the pace of progress over the remaining five years.

The Forum conducted in-depth reviews of five priority Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- **SDG 3:** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

- **SDG 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.



- **SDG 8:** Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

- **SDG 14:** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.

- **SDG 17:** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (mainstreamed across all sessions).

In addition, the Forum provided a platform for the presentation of 37 Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), offering countries the opportunity to share experiences, challenges, and solutions in implementing the SDGs.

The 2025 UN-HLPF was notable for its strong linkage with other major intergovernmental processes taking place in the same year, including Beijing+30, the Third UN Ocean Conference, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) in Seville, and the upcoming Second World Summit on Social Development. The deliberations at the UN-HLPF were also framed as a follow-up to the 2024 Summit of the Future, reinforcing the global commitment to multilateralism and collective action.

2. GHANA DELEGATION

Ghana was represented at the 2025 UN-HLPF by a multi-sectoral delegation, reflecting the country's commitment to a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to SDG implementation.

The delegation was led by Dr. Nii Moi Thompson, Chairman of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) and Special Advisor to the President on the SDGs. Other key members of the delegation included, The Minister for Environment, Science, Technology (MEST), Hon. Ibrahim Murtala Mohammed, the Government Statistician, Dr. Alhassan Iddrisu, the Chief Executive of Korle Klottey Municipal Assembly, Hon. Alfred Gaisie, and the Ag. Director-General of NDPC, Dr Audrey Smock Amoah. Other members of the delegation included senior officials from NDPC, Parliamentary Service, Ministry of Finance, and representatives from Civil Society Organisations such as Ghana Integrity Initiative, Transparency International, SEND Ghana, SightSavers, and Curious Minds.

The composition of the delegation highlighted Ghana's emphasis on inclusivity, with contributions from policymakers, statisticians, planners, and local government officials and Civil Society Organisations. The delegation's mandate was to present Ghana's Voluntary National Review (VNR), participate in thematic sessions, share national experiences at side events, and strengthen bilateral partnerships.

3. PRE-HLPF ACTIVITIES

Ghana's preparation of the 2025 Voluntary National Review (VNR) began with a virtual launch that introduced the process, built awareness, and secured stakeholder support. The launch drew participation from government, non-government actors, and international partners. A multi-stage consultation ensured inclusivity and ownership. Stakeholder meetings reviewed data, shared case studies, and incorporated lessons from four Voluntary Local Reviews by nine districts. Ghana also benefited from global VNR preparatory workshops, before submitting its report to UNDESA in June 2025 and launching it officially by the President ahead of its presentation at the HLPF.

4. PROCEEDINGS AT THE HLPF

4.1. MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR HAROLD AGYEMAN – 14 JULY 2025

Ghana's delegation commenced its engagements at the UN-HLPF with a strategic meeting with H.E. Ambassador Harold Agyeman, Ghana's Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Held at the Permanent Mission in New York, the session provided an opportunity to consolidate priorities, refine Ghana's messaging, and review speaking roles, logistics, and upcoming bilateral meetings. Ambassador Agyeman highlighted the Mission's role in facilitating Ghana's participation and supporting the hosting of its side event, stressing the need for consistency and visibility in interventions.

The delegation also reflected on Ghana's third VNR process, acknowledging mixed results with notable progress, but also persistent challenges such as maternal mortality. In this context, Dr Thompson highlighted some success stories in this area, such as Dodowa Hospital's achievement of zero maternal deaths. It was emphasised that strong political commitment was necessary to achieving the SDGs, while strengthened collaboration between NDPC and GSS was important to ensure data-driven reporting and evidence-based policy making.

4.2. HLPF OPENING – 14 JULY 2025

Figure 1: Figure 1: Dr. Nii Moi Thompson Making A Remark at the Opening Ceremony

The 2025 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) opened with a strong sense of urgency, as leaders noted that only 17 percent of SDG targets are on track while financing shortfalls exceed $4 trillion annually.

The ECOSOC President's message and Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed emphasised the setbacks caused by conflicts, inequalities, debt crises, and climate change, warning that the 2030 Agenda risks failure without decisive action. At the same time, progress in health systems, social protection, education, gender equality, and digital connectivity offered reasons for cautious optimism.

The UN Secretary-General's 2025 SDG Progress Report revealed that 35 percent of targets are progressing, 47 percent too slowly, and 18 percent are reversing. Notable gains include reductions in child marriage and maternal mortality, expansion of electricity access, and increased internet connectivity. Extreme poverty, displacement, and rising carbon emissions pose severe challenges. The report called for accelerated transitions in food systems, energy, digital access, education, jobs, and climate/biodiversity.

4.3. HLPF TOWN HALL: UNLOCKING MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION – 14 JULY 2025

The Town Hall on unlocking means of implementation highlighted the widening $4 trillion annual SDG financing gap, stressing the urgency of blended finance, reform of the global financial system, and investments in digital public infrastructure. The discussions built on the outcomes of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), where the Sevilla Commitment called for bold reforms to mobilize resources and restore trust in multilateral cooperation.

