

JAPAN's Third Voluntary National Review
at the HLPF Voluntary National Reviews (3rd panel)
22 July 2025

(Mr. MIYAJI Takuma, State Minister for Foreign Affairs)
Honorable Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,

It is a pleasure to present Japan's third Voluntary National Review.

Japan remains committed to achieving the SDGs. Today, I would like to highlight three lessons of our VNR.

First, multi-stakeholder engagement. It is essential to address our challenges such as declining birthrates and aging populations, regional revitalization, and disaster risk reduction.

Second, growth and sustainability are compatible. This represents a realistic pathway toward the SDGs. We need to leverage efforts to solve social challenges as engines for growth. Thus, Japan is strategically investing in people and promoting green and digital transformations.

Third, active international exchange and knowledge sharing that underpins the SDGs. The ongoing Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, serves as a vital platform for such exchange.

Honorable Chairperson,

Japan is making steady progress on SDGs in many areas such as a three-year increase in healthy life expectancy over the past two decades, record declines in net greenhouse gas emissions in 2023. Further efforts are needed in areas such as gender equality.

Achieving the SDGs requires greater solidarity among all. This is what Japan has been advocating through its promotion of human security. This VNR also emphasizes the principles of “Leave No One Behind” and “Everyone will make it happen everywhere!”

I would like to share the story of a brave wheelchair user, paralyzed from an acquired disability. She developed an app that shares accessibility information. By this app, everyone, including wheelchair users themselves, can significantly contribute to a society where wheelchair-users are not left behind.

Moreover, advancement of innovations is crucial for SDGs progress. An excellent example is next-generation solar cells, designed for widespread deployment everywhere.

Please take a look at our video.

(Video: 2 minutes) <https://youtu.be/OlbyRVLdRss>

Ms. ODA Yuriiko is with us today. We will hear brief remarks from Ms. Oda, followed by Mr. Chiba, the representative of a youth organization, and Professor Kanie, who supervised the independent evaluation by stakeholders.

(Ms. ODA Yuriiko, Founder and Executive Director of the NGO “WheeLog”)

This journey has taught me that, even though we have disabilities, we can contribute to society. We deserve to make choices, like what to wear or where to go. With the right support, even people with severe disabilities can live fully. I hope today encourages us to believe that we don't have to give up on anything — together, we can create a world in which anyone can go anywhere.

(Mr. CHIBA Soichiro, Chair, G7/G20 Youth Japan/ Founder, Thousandleaf)

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

My name is Soichiro Chiba, and I serve on Japan's SDGs advisory board.

There are three key points I would like to share.

First, like many countries, Japan faces a challenge: for many people, SDGs still feel distant from their everyday happiness. My team conducted a global survey on well-being, and identified three drivers of happiness: health, growth, and deep personal connection—which reinforce one another. So, if SDGs aren't making people happier, something essential may be missing. We believe that missing piece it is “growth”.

This leads to the second point: countries must own the capacity of disruptive innovation which is the key driver of sustainable growth. Disruptive innovation arises from the commercialization of ideas that transform existing systems. This explains why countries that focus on infrastructure often grow more slowly than those that turn infrastructure into downstream value—often through products, global brands and digital platforms.

Third, to accelerate disruptive innovation aligned with the SDGs, countries must empower all generations—but especially the active generation, who often lead such transformation. This means equipping them with skills and strategic intelligence to understand where their efforts can have the greatest impact. Doing so would require collaboration among governments, academia, and the private sector.

By connecting growth to the SDGs, we believe more people will not only prosper but also feel genuinely happier. This is the vision of “Happy Economics”, and Japan is called upon to pursue this model of

innovation-driven sustainability with the world.

Thank you.

(Mr. KANIE Norichika, Professor, Keio University Graduate School)

There are two important dimensions in this VNR.

First, we have included an extensive review by stakeholders. Reviewing the progress by applying the global indicator is important, but not sufficient in terms of understanding the actual progress on the ground. Therefore, we introduced multistakeholder review, using quantitative and qualitative data, in order to capture the reality of implementation. As a result, such review included critical analyses of governmental behavior. To my view, the very fact that the review included criticism, by itself, is the strength of Japan's VNR. As we, academics, often say, we cannot grow without criticism.

Second is the process. Stakeholder review have been emphasized right from the beginning. A few multi-stakeholder meetings were organized involving governmental and non-governmental actors, and we have gone through a "public comment" process before finalizing the VNR. Legendary figure on sustainable development, Mr. Maurice Strong once said, "process is policy". Japan's VNR implemented this important notion, and is presenting a unique model of democracy.

Why do we review? The review is made for the benefit of future improvement. We should start thinking about how pros and cons of the implementation of the SDG could feed into actions going beyond 2030 Agenda. In Japan a multi-stakeholder dialogue is kicking-off in September, and I have an ambition to take a lead in expanding such dialogue to Asia and beyond, bearing in mind the importance of constructive criticism and the process.

I thank you for your attention.