



Voluntary Local Reviews – Crafting the Process: Cities talk to each other

UNECE, Global Cities Hub,
Swiss Confederation & Ville de
Genève



PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 7 October 2025,
18:00–22:00, CET
Villa Rigot, 9 Av. de la Paix, Geneva

In person only upon invitation

Language: English

1. Preparing and developing a Voluntary Local Review (VLR)

Local and regional governments increasingly recognize the importance of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) as a key tool to guide local development and localize the 2030 Agenda. Consequently, the UN Forum of Mayors dedicated an entire thematic session to the subject this year and will continue to focus on this subject as the Forum develops into a UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) for Cities.

To best prepare a Voluntary Local Reviews, local and regional governments might relate to two sources of inspiration:

- **Horizontal comparison (city-to-city, region-to-region):**
VLRs enable municipalities to compare progress, methodologies, and solutions with peers across borders. They foster peer learning and innovation, as cities often face similar urban challenges (mobility, housing, energy, climate resilience). They strengthen networks of solidarity and advocacy, empowering local governments to influence global debates collectively.
- **Vertical complementarity (local-to-national):**
VLRs complement voluntary national reviews (VNRs) by ensuring that local perspectives are integrated into national reporting, avoiding gaps between national strategies and local realities. They offer evidence and data that national governments can use to strengthen the credibility of their VNRs. They create synergies and accountability between levels of government, promoting policy coherence and joint ownership of SDG progress.

The process of preparing for a VLR is complex and crucial. The present side-event will complement the Forum of Mayor's plenary session by giving the voice to those cities and regions whose VLRs are being prepared.

Preparing a VLR is political and strategic:

- How to convince the city/region administration to move forward with a VLR? How to get the population's support?
- How to define local priorities and link them with national plans and Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)?
- How to structure the process internally (political leadership, technical teams, stakeholder engagement)?
- How to collect and manage data and ensure data reliability?
- How to anticipate the challenges and critical points (capacity, financing, coherence, political buy-in)?
- How to best use the VLR: dialogue with residents, central government, fundraising ?
- How to select /cooperate with international partners (UN & others)?

2. How and where to present the VLR?

While VLRs aim primarily to assess and report on sustainable local development, the opportunity to present the VLRs at international platforms is more than symbolic: it is a chance to demonstrate leadership, attract partners and financing, and shape global narratives about sustainable urban development.

Each July in New York, the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) serves as the global platform where UN Member States present their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), showcasing progress towards the SDGs at the national level. In recent years, local and regional governments have increasingly sought to bring their voices to the HLPF through VLRs, positioning themselves as key actors in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Nonetheless, the HLPF is not designed for subnational governments participation and the UN Forum of Mayors ambition to fill this gap.

3. Objectives of the side event

- Explore the political and strategic choices local governments must make when embarking on a VLR process.
- Discuss process design: who should be involved, at what stage, and under whose leadership.
- Share reflections on partnerships: choosing data providers, academic institutions, NGOs, and financing partners.
- Address critical points and pitfalls: coordination with national governments, resource constraints, risk of fragmentation.
- Offer guidance on how and where to present a VLR for a maximum impact (local councils, international organizations, peer networks).
- Reflect on the links between VLRs and VNRs, and on how local governments can connect to national reporting mechanisms.
- Learn about global platforms of reporting, including the HLPF and the UN Forum of Mayors.

18:00 - 18:20 **Welcome Drink**

18:20 - 18:30 **Opening Remarks**

H.E. Markus Reubi, Delegate of the Swiss Confédération to Agenda 2030

H.E. Akram Sa'ud Harahsheh, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Jordan

Panel Discussion

18:30-19:30 *From Political Decision to Implementation: "crafting" a VLR*

Speakers:

Ms. Tatiana Ibrahimovitch, Project Coordinator of City of Lugano, Switzerland

Mr. Ziad Rihani, Deputy Mayor of Amman, Jordan

Ms. Arlene B. Arcillas, Mayor of Santa Rosa, Philippines

Mr. Mustafa Bozbey, Mayor of Bursa, Türkiye

Ms. Chilando Chitangala, Mayor of Lusaka, Zambia

Ms. Lucila Garcia, Director of the Agency for Cooperation, Investment, and Foreign Trade (ACICE), Municipality of the City of Santa Fe, Argentina

Respondent:

Mr. Yves Zimmerman, 2030 Agenda Project Manager of Strasbourg, France

19:30 - 19:55 **Interactive exchange**
Q&A

19:55 - 20:00 **Closing Remarks**

20:00 - 21:30 **Dinner Reception**