



# VOLUNTARY NATIONAL ITALY 2022 REVIEW

 **MINISTERO DELLA  
TRANSIZIONE ECOLOGICA**



  
**Ministero degli Affari Esteri  
e della Cooperazione Internazionale**

## FOREWORD

Italy supports the vision and guiding principles set out in the 2030 Agenda aimed at fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies, which are free from fear and violence, and strongly reaffirms that there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development.

Through the Voluntary National Review 2022 Italy is submitting, for the second time since 2017, a report to the High-Level Political Forum on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at national and local level. The present report is composed of a number of inputs from different levels of government and different stakeholders to allow to reflect in a plural and comprehensive manner the efforts carried out in the past five years to meet the vision and goals set out in the 2030 Agenda. The VNR represents, to this extent, an opportunity to collectively evaluate the work done so far and to further build momentum among all actors towards the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda.

In 2017, Italy presented the first VNR and reaffirmed its commitment to the vision and goals of the Agenda describing the road for implementation at national and local level through the National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) and the support provided at international level through the Three-Year Programming and Policy Planning Document for International Development Cooperation. With the present VNR, Italy is submitting its second report which focuses on an evaluation of the work done so far and provides a common vision to move forward for the years to come.

The VNR follows the periodic revision process of the NSDS, carried out in order to make the strategic framework capable of orienting and further guiding the transformation necessary to build back better from the severe consequences of Covid-19. Also, in the light of the new European Green Deal and the significant commitments undertaken by Italy with the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, sustainability is confirmed to be the metric to assess policies at national, European and international level.

The NSDS links the vision and objectives of the Ecological Transition Plan (ETP), that Italy approved in 2022, with the goals of the 2030 Agenda, building a common reference framework and setting up shared evaluation tools. Within this holistic framework, ecological transition and just transition are completed in a shared integrated process, with the aim of contaminating decision-making and affecting individual and social behaviours.

Italy conceived the VNR as a collective year long process involving main actors at national, regional and local level through the participatory mechanisms set in place since 2017 to implement the NSDS and the Three-Year Programming and Policy Planning Document. The Ministry for Ecological Transition, in close cooperation with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, coordinated the VNR preparatory process at national level. The involvement of Regions, Autonomous Provinces and Metropolitan Cities, through ad hoc VNR/VLR roundtables set up under the auspices of the NSDS vertical coordination mechanisms, reflects the importance that Italy attributes to integrated territorial approach and to effective multilevel governance which is crucial to decline national sustainability objectives in regional and local planning processes.

Similarly, the participation of stakeholders in the VNR preparatory process was ensured under the auspices of the National Forum on Sustainable Development and in coordination with the National Council for Development Cooperation. The contribution of stakeholders, supported by the establishment of a stakeholder drafting group that coordinated the preparation of a position paper reflected in the VNR, will be conducive to further increase, also by strengthening links with local

initiatives, the active role into the policy cycle of Non-state Actors, including youth and under-represented categories.

This choice of building the VNR and VLRs preparatory process on existing coordination mechanisms has allowed Italy to provide visibility and further strengthen these participatory tools, while avoiding duplications and overlapping initiatives.

To better reflect the work carried out in the past five years as well as the challenges addressed, the VNR provides three thematic insights, respectively on policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD), localizing the SDGs and stakeholder engagement. By declining these three areas, the VNR attempts to describe the level of integration of the 2030 Agenda in the planning processes at national (horizontally) and local level (vertically) as well as the efforts to ensure and support participation in decision making processes. This approach is built on the significant work carried out by different actors at national, regional and local level, reflecting a strong commitment to the VNR/VLR through such a collective endeavour.

The focus on PCSD is built on the results of a project launched by Italy in 2020 with the support of the European Commission (DG Reform) and the OECD aimed at strengthening policy coherence in Italian decision-making processes by developing an action plan for PCSD which will be integrated in the NSDS. This plan linked to the NSDS provides an array of policy coherence instruments and tools to better guide Italy's efforts on recovery and resilience from COVID19 building on the sustainable development vision enshrined in the strategy.

The thematic insight on localizing SDGs reflects Italy's strong belief that regional and local authorities have a key role in implementing the 2030 Agenda. In this section, the VNR describes the work carried out since 2017 after the adoption of the NSDS, building on the mechanisms set in place to support Regions, Autonomous Provinces and Metropolitan Cities to develop their own sustainability plans and agendas in line with the NSDS. Regional and local authorities have been actively engaged in the VNR and have prepared voluntary local and regional reviews that are attached to this report. By reflecting the engagement of different levels of government in the 2030 Agenda implementation, these reports provide a unique perspective on the challenges encountered at local and regional level and how Italy is moving forward through a coordinated approach enshrined in the NSDS system.