Speakers underscored that bridging financing divides must go hand in hand with closing digital and technological gaps. Science, technology, and innovation (STI)

were identified as critical to accelerating transformation, tackling poverty, and addressing climate and biodiversity crises. Yet, participants cautioned that benefits remain unevenly distributed, and rapid advances, especially in artificial intelligence, pose risks to equity, privacy, and human rights.

Robert Kirkpatrick (United Cities Foundation) presented an open digital twin initiative to foster local innovation; Sanda Ojiambo (UN Global Compact) stressed public–private partnerships; and Robbert Dijkgraaf (International Science Council) urged open, co-produced science as a global common good. Civil society representatives raised concerns about the human rights impacts of unregulated private investment, while academics called for community-driven research. Delegates welcomed the Sevilla Commitment and emphasised innovative financing, debt relief, inclusive STI, and capacity building in artificial intelligence (AI) as essential pathways to bring the SDGs back on track

Ghana outlined national measures addressing financing, innovation, and productivity. Tax reforms are being implemented to increase the tax-to-GDP ratio while protecting the poor, and local economic development strategies are being advanced to tap community-level financing. Ghana also launched a $1 billion innovation hub to drive advancements in education, health delivery, and human resource development. Beyond financing and innovation, it also emphasized the critical yet overlooked "productivity gap" between rich and poor countries. It stressed that financial resources alone will not translate into better outcomes without a productivity revolution across public and private sectors. The country is working with its Management Development and Productivity Institute to address this challenge and expressed readiness to share lessons with other countries.

4.4. INTERACTIVE PANEL: SDG 3 AND INTERLINKAGES – 14 JULY 2025

The panel on SDG 3, chaired by ECOSOC Vice-President Lok Bahadur Thapa, focused on advancing health targets in the context of global megatrends, including climate change, pollution, conflict, and demographic shifts. Speakers underscored the importance of universal health coverage, equity, and resilient systems, while delegates shared experiences ranging from reductions in maternal and child mortality to digital innovations and national insurance programmes. The session stressed multisectoral approaches, international cooperation, and inclusive participation to ensure people-centered and gender-responsive health systems.

Ghana reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to SDG 3, highlighting achievements such as declining neonatal mortality, reduced HIV prevalence, and increased density of health professionals. Skilled personnel-assisted births doubled over two decades, reaching 87.6 percent in 2022 through midwifery training and NHIS-supported maternal services. Despite progress, maternal mortality remains high, particularly in underserved areas. To accelerate universal health coverage, Ghana has increased funding for the NHIS, introduced the National Healthcare Quality Strategy (2024–2030), and established the Ghana Medical Trust Fund to finance treatment for chronic diseases, strengthen research, and expand specialist training. At the subnational level, local governments allocate 10 percent of central transfers to health services. Ghana called on development partners to support equitable financing, complete health infrastructure, and scale up community-based systems to ensure no one is left behind.

4.5. INTERACTIVE PANEL: SDG 5 AND INTERLINKAGES – 15 JULY 2025

The session on SDG 5, chaired by Bob Rae, explored persistent barriers to gender equality, including discriminatory laws, gender-based violence, and limited access to education and finance. Panelists highlighted the transformative potential of closing the gender justice gap, investing in women's education, and leveraging digital technologies and the care economy. Delegates underscored that gender equality is a fundamental human right and a catalyst for achieving all other SDGs.

Speaking for Ghana, the Director-General of NDPC reaffirmed the country's unwavering commitment to SDG 5. A major milestone was the passage of the Affirmative Action (Gender Equity) Act, 2024, which mandates a minimum 30 percent representation of women in key decision-making bodies, embeds gender-responsive budgeting, and compels political party and private sector compliance. Ghana reported progress in reducing child marriage, intimate-partner violence, and gender-based crimes, while expanding educational and economic opportunities for women. Yet challenges persist, with women underrepresented in Parliament, ministerial positions, and local government, and many still lacking full decision-making power. Ghana stressed that the new law would require adequate funding, supportive institutions, and strong civil society engagement. Ghana called on the international community to scale up financing, nurture female leadership, and embed equity across governance.

4.6. INTERACTIVE PANEL: SDG 8 AND INTERLINKAGES – 16 JULY 2025

Figure 2: Dr. Alhassan Iddrisu Delivering Statement on Goal 8

The SDG 8 session, examined persistent challenges to decent work, including youth unemployment, informality, labour rights, and child labour. Discussions highlighted how fiscal and environmental pressures, disrupted transitions, and global supply chain inequalities are undermining progress. Panellists emphasised the need for stronger social protection, inclusive financial reforms, investment in education and skills, and the creation of green, decent jobs.

Speaking for Ghana, Government Statistician Dr Alhassan Iddrisu delivered a candid statement, noting that despite global unemployment falling to 5 percent, progress on SDG 8 has largely stalled. Ghana's economy grew by 5.7 percent in 2024, above the Sub-Saharan average, with inflation declining from 50 percent in 2022 to 13.7 percent by June 2025. Unemployment remained high at 14.7 percent, and youth joblessness exceeded 25 percent, with over 70 percent of workers, mostly women and young people, still in the informal sector. Dr Iddrisu stressed that this was not just a "jobs gap" but a "dignity gap."

