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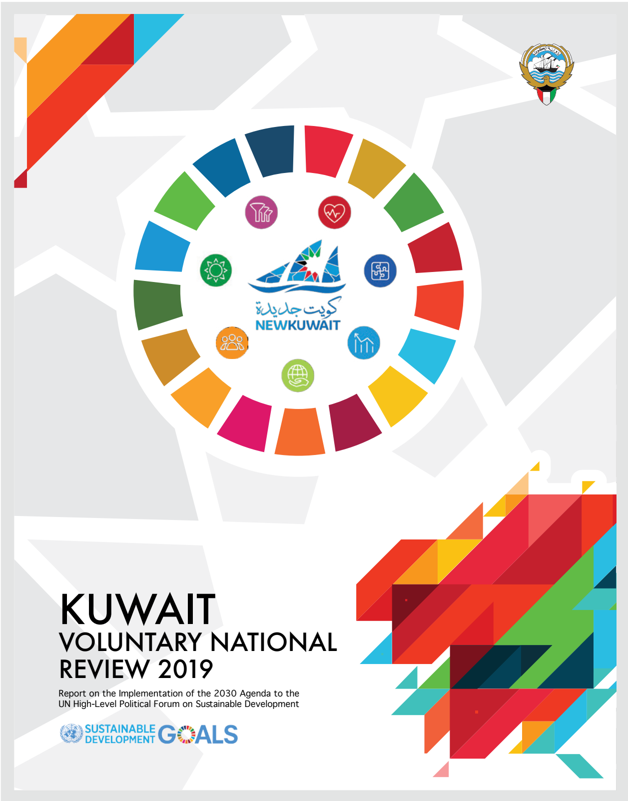
Sustainable Development Goals Tracker

KUWAIT 2023

Voluntary National Review



Kuwait VNR 2019
Report

Kuwait VNR 2023
Report

DOI: 10.47556/R.UN-VNRS2026.24

Kuwait
2023
Voluntary National Review (VNR)

VNRs Submitted: 2 (50%) 2023, 2019

SDGs Achieved: 0 (0%)

SDGs On-Track: 2 (12%) 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; 6 Clean Water and Sanitation

SDGs Off-Track: 15 (88%) 1 No Poverty; 2 Zero Hunger; 3 Good Health and Well-Being; 4 Quality Education; 5 Gender Equality; 7 Affordable and Clean Energy; 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth; 10 Reduced Inequalities; 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities; 12 Responsible Consumption and Production; 13 Climate Action; 14 Life Below Water; 15 Life on Land; 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; 17 Partnerships for the Goals

SDGs No Progress: 0 (0%)

Introduction

The State of Kuwait's 2023 Voluntary National Review (VNR) is its second assessment of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) since 2019. Guided by the "*New Kuwait 2035*" vision, all **17 SDGs** have been integrated into national planning, aligning each pillar with specific SDG clusters. The review highlights achievements in education, healthcare, food security, social protection, gender equality, and climate action, including carbon neutrality targets for 2050–2060. Strong institutions, such as the National Sustainable Development Committee (NSDC), the National Observatory for Sustainable Development (NOSD), and the State Audit Bureau (SAB), ensure oversight, data-driven policy, and financial integrity. Despite COVID-19 disruptions, Kuwait showed resilience through digital transformation, reskilling, and international support. Completed and ongoing projects span economic diversification, private sector growth, governance, infrastructure, environmental sustainability, health, and global engagement, with overall SDGs achievement projected to rise from 60.5 in 2021 to 61.3 by 2030 **(United Nations, 2023a; United Nations, 2023b)**.

VNR Framework Approach to assess Kuwait's Progress Towards the 2030 Agenda

A **VNR** is a self-assessment process through which the United Nations (UN) Member States review and report on their progress in implementing the **2030 Agenda** for Sustainable Development and its **17 SDGs**. These reviews are voluntary, country-led, and inclusive, allowing each nation to share experiences, identify challenges, and highlight best practices.

VNRs are essential because they promote accountability and transparency in the implementation of the SDGs, allowing countries to demonstrate their commitment and progress openly. They help governments track progress, identify gaps, and strengthen policies, ensuring that national development strategies remain aligned with the **2030 Agenda**. Moreover, VNRs facilitate knowledge sharing among nations by enabling the exchange of experiences, innovations, and lessons learned. They also encourage multi-stakeholder participation, bringing together government institutions, civil society, the private sector, and academia in a collaborative effort to advance sustainable development. Finally, the VNRs serve as the foundation for the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) reviews, providing evidence-based insights that guide global discussions on accelerating progress towards achieving the SDGs.

Objectives of VNRs

- Assess a country's progress towards achieving the SDGs.
- Identify key challenges and barriers to implementation.
- Share lessons learned and innovative approaches.
- Mobilise support, partnerships, and policy coherence for sustainable development.

Methodology to Measure VNRs Progress

VNRs assess development performance using quantitative and qualitative data, aligning national priorities with SDGs targets. Countries use available indicators and national statistics to evaluate whether they are:

- Achieved, on-track, moderately off-track, seriously off-track or no progress.
- Facing data gaps or methodological challenges.

Due to incomplete or inconsistent data, some assessments rely on proxy indicators or qualitative descriptions of progress. Each SDG is rated on a **0–5 scale** to measure Kuwait's progress toward the **2030 Agenda**.

0 – No Progress: No measurable progress or data available.
1 – Severely Off-Track: Very little advancement; major gaps persist.
2 – Off-Track: Limited progress with minimal improvement.
3 – Moderately Off-Track: Some progress achieved, but key challenges remain.
4 – On-Track: Noticeable progress made; close to achieving the target.
5 – Achieved: Goal fully met with sustained performance and monitoring in place.

This scale helps to quantify Kuwait's SDGs performance, showing where strong progress exists and where further policy actions are needed. VNRs are vital tools for evaluating and accelerating progress towards the **2030 Agenda**. They enable countries to reflect on achievements, recognise shortcomings, and strengthen collective action for a more sustainable and equitable world.

Explanation of Analysis (Applied to Kuwait SDG Report)

This analysis applies the *VNR framework* to Kuwait's SDG Report. Initially, the report was processed using an AI tool to extract, summarise, and categorise data related to the **17 SDGs**. The AI provided preliminary insights into Kuwait's progress, challenges, and measurable indicators. Following the AI review, the information was cross-verified by two independent human experts to ensure factual accuracy, contextual relevance, and alignment with the official UN SDG indicators. This validation step strengthened the reliability of the data interpretation.

Finally, a team of SDG experts conducted an in-depth qualitative and quantitative analysis to identify key challenges, potential solutions, and policy-level recommendations. The comprehensive approach, integrating AI-driven insights with expert validation, provides a balanced, evidence-based assessment of Kuwait's progress towards achieving economic growth, highlighting strategic areas for improvement, innovation, and sustainability.

Overall Progress

Table 1 presents Kuwait's progress across the **17 SDGs**, with ratings assigned to each goal based on the report's findings. The ratings reflect the extent of progress made, highlight areas where challenges have been addressed, and identify those that remain unresolved.

