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COSTA RICA



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# STRENGTHEN THE MULTISTAKEHOLDER DIMENSION IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND THE MAINSTREAMING OF THE SDGS IN COSTA RICA

## FINAL REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



THE GLOBAL GOALS

# Acknowledgements

This project was developed by the United Nations Office in Costa Rica, with the support of UN DESA, Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) through a grant with the European Commission (SD2015: Delivering on the promise of the SDGs). The report was led by the UN Resident Coordinator Allegra Baiocchi, with follow-up from Victoria Cruz López, RCO Team Leader, and drafted by Ariana Rodríguez Segura, national consultant for SDGs mainstreaming.

The report was constructed with consultations and resources gathered with the support of the SDG National Secretariat, and the signatory actors of the SDGs National Pact in Costa Rica. A special thanks to allied stakeholders, CSOs, organizations and institutions that invested their time in consultations and participated in the main finding's validation workshop that resulted in the conclusion and recommendations chapters in this document.

## Methodology and Scope

The report was prepared through a series of dialogues and semi-structured interviews, online consultation processes, and strategic documents review in coordination with the Resident Coordinators Office and national counterparts. It must be noted that the report scope analyses SDGs stakeholders such as the private sector, local governments, universities, parliament, the judiciary, and unions, but focused mainly on chapters 2 and 3 in-depth around meaningful participation of Civil Society Organizations.

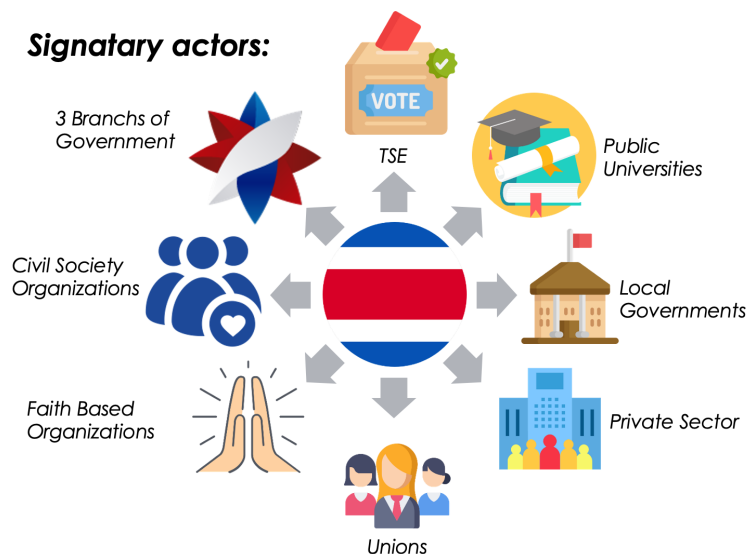


# SDGs STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT MILESTONES IN COSTA RICA

2016	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SDGs National Pact</li><li>• CSOs Platform for the SDGs</li></ul>
2017	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Governance Structure</li><li>• 1st VNR</li><li>• National SDGs Forum</li></ul>
2018	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• National Development Plan 2019-2022</li><li>• SDGs Survey</li></ul>
2019	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• National SDGs Forum</li></ul>
2020	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2nd VNR</li><li>• Development Finance Assessment results</li><li>• Private sector survey</li></ul>
2021	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advisory Committee Action Plan</li><li>• Thematic Groups activation</li><li>• SDGs Localization (Red de Cantones Promotores de los ODS)</li><li>• Cross-Data Partnership for SDGs</li></ul>

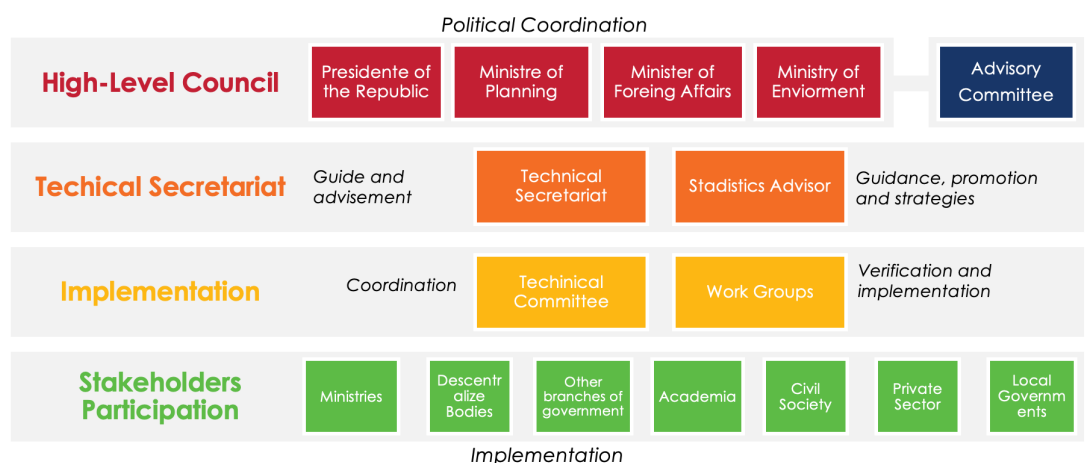
# STAKEHOLDER MAPPING AND ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS

## National Pact for the Advancement of the SDGs



Costa Rica is committed to mobilize resources, plan, budget, strengthening institutional capacities and be accountable for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

## SDGs Governance Model



# SDGs National Pact stakeholders and their interaction with the national SDGs governance structure

The governance structure was meant to consolidate the National Pact aspiration by activating institutional mechanisms that, from its origin, incorporated a “whole of society approach” to sustainable development. The High-Level Council Advisory Committee, the SDGs National Forum, and the Working Groups are the instances meant to promote the multistakeholder participation and inclusion in SDGs implementation processes. The following figure shows the actors that signed the National Pact and their interaction with the governance structure.



# SDGs stakeholder engagement mechanisms activated in Costa Rica

In recent years, Costa Rica has activated processes to facilitate stakeholder participation in SDGs strategies. Some of them within the governance structure, others outside of it. This report will use the identification made by UNDESA according to the experiences reported in Voluntary National Reports will be used to analyze the mechanisms adopted in Costa Rica.

## • NATIONAL PLANS AND PUBLIC POLICY

The Ministry of Planning and Economic Policy (MIDEPLAN) enabled in 2018 a public citizen consultation to provide inputs for the National Development and Public Investment Plan 2019-2022, linked to the SDGs, this was the only stakeholder's consultation mechanism activated related to development planning. Regarding stakeholder's participation in public policies, MIDEPLAN provides advisement to various ministries and institutions to ensure their policies contribute to the SDGs, where specific sectors and populations are consulted. According to the Second Voluntary National Report (VNR), the SDGs Technical Secretariat has advised more than 20 public policies aligned to the SDGs, each one with its own consultation mechanisms. .

## • ADVICE AND DECISION-MAKING

Within the governance SDGs structure, the Advisory Committee is considered a body to enhance the dialogue between the National Pact signatory actors and provide strategic advice to the High-Level Council. In the last 3 years, the Advisory Committee has not been called to advise the High-Level Council directly. Therefore, through the Technical Secretariat, the Committee has sought its own operating mechanism to facilitate alliances between stakeholders. And outside the SDGs governance structure, public institutions have decision-making consultative councils or advisory committees that include stakeholder's representation, such as private sector, civil society, or academia.

## • PARTNERSHIPS

In 2021, The Advisory Committee, since it converges the National Pact Stakeholders, formulated a Work Plan to strengthen their advisory role to the High-Level Council, and promote strategic actions for SDGs acceleration. The Work Plan, built with the stakeholders, has been led by the SDGs Technical Secretariat with UN support. The Plan incorporates multistakeholder Working Groups around topics such as SDGs Localization, data and monitoring, communication, and the agricultural sector.

## • ACCOUNTABILITY

Since 2016, the institutions have activated several accountability, information management and monitoring processes:

- National SDGs Forums.
- Information management and consultation surveys.
- Voluntary National Reviews (2017 & 2020).

## • CAPACITY-BUILDING

Both the SDGs Technical Secretariat and the UN together with actors such as Civil Society Organizations, the Judiciary, the Private Sector, the Parliament, and local governments, have developed systematic capacity-building processes for SDGs mainstreaming.

# Assessment on stakeholders' engagement with the 2030 Agenda

## • Parliament

Costa Rican Parliament has a defined roadmap for the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda in Congress with designated political and administrative liaisons for SDGs mainstreaming. During this report building process, the RCO has engaged closely with both political and administrative bodies, and the commitment from both is tangible. In the last few months, the parliament has finished a methodology to integrate the SDGs within the legislation review and analysis processes and the UN is working closely with the administrative body to ensure that the strategic institutional plan is set to be aligned with the SDGs.

