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Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

He Waka Eke Noa. Towards a Better Future, Together New Zealand's Progress Towards the SDGs 2019
Draft Report

Comments from Transparency International New Zealand (TINZ)

Our Expertise on this Topic

Transparency International New Zealand (TINZ) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on this matter. It fits closely with our objectives, and we are pleased to offer an expert civil society perspective, particularly in relation to the Chapter on Goal 16.

We would be very happy to meet with you or provide additional material in support of our submission if that would be useful.

In preparing this submission TINZ has relied on its National System Integrity Assessment 2018 update which was published on 22 May 2019.

Our chief contributors to this report are our CEO Julie Haggie, our Chairperson Suzanne Snively and one of our Members with Delegated Authority, and expertise in SDGs David Dunsheath.

1. General observations

- 1.1 The overall content of this draft VNR provides a reasonable account of the New Zealand context and offers a broad overview of what our country aims to achieve.
- 1.2 It is very disappointing that this draft VNR offers no linkages to the Targets that underly each SDG, let alone any Indicators underlying the Targets. A key objective of the SDGs is to come up with identified linkages and measurable milestones and outcomes so as to be able to monitor achievements and what to do better when Targets are under-achieved.
- 1.3 **TINZ recommends** that the narratives under 'Challenges' and 'Initiatives Underway' subheadings, be re-parcelled under individual Target subheadings, with links to relevant Target Indicators to reveal trends already on record. By this means New Zealand can better demonstrate that it is 'on board' and committed to the objectives of the SDG 2030 programme.
- 1.4 As the first country to implement a wellbeing framework, New Zealand is well placed to commit to SDG Targets and to monitor successes and failures against them.
- 1.5 TINZ notes that there has been considerable progress in measuring outcomes relevant to the SDGs by the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency and suggests that this be included in the relevant Target indicators.

2. Voluntary National Review (VNR) Introduction

- 2.1 Our observation on the Government's engagement with SDGs to date is that *The New Zealand government may have accepted the invitation to the SDG party, but has not stepped onto the dance floor*. This is reflected in the very general introduction to the VNR.
- 2.2 TINZ recommends that the report acknowledges the very good engagement in the SDGs by a range of businesses and by the NGO and academic sectors in New Zealand, and that government is now increasing its activity.
- 2.3 TINZ recommends providing an example from Whānau Ora programmes (examples can be accessed through the Commissioning Agency). Although the Whānau Ora providers have designed their monitoring to their specific populations and purpose, many of the linkages and targets are aligned with SDGs. They have five years experience measuring their indicators and working out what works best in changing outcomes for people – those outcomes sitting under poverty, healthy eating, health and well-being, quality education and gender equality, decent work and reduced inequality.
- 2.4 The introduction orients New Zealand's response to SDGs, towards the New Zealand government priorities and policies. We acknowledge that each Government administration has its priorities. However TINZ recommends that New Zealand adopts a more consistent and coordinated approach to the SDGs over time so that we are not tied so tightly to the election cycle.
- 2.5 TINZ recommends: that clarity be given over the role of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade working with Statistics New Zealand, other relevant government agencies specific to the various SDG Goals and agencies such as Te Puni Kokiri and the Whānau Ora Commissioning Agency, for future gathering and reporting on progress towards achievement of the SDGs within the remaining 11 years until 2030.

3. Goal 16

- 3.1 Given our mission and objectives to prevent corruption, Transparency International New Zealand's focus is mainly on the SDG 16 section of the report. We submitted two case studies for the development of the VNR draft, which outlined what is further clarified in our submission.
- 3.2 In summary TINZ considers that the response on SDG 16 in the draft report misses a great opportunity to highlight excellent progress under several of the targets and indicators that accompany them, as well as important challenges.
- 3.3 Transparency International New Zealand is happy to provide evidence for out points under 3.5-3.11 below – these are also detailed in our recently released and thorough report [New Zealand National Integrity System Assessment 2018 update \(NIS assessment\)](#). In addition to this NIS assessment, TINZ tracks New Zealand's progress in implementing its Pledges to the 2016 London Anti-Corruption Summit, and analyses New Zealand's score and rating in the Corruption Perceptions Index.
- 3.4 **Abuse of children (16.2)** Violence against women is addressed in some depth, but there is light touch on the abuse of children and government and civil society approaches to it, though there is a government policy focus on child poverty. The Children's Commissioner can add depth to this topic, as can the cohort analysis that informs the work of Oranga Tamariki.