Table 1. SDG Progress Scoring

1 NO POVERTY

Score: 3	
Justification	- Kuwait has a long-standing commitment to welfare and social protection, deeply rooted in the 1960 Constitution, which enshrined the principle of wellbeing for all. - The State's social welfare system aims to promote social justice, cohesion, and inclusiveness by supporting vulnerable groups, including children, youth, women, the elderly, families, and persons with disabilities. - These efforts are designed to enhance overall wellbeing and ensure social and economic productivity for all segments of society.
Challenges	- Maintaining equitable access to welfare benefits between nationals and non-nationals. - Ensuring efficiency and sustainability in social protection funding amid economic diversification efforts. - Strengthening coordination among agencies for integrated poverty data and service delivery.
Progress/ Solutions	- The Ministry of Social Affairs adopted a universal insurance system that provides social development and care, electronically linked with state agencies responsible for poverty eradication. - According to the 2021 National Household Income Survey, the average monthly expenditure reached KWD 602 for Kuwaiti nationals and KWD 267 for non-nationals, equivalent to USD 66 and USD 29 per day, respectively. These figures place Kuwait well above the global poverty line. - Furthermore, the Government allocates a proportion of its Gross National Income (GNI) directly to the national Poverty Reduction Programme, reflecting sustained policy commitment and resource mobilisation.

Unsolved Challenges	- Lack of updated public data on the exact proportion of GNI allocated to poverty reduction programmes. - Continued reliance on state-funded welfare mechanisms rather than empowerment-based or employment-linked approaches. - Limited digital integration and monitoring across social welfare institutions to assess long-term impact.

Score : 3	
Justification	- Kuwait has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to food security and social welfare, ensuring that all residents have access to adequate and nutritious food. - Given its dependence on food imports and limited arable land, the State has prioritised food availability, price stability, and support to local agricultural production. - The government and civil society institutions, such as Al Eslah Society, play a vital role in food distribution and public awareness on nutrition, particularly during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.
Challenges	- Heavy dependence on food imports exposes Kuwait to external shocks and price fluctuations. - Rising food prices (7.48% in 2022) threaten affordability and stability. - Persistent anaemia among women (23.7% in 2019) and child malnutrition rates indicate nutritional imbalances. - Limited agricultural productivity due to harsh climatic and land constraints.
Progress/ Solutions	- Between 2016 and 2019, Kuwait maintained a prevalence of undernourishment below 2.5 per cent, compared to global averages of 7.6–8 per cent. In 2020, the rate rose slightly to 2.7 per cent due to the pandemic. - The Al Eslah Society distributed food supplies benefiting 1,612,857 persons in 2020. - The stunting rate among children under 5 was 5.8 per cent in 2012, rising slightly to 6.0 per cent in 2020; wasting stood at 2.5 per cent, while overweight among children declined from 8.7 per cent in 2015 to 7.1 per cent in 2020. - Agricultural land for sustainable production increased from 40.8 per cent in 2013 to 43.7 per cent in 2019, with a temporary drop to 43 per cent in 2018. - Government expenditure on agriculture rose from 0.36 per cent in 2016 to 0.46 per cent in 2020, while assistance through the Kuwait Fund for Development declined from 10.34 per cent (2016) to 9.66 per cent (2020), with no loans reported in 2021. - The food price index increased from 0.19 per cent in 2016 to 7.48 per cent in 2022, mainly due to the pandemic and trade disruptions.
Unsolved Challenges	- Absence of an updated national strategy for food security and nutrition integrating child and maternal health. - Need to promote healthy dietary habits, exclusive breastfeeding, and nutrition education from early childhood. - Declining investment in agricultural development and lack of development loans since 2021. - Continued reliance on imports without a comprehensive domestic resilience framework.

Score: 3	
Justification	- Kuwait has made notable strides in improving health services and education, prioritising access to high-quality care and lifelong learning. - Health initiatives focus on universal coverage, disease prevention, and advanced medical technologies. - The government, in partnership with civil society organisations such as Al Eslah Society and the Women's Cultural and Social Society (WCSS), has enhanced public health, curative services, and health awareness.
Challenges	- Rising prevalence of non-communicable diseases due to unhealthy diets, sedentary lifestyles, and pollution. - High diabetes prevalence and decreasing life expectancy. - Shortage of specialists and dependency on foreign health personnel. - Health system remains treatment-oriented, with gaps in preventive care.
Progress/ Solutions	- Maternal mortality ratio (MMR): near zero in 2020; births attended by skilled personnel: >99.99% (2012–2020). - COVID-19 support: PPE kits for 4,000 vulnerable foreign labourers across six governorates; awareness campaigns in 12 languages. - Child vaccination and infant survival: full achievement of World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended vaccines; low traffic death rates. - Civil society initiatives: "*Hope Club*" and "*Hope Fund*" support cancer patients since 1987; "*Compassion for Rheumatoid Patients*" and "*Boshrakum Sclerosis*" projects; 314,300 KWD spent on 213 patients in 2021.
Unsolved Challenges	- Need to improve governance, planning, and sustainable financing in health. - Expand health promotion laws, policies, and programmes. - Develop comprehensive health information systems and integrate technologies.

Score: 3	
Justification	- Kuwait demonstrates a high commitment to human development, reflected in its Human Development Index (HDI) rank of 52/191 (2022) and Global Knowledge Index rank of 47/132 (2022). - Investments in education and research aim to improve national knowledge, skills, and innovation capacity. - Public and private higher education institutions (HEIs) are expanding access and quality, while civil society organisations like the (WCSS) and Al Eslah Society complement government efforts by supporting disadvantaged students, preschool children with special needs, and orphans.
Challenges	- Low R&D expenditure compared to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) averages. - Absence of a national funding body, research-based budget, and governance authority for R&D. - High reliance on public HEIs; private HEIs face resource and enrolment limitations. - Limited teaching in English and low international student intake. - Insufficient collaboration between public and private institutions for research and innovation.

Progress/ Solutions	- Government expenditure on education: 12.2% of national budget in 2021 (Ministry of Education: 9.3%, Ministry of Higher Education: 2.7%). - R&D expenditure: 0.19% of GDP in 2020, fluctuating from 0.43% in 2014 to 0.06% in 2018. - Student enrolment: Public HEIs – 126,023; Private HEIs – 22,947 (2020/2021). - University rankings: Kuwait University (THE 801–1,000; QS 1,001–1,200); American University of the Middle East (QS 701–750); Gulf University for Science and Technology (QS 801–1,000). - Literacy rates: Age 15+ – 96.2% (2016/2017) → 96.8% (2020/2021); Age 15–24 – 99.3% → 99.6% (2016/2017 → 2020/2021). - Civil society support: WCSS and Al Eslah Society provided educational programs, rehabilitation, grants, and sponsorships for 1,795 students (409 university students; 1,386 other levels), with expenditure exceeding KWD 165,000.
Unsolved Challenges	- Need for a structured, high-level national R&D governance system. - Expansion of R&D funding aligned with SDGs and Vision 2035. - Enhanced accreditation frameworks and quality assurance for Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and HEIs. - Improved integration of digital and innovative learning tools post-pandemic. - Greater inclusivity in education for foreign students and students with special needs.

