



# GREENLINES

A newsletter of the INTOSAI Working Group on Environmental Auditing

Vol. 24, No. 2

WGEA.org

July 2023

## Message from the Chair



Dear INTOSAI WGEA Members and other readers,

One of the main activities for INTOSAI WGEA during the early part of 2023 was the 19<sup>th</sup> INTOSAI WGEA Steering Committee meeting in Rabat, Morocco, 13-16 March, where we kicked off the new Work Plan Period for 2023-2025. The meeting's vibrant atmosphere and the positive feedback received showed how important it is to meet in person from time to time. In-person meetings are even more important when we welcome new members to the Working Group and Steering Committee.

My personal attendance is also needed in football as a soccer dad, which consumes most of my after work hours. Although football is a free-time activity, it holds valuable lessons for working life, too. It shows how one must strive to work as part of a team, where everyone has their own important role and accomplishments cannot be achieved by oneself alone. The team is as strong as its weakest player, so no one should be left behind, not in football or sustainable development.

I can find many links between the environment and football. As those of you who participated in the online 18th Steering Committee Meeting in 2021 know, Finland's national football team is called The Eagle Owls. The name stems from the infamous Bubi owl that interrupted the 2017 Belgium-Finland European Championship match by flying across the football field and taking its time on top of the goal post. The incident truly proved the beauty and power of nature. Football can also have a powerful and influential role in environmental actions. The United Nations (UN) initiative, Football for the Goals, launched in 2022 and encourages the global football community to advocate for climate action, among other UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Environmental auditing is another good example of an effort that needs continuous teamwork. I have been happy to witness the team efforts of the WGEA member SAIs towards the new collaborative projects. I look forward to seeing the results unfold over the course of the work plan year.

**Dr. Sami Yläoutinen, Chair of INTOSAI, Auditor General of SAI Finland**

## Feature Story

### Public Sector Sustainability Reporting: It's Time to Step It Up

The future of our planet is currently balanced on a knife edge. Whilst the World Meteorological Organisation has estimated that the acceleration of global warming...

Continued on [Page 2](#)

### WGEA News

19<sup>th</sup> Steering Committee Meeting, INTOSAI WGEA website update, and new Work Plan

See page 4

### Regional News

Updates from ARABOSAI, COMTEMA, and EUROSAI

See page 5

### News Briefs from Around the SAI World



**Bahrain:** Focus on environmental issues and goals

**Cyprus:** Environmental management of Akamas Peninsula

**Czech Republic:** Nature conservation and landscape management

**Ecuador:** Comptroller General awarded "Green Initiative Distinction"

**Egypt:** SAI Egypt participates in INTOSAI WGEA Steering Committee Meeting

**India:** Netting open resources for seas

**Kuwait:** Evaluating the efficiency of government entities in dealing with climate change impacts

**Latvia:** Management of mineral resources

**Lithuania:** Municipal waste management

**South Africa:** Identifying material irregularities during public sector audits

**Tanzania:** Management of invasive alien species

**Thailand:** SAI Thailand leads research on climate finance accountability

**Türkiye:** UN-SAI country-level collaboration on SDG audits: recommendations for auditors

Briefs start on [Page 8](#)

## Public Sector Sustainability Reporting: It's Time to Step It Up

Continued from Page 1

is such that we are likely to see the planet hit, even exceed, the 1.5°C limit as soon as 2027, the most recent [Climate Change 2023 Synthesis Report](#), provided by the United Nations Environment Programme, indicates that we still have an opportunity to avoid this catastrophe, but only if we act swiftly. We do not have the luxury of sitting back any longer. At the same time national governments are tackling significant social issues, some of these issues, such as poverty and inequality, are exacerbated by climate change.

Governments are taking the lead in this charge by signing up to various global initiatives aimed at contributing to and achieving sustainable development and preventing catastrophic consequences for future generations. However, success requires action by different levels of government, public agencies, and other public sector organisations. They are increasingly expected to lead by example and take responsibility for how our way of living and working has an impact upon the planet and people.

In steering the public sector to better support global movements to reduce climate change, poverty, and inequality, greater effort needs to be extended in setting out how individual organisations, agencies, and local government areas can act to make a positive contribution. Here is where my research, conducted in partnership with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)—the only professional accountancy body in the world exclusively dedicated to public finance—seeks to provide a way forward, by providing guidance and a framework for sustainability action, implementation, and public accountability through reporting.