To address these challenges, Ghana is advancing the 'Reset Ghana Agenda', which includes the "24-Hour Economy initiative", a US$10 billion infrastructure "Big Push Programme," the "1 Million Coders" digital skills initiative, and the "GoldBod" to formalise small-scale mining. It was underslined that data is "core infrastructure," with quarterly labour statistics and a new national survey on skills mismatches guiding policy. Ghana urged global action in the final five years to protect the dignity of workers everywhere.

4.7. NDPC-UN DESA BI-LATERAL MEETING ON VOLUNTARY LOCAL REVIEWS – 16 JULY 2025

Figure 3: Bilateral meeting UNDESA

The National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) held a bilateral meeting with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) to deliberate on support for the preparation of five Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) in selected Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in the Western Region of Ghana, with financial and technical contributions from the Government of Italy. The discussions underscored the need for the VLRs to serve not only as reporting instruments but also as tools to strengthen local planning and implementation processes.

Particular emphasis was placed on Infrastructure Asset Management (IAM), drawing on commitments from the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development to enhance national and local capacities in sustainable asset management. The meeting further addressed post-VLR processes, stressing the importance of integrating findings into local planning frameworks in line with the principles of effective governance articulated by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA). Key challenges identified included inadequate asset inventories, urban expansion, and fiscal constraints, highlighting the need for improved capital budgeting and data systems. A two-pronged approach was proposed: direct technical support to MMDAs on IAM, alongside capacity strengthening of the NDPC to sustain guidance beyond the project cycle.

4.8. TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL SIDE EVENT – 16 JULY 2025

Figure 4: Picture of TI Side Event

Transparency International organised a side event on the topic "*Breaking Corruption Barriers to Gender Equality*," with stakeholders probing how corruption fundamentally undermines gender equality by impeding women's access to essential public services and economic opportunities. Discussions drew on Transparency International's research, which reveals that corruption in areas such as land administration, healthcare, and education disproportionately affects women and girls and contributes to structural inequalities. There were calls for the mainstreaming of gender-sensitive anti-corruption policies, increased transparency in public procurement and service delivery systems, the creation of safe and accessible reporting mechanisms, and the strengthening of institutional integrity across sectors including education, health, and land rights.

Mr Michael Kissi Boateng (NDPC), underscored the nation's efforts to operationalise these principles, detailing how Ghana is deploying digital platforms

to enhance transparency in procurement and open contracting, especially targeting vulnerabilities within the NHIS and school systems. These reforms aim to reduce fraud, improve accountability, and ensure that resources meant for women's services are protected and effectively delivered. Ghana's remarks emphasised that corruption acts as a barrier that disproportionately affects women, limiting their access to education, healthcare, and economic empowerment, and that tackling it requires both governance reforms and targeted, gender-responsive interventions.

4.9. INTERACTIVE PANEL: SDG 14 AND INTERLINKAGES – 17 JULY 2025

This session examined obstacles and opportunities in advancing ocean conservation, the blue economy, and governance. Speakers emphasised the persistent financing gap, fragmented governance, and the need to empower coastal and small-scale fishing communities through inclusive policies. Discussions highlighted the importance of embedding the FAO Voluntary Guidelines on Small-Scale Fisheries, strengthening the science-policy-society interface, and reducing destructive practices such as bottom trawling. Delegates shared national measures, including marine protected areas, bans on single-use plastics, mangrove restoration, and science-based tools for ocean management, while stressing that ocean collapse directly threatens food security, health, and livelihoods.

Dr Smock Amoah, reaffirmed Ghana's commitment to advancing SDG 14 through concrete action. Ghana highlighted its leadership as one of the first countries to report on plastic debris density under Indicator 14.1.1(b), drawing on citizen science to guide national policy. Key initiatives such as the launch of the Circular Economy Framework for Plastics, Marine Fisheries Management Plan (2022–2026), and the ratification of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies were discussed. Protecting oceans is critical to ensuring food security, climate resilience, and biodiversity, thus innovation, partnerships, and inclusive approaches that empower women, youth, and coastal communities are required. Ghana also welcomed global commitments, including support for the BBNJ Agreement, the international plastics treaty process, and calls for a precautionary moratorium on deep sea mining under UNCLOS, stressing that such multilateral cooperation is critical for building a sustainable and resilient blue economy.

4.10. INTERACTIVE PANEL: STRENGTHENING ALLIANCES FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION – 17 JULY 2025

Ghana participated in this panel session focused on building effective partnerships to achieve the SDGs. The delegation shared its national experience in establishing a well-structured coordination architecture for SDG implementation, anchored by the NDPC. Ghana's intervention emphasized that partnerships must be built on legitimacy, ownership, inclusiveness, and clear development logic. The delegation showcased examples of multi-stakeholder collaborations, including partnerships with civil society organizations, private sector actors, and development partners, which have contributed to addressing data gaps and enhancing service delivery. Ghana underscored the importance of regional and global partnerships in complementing national efforts, especially in mobilising finance and technology. The intervention concluded with a call for stronger alignment between global frameworks and national priorities, ensuring that partnerships are mutually beneficial and geared towards accelerating progress.