5 GENDER EQUALITY

Score: 3	
Justification	- Kuwait has a strong legislative and policy framework to promote gender equality, embedded in the 196 Kuwait Constitution (Article 29) and reinforced through multiple laws, decrees, and international commitments including CEDAW. - A specialized Women's Committee under the Council of Ministers coordinates government and non-government efforts on women's issues, representing Kuwait in regional and international forums, and promoting gender-focused research and discussions.
Challenges	- Seats held by women in the Council of Ministers and National Assembly fluctuated, dropping in 2020 and 2021 before recovering in 2022. - Limited female representation in certain non-government sectors.
Progress/ Solutions	- Violence against women: Prevalence of females subject to physical violence – 0.02% in 2022. - Child marriage: Girls married or engaged before age 18 – 2.7% in 2022. - Female circumcision: Achieved 0 cases since 2016. - Reproductive health: Women aged 15–49 making informed decisions – 100% since 2016. - Women in leadership (mid-2022): 28% overall (Kuwaiti women: 21%, non-Kuwaiti women: 7%). - SAB: Female employees – 51.6% in 2020; women in supervisory roles – 35 out of 72. - Parliamentary and ministerial representation: Increased in 2022 with appointment of female ministers and election of two women to parliament.

Unsolved Challenges	- Closing remaining gender gaps in labour force participation and political representation. - Enhancing gender mainstreaming in the private sector and community-based organisations.

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Score: 4	
Justification	- Recent data from Kuwait's Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) and relevant authorities demonstrate the country's long-standing commitment to ensuring universal access to safe and sustainable water and sanitation services. - The continued 100 per cent coverage of the population with safely managed drinking water and sanitation services since 2016 reflects strong institutional coordination and investment in national infrastructure. - Kuwait's efforts align with Article 89 of the 2014 Environmental Protection Law No. 42 and its amendments, emphasising integrated management and pollution prevention.
Challenges	- Low levels of groundwater with a renewal rate of less than 70 mm/year. - Growing population and industrial demand have intensified water consumption pressures. - Heavy reliance on seawater desalination and cross-border groundwater procurement to meet rising demand. - Fluctuating financial investments in the water sector suggest inconsistency in long-term resource allocation.
Progress/ Solutions	- Drinking Water and Sanitation: From 2016 to 2022, 100 per cent of Kuwait's population continued to benefit from safely managed drinking water and properly managed sanitation services. - Waste water Treatment: By 2022, 100 per cent of wastewater was safely treated, according to WHO and the Ministry of Public Works. - Integrated Resource Management: The implementation indicator improved from 80 in 2016 to 94 in 2020, with the target expected to reach 100 by 2030. - Financial Commitment: Kuwait's support to the water and sanitation sector through loans fluctuated—138.7 million KWD (2016), 56 million KWD (2017), 126.5 million KWD (2018), 5 million KWD (2019), and 99.0 million KWD (2020). - Infrastructure Projects: Ongoing water desalination initiatives include the two-phase Doha seawater reverse osmosis project, with 90 per cent of Phase I completed and both phases expected to conclude by the end of 2024.
Unsolved Challenges	- Inconclusive analysis regarding the fluctuations in financial support for the water and sanitation sector. - Need for further research on sustainability and efficiency of current desalination and groundwater management strategies. - Continued risk of over-reliance on desalination, with limited progress on renewable and cost-efficient water production methods. - Final adoption pending for the national programme for the control of drinking water, awaiting review by the National Committee.

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Score : 3	
Justification	- Kuwait's economy is heavily reliant on the energy sector, particularly oil, natural gas, and water desalination. - With over 90 per cent of its water consumption coming from desalination and oil exports contributing about 90 per cent of export revenues (USD 46 billion in 2017, nearly 40 per cent of GDP), the need for diversification is urgent. - The 2019 VNR recorded Kuwait's intent to establish a new energy strategy aimed at reducing fossil fuel dependency and promoting efficiency. - The Government recognises that addressing high per capita energy consumption requires comprehensive reforms combining efficiency, awareness, and subsidy reduction.
Challenges	- Heavy dependence on fossil fuels and energy subsidies sustaining high consumption levels. - Extremely high per capita energy use driven by residential electricity demand and near-universal car ownership. - Slow transition pace towards renewable energy despite abundant solar and wind resources. - Economic diversification constrained by volatility in oil revenues.
Progress/ Solutions	- Universal Energy Access: Since 2016, Kuwait has maintained 100 per cent access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy services, with all residents using electricity and clean fuels. - Renewable Energy Share: The share of renewable energy in total consumption rose from 0.006% in 2016 to 0.256% in 2021, with a goal to reach 15% by 2030. - Energy Efficiency: Energy intensity improved from 7.1 in 2015 to 7.4 in 2019, equal to the 2010 baseline level. - Infrastructure Projects: Shaqaya Complex for Renewable Energy – Phase I completed in 2018 (capacity 70 MW). - Phases II and III (capacity 4000 MW) expected by 2025. - Four additional renewable energy projects are expected between 2024–2025. - Policy Measures: Law passed in 2016, enforced in 2017, raised tariffs for electricity and water consumption to encourage efficiency. - Official Development Assistance (ODA) Contribution: Up to 166 countries benefited from Kuwaiti loans, with 23.9% directed to the energy sector; financial support rose to 24% in 2021 and 42% in 2022.
Unsolved Challenges	- Need for effective implementation of the three-pronged national energy efficiency strategy (efficiency plan, public awareness, subsidy reduction). - Renewable share (0.256% in 2021) remains far below the 15% target for 2030. - Limited local capacity for blue hydrogen production and carbon footprint reduction technologies. - Continuous monitoring and evaluation required to ensure sustainability of future energy reforms and renewable projects.

Score : 3	
Justification	- Kuwait's economy remains heavily dependent on oil, representing 84% of revenues in 2020. - To ensure financial sustainability and prepare for the post-oil era, Kuwait has developed policies aligned with Vision 2035 and the Third National Development Plan (2020/2021 – 2024/2025) to diversify income sources and strengthen the private sector. - The country hosts a large foreign workforce, with 2,790,287 workers on 31/12/2022 (15.9% Kuwaiti, 84.1% non-nationals), underpinning the need for robust labour policies and workforce regulation.
Challenges	- Heavy reliance on oil revenue continues, despite diversification efforts (84% in 2020). - National workforce participation in the private sector remains low (4.6% of nationals in the private sector). - Labour market fluctuations due to global oil price instability and regional instability. - Ensuring full compliance with labour protections and effective enforcement of anti-trafficking measures.
Progress/ Solutions	- Global Competitiveness: Ranked 46th out of 141 countries in 2019. - Workforce management: Establishment of the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) in 2013, overseeing private and oil sector labour, issuing work permits, and providing automated e-complaints mechanisms. - Labour legislation: Legal protections ensure foreign workers' rights, including work contracts, family accompaniment, and prohibition on withholding documents (Law No. 68 of 2015, Article 38 of 2021 Administrative Decision). - Child labour and forced labour: Laws criminalizing forced labour, human trafficking, and child labour (Law No. 6 of 2010, Law No. 91 of 2013, Law No. 68 of 2015). - Small & Medium Enterprises (SME) development: (SAB) plan (2020) implemented programs for microloans, entrepreneurial ecosystem, and public-private partnerships. - Youth employment strategy: Established since 2016, integrated into national development planning. - Banking access: Fluctuating but generally increasing number of commercial bank branches and ATMs per 100,000 adults since 2016. - Aid for trade obligations: Slight decrease from KWD 140,457,393 in 2016 to KWD 140,420,933 in 2020.
Unsolved Challenges	- Plan for complete eradication of child labour and forced labour by 2025. - Need for full integration of youth employment strategies into private sector growth. - Plan for expansion of national workforce efficiency and technological upskilling in private and capital-intensive sectors. - Further diversification of income to reduce vulnerability to oil price fluctuations. - Strengthening bilateral agreements and oversight mechanisms for foreign labour mobility.