The third focus of the VNR is on engagement and participation and describes the work carried out and mechanisms set into place to ensure an open participatory process in implementing the SDGs at national and local level. Through the ad hoc drafting group, composed by stakeholders within the National Sustainable Development Forum, non-State actors involved in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda contributed to the VNR with a position paper that describes the work done and provides recommendations for the steps ahead. These spaces for participation and dialogue are crucial for the implementation, follow up and review of the Agenda as they ensure a more comprehensive picture within the VNR/VLR, both in the assessment process and in designing the way forward.

In addition to the description of the internal implementation process, the VNR provides a focus on Italy's international development cooperation activities guided by the Three-Year Programming and Policy Planning Document for International Development Cooperation approved by the Inter-Ministerial Council for Development Cooperation and that reflects the country's commitment to the 5ps of the 2030 Agenda through the external action. International development cooperation is at the core of the implementation of the external dimension of the 2030 Agenda and Italy worked successfully to uphold its development cooperation policy with a considerable growth of its budget share.

The severe impact of COVID 19 on the economic and social textures of Italy has halted progress in SDG implementation, widening inequalities and social exclusion, increasing poverty and weakening social capital in particular in terms of education and training. Long months of strict lockdowns affected the most vulnerable, in particular, younger generations, elderly and especially women that have been increasingly overburdened with care responsibilities.

Italy's efforts to recover from COVID 19, supported by the European Union through the Recovery and Resilience Facility, are aimed at building a more sustainable and resilient future by aligning short- and medium-term recovery measures with long-term overarching sustainable development objectives. Effective governance mechanisms, both horizontal and vertical, supported by a whole-of-society approach will ensure that policy responses for a sustainable recovery are crafted considering interlinkages and potential risks, including spill over and transboundary effects. It is in this context that Italy is working towards strengthening policy coherence by including a National Action Plan (NAP) on PCSD as an Annex to the revised NSDS and by including PCSD tools and mechanisms within the NSDS itself. At the same time a coherent framework of indicators will be conducive to pursuing a unitary approach to the 2030 Agenda implementation. Italy can count on a system of "Equitable and well-being indicators" that integrates the traditional economic indicators, as well as on the NSDS set of indicators and the annual SDG National Report compiled by ISTAT, all of which are undergoing a process of mutual fertilization.

The present VNR and VLRs are a collective exercise and has provided an opportunity for Italy to take stock of the efforts set in place since the first national exam and to further re-affirm the commitment to the 2030 Agenda at different levels, promoting visibility and support to those actors and initiatives that are contributing to bringing the implementation process forward.

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*Annex 2 – Voluntary Local Reviews ITALY*



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## Stakeholders engagement

The 108/2017 CIPE decision approving the NSDS provides that MiTE ensures a Forum for sustainable Development open to non-State actors, civil society and experts to accompany the implementation of the NSDS and of the 2030 Agenda in Italy. It was launched in 2018, during the first National Sustainable Development Conference and includes about 200 organizations up to date.

The intent is to follow up on the **regulatory mandate** by building a space where sustainability subjects and practices could emerge and engage and where public policies can meet and dialogue with social energies.

On these bases, the Forum for Sustainable Development plays a key role in the **NSDS implementation and in the three-year revision process** (as per Article 3 of Legislative Decree No. 221/2015). The 2022 NSDS and the NAP PCSD enable the Forum for Sustainable Development as a **stable and incremental platform** of dialogue between institutions, civil society and non-state actors as well as with the National Council for Development Cooperation - to promote integration and coherence among the internal and external dimensions of the policies - and with the territorial fora to contribute to the definition and implementation of the strategic vision shared at different level of government.

The Forum is composed of wide-ranging and heterogeneous voices representing the different realities of the Country – i.e., networks and associations from the voluntary and environmental sectors, youth, academia, as well as organisations from the world of labour, social economy, and small and medium-sized enterprises.

Forty per cent of the organisations joining the Forum are located in central Italy, while the remaining 60 per cent are evenly distributed in the other geographical areas of the Country. They are relatively young organisations established mostly between 1980 and 2011. Their members are thus composed: 45% non-profit organisations; 29% businesses; foundations (9%); representative bodies (10%); research organisations (7%).

### FOCUS – FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TASKS

As follows the **institutional functions** of the Forum:

- Supporting the NSDS implementation, monitoring and triennial updating processes (as per Article 3 of Legislative Decree No. 221/2015);
- Collecting recommendations, suggestions and opinions on Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) as provided for in the NAP-PCSD;
- Preparing position papers and own contributions for national positions within the main European and international negotiation processes on sustainable development;
- Contributing to the preparation of the National Sustainable Development Conference.

Besides its institutional tasks, the Forum has the following **relational functions**:

- Promoting sustainable development education, with focus on younger generations;
- Communication and dissemination of Strategy contents;
- Promoting information exchange and support for co-designing and networking among sustainability actors;

- Relations with the activities of the forums activated by Regions and territories for elaboration, implementation and monitoring of Sustainable Development Strategies at the various territorial levels.