4.11. INTERACTIVE PANEL: TRANSFORMATION FROM THE GROUND UP – 17 JULY 2025

At this session, Ghana's local government representatives from Korle Klottey Metropolitan, Assemblies (MMDAs) presented innovations in local SDG implementation. Their interventions highlighted the importance of empowering local authorities with financial resources, technical capacity, and data systems to deliver on the SDGs. Ghana shared examples of participatory budgeting processes, local revenue mobilization strategies, and the use of digital tools for service delivery. The delegation emphasized that local action is central to achieving the SDGs, as it is at the community level that policies translate into tangible outcomes. Ghana's presentation demonstrated how local innovations contribute to broader national targets, reinforcing the value of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). By elevating local voices at a global forum, Ghana positioned itself as a leader in advancing bottom-up approaches to sustainable development.

Figure 5: A photograph of organisers, panel members and participants at the Local and Regional Government engagement in VNR/VLR Processes

4.12. UN DESA VNR PREPARATORY MEETING – 17 JULY 2025

The VNR/VLR Lab Panel discussion on the theme "local and regional governments engagements in VNR/VLR processes" discus was convened under the auspices of UN DESA. The panel made up of representatives from the United Cities and Local governments, South Africa Local Government Association, German Council for Sustainable Development, Knowledge Platform and SDG Localisation, Ministry of Housing and local development in Malaysia, Barcelona Provincial Council and Ndwenya Town Board of Eswatini shared perspectives from the international, local governments networks and national think tanks and national and local levels.

The event provided participants with the opportunity to exchange experiences and good practices regarding how VNRs and VLRs are contributing to integrated SDG planning and implementation, highlightingroleofassociationsornetworks of local governments in supporting local

governments in SDG reporting, sharing of reporting practices and local/subnational inputs into national reporting, existing good practices, enhanced data sharing including availability of disaggregated data at the local and strengthened multilevel governmental dialogue, planning and actions through VNR and VLR processes in implementing the SDGs and, aligned VNR and VLR processes after the publication of the reports.

The panel outlined concrete actions to turbocharge SDG Localization to include;

1. Strengthening Multilevel Governance and Policy Coherence such as:
    - Establishing or reinforce national-subnational SDG steering bodies with clear mandates, integrated budgets, and regular joint planning cycles.
    - Institutionalising Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) that feed into Voluntary National
2. Mobilising and Innovate Finance through the Creation of SDG-focused blended finance vehicles that combine public sector allocations, private investment, and philanthropic grants.
    - The introduction of performance-based incentive grants for local authorities that meet predefined SDG milestones – e.g., reductions in inequality or improvements in water access.
3. Enhancing Data, Monitoring, and Reporting by:
    - deploying standardized subnational SDG dashboards harnessing geospatial analysis and citizen-generated data to fill coverage gaps.
    - building capacities in national and local statistical offices for disaggregated data collection, visualization, and real-time analytics.
    - adopting open data platforms and interoperable data-sharing protocols across ministries, agencies, and local administrations
4. Scaling Capacity Building and Digital Innovation through:
    - Develop mobile and web-based applications enabling frontline officials and communities to capture and monitor SDG indicators in real time.
    - Facilitate South-South peer exchanges and virtual hackathons to share local best practices and co-develop new digital solutions
5. Fostering Inclusive Stakeholder Partnerships through:
    - Institutionalise multi-stakeholder SDG forums at national, regional, and local levels with guaranteed representation of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and indigenous groups.
    - Partner with active private-sector actors on data-sharing agreements, technical expertise, and joint resource mobilization for local sustainability project

The panel reiterated the urgent call to accelerate SDG localisation towards achieving the 2030 Agenda which hinges on empowering local and

regional governments responsible for over 65 percent of SDG targets – to act as primary agents of implementation.

4.13. GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP SIDE EVENT: ACCELERATING SDG PROGRESS THROUGH THE POWER OF DATA – 18 JULY 2025

The UN Statistics Division (UNSD), in collaboration with OISC, hosted a VNR Data Lab during the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2025 to spotlight country experiences in integrating innovative data sources into Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). The session took place on Tuesday 22 July, 2025 from 1:00 p.m to 2 p.m. at the United Nations Secretariat. Building on insights from recent global workshops on expanding SDG data sources, the session responds to the growing need to share best practices in using non-traditional data for SDG monitoring and reporting. Traditional data collection faces persistent challenges such as time lags, high costs, and limited disaggregation—especially for marginalized populations. Innovative sources like satellite imagery, mobile phone data, social media analytics, and citizen-generated data offer opportunities to bridge these gaps, improving the timeliness, granularity, and inclusiveness of VNRs.