- 3.5 **Access to Justice (16.3)** The chapter touches on access to justice but does not address the impact of justice and illegal activity on the population (we note for example the very high rate of experience of crime by specific groups of people, and the experience of Maori and Pacific people in the justice system). The Ministry of Justice focus on restorative justice is relevant to the 16.3 targets.
- 3.6 **Illicit flows of money and arms, reducing organised crime, and reducing bribery and corruption (16.4 and 16.5).** There has been substantial work in this area, and the efforts are having a positive impact to reduce the flow of money, drugs and the power of organised crime in New Zealand. Not least are:
- the ratification by New Zealand of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and the monitoring of observance of the convention in the upcoming Financial Action Taskforce Review;
 - a suite of anti-corruption and organised crime legislation passed in 2016 including the implementation of anti-money laundering provisions for financial institutions, lawyers, accountants, real estate agents and sellers of high value goods;
 - legislative progress towards more transparency in the beneficial ownership of companies and other legal entities which has placed a limitation on money laundering;
 - a national anti-corruption programme developed by the Ministry of Justice, the Serious Fraud Office and other government agencies;
 - increased resourcing for the Financial Crimes Group which has resulted in more focused activity around financial crimes, including organised crime, particularly by the Police and SFO but also the involvement of other government agencies such as Customs, DPMC, MBIE, Justice, DIA where their knowledge can leverage enforcement, and, ideally crime prevention; and
 - a review of the Protected Disclosures Act 2000, now underway;
- 3.7 TINZ also wants to bring to the attention of those leading the SDG monitoring for New Zealand two important features of the SDG anti-corruption Targets:
- they are being designed to be a universal measure of corruption so that the levels and learning about corruption in different countries can be compared and contrasted as a means of learning better way to address it.
 - there is a target to measure corruption in the private sector, filling a current large gap (Transparency International's measure of corruption, the Corruption Perceptions Index, focuses only on corruption in the public sector).
- 3.8 **Accountable Institutions (16.6):** This is touched on in relation to the Corruption perceptions Index. However, there is more to be said about other indicators of progress to improve accountability. Our NIS Assessment update provides evidence of progress in many areas, which include:
- stronger formal processes now in place for public procurement, and compliance appears to be high.
 - a review of the State Sector Act
 - opening of Minister's diaries
 - work programmes of the Office of the Auditor General and the Ombudsman across many areas of public sector accountability
 - provision of online data sets for the public
 - a Wellbeing Framework and Wellbeing Budget

3.9 Representation and participation (16.7): The main focus under this heading could be on the Open Government Partnership, and the development of National Action Plans.

“Since 2018, officials working on the OGP National Action Plan (NAP) commitments have been actively supported by Cabinet and there has been increased collaboration between government agencies. This increased effort has led to greater originality, greater ambition and a greater number of NAP commitments. There are three times the number of commitments in NAP 3 compared with the high-level, first Action Plan. This offers much greater potential for more civil society and community participation.”¹

While the NAP 3 commitments are far more ambitious than in the earlier OGP Action Plans, there is potential for even further improvement, as we note in our NIS assessment.

“In most areas of policy formation, opportunities for public consultation could be better designed. It appears that government agencies are giving insufficient priority and funding to the development of expertise in and technology capacity and other resources required for public consultation that empowers people to speak up.”²

A further area of focus could be on the work going on to increase diversity in public services and on public Boards.

3.10 Public Access to information (16.10 and in particular 16.10.2): There are three progress points that could be made and some areas for further improvement. The first is that the State Services Commission and the Ombudsman have worked to improve responsiveness to public requests for information. The second is that the effectiveness of the Ombudsman has been enhanced by an increase in resources to build capacity. The third is that a review of the Official Information Act is being considered. Other progress points include the online publication of cabinet papers, led by the Speaker, and the online publication of all New Zealand legislation, led by the PCO.

3.11 Freedom of journalists (16.10.1): Our NIS Assessment includes a pillar assessment on media in New Zealand and we make a recommendation about the media. We also think it is pertinent to consider how New Zealand responds in situations where New Zealand journalists respond to contentious political issues (such as the publications that have led to the Afghanistan inquiry) and where they face difficulty overseas. There are examples of NZ journalists arrested in Fiji and Nauru, which are relevant to this target and indicator.

¹ New Zealand National Integrity System, Assessment - 2018 update, p34
<https://www.transparency.org.nz/national-integrity-system-assessment-2018-update/>

² New Zealand National Integrity System Assessment - 2018 update, p34

4. What is the National Integrity System Assessment?

On 22 May 2019, TINZ launched its [National Integrity System Assessment 2018 update](#) (NIS 2018) from its earlier 2013 NIS. The NIS is basically a country risk profile. A temple diagram is a useful way of thinking about the components that contribute to a national integrity system. 12 'pillars' make up the system (Legislature, Executive, Judiciary, Public Sector, Law Enforcement, Electoral Management, Ombudsman, Audit Institution, Political Parties, Media, Civil Society and Business). The 12 pillars rest on foundations: the key norms, ideals and ethics of New Zealand society: political, social, cultural, economic, the Treaty of Waitangi and Environmental governance. If the foundations of a society are sound then they are capable of supporting a sound national integrity system. If the pillars and the connections between them are strong then we are more likely to have a society with high integrity.



Ongoing assessment of the linkages that lead to improvements in the pillars provides a further monitoring tool that New Zealand could be applying to measure progress on the SDG 2030 Targets.

For further information on this submission contact:

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