Score: 4	
Justification	- SDG 9 forms one of the key pillars, “*Advanced Infrastructure*”, of Kuwait Vision 2035, reflecting the nation’s focus on sustainable industrialisation and technological advancement. - Around 30 infrastructure projects are currently under implementation, covering new roads, railways, ports, and airports. - To strengthen sustainable development, the Supreme Council for Planning and Development funded the project “*Establishing a Centre for the Development of Sustainability Technologies in Facilities and Infrastructure*” at a cost exceeding 10 million Kuwaiti Dinars. - The State’s emphasis on innovation, industrial growth, and energy-efficient infrastructure demonstrates its commitment to inclusive and sustainable economic progress.
Challenges	- Heavy dependence on petroleum, which accounted for over 84% of exports in 2020/2021, limits industrial diversification. - Decline in the manufacturing sector’s GDP contribution from 7.4% to 5.5% (2017–2020). - Decrease in research personnel and limited investment in R&D and innovation. - Need for improved coordination between public and private sectors to accelerate industrial competitiveness and sustainability.
Progress/ Solutions	- Infrastructure Development: Around 30 projects underway, including major transport and energy facilities. Two Electric Power and Water Distillation projects were completed in 2021, increasing production capacity. - Environmental Governance: Mechanised control systems for gas emissions have been installed, and all industrial enterprises are legally required to conduct Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA). - Industrialisation: Transformational added value of GDP decreased from 7.4% (2017) to 5.5% (2020), after peaking at 7.5% (2019). - Employment in manufacturing rose from 13.5% (2016) to 13.7% (2021), then declined to 9.1% (2022). - Sustainability and Emissions: CO_2 emissions per unit of value-added manufacturing declined steadily since 2016, reaching 0.43 percentage point in 2019. - Research expenditure stood at 0.2% (2016–2020); research personnel decreased from 15,385.5 (2021) to 15,199 (mid-2022). - Official international support for infrastructure totalled 313.7 million KWD (2016), declining to 50 million KWD (2021). - The Share of the medium and advanced technology industry increased from 30.56% (2012) to 38.83% (2019). - Licensed entities promoted green building systems, waste management, and youth and women’s empowerment initiatives, including the ICT Skills Competition, Kuwait Engineering Design Challenge, and the Women’s Social Entrepreneurship Forum.

Unsolved Challenges	- Further analysis required to understand the decline in industrial value-added and devise corrective strategies post-COVID-19. - Low investment in research and innovation (0.2%) may hinder achieving Target 9.5 by 2030. - Falling international financial support for infrastructure (from 313.7 million KWD in 2016 to 50 million KWD in 2021) needs review. - Greater effort needed to institutionalise sustainability practices and expand green industry initiatives across sectors.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Score: 3	
Justification	- Kuwait has implemented policies, legislation, and institutional frameworks across multiple ministries and with civil society and private sector actors to enhance inclusiveness for people with disabilities, women, children, the elderly, and foreign and domestic workers. - The State prioritises equality in social, fiscal, and labour policies to progressively reduce inequalities, in line with international standards and agreements.
Challenges	- Data gaps: Some SDG 10 targets lack recent or comprehensive data, with certain data dating back to 2013 or earlier. - Implementation capacity: Public institutions, including the Public Authority of the Disabled, lack sufficient resources to fully implement SDG-related programmes. - Maintaining equality in private and public institutions, despite strong legal frameworks.
Progress/ Solutions	- Ministry of Justice records show 0% discrimination or harassment from 2016 to 2021 - Labour share of GDP: Increased since 2012, reaching 22.9% in 2020 - Fiscal year 2021/2022 budget prepared in accordance with GFS 2001 standards - Recruitment costs: Zero cost borne by employees in Kuwait since 2012. - International coordination: Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) engaged 140 companies, 14 bilateral committee meetings with seven countries, and signed three MOUs (2020) to promote equal opportunity and attract investment. - SAB audits ensure service quality for persons with disabilities, although resource constraints exist. - WCSS monitors and reports discrimination against women through the Women and Business Affairs Committee.
Unsolved Challenges	- Full operationalisation of SDG indicators for persons with disabilities, including creation of a centralised database is needed. - Complete elimination of structural inequalities across diverse groups is required. - Continuous monitoring and enforcement of anti-discrimination measures. - Broader engagement and compliance of private sector actors in reducing inequality is needed.

Score: 3	
Justification	- The State of Kuwait faces a persistent challenge in achieving sustainable urban development, as it is primarily urban, commonly referred to as a "*city state.*" - Over 98 per cent of the population live in urban agglomerations concentrated in the Kuwait Metropolitan Area (KMA), which covers only 8 per cent of the national land area. - This has created immense pressure on infrastructure, land use, and the environment. To address this, Kuwait adopted the Kuwait Master Plan IV (KMP4) (2007–2030), outlining long-term objectives for balanced population distribution, sustainable city planning, and diversification of national income sources beyond oil.
Challenges	- High population concentration in a limited urban area (KMA) strains land use, infrastructure, and service delivery. - Persistent air pollution due to frequent dust storms, often originating from neighbouring countries. - Delays in enacting legislation for automatic waste recycling systems, hindering implementation. - Need for stronger environmental inspection and compliance programmes to monitor industrial emissions.
Progress/ Solutions	- Under Vision 2035 – Sustainable Living Environments, Kuwait launched five new smart and sustainable residential areas away from Kuwait City, providing over 89,000 housing units. - Innovative measures such as 3D-printed construction, LEED-certified buildings, electric vehicle charging stations, and district cooling systems were initiated to enhance urban sustainability. - The Environment Public Authority (EPA) established 15 direct monitoring stations and 13 stations under Kuwait Oil Company for air quality tracking, integrated with AQICN.ORG. - Waste recycling systems were designed for Saad Al-Abdullah, Al-Mutlaa, and South Sabah Al-Ahmad cities, pending full implementation. Kuwait achieved Zero per cent of population in slums since 2016, 100 per cent access to public transport, and Zero cases of disaster-related deaths or losses since 2016. Solid waste collection reached 99.2 per cent in 2021. Furthermore, Kuwait was ranked among the top 10 global improvers in the 2020 World Bank Doing Business report, with its DTF score rising from 62.6 in 2019 to 67.4 in 2020, a 4.8 percentage point increase.
Unsolved Challenges	- Pending laws for waste recycling and management systems delay progress. - Sustained high levels of particulate matter due to regional sandstorms remain unresolved despite bilateral agreements with Iraq and Iran. - Slow implementation of the National Strategic Plan for Air Quality Management as recommended by the SAB (2020). - Continuous need to balance rapid urban expansion with environmental sustainability and equitable population distribution.