The aim of the data lab was to facilitate peer learning among countries presenting VNRs at the 2025 HLPF. Through practical examples, discussion of methodologies, and exchange implementation challenges, with the aim of supporting efforts to improve the quality, coverage, and effectiveness of data used in SDG reporting.

The report synthesizes the innovative approaches of four countries—Ghana, Ethiopia, Switzerland, and the United Arab Emirates—in preparing their VNRs. Each nation has developed unique strategies to overcome common challenges such as fragmented data, infrequent reporting, and limited stakeholder engagement. Their experiences highlight a global shift towards digitalization, granular data disaggregation, and inclusive processes to create more impactful, evidence-based, and transparent reviews.

The experiences of Ghana, Ethiopia, Switzerland, and the UAE reveal a clear evolution in how VNRs are conceived and executed. While their contexts differ, common innovative themes emerge:

Digitalisation is Non-Negotiable: All four countries have invested in digital platforms (Ghana's toolbox, Ethiopia's DPMES, Switzerland's SDGital2030, UAE's MARS) to streamline data collection, analysis, and dissemination. This is key to overcoming fragmentation and improving timeliness.

Disaggregation is Key to "Leaving No One Behind": The move beyond national averages—exemplified by Ghana's geospatial poverty maps and Switzerland's focus on local government input—is critical for identifying inequalities and targeting interventions effectively.

Inclusion Drives Ownership and Quality: Engaging a wide range of stakeholders (from subnational governments to citizens) is no longer optional. It improves the quality of the review through diverse data sources and builds a broader coalition for SDG implementation.

Innovation is as Much About Process as Technology: The most successful approaches (e.g., Switzerland's qualitative synthesis, Ethiopia's triangulation process) combine new tools with improved governance and collaborative workflows.

The future of VNRs lies in integrated digital ecosystems that support granular, timely data collection, foster multi-stakeholder collaboration, and ultimately transform the VNR from a periodic reporting exercise into a continuous engine for policy improvement and accountable governance. Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) are a cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda, providing a platform for countries to share experiences, accelerate progress, and strengthen policies and institutions for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

4.14. ACCELERATING AGENDA 2030 THROUGH LEVERAGING SDG SYNERGY DRIVERS (UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX SIDE EVENT) – 18 JULY 2025

Figure 6: Professor Alcamo, University of Sussex Making a Presentation

At a side event titled "Accelerating Agenda 2030 through leveraging SDG Synergy Drivers", co-hosted by the UK Mission to the UN and the Sussex Sustainability Research Programme (SSRP), the FCDO-funded report "Synergy Drivers for Accelerating the SDGs[1]" was unveiled. This evidence-based report offers ten "synergy driver" policy tools, that is, strategies enabling countries to fulfil multiple SDG targets simultaneously, optimising limited resources.

Prof. Joseph Alcamo, SSRP Director and lead author, delivered the keynote, citing UN data showing that 47 percent of SDG targets are lagging, with 18 percent including hunger reduction, actually regressing. He highlighted specific tools such as Decentralised Solar Energy Systems, Clean Cookstove Programmes, and Urban Greening Projects, each supported by strong scientific evidence for delivering multi-sectoral benefits. The synergy-driver concept is deemed vital amid resource constraints, necessitating the scaling of such approaches to dismantle siloed planning.

1 https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=ssrp-synergy-drivers-for-accelerating-the-sustainable-development-goals-report-university-of-sussex.pdf&site=492

In contributing to the potential uses of such a tool, NDPC Acting Director-General detailed how many of Ghana's initiatives are interlinked and impact multiple SDG goals at the same time. These include school feeding programmes linked to supporting local farmers, free senior school initiatives, and free sanitary pad distribution, advancing SDG 5 – Gender Equality, SDG 4 – Quality Education and SDG 1 – No poverty among others.

4.15. PARTNERSHIP PLATFORM ON LOCALIZING THE SDG (ITALIAN MINISTRY & UN-HABITAT PARTNERSHIP MEETING) – 18 JULY 2025

The UN-Habitat and the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security jointly convened the 2025 Annual Meeting of the Partnership Platform on Localizing the SDGs, with the aim of sharing progress on the design and implementation of National SDG Localisation Frameworks, foster effective multilevel governance, and accelerate action by closing gaps between national policies and local delivery.

The Platform supports countries in developing comprehensive frameworks to translate national sustainable development strategies into impactful projects on the ground, enhances local capacity in planning, data management, and investment, and promotes funding for high-impact initiatives, particularly through collaboration with Italy's bilateral environmental cooperation. As part of the broader localisation ecosystem, the event reinforced dialogue, peer learning, and partnerships to strengthen coherence, financing, and implementation at multiple levels across the UN system. Ghana contributed to the discussions by highlighting Ghana's SDG localisation journey through the adoption and alignment of local level plans to the SDGs, community engagements on various aspects of the SDGs, preparation of annual progress reports linked to SDG targets, and the preparation of VLRs.