When it comes to sustainability reporting in the public sector, it is clear that efforts need to be significantly stepped up. One challenge to achieving this is the proliferation of multiple sources of guidance with different indicators. These have been developed to address specific organisations, subsectors within the public sector, and different local government areas or states, even within the same country. Whilst well-intentioned, such a multiplicity of options is, ultimately, inefficient. With everyone singing from slightly different hymn sheets, it is hard for the positives of such efforts to be seen and heard. Comparisons cannot easily

be made and staff cannot easily move from one organisation to another.



There is a greater need for transparency, such as better access to information on management approaches to identifying material impacts, how sustainability considerations are incorporated into policy and strategy, and governance oversight. Comparable data on the level of public sector organisations' impact and the outcomes of policies and programmes is needed.

The report, aimed at global public sector bodies and their regulators; accounting, finance, and sustainability professionals; and national and global policy influencers and regulators charts a path to consistency in order to assist national governments in meeting their commitments to the UN SDGs, the Paris Agreement, the UN Guiding Principles (on Business and Human Rights), and their citizens.

The report seeks to assist those preparing public sector sustainability reports to further develop their public disclosures and reporting strategy. There are benefits to information sharing, strategic and operational planning, and future decision making.

Rather than setting out yet another new approach, the guidance draws on global reporting initiatives already in existence, particularly the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards, and also the International Public Sector Accounting Standards Board (IPSASB) and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Standards, and the Sustainable Development Goals Disclosure (SDGD) Recommendations. It sets out steps

Continued on Page 3

Continued from Page 2

to guide organisations to further develop their reporting regardless of where they currently are on the sustainability reporting journey. It considers how the disclosures made in these reports inform strategy including, for example, products and services provided and capital expenditure projects.



<https://www.globalreporting.org/standards/>

Under the Paris Accords, 139 governments committed to net zero by 2050. This brings legal requirements for many public sector organisations. The UN SDGs speak beyond the environment, emissions, and data to consider human rights and standards of living. Aims such as ending poverty and hunger, ensuring quality education for all, reducing social inequality, and driving gender parity are expected to be delivered upon by governments and, by extension, the public sector. Accountability across the board is becoming ever more important.

Geopolitical “megatrends” also present challenges. These are events and circumstances that are felt on a global scale, such as the recent pandemic and wider healthcare access, shifts in geopolitical power and conflict, citizen activism, and even the growing influence of technology and AI. These megatrends bring consequences, not only for how organisation’s operate, but also for the future of humanity and, as such the impact upon the sustainability efforts governments put in place.

One of the biggest problems for sustainability reporting lies in achieving reliability and consistency. To address this, the report published by CIPFA guides organisations through a process to develop their sustainability reports using global standards developed through rigorous consultation processes. Whatever their current stage in developing sustainability reporting, it helps them “step it up” by, for example, pointing to appropriate information to gather and understanding their own responsibilities. They can reap benefits by doing so. Consistency of approach using global standards increases stakeholder understanding and facilitates capacity building and skills transferability between organisations. This facilitates the building of a critical mass of experts.

The report encourages preparers to be innovative— considering and developing disclosures that are not yet asked for. To put it simply, there is always more to do, whether looking to curb emissions, tighten up supply chains, invest in better data collection technologies, or in extending greater effort to reach out beyond a public sector organisation’s current thinking and strategy to make an active contribution to wider societal needs.

The report sets out the steps for planning an initial report and, from there, developing a bespoke reporting strategy for individual organisations to consider where they can most effectively make progress, and build and expand upon those in the next few years. From considering what to disclose, to enhancing the credibility and quality of the information an organisation chooses to share, these steps ensure an inclusive, transparent and, most importantly, impactful strategy can be set out, shared, and followed.

There is no question as to whether public sector organisations should report their sustainability efforts. The information is vital for showing where progress is being made, informing public-private partnerships, and building and maintaining stakeholder trust, as commitments to supporting a greener and fairer world become ever more important.

The report authored by Carol Adams, “*Public Sector Sustainability Reporting: Time To Step It Up*” is available to download and read via The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy – [www.cipfa.org](http://www.cipfa.org).

