

## **Consultation with civil society and national human rights institutions**

**14/06/2022**

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The Scottish Human Rights Commission was established by the Scottish Commission for Human Rights Act 2006, and formed in 2008. The Commission is the National Human Rights Institution for Scotland and is independent of the Scottish Government and Parliament in the exercise of its functions. The Commission has a general duty to promote human rights and a series of specific powers to protect human rights for everyone in Scotland.

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**Qu.3 In your view, is progress being made to secure more meaningful and active participation of civil society and other stakeholders in SDG national level action (design, implementation and reporting)? Please share examples of promising practices as well as lessons learned and remaining challenges.**

In Scotland, progress is being made to secure more meaningful and active participation of civil society and other stakeholders in SDG national level action. The action is primarily driven by civil society through the SDG Network Scotland (see Example of practice below) and although initially supported with some secretariat funding from the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), the Network is unfunded. As such, progress of the Network is limited to the good will and support provided by its members/organisations. This undoubtedly limits the scope of potential activity and effectiveness of the Network.

**Example of practice**

In July 2015, Scotland's First Minister pledged that Scotland would lead the way to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals expressing a desire for Scotland to "provide international leadership on reducing inequality across the globe".

The [SDG Network Scotland](#) was formed in 2017, with the Scottish Human Rights Commission becoming a member in 2018 (and a Steering Group member in 2020). The Network is an unfunded coalition that is built on an active membership of over 600 people and organisations including charities, universities, schools, public sector bodies, and businesses. The Network was formed out of a demand to enhance working together and facilitating partnerships across Scotland and beyond. The Network's objectives are to build awareness with and engagement on the SDGs across civil society and with business and government. Where possible, it also tries to support the implementation of the SDGs in Scotland and aims to ensure that the voice of those committed to sustainability is heard by key decision makers.

The Network has played and continues to play an essential role in offering perspectives, challenge and support to realise the ambition of the Global Goals in Scotland. It provides a unique and open space for anyone wanting to play their part, experimenting with open government innovations to accelerate progress on the SDGs in a transparent and participative way.

In 2018, the Network wrote an open letter to the First Minister, Scottish Parliament and Local Authorities in 2018, which was supported by almost 100 organisations. The letter indicated the level of concern that existed with Scotland's commitment to Agenda 2030 since adopting the Goals in 2015. It presented a much-needed opening for civil society, business and government to come together to make sure that actions are taken in Scotland to achieve the SDGs.

The SDG Network along with the Scottish Government then launched a call for evidence on Scotland's progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which is seeking the views of people and organisations across Scotland to feed into the [UK Voluntary National Review](#) and Scottish Supplementary Review.

In response, the First Minister welcomed the work of SDG Network Scotland in 'bringing together organisations and civil society to raise awareness and initiate action' and committed the Scottish Government to work together with the network 'to ensure Scotland's journey to achieving the 2030 goals is as productive as possible.'

The limited engagement process undertaken by the UK Government failed to take advantage of the UK VNR by not building an inclusive and participative process that could drive engagement and action. Limited opportunities were available for the voice of devolved nations, and indeed non-governmental stakeholders, to come through. In response to this, SDG Network Scotland secured a commitment from the Scottish Government to undertake a full review, independent of the UK VNR, of Scotland's progress across all 17 goals in the shape of the Scottish Supplementary Review. The Scottish Government joined the network's working group in September 2018. The government worked collaboratively with SDG Network Scotland to deliver a three-week evidence gathering period and two subsequent opportunities for public comments on drafts.

We welcomed the transparent, collaborative and innovative approach taken by the Scottish Government in developing the [Supplementary Review](#), Scotland and the SDGs: A national review to drive action.

The process was however, not without challenge. In the later stages of development of the report, there was concern that the publication of the final review, due to be published in 2019, was being continually delayed and that the report remained in draft form at the start of 2020. The strength and established respect behind the Network, however, enabled direct communication with the relevant Parliamentary Minister who was then able to facilitate the publication of the report. Whilst the Network has now re-established a good working relationship with the Scottish Government – this process did reveal the difficulties of joint working.

In tandem with the Supplementary Review – members of the network also supported the production of an additional publication to ensure progress and concerns were documented. The UWS-Oxfam Partnership published their report [On Target for 2030? An independent snapshot review of Scotland's progress against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#) on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. It combines contributions for 22 Civil Society Organisations and provides additional evidence to the SDG Network's Scottish Supplementary Review.

**Qu4. Is there any other information on integrated approaches to achieve the SDGs and the protection and promotion of human rights that you would like to share with us? Have you issued any recent publications on the issue that you would like to draw our attention to?**

Since 2015 the Commission has actively engaged with Government and civil society in embedding a focus on SDGs, this has included the following Innovation practice:

- High level political commitment to SDG agenda
- A National Action Plan on Human Rights drawing express linkages with SDGs
- Strong working level relationships between the NHRI and Government National Monitoring Framework strongly connected to SDGs and with an express human rights outcome
- Drawing together of evidence from treaty body reviews and UPR to support data gathering
- NHRI sustained engagement with civil society to maintain focus on human rights and the SDGs (see answer to Qu. 3)
- Embedding consideration of SDGs in NHRI strategic planning and cross cutting operations such as policy and legislative consultation submissions
- Sharing lessons with broader range of international stakeholders

**National Measurement & Data –Working with Government**

From 2015 the Commission has worked to ensure that the SDGs were reflected within the measurement framework for Scotland’s First National Action Plan for Human Rights (SNAP), and the timescale (2013 to 2030) and content of SNAP’s long term 2030 Outcomes were consciously influenced by the SDG Agenda. One of those outcomes focuses on embedding human rights within national measurement frameworks. Therefore, following the Scottish Government’s commitment to the SDG Agenda, the Commission, supported the Government to embed human rights and reflect their SDG obligations within their own [National Performance Framework \(NPF\)](#) (a framework with targets, outcomes and indicators that measure national progress across a wide range of areas). To facilitate this, the Commission developed a small working group involving the Scottish Government leads for the SDGs, National Performance Framework and Human Rights. The work was brought within the Scottish Government’s [Open Government Partnership](#) Action Plan (Action 2).