4.16. HLPF GENERAL DEBATE: UN@80 – 21-22 JULY 2025

Figure 7: Dr. Nii Moi Thompson Delivering a Statement at the General Debate

The 2025 High-Level Segment of ECOSOC opened on 21 July under the theme *UN@80: Catalyzing Change for Sustainable Development*. ECOSOC President Bob Rae underscored the urgency of reinforcing solidarity amidst "enormous global disruption," while UN Secretary-General António Guterres highlighted recent progress at multilateral gatherings as evidence that cooperation can deliver tangible results. Member States and stakeholders reiterated strong commitment to the 2030 Agenda, linking peace, security, and sustainable development, and called for reforms to the global financial architecture to close the SDG financing gap.

Speaking on behalf of Ghana, Dr Nii Moi Thompson, reaffirmed Ghana's unwavering commitment to building a resilient and sustainable future. Drawing on Ghana's 2025 Voluntary National Review, he detailed progress on SDG 3 through expanded universal health coverage and digitised health records; SDG 5 through advancing women's leadership and combating gender-based violence; and SDG 8 by leveraging Ghana's youthful workforce to drive inclusive growth. He also stressed efforts under SDG 14 and 17, including combating illegal fishing, restoring marine ecosystems, and strengthening partnerships through data-driven, localised approaches. Dr. Thompson urged bold reforms to global financial systems, equitable technology access, and genuine partnerships to empower developing nations to invest in people and the planet.

4.17. BILATERAL MEETING WITH SWITZERLAND – 22 JULY 2025

Figure 8: Engagement with Switzerland Representatives at the Bilateral Meeting

Ghana's delegation held a bilateral meeting with Switzerland on the sidelines of the UN-HLPF to exchange experiences on Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and SDG implementation. Ghana highlighted its inclusive approach, engaging stakeholders at both national and sub-national levels, Civil Society organisations, and Local Governments through online and in-person consultations, validation exercises, and surveys supported by digital tools. Particular emphasis was placed on

reducing maternal mortality (MMR), with the President's recent VNR launch setting a target of zero deaths per 100,000 live births. Discussions underscored the need to strengthen data systems, harmonize administrative and survey data, and leverage AI-driven methods, as seen in the UNDP Human Development Report.

Climate cooperation also featured prominently. Ghana emphasised its pioneering Article 6 partnership with Switzerland, including clean cooking stove initiatives, as well as the submission of a Cabinet memo on electric vehicle adoption, highlighting the need for EV charging infrastructure and reduced import duties to ease the transition from thermal fuel dependency. On environmental financing, Minister of Environment, Science and Technology, Hon. Murtala Mohammed, reaffirmed African nations call for a streamlined Global Environment Facility (GEF) to alleviate bureaucratic burdens and improve access to funds. There were hopes that the GEF would establish a dedicated waste fund, with a portion earmarked specifically for plastic waste, and urged consensus-building among all partners.

4.18. BILATERAL MEETING WITH CZECHIA – 22 JULY 2025

Ghana and the Czech Republic held a constructive bilateral meeting at the HLPF to deepen cooperation on SDG implementation and multilateral issues. Ghana briefed the Czech delegation on progress across several SDG goals while candidly outlining persistent challenges, notably maternal health, where maternal mortality remains above 300 per 100,000, with higher burdens in remote areas and delays in accessing timely care despite free antenatal services. Education was highlighted as a standout performer with reforms in basic education (FCUBE) to the implementation of Free Senior High School, stipends for teacher trainees and expanded teacher training improving teacher availability and quality.

Ghana highlighted its ongoing reforms in e-governance and digital public services, expressing interest in knowledge exchange with Czech institutions. Both delegations also discussed potential cooperation in higher education and technology transfer. Digitalisation emerged as a priority need, as Ghana's 261 local authorities still heavily rely on manual reporting, creating gaps in timely sub-national data and service delivery. Delegates identified opportunities for Czech support through technology transfer and capacity building to modernize local reporting systems. Defence cooperation and delivery of Czech aircraft in 2025 were noted. The Czech Republic requested Ghana's support for its UN Security Council candidacy (2030–2033), and both sides affirmed commitment to multilateralism, sustainable development and human rights. It was agreed that potential areas of collaboration included health system strengthening, digital governance, education and defence logistics.

4.19. UN STATISTICS DIVISION VNR DATA LAB – 22 JULY 2025

The UN Statistics Division and OISC hosted a VNR Data Lab at the 2025 HLPF to address challenges in traditional SDG data—such as cost, timeliness, and disaggregation—by promoting innovative sources like geospatial and citizen-generated data. The session facilitated peer learning among countries presenting VNRs, focusing on practical methodologies and implementation challenges. Experiences from Ghana, Ethiopia, Switzerland, and the UAE demonstrated a shift toward digitalization, granular data disaggregation, and inclusive processes, highlighting strategies to improve the quality, coverage, and effectiveness of SDG reporting through more evidence-based and transparent reviews. The session

took place on Tuesday 22 July, 2025 from 1:00 p.m to 2 p.m. at the United Nations Secretariat.