In order to carry out its tasks, the Forum is supported by MiTE's for the **operational and organisational aspects**, and benefits from the **scientific support** of "Roma Tre" University – Department of Architecture, in collaboration with "La Sapienza" University – Department of Social and Economic Sciences, and "Tor Vergata" University – Department of Management and Law.

The Forum is autonomously managed by its member organisations. Its main components are:

- Working Groups
- Coordination Group.

Member organisations actively participate in the Forum and animate 6 Working Groups that focus on thematic aspects directly related to the NSDS:

1. **Working Group on sustainability culture** supports the implementation of the NSDS, focusing on the trajectories of the Vector "Culture for sustainability (Vector 2) including the cross-cutting action fields of information, education, training, and communication as fundamental levers to support sustainability within policies, plans and projects at various levels.
2. **Working Group on Peace.** The three fundamental principles of the NSDS "P" for Peace are: promoting a non-violent and inclusive society, eliminating all forms of discrimination, and ensuring a society based on the cornerstones of legality and justice. "Peace" highlights the need to promote peaceful, equitable and inclusive societies for residents and migrants by supporting the fight against discrimination (age, gender and race), and measures to combat organised crime, corruption and violence in all its forms.
3. **Working Group on People.** The objectives of the "P" for "People", aim at combating social exclusion by supporting human capital development, health and well-being promotion with special attention to the inclusion of "People" issues in the principles and objectives of the NSDS. In particular it supports the development of a social dimension that guarantees a dignified life for the whole population and that all citizens can achieve their own potential in a healthy environment by combating the phenomenon of inequality to the benefit of a greater social cohesion.
4. **Working Group on Planet.** The objectives of the "P" for "Planet" are at the heart of the initiatives of this Working Group that supports the NSDS implementation process promoting biodiversity preservation, sustainable management of natural resources, increasing the resilience of territories and communities and safeguarding of landscapes and cultural heritage.
5. **Working Group on Prosperity.** The objectives of the "P" for "Prosperity" are at the heart of the initiatives of this Working Group, which supports the NSDS implementation process, promoting the development of a new circular economic model that guarantees full development of human potential and a more efficient and responsible use of resources by identifying development paths that minimise negative impacts on the environment and, more generally, promote the sustainable use of resources and human capital enhancement.



6. **Working Group on Youth.** It is aimed at involving the new generations in dialogue and exchange to promote greater awareness-raising and impact of public policies on sustainability.

The Coordination Group is composed of the coordinators of the Working Groups, as well as of representatives of main network organisations (for widest representativeness) and a representative of Working Group 1 of the CNCS.

As follows the tasks of the Coordination Group:

- Fostering Working Groups dialogue and full functionality;
- Supporting coherence of topics and processes leading to the elaboration of position papers and contributions for national positions within main European and international negotiation processes on sustainable development;
- Promoting exchange and discussion with the institutional and territorial actors involved in sustainable development governance, in coherence with the 2022 NSDS and the NAP-PCSD.

## 5.1 Contribution to the NSDS review process: towards the NSDS 2022

Launched in 2018 during the first National Sustainable Development Conference, the National Forum was established following the call for Expressions of Interest (April 2019) and first met in plenary in December of the same year. The National Sustainable Development Conference was a structured moment of interaction and dialogue between Forum members and institutions as well as an opportunity to launch joint initiatives and actions. The 2022 NSDS and the NAP PCSD enable the National Sustainable Development Conference as a permanent annual event organised by the Forum and MiTE, offering a structured space for the active involvement of non-State actors in the implementation, monitoring and review of the NSDS and of the NAP PCSD as well as an awareness-raising instrument at all levels of governance. The Second National Sustainable Development Conference takes place on June 21 in Rome.

On 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2020, the Forum held a **plenary meeting** titled “*The Forum for Sustainable Development: organisations together to promote change*”. This initiative represented the first opportunity for the Forum to provide input to the reflection on the triennial NSDS review process, and to present itself by opening up to **external stakeholders** (European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) and youth engagement networks such as CNG, Youth Network and *AIESEC*) as well as to share its mandate, areas of work, and activities.

### CONFERENCE, POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND POSITION PAPERS

In early 2021, Forum efforts were focused on the contribution to the NSDS revision process, through the implementation of **Position Papers** (one for each Working Group) summarising the recommendations of civil society and non-State actors joining the Sustainable Development Forum. Also, a **Policy Recommendations** document was developed by the Forum Coordination Group on the bases of an internal investigation about the interlinkages between the main sustainable development policies and the priorities and objectives of the 6 Working Groups.

These position papers were at the centre of the discussion of the Preparatory Event of the second Conference *“Together for the future – a sustainable recovery for Italy”* (3-4 March 2021)<sup>19</sup>, introduced by the Minister for Ecological Transition, Roberto Cingolani. All the actors involved in the NSDS implementation and review processes, such as national and territorial institutions, the academic world, Forum members, provided an active contribution to the event. In particular the Forum took the opportunity to report on the requests made by its members to the institutions in the context of the NSDS review process, looking at the sustainable relaunch of the country in compliance with the principle of policy coherence of the main programming tools (including 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy programming), and in coherence with the principles of inter-generational and intra-generational responsibility, under which the involvement of young people plays a crucial role.

