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# VNR LABS

## HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM

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### **(Virtual) VNR lab 12: Governance and policy integration in the context of COVID-19**

14 July 2021, 08:00-09:00 am (Eastern Daylight Time, New York)

*Online - via Zoom*

#### **Concept note**

Organized by: Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government of the United Nations  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Description: The COVID-19 pandemic has presented an important test of policy integration and institutional coherence as well as opportunities to strengthen horizontal and vertical integration. Success in responding to the pandemic and building back better depends on mobilizing and effectively coordinating efforts of multiple sectors and all levels of government.

The sustainable development goals (SDGs) are interlinked and their implementation requires governance that effectively addresses the synergies and tradeoffs in policymaking. Policy integration, the notion that public policies in different sectors should not undermine each other, but rather work in synergy, underpins the SDGs. The management of the pandemic requires horizontal integration to provide effective responses, which encompass many policy areas and involve more than one ministry. COVID19 has been a test of whether policy integration across different sectors works well and whether governments have been effective in promoting whole-of-government approaches when urgently needed.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the importance of effective multi-level governance and integration. Sub-national governments are at the frontline of crisis response and recovery, and vertical coordination among national and subnational governments is critical in controlling and responding to the pandemic. In the longer term, lessons from the pandemic may in some contexts lead to a reconsideration of the balance between centralized and decentralized territorial management as well as coordination mechanisms among levels of government.

This VNR Lab will discuss the challenges and opportunities that COVID-19 presents for governance and policy integration. It will highlight country experiences that have supported

effective governance and integrated policymaking, and consider actions that might help countries move policy integration forward to build back better.

Guiding questions:

The Lab discussions will focus on the following questions:

- What are some of the governance challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic laid bare in terms of horizontal and vertical policy integration?
- Has the COVID-19 pandemic derailed efforts to promote policy integration, reinforced them, or had no major impact? Why or why not?
- What role have multilevel governance approaches (e.g. collaboration between national and local level public institutions) played in effective pandemic responses? Is COVID-19 reshaping multi-level governance?
- What are lessons learnt from both successful and unsuccessful cases of policy integration in the context of COVID-19?
- What actions would be needed in terms of horizontal and vertical integration to strengthen the preparedness of countries to shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What actions should governments consider to move forward on policy integration to build back better?

Format: The Lab will last for 1 hour and will be organized as an interactive dialogue. Five speakers will be invited to make short initial interventions (approximately 5 minutes). A moderated open discussion will follow, based on the questions presented above. Speakers are invited to address questions and comments in short and focused responses. Use of PowerPoint presentations is discouraged.

The VNR lab will take place under the Chatham House rule to allow for candid discussions. This also applies to the use of social media during the event.

Language: The VNR lab will take place in English only.