Score: 3	
Justification	- Kuwait has been implementing action plans for sustainable consumption and production since 2016, integrating these priorities into national policies. - The State has ratified key environmental conventions including the Basel, Stockholm, Rotterdam, and Minamata Conventions, and has promoted legal and institutional measures to limit hazardous and polluting industrial waste, protecting public health, wildlife, and marine life.
Challenges	- Recycling: Significant decline from 2.94% in 2015 to 0.76% in 2021, indicating a need for stronger waste management initiatives. - COVID-19 impact: Delays in chemical safety programmes and other projects due to the pandemic. - Coordination gaps: SAB identified insufficient coordination between major project groups, limited studies, and inadequate financial systems for shared networks. - Data limitations: Incomplete assessment of some persistent organic pollutants, such as PFOA.
Progress/ Solutions	- Action plans: Continuous implementation of SDG 12 policies since 2016. - Waste management: Closure and safe recycling of damaged rubber tyres in 2019. - Ratifications: Kuwait is among 186 countries adopting the Stockholm Convention and 190 countries adopting the Basel Convention. - Hazardous waste: Industrial solid waste reached a low of 60,316 tons in 2020, while medical waste peaked at 10,693 tons. - Recycling: Recycled 2.94% of solid waste in 2015, though it dropped to 0.76% in 2021. - Chemical safety: National Plan for Chemical Safety submitted in June 2021, covering persistent organic pollutants, with updates expected every two years. - Renewable energy: Installed capacity increased from 1.46 W per capita in 2015 to 24.76 W in 2020, reaching 100 W in 2022. - Education: Sustainability education promoted across curricula, teacher training, and student evaluation since 2016.
Unsolved Challenges	- Full operationalisation of the National Plan for Chemical Safety, particularly for unassessed pollutants is needed. - Consistent improvement of recycling rates and reduction of industrial and medical waste is required.

Score: 2	
Justification	- Kuwait has committed to long-term climate action, targeting carbon neutrality for the oil sector by 2050 and for all sectors by 2060. - EPA is implementing projects aligned with the national low carbon strategy for 2050, while preparing the Third National Communication and the second biennial update report on climate change. - The State has ratified key global agreements, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Kyoto Protocol, and Paris Agreement, and aims to mitigate emissions following circular carbon economy principles.

Challenges	- Public awareness: More awareness is needed regarding sustainable resource use and adoption of low-carbon behaviours. - Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions: Efforts remain concentrated on business-as-usual emissions in 2020-2030, requiring energy mix diversification to meet 2035 goals. - Policy implementation: Continued alignment of national laws with emission reduction targets and circular carbon economy principles is needed.
Progress/ Solutions	- Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) update: Kuwait increased mitigation ambition by 7.4% in 2035. - Gas flaring reduction: Kuwait Oil Company reduced gas flaring from 17% to 1% over 12 years; annual reduction 219,762 tons in 2019, 351,791 tons in 2020. - Disaster management: Zero deaths or missing persons from disasters maintained since 2016; 100% adoption of local disaster risk reduction strategies since 2016. - Adaptation & technology: Institutions and individuals have built capacity for climate adaptation and technology transfer since 2016. - Education: Climate change mitigation and adaptation integrated into primary, secondary, and tertiary curricula since 2016. - Health sector adaptation: (WHO) supported Boost Initiative launched in September 2022, forming the National Committee on Preparedness and Response to Climate Change, developing a Health National Adaptation Plan, and participating in COP26/ATACH.
Unsolved Challenges	- Need for full operationalisation of the long-term low-carbon strategy across all sectors by 2060. - Need for continuous reduction of GHG emissions in line with projected targets (2015–2035), including voluntary national efforts.

Score: 2	
Justification	- Kuwait has been implementing ecosystem-based management approaches across all economic zones since 2016 (100 per cent coverage). - The country is committed to protecting marine biodiversity, sustainable fisheries, and adhering to international instruments such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. - Legal frameworks have been enacted to safeguard small-scale fisheries and combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing.
Challenges	- arine pH levels: Close to the upper acceptable limit at 8, maintained since 2012, with no significant declining trend. - Protected areas coverage: Target of 100 per cent by 2030 is far from the current 6.63%. - Ocean health indicators: "*Ocean Health Index,*" "*Clean Waters*" score, and "*Fish caught by trawling or dredging*" show limited sustained positive trends.

Progress/ Solutions	- Marine management: 100 per cent of economic zones managed using ecosystem-based approaches since 2016. - Legal measures: Decree No. 1630 (2017) prohibited back-trawl fishing in territorial waters. - Protected areas: Marine protected areas remained at 6.63% since 2016, contributing to biodiversity preservation. - Aquaculture & fisheries: Aquaculture production reached 197 metric tonnes and fisheries production 2,817 metric tonnes as per United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) report in 2021. - Research initiatives: Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR's) economic production complex for fish and shrimp (2019–2029) in preparatory phase, promoting food security and economic development. - KISR research facilities for sea resource management (2011–2027) in the execution phase, aiming to preserve marine resources and enhance food security. - International instruments: Continuous ratification and implementation since 2016 to ensure sustainable marine management.
Unsolved Challenges	- Target to achieve the 2030 target of 100 per cent coverage of marine protected areas. - Need for fully operationalising KISR projects and ensuring their long-term sustainability impacts on marine biodiversity and food security.

Score: 2	
Justification	- Kuwait has prioritised the protection and restoration of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems, adopting legislative, administrative, and policy frameworks for biodiversity conservation. - Efforts include the prevention and control of invasive species and ensuring fair and equitable sharing of benefits from biodiversity (indicator 15.6.1). National projects and institutional coordination aim to combat desertification, preserve natural habitats, and strengthen ecological resilience.
Challenges	- Tree coverage: Remains low at 0.35%, unchanged since 2015. - Red List Index: Declined from 0.9 (2010) to 0.8 (2020), indicating species survival concerns. - Environmental stressors: Desertification, dust storms, high evaporation, and water erosion due to North-westerly winds and low rainfall. - Biodiversity threats: 11 bird species, 7 mammal species, 37 fish species, and 4 reptile species are threatened (IUCN).

Progress/ Solutions	- Land coverage: Tree coverage at 0.35% maintained since 2015. - Protected areas: Increased from 10.2% in 2013 to 11.6% in 2022. - Rehabilitation projects: 15,000 Sidr trees planted in the Jahra Reserve; ongoing planting plans. - Mangrove cultivation: 4,000 seedlings cultivated by 2021, targeting 18,000 by 2035. - 19 reserves established: 13 wild nature reserves, 6 marine reserves. - Environmental compensation policies integrate at least 10% of development project areas for biodiversity preservation. - Research and documentation: 30-month project launched to map biodiversity, develop the Red List, and link databases with research institutions. - Wildlife trade: Zero trafficked wildlife cases since 2016; 474 legitimate trades between 2016–2021, peaking in 2016 (228 bustards, 141 falcons). - Desertification management: Rehabilitation and afforestation efforts, addressing extreme arid climate with annual rainfall below 113 ml/year.
Unsolved Challenges	- Further enhancement of protected areas and biodiversity resilience to meet long-term ecological goals. - Sustaining mangrove and vegetation rehabilitation projects to ensure ecological impact by 2035. - Addressing remaining threatened species and maintaining Red List Index improvements.