The requests gathered in the position papers were shared with the Minister for Ecological Transition and CIPESS (Italy’s inter-ministerial committee for economic planning and sustainable development) in April 2021. The ensuing reflections highly inspired the revision process and contributed to the implementation of the 2022 NSDS.

One of the main issues brought up by the Forum was the “just transition” theme, not only as a technological or environmental element, but also as an opportunity to achieve social objectives especially in terms of rights and dignity of each person, in particular in emergency situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic. From this point of view, the just transition includes the themes of social justice, environmental justice and education (People), with special reference to: the employment and democratic, social and environmental repercussions of innovation processes (Prosperity); the protection of rights and resources of people, territories, natural capital and biodiversity (Planet); the need for a shared and participatory perspective by stakeholders and “rightholders” (Peace).

It was also highlighted the need to strengthen the dialogue and mediation perspective between all social actors and with the institutions by radically changing the prevalent sectoral approach to public policies and by developing social cohesion internally, within the multiple territorial contexts, as well as externally, through cooperation policies, aiming at developing a governance of global systems primarily oriented to build a world of peace. The following table shows some of the Forum's policy recommendations with reference to the NSDS scopes of application.<sup>20</sup>

A comparative reading of the Position Papers also shows the extent to which the Forum supported the need to **link the NSDS with other national policies**. As a matter of fact, some **transversal thematic issues** can be identified across the Forum's Working Groups, outlining a framework within which civil society and non-State actors look at sustainable transition problems and solutions. In particular, the need to assess and monitor public policies with respect to their capacity was emphasized to:

- **Reduce inequalities**, overcome, social, economic and cultural gaps, combat social marginalisation, and strengthen social cohesion and institutions.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.mite.gov.it/pagina/conferenza-preparatoria-3-e-4-marzo-2021>

<sup>20</sup> The Policy Recommendations and Position Papers on Planet, People, Peace, Prosperity, Culture and Youth are included in the Annual Progress Report on the Implementation Status of the UNDP 2020, shared with CIPESS at its 29 April 2021 meeting.

- **Affirm the rights of people and the environment**, and support legal-institutional issues for sustainable transition pertaining to the private and individual sphere as well as to the public and collective sphere also extendible to animal and plant ecosystems.
- **Ensure innovation and collaboration in the establishment of formal, informal and non-formal education and training systems** through innovative forms of education, educational communities, and territorial educational pacts, supporting a change in both individual and collective values.
- **Ensure innovation and collaboration on management of communities and territories**, with innovative forms of governance to achieve sustainable transition involving public, non-governmental and civil society actors in the construction of integrated actions for social welfare;
- **Ensure practical and operational support for models of sustainable transition economies** both on the **demand** side (consumer) and the **supply** side (process innovation and business culture) through acquisition of skills, implementation/use of new technologies, and adherence to appropriate transparency and accountability criteria.

In the course of the 2022 NSDS review process, the Forum transformed for the consultation phases these thematic areas into **proposals for contents and indicators** and supported them within inter-institutional tables. In particular, the Forum proposed indicators on inequalities (gender, race, age), youth, migrants, as well as decent work, and business certification systems. A key role was played by public policy evaluation and the choice of indicators that define the type of society pursued and the selected directions to start sustainable development also in terms of monitoring and programming. The Forum often focussed on the need to link, as much as possible, reflections on the NSDS review to political contingency, thus creating **bridges with high-level planning and programming** (PNRR, Green Deal, etc.) and key players (MAECI, MEF, DIPE, DIPCoE).

Forum Policy Recommendations	Impacts on the NSDS 2022 design
<p><i>"Pursuing a just transition, aware of its social dimensions, and of the need to fight against inequalities; oriented to protecting the rights of people, territories, natural capital, biodiversity; aware that our Country's sustainability is played out in a global context."</i></p>	<p>The response to this recommendation can be found in the very structure of the Strategy, composed of a strategic framework for integrated policy monitoring (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership) and Sustainability Vectors (Policy Coherence, Sustainability Culture, and Participation for Sustainable Development) that represent cross-cutting working trajectories on which to build actions for a just transition.</p>
<p><i>"[...] Policy coherence for sustainable development is central as it links the different SDGs (and Targets) to each other, placing them in relation to the very principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, starting with the "leave no one behind" principle.</i></p>	<p>The response to this recommendation can be found in the Policy Coherence vector, one of the three vectors in the 2022 NSDS review, along with Culture and Participation. In this perspective, valuable progress is made with respect to the Strategy adopted in 2017: coherence is explicitly recognised as an enabling factor. In order to ensure the perspective of civil society and non-State actors in the assessment and monitoring of public policy Coherence, the Forum was formally recognised in the National Action Plan for Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (NAP-PCSD),</p>

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which is an annex and integral part of the 2022 NSDS document.