The experiences of Ghana, Ethiopia, Switzerland, and the UAE reveal a clear evolution in how VNRs are conceived and executed. While their contexts differ, common innovative themes emerge:

i. Digitalization is Non-Negotiable: All four countries have invested in digital platforms (Ghana's toolbox, Ethiopia's DPMES, Switzerland's SDGital2030, UAE's MARS) to streamline data collection, analysis, and dissemination. This is key to overcoming fragmentation and improving timeliness.

ii. Disaggregation is Key to "Leaving No One Behind": The move beyond national averages—exemplified by Ghana's geospatial poverty maps and Switzerland's focus on local government input—is critical for identifying inequalities and targeting interventions effectively.

iii. Inclusion Drives Ownership and Quality: Engaging a wide range of stakeholders (from subnational governments to citizens) is no longer optional. It improves the quality of the review through diverse data sources and builds a broader coalition for SDG implementation.

iv. Innovation is as Much About Process as Technology: The most successful approaches (e.g., Switzerland's qualitative synthesis, Ethiopia's triangulation process) combine new tools with improved governance and collaborative workflows.

The future of VNRs lies in integrated digital ecosystems that support granular, timely data collection, foster multi-stakeholder collaboration, and ultimately transform the VNR from a periodic reporting exercise into a continuous engine for policy improvement and accountable governance. Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) are a cornerstone of the 2030 Agenda, providing a platform for countries to share experiences, accelerate progress, and strengthen policies and institutions for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

4.20. GHANA SIDE EVENT: BOOSTING NATIONAL AND LOCAL ACTIONS – 22 JULY 2025

Figure 9: Some Panel Members at Ghana's Side Event

Led by the NDPC, Ghana organised its own side event titled *"Boosting National and Local Actions to Achieve the SDGs."* The event highlighted Ghana's integrated approach to SDG implementation, showcasing how national priorities are translated into local action. Delegates from Korle Klottey Municipal Assembly presented their Voluntary Local Review (VLR), demonstrating how local authorities are mainstreaming SDG indicators into their development plans. The session also emphasised the importance of whole-of-society partnerships, with civil society, academia, and private sector actors sharing perspectives. Ghana's side event attracted wide participation, positioning the country as a leader in localisation efforts. The outcomes reaffirmed that empowering Local Governments and communities is central to accelerating progress towards Agenda 2030.

4.21. PRESENTATION OF GHANA'S VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW – 23 JULY 2025

Dr. Nii Moi Thompson, presented Ghana's third Voluntary National Review (VNR). Framed around the pillars of participation and inclusivity, the report underscored Ghana's whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, engaging youth, civil society, the private sector, and persons with disabilities. Dr. Thompson highlighted progress on five SDGs, Health (3), Gender Equality (5), Decent Work and Economic Growth (8), Life Below Water (14), and Partnerships (17). Notable achievements include a rise in skilled birth attendance to 87.6 percent, a decline in under-five mortality from 60 to 40 per 1,000 live births, and reductions in neonatal mortality. He also cited advances in gender equality, including the passage of the 2024 Affirmative Action Law and the election of Ghana's first female Vice President, alongside initiatives to strengthen ocean governance and combat illegal fishing.

Acknowledging persistent challenges, particularly high maternal mortality, youth unemployment, climate vulnerability, and financing gaps, he stressed the need to enhance data systems and domestic revenue mobilisation. He also noted efforts to formalise the informal sector, prioritising productivity and extending health insurance coverage.

In the interactive discussion, member states commended Ghana's transparency, its integration of Voluntary Local Reviews, and its investments in innovation and technology for SDG monitoring. Dr Thompson reaffirmed Ghana's commitment to accelerating the 2030 Agenda through evidence-based policies, strengthened partnerships, and sustainable investments.

4.22. ITALIAN MINISTRY AND UN-HABITAT HIGH-LEVEL EVENT – 23 JULY 2025

Figure 10: Dr. Audrey Smock and Delegates at the UN-Habitat High-Level Event

Ghana joined the high-level event hosted by Italy and UN-Habitat on localizing the SDGs. The session highlighted global best practices in embedding the SDGs into urban governance systems. Ghana's delegation shared experiences from metropolitan areas like Korle Klottey, where SDG indicators are being integrated into urban planning and budgeting processes. The intervention stressed that achieving the SDGs requires strong city-level leadership, innovative financing for urban infrastructure, and active citizen participation. Ghana also pointed to the importance of integrating climate resilience into urban development, noting the vulnerabilities of coastal cities.

The discussions at this event provided Ghana with an opportunity to learn from global peers. Italian officials and UN-Habitat experts highlighted how innovative municipal financing mechanisms, such as green bonds and public-private partnerships, are being applied to fund sustainable infrastructure. Ghana's delegation emphasised that these tools could be adapted to its context, particularly for upgrading informal settlements and strengthening climate resilience in coastal communities. The event also emphasised the role of digital technologies in smart city planning.