The administrative and political level through the governing party has a high interest on SDG mainstreaming and engaging within the governance structure, however, the next months will be crucial to institutionalize SDGs follow-up before next year elections.

## • Judiciary

The Judiciary is one of the stakeholders that must be identified as capitalizers of the SDGs, the institution has a high level of participation defining its own governance structure with the explicit commitment of the Supreme Court of Justice, and four SDGs accountability reports.

## • Local Governments

Although they have resources and influence, each local government's level of interest varies. Even though a series of local governments are identified to have adopted and currently implement SDGs in their local plans and policies, further efforts to engage the meaningful participation of local governments and reach Costa Rican territories are needed. In this regard, during 2021, MIDEPLAN, IFAM (Instituto de Fomento y Asesoría Municipal) with UN support started a joint project to provide support to local governments, building an online toolkit for SDGs localization and the launch of the Red de Cantones Promotores de los ODS initiative. As of August 2021, more than 30 local governments are committed to participate.

## • Unions

Unions are also identified as an interesting stakeholder, as they have a high capacity for mobilization, a strong and structured organization with a national scope, clarity on their contribution to the advancement on the 2030 Agenda, and a high political influence and level of interest in promoting the SDGs. The union's representation in the Advisory Committee is very present and have been vocal about their commitment in promoting the Agenda and engaging with multistakeholder initiatives.

During the UN75 round of consultations in 2020, the unions provided several recommendations on how to scale SDG action: promote a national platform that opens the doors for permanent social dialogue and facilitate sectoral consensus to build a shared national development vision with meaningful stakeholder's participation. And within this process, to strive for a "new social contract" that responds to the "new normality" post-COVID-19 and future global trends.

# Assessment on stakeholders' engagement with the 2030 Agenda

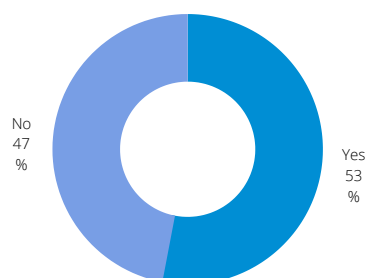
## • Private Sector

The private sector participating in the SDGs National Pact are UCCAEP (Unión Costarricense de Cámaras y Asociaciones del Sector Empresarial Privado - 48 business chapters), and AED (Alianza Empresarial para el Desarrollo - more than 120 companies). AED has developed SDGs training processes and resources and has ventured into joint projects with the SDGs Technical Secretariat around creating mechanisms for companies' SDGs monitoring and contribution. Also, AED directed a VNR business sector consultation with the identification of good case practices and case studies.

In consultations with business chambers, most associations and companies still lack understanding on how to contribute to the SDGs, and how the SDGs bring them value. They are also interested in positioning businesses' benefits and social value, recognizing the SDGs as a roadmap to do it, so they are willing to implement a model that allows them to identify contributions to the SDGs and monetize their benefits.

Companies mentioned Private-Public Partnership as a means to accelerate the SDGs, however, they also commented that there are no state regulations for an agile use of this mechanism, and it's necessary to promote a stronger, more efficient, resilient, and transparent state to promote sustainable development in the short, medium, and long term. The private sector recommends promoting the implementation of due diligence policies and incentives for responsible businesses to support states in achieving sustainable and inclusive development.

### Are companies aware of the SDGs?



In March 2021, the BCCR conducted the Business Performance and Perspective Survey adding two SDGs specific questions. Out of the 375 companies that responded, 53% said they were aware of the 2030 Agenda and 51% mentioned they engaged in specific actions for the SDGs and mostly on environmental impacts, such as recycling, conservation, energy use or green certifications.

### Do companies engage in specific SDGs actions?



## • Universities

The state universities (National Commission of University Deans -CONARE-) are the academic representatives' signatories of the SDGs National Pact. CONARE and the public universities (UNA, TEC, UCR) have participated in national processes convened by the SDGs Technical Secretariat and have incorporated the SDGs' systemic vision within the National Higher Education Plan. In addition, el Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica (TEC) has built an internal online mechanism to follow up and identify their contribution to the SDGs, which is expected to be adopted for other academic institutions.

Also, private universities, even though they are not direct signatories of the SDGs National Pact have demonstrated great interest to participate and promote multistakeholder partnerships. For example, the ULACIT (Universidad Latinoamericana de Ciencia y Tecnología) created an SDGs Observatory, to develop investigation and academic research to identify how the different stakeholders are implementing SDGs and address key issues on sustainable development.