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*"A radical rethinking process is indeed needed in the approach to public policies, involving all the areas that we generally consider sectoral and separate: industrial, energy, infrastructure, economic and fiscal, health, land management and protection, research policies, policies aimed at building social cohesion within our Country (social policies, "inner areas"). But also, cooperation policies, trade policies, policies oriented towards building a world of peace, policies on global systems governance.*

(...)

*Such a change requires a new perspective, which must be based on dialogue and mediation between all social actors and with institutions. The participation of civil society and other non-State actors is a necessary anchor of a process of change that will inevitably touch the lives of many."*

Besides the reasons mentioned in the Policy Coherence Vector, the response to this recommendation can be found, also in the Participation for Sustainable Development Vector, an indispensable enabling factor to fulfil the legislative mandate that identifies the NSDS as the reference framework for environmental and territorial planning, programming and evaluation processes.

On the occasion of the 2022 NSDS review, the Forum was acknowledged as a key player for dialogue with territorial forums and innovative partnerships for sustainable development.

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The Forum also emphasised that national policies must be linked with their transnational and international dimension for the **promotion of positive peace at global level**. In this framework, the 2022 NSDS and the NAP-PCSD strengthen the Forum's interaction with the *CNCS* supported by MAECI – with a view to integrating the internal and external dimensions of policies – and with **territorial forums** to contribute to defining a shared strategic vision at the different levels.

**Youth involvement** was an extremely relevant line of work for the Forum. Part of the Coordination Group acted as spokesperson; subsequently, several formal/informal youth organisations, young members and/or activists of the Forum's members also joined. A cross-cutting working group was established to collect and adequately represent the position of youth organisations within the various working groups. Young people were called for **harmonisation of those institutional initiatives** that require their involvement and/or key role.

This long ongoing path of transformation aims to enhance civil society's proposals within the NSDS review and implementation processes. The Forum took an active part in the **review process** both through its participation in joint working moments (virtual World Cafés, Workshops, Technical Seminars) with central and territorial administrations, and by working on the NSDS working documents shared for consultation, as well as

in the workshops on **policy coherence for sustainable development**, organized in the context of the project "Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development: mainstreaming SDGs in the Italian Decision Making" proposed by MiTE in 2019 and carried out with the scientific support of the OECD – Directorate

for Public Governance - and within the Structural Reform Support Program (now called Technical Support Initiative) of the European Commission - DG Reform.

In the review process the Forum contributed to the review of the strategic **choices, objectives, and 5 Ps indicators** (Planet, Person, Peace, Prosperity, and Partnership), notably by highlighting major transversal topics concerning inequalities, rights, and economic system transformations required for sustainable transition and by reconciling the internal/national dimension and the external/international dimension of sustainable development. With regard to the area Partnership, the Forum (and specifically Working Group 1 of the *CNCS*) encouraged institutions to engage in a more coherent formulation of the text – increasingly in line with the other Ps – in order to overcome the deceitful dichotomy between the external dimension and the internal one.

The **Sustainability Vectors** were also redesigned through a participatory and inclusive approach drawing upon meetings involving both institutions and the Forum. that made it possible to recognize what was already in place, create connections and synergies, review the objectives, and identify tools associated with each Vector. For example:

- **Policy coherence** as the pivot for NSDS implementation and for an effective achievement of the sustainable development objectives. The dialogue paths activated on this theme made it possible to address the **spill-over effects** (potential negative impacts of public policies in third countries) and the importance of **public policy measurement and evaluation tools** that take into account legal requirements and the creation of a coherent and integrated system, in line with the need to move faster towards the alignment of planning/programming and evaluation tools for policies, plans and programmes.
- Centrality of **sustainability culture**; overcoming educational fragmentation; enhancing polycentrism and educational polymorphism; importance of building effective and institutionally “recognisable” educational networks; developing skills based on a critical and systemic approach to support social change towards sustainability.

This long and intense process of consultation and participation further strengthened the important role of the Forum within the NSDS

The reflections highlighted by the Forum in these contexts were taken into consideration and contributed to the definition of the contents of [Italy Governance Scan for Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development](#) and, based on it, to the NAP-PCSD, shared with the Forum Coordination Group and Working Groups.