To support this work the Commission undertook a ‘gap analysis’ of the indicators and data used to measure progress in Scotland and compared this with the SDG Global indicator set in order to identify the gaps between the two measurement frameworks. The revised National Outcomes (and associated indicators) were published in June 2018. These National Outcomes make linkage between the outcomes and the relevant SDGs and there is also now an outcome on human rights: *We Respect*,

*Protect and Fulfil Human Rights and Live Free from Discrimination.* However, the gap analysis revealed significant gaps in the ability to measure national progress towards the SDGs using only the NPF. The alignment between the SDGs and the NPF whilst a first step, is not very close and varies by Goal. Consideration of the NPF as the ‘local mechanism’ for delivering on the SDGs requires closer alignment in the areas where this is weak (for example, gender equality). There is a legal obligation to review the Outcomes every five years (due 2023) and discussions with the Government on how this should be approached, to improve SDG and human rights integration are ongoing. The Network sits on a working group with the Scottish Government to develop this process.

Specifically in relation to data collection, during each UN treaty body review (including UPR) the Commission draws together its evidence with reference to relevant SDGs. This cumulative collation of data will provide a gradual evidence base of SDG relevant material available to draw on.

### **National Action Plan for Human Rights**

SNAP reached the end of its first four year cycle in 2017 and since then has undergone a process of external evaluation as well as a participatory evidence gathering review to determine future priorities and action. As part of this evidence review, the Commission performed a triangulation analysis of the evidence of issues gathered through the participation process, with all outstanding conclusions and recommendations from all UN Treaty Bodies (including the UPR process), and the SDG Goals & Targets. This was done to ensure that the next iteration of SNAP (currently under development and due to be published December 2022) is grounded in the SDG agenda. One action that is currently under discussion is the development of an online tracker that will allow for Scottish progress on devolved issues within UN Treaty Body recommendations (including UPR), the SDGs and SNAP Outcomes to be monitored.

### **NHRI work**

In addition to this work related to SNAP and the NPF itself, the Commission will also be considering the SDG Goals & Targets within future strategic & operational planning in years to come. This will support planned future work by the Commission to support rights holders, civil society groups, and government to draw direct links between SDGs and international human rights obligations through human rights treaty reporting and parallel reporting processes. See our most recent UPR Submission – specifically Annex 2: SDG review of thematic issues <https://www.scottishhumanrights.com/media/2303/shrc-submission-upr-2022-vfinal.pdf>

Over the last six years, the Commission has also systematically included, where relevant, reference to the SDGs within its policy and legislative consultation submissions to Government and Parliament. For example in our submissions on [A New Future For Social Security Social Security in Scotland](#) in 2016; the [Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Bill](#) in 2017; on [guidance on engaging communities in decisions relating to land](#) in 2018; [Human Rights and Economic Recovery: Submission to Advisory Group on Economic Recovery](#) and [The Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee Submission on Green recovery](#) (both 2020).

### **Knowledge exchange**

The Commission has also shared good practice from its work on SDGs with the wider international human rights and SDG communities – in order to encourage a better understanding of the relevance of human rights within the SDG agenda and vice versa. This engagement has included producing or contributing to a range of publications, including Blog posts, ENNHRI and GANHRI publications, and publications by the Danish Institute for Human Rights. It has also included presentations at a range of knowledge exchange opportunities, including presentations for the SDG Global Alliance, ENNHRI & ANNHRI and the CoE.

A few recent examples:

- Contributing to the Danish Institute Publication – Human Rights and Data (2017): <https://www.humanrights.dk/publications/human-rights-data>
- Scottish Human Rights Commission’s Briefing on the Sustainable Development Goals July 2019 (Submission to the VNR 2019) [http://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2021/2392221\\_Scottish\\_Human\\_Rights\\_Commission.pdf](http://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2021/2392221_Scottish_Human_Rights_Commission.pdf)
- Contributing to the Danish Institute Publication – Engaging with the Voluntary National Review of 2030 Agenda Progress to Promote Human Rights: a guide for NHRIs (2021) [https://www.humanrights.dk/sites/humanrights.dk/files/media/document/ENGuideNHRIEngagementWithVNRs\\_0.pdf](https://www.humanrights.dk/sites/humanrights.dk/files/media/document/ENGuideNHRIEngagementWithVNRs_0.pdf)
- Case study example - *linking human rights and SDG performance and monitoring frameworks in Scotland*, (2022) Indicators and Data for Human Rights and Sustainable Development: A guide for NHRIs - [https://www.humanrights.dk/sites/humanrights.dk/files/media/document/GuideOnNHRIEngagementWithSDGdataNSOs\\_EN\\_accessible.pdf](https://www.humanrights.dk/sites/humanrights.dk/files/media/document/GuideOnNHRIEngagementWithSDGdataNSOs_EN_accessible.pdf) .

In 2019 the Scottish Government agreed to participate in a knowledge exchange process coordinated by the Commission. This meeting drew on the expertise of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ human rights indicator specialist and the Danish Institute for Human Rights, to further the government’s understanding of the connections and to lay the groundwork to explore the feasibility of adopting a HRBA to the next review of the National Outcomes.

Most recently (2021-22) we worked with DIHR and ENNHRI to develop a self-directed online course on Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: What role for NHRIs in the UNECE Region.

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