# Assessment on stakeholders' engagement with the 2030 Agenda

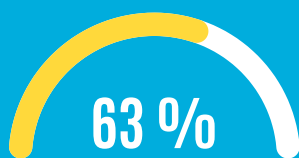
## • Civil Society

The actors representing civil society in the SDGs National Pact are two entities that bring together various civil society organizations: the Platform of Civil Society Organizations for SDGs, a body created for this purpose, and at the time had the participation of 26 organizations, and the Federation of Social Organizations (FOS) which at the time brought together 22 organizations (the latter is currently not active).

"Civil society is who brings the SDGs to life"

## CSOs Platform for the SDGs

The Civil Society Organizations Platform for the SDGs was an instance created in 2016 in an effort to bring together the interests of the various civil society organizations allied to the UNS to participate in the national SDGs implementation processes. The report findings have reflected that the Platform has presented challenges to consolidate a clear work agenda, Its composition has varied several times over the last few years, and currently is not considered for others CSOs as a truly representative space of the universe of civil society in Costa Rica.



of consulted CSOs stated that the CSOs Platform for the SDGs hasn't facilitated a meaningful participation in SDGs processes.

## What do CSOs need to effectively participate and implement the SDGs?

### Accesible Information

- Convening processes are centralized and reduced.
- Information and participation mechanisms must be accesible for all.

"Our identity must be in tune with the SDGs"

### Engagement

- A sector of civil society still doesn't understand the SDGs and how they relate to their daily work.

### Diversity and decentralize approach

- The diverse CSOs/communities' capacities and knowledge must be considered and evaluated.
- Acknowledge the community's reality and proposals.

"There is a great difference between the GAM and rural areas"

### Community & cultural approach

- A communication and training strategy for communities built from a human rights, and culturally relevant perspective its necessary.

### Results & Feedback

- CSOs must be provided with a clear roadmap, expected results, and a feedback mechanism must be in place for any convened process.

"We don't find ourselves in the SDGs"

### Capacity & Support

- CSOs lack proper tools to monitor SDGs advancement.
- A previous step is needed to be able to form a coordination structure and effectively participate in SDGs processes: strengthening CSOs capacities.



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# Conclusions

## 1. The SDGs National Pact is a fundamental milestone to ensure multi-stakeholder participation, however, the SDGs have not yet permeated and are understood by all stakeholders

- There is still a general lack of knowledge about the SDGs among the stakeholders and national institutions.
- Although the National Pact is an open call for the participation of multiple stakeholders through representative or individual instances, more significant efforts are needed to ensure that the voices of vulnerable populations are heard and that critical groups such as indigenous peoples, youth, and people with disabilities can effectively participate.
- Having civil society, private sector, and local government representation at the "table" is not necessarily ensuring that information and the invitation to participate reach stakeholders grassroots.
- Stakeholders have ventured into actions to promote the SDGs. However, most efforts are still executed from silos and sectoral perspectives, and there is still a great opportunity to engage in multi-stakeholder joint initiatives.
- Some companies that are working with SDGs are doing it only from an environmental perspective and not transcending to a multidimensional approach, but the fact that companies are willing to participate in mechanisms and methodologies for measuring SDGs contribution represents an engagement opportunity.
- To accelerate the SDGs, the stakeholders (especially state included) must analyze their capacities to engage in meaningful, effective, and agile partnerships and take corrective measures to build an enabling environment for partnering.
- Greater efforts are needed to make the implementation of the SDGs visible (both institutionally and from the UN) as a cross-cutting roadmap that has been integrated into the planning, execution, reporting, and evaluation processes. Although there are currently development planning instruments aligned with the SDGs, the 2030 Agenda continues to be perceived as an isolated process, and not articulated within the institutions and UN entities.

# Conclusions

## 2. The governance structure is a great effort and mechanism to ensure multi-stakeholder participation, however, their practical operationalization requires strengthening.