## **FOCUS – THE ROLE OF THE FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN NSDS AND NAP-PCSD**

The Forum is recognised as a key actor of the NSDS and operates within the reference strategic framework together with central and territorial administrations. Furthermore, the importance of stable interaction with the CNCS through Working Group 1 is recognised in order to ensure coherence between the internal and external dimensions of sustainable development. As to NSDS implementation, in the coming years the Forum:

- will participate in the inter-institutional dialogue on policy coherence and in building the tools for assessment and monitoring as defined in the NAP-PCSD (Coherence Matrices and Fiches, Sustainability Labs, Sustainability dashboard);
- will contribute to the implementation of the Vector of sustainability 2 “culture for sustainable development” and its components (education, training, information, communication), recognising their transformative power and the key role of civil society;
- will contribute to creating innovative partnerships for sustainable development that bring together institutions, universities, research centers, education system and business;
- will collaborate with territories and territorial administrations to foster participation in coherence with the Vector of sustainability 3 “Participation for sustainable development” and on the basis of the experiments and collaboration between MiTE and DFP on Open Government;
- will organise the Sustainable Development Conference with MiTE.

## 5.1 Regulation review and experimentation of new modes of participation

The interactive and multistakeholder review process and the high number of different actors involved, in addition to the Forum, made it essential to use different engagement tools aimed at co-constructing “contents” and experimenting different ways of interaction and participation. In some cases, actual experiments were performed to innovate the tools used by the Forum actors, also in view of implementing the third Sustainability Vector expressly dedicated to participation.

The paths undertaken therefore had the dual purpose of implementing the Forum's “operativeness” (i.e., its procedural and decision-making capacity) and strengthening its “functionality” in supporting the NSDS implementation and review processes.

On the “operational” side, the work focussed on the redefinition of tools to support and innovate the dynamics of meeting, debating and participation among the Forum's members. A key organisational step involved **amendments to the Forum Regulation** – drafted through plenary meetings, an online questionnaire, and Coordination Group discussions. The stakeholder engagement questionnaire aimed to identify: knowledge of NSDS contents; perception of one's own role as a Forum actor participating in the review process, and highlighting issues and potentials at working group/coordination group level; and the grounds of the new Forum Regulation.

On these bases, a Regulation was drafted to **consolidate the Forum's spaces of autonomy** and allow members to gradually assess best ways for internal interaction, with the organisational and operational support of MiTE and of the universities involved. In addition, the Regulation will be annexed to the new NSDS22, showing that the Forum has assumed a central role in the whole NSDS implementation and review process.

The Forum's logo was also created as a sign of identity of this space of dialogue.

In terms of “functionality”, the central themes were to strengthen the Forum as a place for:

- Civil society participation and consultation on sustainable development;
- Development of a culture of sustainability capable of generating the conditions enabling the achievement of the sustainable development goals;
- Fostering a Multi-actor dialogue – also with and between institutions – aimed at achieving public policy coherence on sustainable development.

With a view to an integrated process aimed at strengthening the National Forum for Sustainable Development in its internal dimension (multistakeholder platform) and external dimension (meeting place of public policies with social energy), MiTE, supports the activities of the Forum (in coherence with the CIPE Resolution 108/2017) and to this aim launched a pilot project to promote the creation of a Forum working space on the ParteciPA<sup>21</sup> open-source platform in collaboration with the Department of Public Function (*DFP*) of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. Such initiative is anchored within the **Fifth National Action Plan for Open Government 2022-2023**, in the broader framework of the

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<sup>21</sup> ParteciPA is an open source consultation platform to experiment with innovative OpenGov models. Formez PA supports the DFP in its implementation.

**Open Government Partnership (OGP)** – Italy has been participating since 2011 to promote open government policies at national level.

The project supports the contribution of the Forum to the NSDS review Process and to the VNR process through the participated construction of a **Position Paper** that provide recommendations for the implementation of the 2022NSDS in the coming years.

In this framework, the Forum's “operativeness” and “functionality” are indissolubly interwoven, due to the need for the Position Paper to represent the accomplished expression of civil society and non-State actors’ demands on sustainability, as well as the result of a broad, participated, complex and, above all, shared work.

To such end, it was decided that the Position Paper could be developed through an experimental participation model – testing the use of PARTECIPA platform as a space for the Forum’s empowerment.

The initiative aimed at creating a space to **systematise the dynamics of civil society's participation** in the NSDS implementation and review paths, fostering multi-actor dialogue for stakeholder consultation, and defining instruments of institutional dialogue, co-designing of initiatives and spaces for listening, debate and accountability. In addition, *DFP* collaboration ensures that the dialogue between institutions and non-State actors takes place under the **Open Government** principles, such as transparency and support for civic participation to improve the quality of public decision making and the democratic life of communities. The whole space is the result of a **co-design project** relying on the synergic work of Forum representatives, as well as MiTE, supported by *DFP* and *Formez PA*.

In addition to the Assembly, two further transversal processes were built to support the activities of the whole Forum: **the Coordination Group space; and the Participatory space.**

The purpose of the Coordination Group is to foster synergic meeting of ideas, positions and proposals from the various Working Groups components. It will thus be possible to activate internal exchange and debate processes, return documents on consultation and/or Forum positioning processes, and put forward proposals consistently with the Forum Regulation.