Ghana signed the Letter of Intent to join the Partnership Platform on Localising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), led by UN-Habitat and the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security (MASE), an initiative focused on localising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This partnership platform aims to guide countries towards a low-carbon economy while protecting and enhancing their territories and communities. This commitment reflects Ghana's recognition that localising the SDGs is central to achieving national development objectives. The delegation noted that participation in the governance structure will provide opportunities for peer learning, resource mobilisation, and global visibility

for Ghana's local authorities. The signing also symbolised Ghana's willingness to contribute actively to shaping the global agenda on localisation, aligning national strategies with international frameworks. The signing also gave Ghana increased visibility in international networks that can provide technical support and funding. Overall, this moment was a milestone in demonstrating Ghana's readiness to transform commitments into practical action for accelerated SDG delivery.

4.23. AFRICA UNION AFRICA DAY EVENT – 23 JULY 2025

The UN High-level Political Forum (HLPF) "Africa Day" event in New York organised on 23 July presented a platform to discuss progress on the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and African Union's Agenda 2063. It featured a ministerial meeting to launch the Africa Sustainable Development Report 2025, where member states shared progress on development goals. Dr. Nii Moi Thompson shared some perspectives on 2025 African Sustainable Development Report as well as lessons on Ghana SDGs coordination and implementation. He acknowledged that the preparation of VNRs and VLRs in Ghana have deepened stakeholder engagement and fostered a "whole of-government, whole-of-society" approach for the SDGs. He touched on the need to address existing institutional imbalances that impedes acceleration of the two agendas while encouraging CSOs and other partners to localise the AU's priorities as part of their programming.

Despite progress in developing several bankable projects aligned with both frameworks, uptake has remained limited. To fast-track implementation, five SDG Transformation Targets have been identified as national accelerators, strategically aligned with the AU's Seven Moonshots. These priorities are being advanced through policy synergies and cross-sectoral partnerships, ensuring coherence across national and regional governance systems.

Participants and partners were urged to invest in planning systems, strengthen implementation coordination, and promote inter-agenda coherence reaffirming that the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 are not in competition, but complementary frameworks for the Africa we want, and the Future we need.

5. CONCLUSION

Ghana's participation in the 2025 UN High-Level Political Forum reaffirmed the country's strong commitment to the SDG Agenda and its vision of inclusive, evidence-based, and locally driven development. Through its third Voluntary National Review, Ghana demonstrated notable progress on health, gender equality, decent work, ocean governance, and partnerships, while candidly acknowledging persistent challenges in maternal mortality, youth unemployment, financing, and climate resilience. The VNR's participatory approach, enriched by Voluntary Local Reviews, highlighted Ghana's determination to integrate national and sub-national voices into global processes.

Ghana's interventions across plenary sessions, interactive panels, and side events underscored the importance of resilient institutions, innovation, data-driven policymaking, and productivity growth as critical accelerators of sustainable development. The delegation's active engagement in discussions on financing, gender equality, ocean sustainability, and local governance positioned Ghana as a constructive partner committed to sharing lessons and advancing collective solutions.

Bilateral meetings with partners such as Switzerland and the Czech Republic further deepened cooperation in health, education, climate, digitalisation, and defence, while Ghana's side event and its signing of the Letter of Intent to join the Partnership Platform on Localising the SDGs showcased leadership in advancing bottom-up approaches.

Overall, Ghana left the HLPF with strengthened partnerships, enhanced visibility, and renewed resolve to translate global commitments into local action. As the world enters the final five years of the 2030 Agenda, Ghana stands ready to scale up reforms, mobilise domestic and international resources, and harness science, innovation, and inclusive governance to ensure that no one is left behind.

Annex 1: List of Ghana's Delegation

Name	Position/Institution
Dr Nii Moi Thompson	Chairman/ National Development Planning Commission and Special Advisor to the President on SDGs
Hon. Ibrahim Murtala Muhammed	Minister of Environment, Science and Technology
Dr. Alhassan Iddrisu	Government Statistician/ Ghana Statistical Service
Dr Audrey Smock Amoah	Ag. Director-General/ NDPC
Hon. Alfred Gaisie	Chief Executive/ Korle Klottey Municipal Assembly
Mrs Alice Amekudzi	Ag. Director Development Policy Division
Mr Stephen Ampem Darko	Principal Planning Analyst, Monitoring and Evaluation Division/ NDPC
Mr Philip Acheampong	Principal Planning Analyst, Development Coordination Division/ NDPC
Mrs Patience Ampomah	Senior Planning Analyst, Monitoring and Evaluation Division/ NDPC
Mr Michael Kissi Boateng	Senior Planning Analyst, Monitoring and Evaluation Division/ NDPC
Mr Nii-Odoi Odotei	Principal Planning Analyst, Development Policy Division/ NDPC
Mr Christopher Conduah	Senior Planning Analyst, Monitoring and Evaluation Division/ NDPC
Ms Vera Baffoe	Senior Planning Analyst, Monitoring and Evaluation Division/ NDPC