- The leadership of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Policy has driven the governance structure to incorporate specific mechanisms for stakeholder engagement.
- The National Pact has great value in promoting the whole-of-society approach necessary for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- The governance structure has presented great challenges in its adequate operationalization (both from the institutional framework and stakeholders).
- Further efforts are needed to ensure quality criteria that allow for effective, inclusive, and sustained participation. Particularly in the dimension of development planning processes. There is a challenge yet to achieve a common understanding of a long-term development vision for Costa Rica.
- Although the figure of the Advisory Committee is an important body for the National Pact signing actors, it has changed its role according to the one proposed in the governance structure.
- The SDGs Technical Secretariat's great efforts to mobilize multi-stakeholder actions are recognized, but in addition, the strategic direction must be revitalized to identify major accelerators for the SDGs in Costa Rica and the commitment of stakeholders around them. Strengthening the drive from the high level is necessary, both from the institutional framework with the High-Level Council, as well as in the participation of multiple stakeholders.
- The administration change in 2022 presents an opportunity to analyze the current governance structure and stakeholder engagement to suggest improvement opportunities and learned lessons for the next administration.
- The VNR 2020 represented an instrument for Costa Rica to revitalize the relationship with stakeholders and explore new forms of engagement. Progress in stakeholder dialogue, willingness, and feasibility to work on joint projects has improved significantly in the last year.

# Conclusions

## 3. The participation of civil society organizations in the SDG processes requires further efforts to be effective.

- The effective participation of Civil Society Organizations in SDG processes has not yet been fully ensured. Currently, it is not advisable to consider the participating civil society entity in the governance structure as a representative body that is evidencing CSO concerns and contributions in SDGs' national implementation processes.
- Institutions have mechanisms for CSO participation that contribute directly to the SDGs (e.g. in public policy and advisory councils), however, these are dispersed and disengage with the governance structure, and are not in all cases linked to the SDGs.
- The SDGs continue to be communicated from a technical, institutional, and centralized perspective without fully transcending into the day-to-day work of the civil society. Some CSOs are unclear about their relationship with the SDGs, how to get involved, and above all, they do not feel a sense of ownership of the Agenda as a commitment for which they must be accountable, disseminate and monitor compliance.
- Therefore, work with civil society must be revitalized and reformulated. To do so, strategies that consider two fundamental elements should be designed:
  1. 2030 Agenda engagement and appropriation for CSOs from a human rights, accessibility, and culturally relevant approach.
  2. Follow-up and supportive structures with clear results and feedback.

# Recommendations

## 1. GENERAL RECOMENDATIONS

- Re-launch the 2030 Agenda and the National Pact for the Advancement of the SDGs to place the SDGs in the public eye and conversation.
- Undertake strengthening processes within institutions and stakeholders to promote the SDGs and build capacities to ensure a partnership culture with a multi-stakeholder approach.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE NATIONAL SDGs MULTI-STAKEHOLDER GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

- Resume the leadership and protagonist role of the High-Level Council in proposing SDG implementation strategies, and in the convening with multiple stakeholders.
- Analyze the governance structure considering lessons learned. Several considerations are offered as a starting point for this discussion:
  1. Restore the Advisory Committee as a consultative body convened by the High-Level Council, ensuring high-level participation also from strategic stakeholders.
  2. Create specific spaces to articulate actions with stakeholders under the SDGs Technical Secretariat leadership.
  3. Draft Terms of Reference for each of the mechanisms created by the governance structure to ensure clear functions operationalization and gender parity.
  4. Guarantee participation of particular groups such as indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, Afro-descendants, and youth.
  5. Three essential standards must be considered to analyze and ensure the quality of stakeholder participation: Openness, Transparency, and Sustainability.
- Strengthen public institutions' knowledge and capacities to implement the SDGs.
- Recognizing the Territorial Strategy 2050 as a highly innovative planning development process is recommended to establish a clear roadmap with the SDGs. The process could serve as an opportunity to strengthen the effective stakeholder's participation in development planning processes. To this end, effective communication, outreach, and participation strategies are required.
- The SDGs Technical Secretariat's boost from the ministerial desk has given an important impetus to the 2030 Agenda, and the Ministry's efforts to strengthen the Technical Secretariat's direction in its engagement with stakeholders are acknowledged. To ensure adequate process sustainability, the Technical Secretariat must also be consolidating itself through an interdisciplinary technical team within the Ministry

# Recommendations

## 3. RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

- To promote representativeness of the diversity of civil society is recommended to decentralize the spaces for participation, identify communal networks and communication channels, ensure accessibility to people with disabilities, and organizing them from a gender perspective.
- Map and promote participation spaces activated by local entities. Working with local governments through the initiative of the *Red de Cantones Promotores de los ODS* represents an opportunity.
- Promote Civil Society engagement from other stakeholders such as academia or the private sector.
- Increasing the visibility of the link between the SDGs and the human rights agenda.
- About the Platform of CSOs for the SDGs: To improve its inclusiveness and effectiveness, a restructuring of the current organizational and working methods of the Platform is recommended. And any of the support options to strengthen this coordination body will require essentially two factors to be considered:
  1. A roadmap with clear and achievable results.
  2. Specific support from an external body (either institutional such as Mideplan or the Ombudsman's Office, or the UN).