The Participatory Space, on the other hand, is intended to guarantee these prerequisites, facilitating exchange, promotion and awareness among the several Working Groups and components of the Forum, and ultimately favouring a common shared path.

In addition to demonstrating the functionality of “ParteciPA” and of the new participatory models, the results of the pilot project – hence the Position Paper attached to this VNR – reaffirm the key role played by the Forum in supporting the NSDS implementation and review processes through a two-way approach. On the one hand, participation fosters a sustainability culture that is essential to achieve the established objectives; on the other hand – through a participatory model debate based on listening, consultation and co-designing – it enables intercepting “new” issues, instances and needs to outline the next sustainable development challenges in the Country.

This element is of major importance, primarily as the NSDS is subject to three-year review and annual reporting. Only through an open debate with all the relevant actors – institutions, civil society, and private subjects – is it possible to outline the next sustainable development objectives.



### 5.3 Forum's Position Paper for Italy's VNR 2022

As a result of the pilot actions carried out by DFP and MiTE, the present position paper was developed and shared by the Forum for Sustainable Development and the CNCS focusing on the same three thematic areas of the VNR, adding value to both the perspective and the vision enshrined in this document.

#### **Introductory and summary remarks**

- 1.1** It is important to preserve and increasingly structure the National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) as a space for dialogue between institutions and non-State actors and participatory policy making between institutions and non-State actors, whether profit or not-for-profit bodies that act to empower the social rights of the most vulnerable social groups.
- 1.2** As per Articles 9 and 41 of the Italian Constitution as amended in 2022, environment, biodiversity, natural ecosystems and health are now interlinked "assets" to be protected and promoted as part of the national heritage and the Italian natural, social and cultural capital to be protected. The economic objectives of private initiatives must be consistent with the objective of safeguarding social rights and the environmental equilibrium of flora and fauna. This is the outcome of a longstanding struggle and advocacy work led by *ASVIS* and other non-State actors' coalitions.
- 1.3** Widespread and effective awareness-raising activity on the 2030 Agenda, culminating in the Sustainable Development Festival (2,789 events over 4 years), organised by several hundred organisations, under *ASVIS* lead.
- 1.4** We acknowledge a general issue of fragmentation in integrating sustainability concerns in general policy making both within a horizontal and a vertical perspective. Such challenges become more urging in the current context of the war in Ukraine and other ongoing conflicts, and should be addressed in a consistent way and in structural terms. Within this perspective, it is important to enhance the role of Italy and the European Union in reframing the method of multilateralism notably with regard to an urgent structural reform of the United Nations to put at the heart of human rights, solidarity, and a notion of international cooperation as a means of human development.

#### **Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development: a challenge for Italy's institutional system**

- 2.1** The PCSD is a rising priority in policy making. In order to develop the transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda, it needs to be understood not only in terms of interaction between objectives and targets, but also in terms of coherence with the principles of the Agenda, and in terms of coherence between internal and external agendas.
- 2.2** Specific attention in enhancing the PCSD should be paid and further developed by introducing and/or improving gender mainstreaming in policies and monitoring their gender impact.
- 2.3** The lack of integration between the internal and external dimensions of the sustainable development agenda poses issues. The 'Partnership' section of the expected Sustainable Development Strategy follows a different outline from that of the other sections, exclusively focused on International Development Cooperation.

It is still unclear where the dialogue on the Partnership issues beyond development cooperation should take place, including all issues related to migration, defense, trade and foreign investment policies (among others). Consultation on the Partnership section took place within the working group on planning of the mentioned National Council for Development Cooperation (*CNSC*); the working group operating on the 2030 Agenda then prioritised the PCSD.

- 2.4** Informing the policy-making process in a perspective of coherence requires a complex arrangement in institutional terms. We welcome the forthcoming adoption of the Plan for the PCSD. The Plan has been the object of analysis and reflection through an open consultation process.
- 2.5** Yet, some aspects of the institutional design on PCSD governance still require refinement, in order to become effective in contributing to overall policy making and aligning with the 2030 Agenda.
- 2.6** The system of indicators used to monitor advancements in terms of sustainability still represents a challenge. Indicators are often conceived as a purely technical and neutral element: there is a strong need for discussing “what” we are measuring, and to what extent we need develop alternative metrics. In this perspective, it appears necessary to develop the presence of Non-State Actors and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs/NSAs) in those technical instances where indicators are decided upon and approved, in order to identify a more appropriate set of indicators for measuring the stated objectives.
- 2.7** Major practical concern in terms of PCSD focuses on how the most fragile and vulnerable population (those who are hit the hardest and pay the highest costs) will be accompanied through the ecological and digital transitions. This should include specific awareness-raising provisions and local level initiatives that may allow for a gradual approach and familiarity to new systems.
- 2.8** In terms of current policy challenges, there is an important gap to be filled in how sustainable development is integrated into the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (Italy’s *PNRR*). No meaningful process of participation was established in view of its elaboration; its formulation only very weakly expresses the need for alignment to the 2030 Agenda principles and objectives; its monitoring is still very limited due to absence of data and accountability, which compromise proper evaluation processes.
- 2.9** Particularly in view of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan implementation phase, it is important to strengthen analysis and action on coherence at the local and regional levels with the participation of regional forums and town assemblies; and more in general all provisions to foster active citizenship. Participation is key in making policies really responsive to communities’ needs.
- 2.10** Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development needs be brought at a more “concrete” level in establishing policy making where the different elements of the 2030 Agenda (economic, social, environmental) are integrated since the earliest phase of policy foresight and conception.