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Score: 3	
Justification	- Kuwait has prioritised peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice, and accountable institutions. - Legislative frameworks, constitutional guarantees, and national policies safeguard human rights, public safety, and minority protection. - Institutions such as the National Bureau for Human Rights, the SAB, and specialised cultural and sports authorities underpin governance, transparency, and societal development.
Challenges	- Reported violence: Cases increased from 1,186 (2016) to 3,096 (2022). - Victims reporting abuse: Slight increase in victims reporting abuse to authorities. - Ongoing societal awareness: Continued need for promoting public awareness on rights, safety, and anti-corruption practices.

Progress/ Solutions	- Violent crime: Victims of premeditated crime decreased from 65 cases (2016) to 36 cases (2022). - Conflict and safety: No significant conflict recorded; 100% of residents' report feeling safe walking alone. - Global ranking: 39th globally and second in MENA on the Global Peace Index (2022). - Human trafficking: Zero cases reported since 2016. - Bribery: Declined to 15 cases (2022), close to zero. - Protection of journalists and activists: Zero cases of murder, kidnapping, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, or torture reported since 2016. - Prison population: Unsentenced detainees stable at 0.4%, slightly decreasing to 0.3% in 2017. - Human rights and access to information: National Bureau for Human Rights established under Law No. 67 of 2015; constitutional and legislative guarantees in place. - Minority rights: Freedom and recognition for minorities evident in schools, cultural events, and arts initiatives. - Cultural and sports development: National Council for Culture, Arts, and Literature strategy 2023–2028 developed with >960 partners, >70% women. - Public Authority for Sports strategy 2022–2028 to enhance safe access, infrastructure, talent development, and female participation. - SAB initiatives: Technical and automated system projects, partnership with Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority, and employee training to combat corruption.
Unsolved Challenges	- Need for reducing reported violence and ensuring sustainable decline in abuse cases. - Need for strengthening citizen engagement and trust in reporting mechanisms. - Enhancing minority protection and equitable access to opportunities across all sectors is required.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Score: 3	
Justification	- Since joining the UN in 1963, Kuwait has demonstrated sustained commitment to global and regional partnerships, human rights, and international development. - Through Vision 2035, the country integrates SDG 17 into national policies, ensuring support for domestic capacities, international collaboration, and sustainable wellbeing. Institutions such as the (SAB) and (KDIPA) play a central role in fostering effective partnerships and overseeing development initiatives.
Challenges	- Limited availability of data historically, although addressed progressively since 2019 through GSSCPD and CSB initiatives. - Slight decrease in ODA to least developed countries from 1.2% (2016) to 0.9% (2019). - Volatility in developing countries' share of world exports, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020).

Progress/ Solutions	- Domestic resource mobilisation: Non-oil revenues reached 5.33% of GDP (2020); oil revenues decreased to 27.09%. - Net ODA (paid) increased from 390 million KWD (2016) to 435 million KWD (2020); ODA to least developed countries decreased slightly from 1.2% (2016) to 0.9% (2019). - Foreign investment and south-south cooperation: Increased from 739 million USD (2016) to 1,148 million USD (2020). - Global trade share: Developing countries' exports decreased in 2020 to 39,935,616 USD but increased in 2021 to 68,291,805 USD. - Telecommunications: Around 99% of residents use the internet; in 2022, social media users numbered approximately 4.05 million. - Statistical capacity: Full registration of births and deaths at 100% since 2016. - Investment: Between January 2015 – March 2022, KDIPA reported 1,309,864,786 KWD across 67 investment entities from 25 countries; Europe contributed 64.9%, Asia 23.7%, North America 10.1%, Africa 1.2%, Oceania 0.1%. - Corporate sustainability initiatives: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) (2021): 71% increase in training investment to KWD 1,021,277; 41,037 training hours; 100% paper recycling; 64% reduction in plastic; KWD 17,705,000 in community contributions. Gulf Bank (2021): 26% increase in training for 1,800 employees; 57.5% increase in graduate employment; 75.3% Kuwaitisation bank-wide; 41 metric tons CO_2 reduction. KPC (2015/2016): Strategic alignment of oil sector with global trends, HSSE, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), domestic and international growth.
Unsolved Challenges	- Need for sustaining and expanding south-south and triangular cooperation. - Need for strengthening data monitoring and reporting to fully capture development outcomes. - Need to ensure equitable and diversified foreign investments across sectors and regions.

Source: (United Nations, 2023a; United Nations, 2023b).

Major Challenges

- **Data Availability:** Despite improvements by NOSD and CSB, gaps in recent, disaggregated, and geospatial data remain, particularly for gender, age, and locality, affecting SDGs 10, 12, 13, 14, and 15.
- **Pandemic Disruptions:** COVID-19 caused budget shifts, labour disruptions, and project delays; over 70% of SDG-related projects faced delays in 2021, with uneven recovery, especially for youth and remote populations.
- **Education Quality:** Universal access exists, but performance remains modest. Kuwait ranks mid-range in global indicators, with gaps in STEM, assessments, and teacher training, limiting competitiveness.
- **Gender Equality:** Legal protections are strong, yet structural barriers limit women's leadership roles, particularly locally and in high-value sectors, slowing SDG 5 progress.
- **Water and Resource Management:** Heavy reliance on desalination raises sustainability concerns. Modernised irrigation and efficiency improvements are needed.

- **Economic Diversification:** Youth unemployment and dependence on oil (~84% of government income) remain high. Non-oil sectors have yet to meaningfully contribute to GDP or job creation.
- **Industrial Sector Performance:** Manufacturing contribution to GDP and jobs is low. Limited R&D and absence of industrial clusters hinder the 2019 National Industrial Strategy.
- **Unsustainable Consumption:** Food waste, low recycling, and inefficient consumption persist. Circular economy and clean technology adoption are limited.
- **Climate Action:** Climate policies exist, but public awareness is low. Per capita emissions are high, and the country faces desertification, heat, and marine threats.
- **Ecosystem Pressures:** Forest cover is only 0.35%, marine protected areas are insufficient, and marine pH is near upper limits, threatening biodiversity.
- **Justice and Institutions:** Kuwait scores highly on the Global Peace Index, but unsentenced detainees, rising violent crime, and sub-national performance gaps remain.
- **International Financial Fluctuations:** Foreign aid and trade-support flows have declined, with reduced concessional loans potentially affecting SDG 17 targets.

Key Lessons Learned

- **Strategic Integration:** All **17 SDGs** are mainstreamed into "New Kuwait 2035," aligning national goals with global agendas.
- **Whole-of-Nation Approach:** Broad engagement of public, private, academic, and civil society actors ensure shared ownership and diverse perspectives.
- **Institutional Oversight:** Bodies like NSDC, NOSD, and SAB provide clear mechanisms for monitoring, financial integrity, and resource optimisation.
- **Data Investment:** Enhanced statistical capacity and disaggregated data support effective targeting, tracking, and policy decisions.
- **Crisis Adaptation:** Kuwait's COVID-19 response shows resilience, inter-ministerial coordination, digital transformation, and workforce reskilling.
- **Long-Term Planning:** Multi-year Vision 2035 plans offer structured, continuous development, focusing on infrastructure, private sector engagement, and a knowledge-based economy.
- **Human Development:** Free education, advanced healthcare, food security, social safety nets, and gender equality highlight human capital as a key driver.
- **International Cooperation:** Ongoing aid, regional leadership, and ratification of global agreements demonstrate commitment to global partnerships.