# Recommendations

## RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Engagement and appropriation elements	Follow-up structures
Communication and training campaigns that allow CSOs to have a realistic approach to the SDGs, and design from a perspective of human rights, gender, disability, rurality, language, and be culturally relevant	Map and build alliances with grassroots organizations, networks, and media that could act as liaisons, disseminate information, and have convene capacity.
Listen to grassroots CSOs and populations interests, especially considering COVID-19 impacts	Clarity in the roadmap and feedback to the participating CSOs for each of the consultation processes, and use their inputs for national policies and UNS Cooperation Framework and strategic plans.
Opportunity for CSOs to monitor institutional commitments.	Enable an online mechanism to visualize progress and track SDGs institutional commitments. For example, linking it to the online dashboard enabled for the PNDIP 2019-2022 follow-up reports, and align the participation mechanisms already enabled by the institutions with the SDGs is also recommended.
Participation in Voluntary National and Local Reviews.	Strengthen CSO capacities to SDG monitor and report and engage the identified key CSOs and liaisons to support convening and gather inputs. The Data Partnership initiative is highlighted as an engagement vehicle for CSOs in this regard.

# Recommendations

## 3. RECOMENDATIONS for the UN

- The role of the UN in SDG implementation processes with civil society needs to be clarified. Sometimes, CSOs themselves do not quite understand the role of the UN. For smaller organizations, there is a perception of positioning or conditionality of the UN agenda exists, which does not necessarily align with what communities need.
- As part of the process of formulating the CCA and the new Cooperation Framework, a diagnosis of the situation of the populations is recommended, bearing in mind the effects of COVID and identifying SDG work priorities for each one of them.
- Strengthen the dissemination and visibility of the 2030 Agenda in all processes related to the entities' work with the communities. Although the UNS contribution to the SDGs is clear in the information available in UN INFO, this connection is not visible in the day-to-day work of all entities.
- Reinforce the link between the Human Rights agenda and the SDGs. The CSOs that stated that they were not clear about the SDGs' usefulness are the ones that are most clear about their alignment with the human rights treaty bodies' recommendations. By establishing this connection clearly, an entry point with these CSOs and greater insight into their ways of contributing will be available.
- Establish clear feedback processes for open consultations with civil society. CSOs have the perception that they are called upon to provide information, but do not receive clear feedback or benefit for participating in these consultation processes.
- Analyze jointly within the UNS which of the participation mechanisms identified by civil society could be promoted and supported by the work of the Agencies, Funds, and Programs.
- Further generate spaces for advocacy and dialogue with the National Pact's signatory strategic stakeholders, especially those that have a high level of influence and resources but little interest in participating. The United Nations is in a privileged position to highlight the aggregate value of aiming at the SDGs and to strengthen stakeholders' capacities to do so.
- The United Nations has a clear mandate to support the countries to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Therefore, it is critical that the UNS is prepared to provide adequate support for the country in its change of administration and undertake respective actions to support the strengthening of civil society capacities stemming from this report.



# Next Steps

## Where do we go from here?

Certainly, this project has provided useful inputs to the RCO to strengthen the stakeholder's dimension in SDGs processes, the follow-up immediate actions will be to identify and analyze the recommendations presented in this report in coordination with strategic stakeholders, with the aim of identifying specific actions for proposal to the High-Level Council and the Advisory Committee in light of the end of this Administration and in transition with the next government, to make sure that the Agenda 2030 remains as a national priority.

- 01 ————— Share findings with UNCT and National Counterparts.
- 02 ————— Engage in feedback sessions with CSOs and design an action plan to initiate a conscious process to strengthen their participation capacity.
- 03 ————— Identify specific actions to present for the SDGs High-Level Council and Advisory Committee before the end of this Administration.

# Strengthen the Multistakeholder Dimension in National Development Planning and the Mainstreaming of the SDGs in Costa Rica



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