## **The 2030 Agenda and the localising process: the role of territories and local authorities**

- 3.1** Policy integration for sustainability is a challenge integrating the different levels of policy making, linking the concerns arising at local level with those emerging at national and supra-national levels. Metropolitan areas may represent a crucial crossroad as a sharing, innovation and experimentation arena, and international decentralised cooperation ground experiences may be regarded as inspiring sustainable practices.
- 3.2** It is important to take sustainability concerns to a better degree of integration between the environmental level needs and requirements, on one side, and social level issues, on the other, by conceiving integrated policies that encompass both the dimensions since the very beginning, and generate shared measures that value civic commitment.
- 3.3** The territorial dimension is the level at which the integrated approach to sustainable development can be effectively designed and implemented. This includes small, medium and metropolitan areas, as well as marginalised and sparsely populated areas.
- 3.4** Governance arrangements and planning/programming measures for sustainable development should be designed at all these levels and notably as to the metropolitan dimension, in which the Metropolitan Sustainable Development Agenda is an important tool for policy integration.
- 3.5** Fostering an adequate and homogeneous level of participation at local level is an important element to be developed; these processes should include non-formal actors and groups, which are active at grass-roots levels.
- 3.6** Improving the relations between local forums and national forum, with bottom-up mechanisms, as well as virtual and physical channels of communication, which will allow introducing attention points from the “grass-roots” to the national level.
- 3.7** Deepening the involvement and support of “sustainability makers” within regional and metropolitan forums.

## **The participation of Non-State Actors and Civil Society Organisations: spaces, effectiveness, perspectives**

- 4.1** The Forum for Sustainable Development is the arena that promotes the participation of Non-State Actors and Civil Society (associations, cooperatives, NGOs and not-for-profit organisations, charities and foundations, as well as small, medium and large enterprises) to the processes of assessment, review and reformulation of the National Sustainable Development Strategy. The different legal status of the members has produced positive exchanges of ideas and views. However, in order to improve the outreach of the National Strategy, some discontinuities need be addressed.

- 4.2** The Forum delivered relevant contributions to the Strategy in terms of policy recommendations. The working groups of the Forum produced five Positions Papers, which suggested specific attention points and cross-cutting topics addressing the new challenges for the Strategy. In order to make actors' engagement more effective, the Forum's role needs to scale up in the "ladders of participation" towards "empowerment".
- 4.3** The Forum as a whole, within its different working groups, strongly argues in favour of the need of pursuing a "just" transition that must be: aware of its social dimensions and of the need to fight against inequalities; oriented towards the protection of people's rights, territories, natural capital, biodiversity; aware that our Country's sustainability is played out in a global context.
- 4.4** The participants in the Forum also underlined some aspects to be improved, notably referred to: networking (more opportunities to build relations and exchange knowledge); institutional dialogue (exchanges with national, regional and local institutions); relevance of creating an enabling network and promoting productive dialogues; Forum outreach (enhancing the capacity to involve participants to a wider extent in dissemination initiatives) and its capacity to become a credible reference point for local actors and grass-roots initiatives.
- 4.5** We therefore suggest strengthening the central coordination group to support the Forum in networking and dissemination activities. These activities will be co-designed by the Forum components and will be managed by the coordination group.
- 4.6** The participation of Non-State Actors and Civil Society in the Forum for Sustainable Development requires specific arrangements and mechanisms; the key issue concerns participation in policy-making, implementation, monitoring, and assessment activities. To have those voices actually heard, the above needs be operationalised through specific institutional and dialogue arrangements. Under this perspective, the Forum should be conceived as a tool to ensure wider empowerment of societal actors in sustainable development pathways, as well as to make the Strategy implementation process more accountable.
- 4.7** We also see the opportunity for building communication initiatives at local level, jointly prepared by regional and national Forums' members; and designing specific initiatives to create and/or strengthen communication channels between Forum's members and sustainability activists (especially youth organisations) at local level, in line with "open innovation" approaches, which can feed synergies among different perspectives. The same should be pursued in strengthening the Forum relations with educational entities and training agencies to improve the capacity to spread the sustainability culture. Also, online communities need be considered.
- 4.8** A perspective for of Non-State Actors and Civil Society participation should involve a clear concern for participation of young generations, and possible contribution of relevant/non-formal actors, besides the needed attention for formally represented actors and stakeholders.