Notable Contribution

- **Population (2022):** 4,216,900 (66% non-Kuwaiti nationals)
- **Oil Contribution to Economy:** ~40% of GDP, 95% of export earnings, 84% of government budget
- **Non-Oil Revenue Share of GDP (2020):** 5.33%
- **Oil Revenue Share of GDP (2020):** 27.09%
- **Total Workforce (2022):** 2,036,990 (21.7% Kuwaiti nationals, 78.3% non-nationals)
- **Kuwait's First VNR (VNR1):** 2019

- **Kuwait's Second VNR (VNR2):** 2023
- **Carbon Neutrality Target:** By 2050 for the oil sector, and 2060 for other sectors, in line with the Paris Agreement
- **NSDC Established:** September 2021
- **Estimated Budget for SDGs Implementation (2020–2021):** KWD 2,097.5 million
- **Estimated Budget for SDGs Implementation (2021–2022):** KWD 1,812.8 million
- **Anticipated Budget for SDGs Implementation (2022–2023):** KWD 1,707,009,780 for 130 projects
- **Anticipated Budget for SDGs Implementation (2023–2024):** KWD 955,429,033 for 129 projects
- **SDGs-Related Government Projects Implemented (2019–2020):** 135 projects (60% on-time, 38% advanced, 2% delayed)
- **SDGs-Related Government Projects Delayed (2021):** 70.8% of 130+ projects delayed, primarily due to COVID-19
- **Kuwait's Overall SDG Score (2021):** 60.5 (forecast to reach 61.3% by 2030)
- **SDG 1 (No Poverty) Achievement:** 100% achieved by 2019
- **Global Knowledge Index Ranking (2022):** 47th out of 132 countries
- **HDI Ranking (2022):** 50th out of 191 countries
- **Government Expenditure on Education (2021):** 12.2% of national budget
- **Women's Participation in Leadership Positions (mid-2022):** 28%
- **Prevalence of Females Subject to Physical Violence (2022):** Zero
- **Girls Married/Engaged Before 18 (2022):** 2.7%
- **Access to Safely Managed Drinking Water and Sanitation (2016–2022):** 100% of the population
- **Wastewater Treated Safely:** 100%
- **Integrated Resource Management Implementation Score (2020):** 94 (target 100 by 2030)
- **Universal Access to Modern Energy Services:** 100% since 2016
- **Share of Renewable Energy in Total Consumption:** Increased from 0.006% (2016) to 0.256% (2021)
- **Mobile Network Coverage (2021):** Near 100% for 2G, 3G, 4G; 92% for 5G
- **Global Peace Index Ranking:** 39th globally, 2nd in MENA
- **Human Trafficking Cases (since 2016):** Zero
- **Internet Usage:** ~99% of residents
- **Social Media Users (2022):** ~4.05 million
- **Net ODA Paid:** Increased from KWD 390 million (2016) to KWD 435 million (2020)

Recommendations

- **Expand Marine Protected Areas:** Increase coverage beyond 6.63% to meet the 2030 target of 100% for sustainable fisheries and biodiversity.
- **Enhance Marine and Terrestrial Monitoring:** Strengthen data collection on pH levels, species survival, and desertification to enable evidence-based policies.
- **Promote Reforestation and Biodiversity Projects:** Accelerate tree planting and mangrove

restoration to combat desertification and support wildlife conservation.

- **Strengthen Crime Prevention and Justice Systems:** Address rising cases of violence (1,186 in 2016 to 3,096 in 2022) through prevention programmes and community awareness.
- **Sustain Anti-Corruption Measures:** Continue reducing bribery cases (15 in 2022) and enhance transparency via SAB and inter-agency oversight.
- **Boost Domestic and Non-Oil Revenue:** Further diversify GDP sources and maintain non-oil revenues above 5% to ensure economic sustainability.
- **Increase Foreign Investment and Partnerships:** Expand KDIPA-supported investments, south-south cooperation, and multi-country collaborations for economic growth.
- **Strengthen Statistical Capacity:** Maintain 100% registration of births and deaths and improve monitoring tools for all SDG indicators.
- **Promote Private Sector Sustainability:** Encourage businesses to adopt environmental, social, and (ESG) initiatives similar to NBK, Gulf Bank, and KDD.
- **Enhance Digital and Social Connectivity:** Expand internet access, social media engagement, and digital tools to support education, reporting, and public awareness.

Conclusion

Kuwait's 2023 Second VNR demonstrates strong commitment to **Agenda 2030**, embedding all **17 SDGs** into its "*New Kuwait 2035*" vision. The review highlights major institutional reforms, enhanced data systems, and progress in universal access to water, sanitation, energy, healthcare, and gender equity. Kuwait's adaptive COVID-19 response accelerated digital transformation, reskilling, and multi-stakeholder coordination. Ambitious climate and carbon neutrality targets, alongside ongoing economic diversification and policy reforms, position the country for steady SDG progress, while continued efforts are needed in sustainable consumption, climate action, and marine protection.

Reference

United Nations (2023a): Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2023. Available at: https://hlpf.un.org/2023

United Nations (2023b): *Kuwait Voluntary National Reviews 2023.* High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Available at: https://hlpf.un.org/countries/kuwait/voluntary-national-reviews-2023

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The SDG Tracker (SDGT) is a global research initiative, developed under the auspices of the World Association for Sustainable Development (WASD), designed to systematically analyse and score the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) submitted by United Nations member states. The SDGT aims to enhance global accountability, promote transparency, provide evidence-based insights for policymakers, and facilitate cross-country comparison and benchmarking, with all its comprehensive findings made publicly available on the dedicated SDGs Tracker Platform. For more information about this report and/or any other activities of the initiative, please visit: www.sdgstracker.org and contact us: director@sdgstracker.org.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

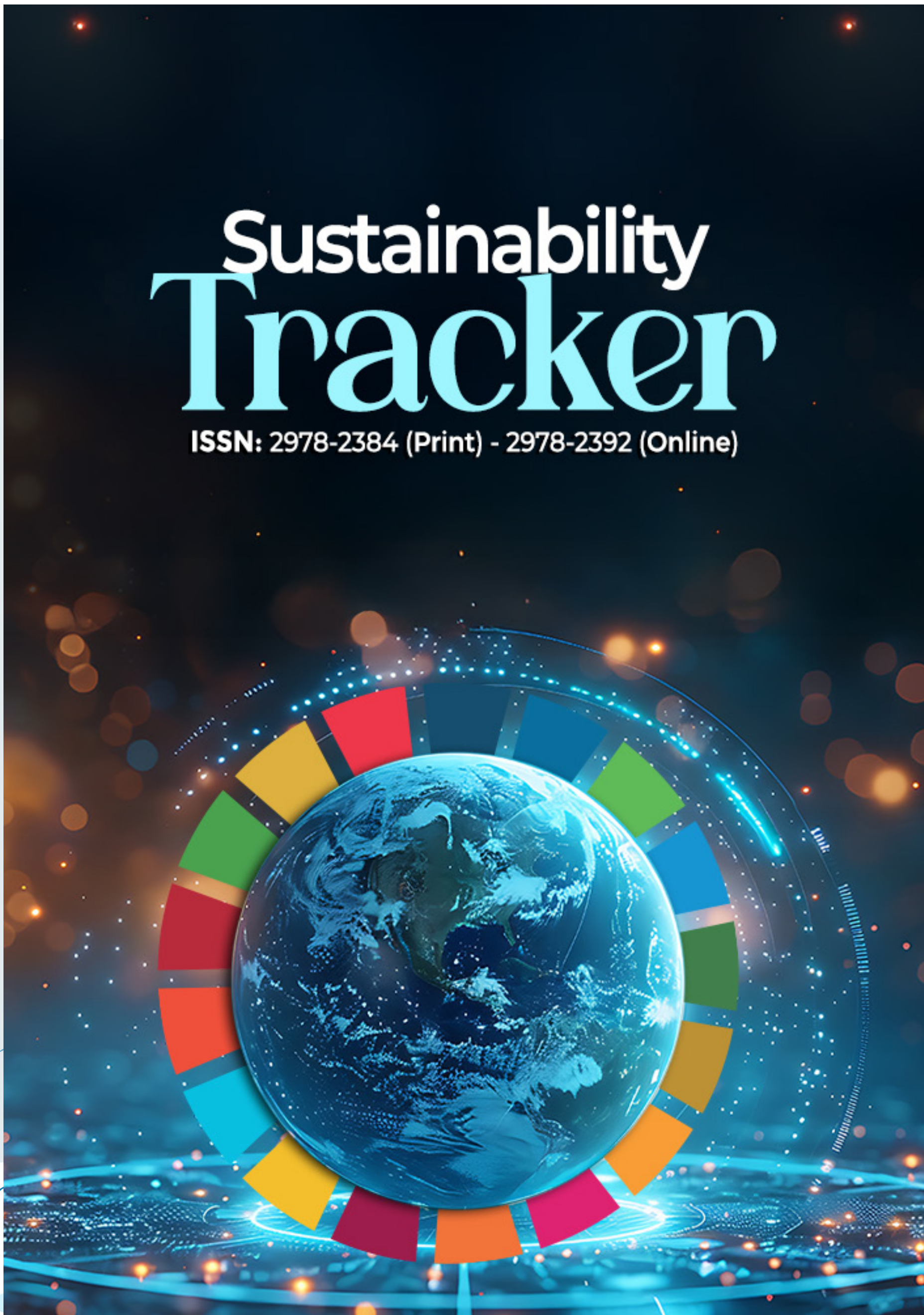
WASD COLLABORATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

WASD is delighted to be working very closely with various United Nations Agencies, most specifically with the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). Both JIU and WASD are inspired by the conviction that the UN **Agenda 2030** for Sustainable Development (SD) and the **17** Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide the momentum for renewed UN engagement with the public and private sectors.

In **2018,** WASD collaborated with JIU on the UN project **Strengthening policy research uptake in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, aimed at reviewing the policy research uptake in service of the **2030 Agenda** for SD. For the first time in its **52** year history, the UN (aided by WASD) officially consulted academics and researchers from all over the world on the policy research uptake in the UN.

In **2019,** WASD also worked very closely with the UN JIU to undertake a UN system-wide review of policies, programmes, and platforms to support learning and enhancing the adequacy of training policies in the UN. The report **Policies and platforms in support of learning: towards more coherence, coordination, and convergence** was launched officially on **28** October 2020 at the opening of WASD's Online Learning Conference.

These various initiatives and events with the UN JIU have encouraged WASD to launch its **Sustainable Development Goals Tracker (SDGT).**



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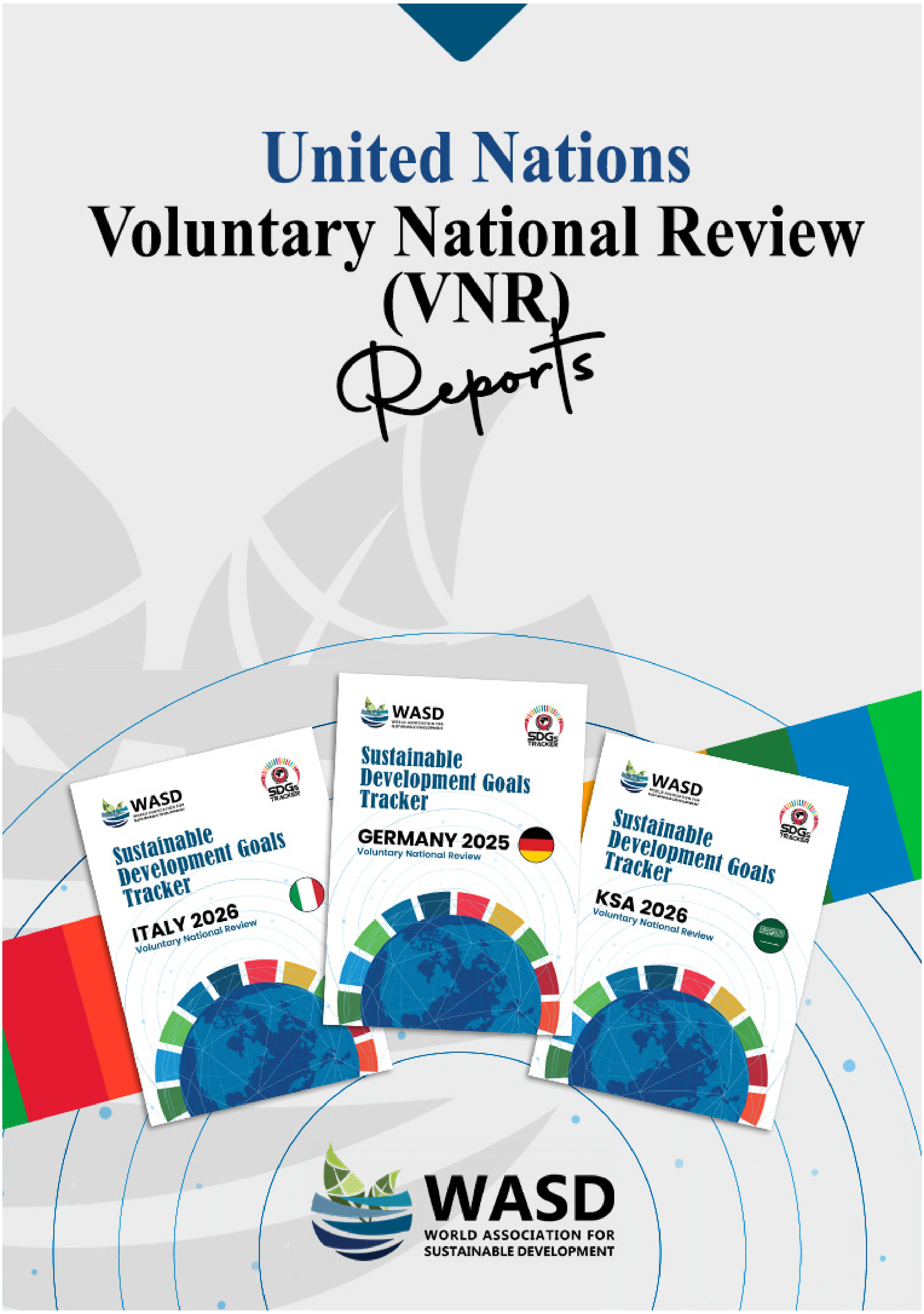

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