*Carol Adams is Professor of Accounting at Durham University Business School in England. She is Chair of the GRI’s Global Sustainability Standards Board as well as Chair of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland’s (ICAS) Sustainability Panel, and member of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy’s (CIPFA) Public Finance International Advisory Panel. Carol’s research and advisory activities focus on global corporate sustainability reporting.*



## Greetings from the Secretariat

The first half of 2023 has been busy at the INTOSAI WGEA Secretariat. In February, the Secretariat welcomed its newest addition, Project Specialist Ms. Kati Hirvonen. Kati transferred to INTOSAI WGEA from the UN University World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER), where she worked as a Project Associate. Kati holds a master's degree in economics from the University of Helsinki and has also worked at the Finnish Ministry of Finance.

In March, the Secretariat, in collaboration with the Moroccan Court of Accounts, held the 19th Steering Committee Meeting in Rabat, Morocco. In addition to discussing current topics regarding the work of INTOSAI WGEA, the meeting also launched the Work Plan and its projects for 2023-2025. These projects are introduced in the pitch talk videos made by project leaders that can be found on [INTOSAI WGEA's Youtube Channel](#). In addition, the Secretariat also distributed a survey in June to the whole INTOSAI to collect input for the projects.

In April, the Secretariat focused on updating and renewing the INTOSAI WGEA website. As you may have noticed, the front page now features the Secretariat's latest Twitter posts as well as three more news items. The update work is continuous and more information on WGEA activities is provided online on a rolling basis. For instance, in late June, the Secretariat published a webpage for each project under 2023-2025 Work Plan. We also aim to ensure easier access to information on existing training possibilities on [WGEA.org](#). Related to capacity strengthening activities, we have also inquired members about their willingness to form mentoring arrangements in order to pilot this initiative during this Work Plan period.

As decided in the 19th Steering Committee meeting, the INTOSAI WGEA, in collaboration with SAI UAE and a few other partners, is considering to organize an in-person event at COP28 to build on the experience of webinars held in the context of previous UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

(UNFCCC) COP meetings (see COP27 and COP26). The suggestion is that the event could highlight INTOSAI WGEA's climate-related projects and member SAIs activities. In April, the Secretariat sent out a questionnaire to members asking for their insight on INTOSAI WGEA's participation in COP28 in Dubai.

As it was pointed out in the INTOSAI WGEA Chair's words, in-person presence is important from time to time to exchange knowledge and enhance cooperation. In May, the Secretariat supported the PASAI regional WGEA meeting in Sydney by delivering a training for regional member SAIs on environmental auditing and SDGs. The Secretariat also attended the EUROSAI WGEA Spring Session 2023 in Warsaw. The topic of the meeting was "Climate Change: Progress made in Adaptation Efforts."

Among a few other SDGs, the environment-related goals on clean water and sanitation (SDG6), affordable and clean energy (SDG9), and sustainable cities and communities (SDG11) were under review at this year's High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) held in New York in July. Together with several partners, including the INTOSAI General Secretariat and INTOSAI Development Initiative, INTOSAI WGEA organized a side event to share experiences, audit insights, recommendations, and examples of actions taken towards the implementation of above SDGs. Also, the latest audit results related to these SDGs were summarized in a [blog post](#) published on [WGEA.org](#).

In the second half of 2023, the Secretariat continues preparing and planning for the INTOSAI WGEA Assembly to be held in Rovaniemi, Finland from 22-24 January 2024. This will be the 22nd INTOSAI WGEA Assembly, with a thematic focus on Arctic environmental change as well as indigenous environmental knowledge. We look forward to welcoming you to the Arctic Circle in January!



## ARABOSAI: Sustainable Development & COVID-19

Between 15-17 March 2022, ARABOSAI participated in the 2022 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development under the motto: “Recovery and Resilience”. The event was headed by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and was organized in person and virtually by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). The forum brought together Arab governments, representatives, and stakeholders concerned with sustainable development to discuss the achieved progress, review national and regional experiences, and examine the latest updates on sustainable development and implementation mechanisms for national and regional levels.

ARABOSAI made a presentation during the 5th specialized session entitled, “How can SAIs support recovery from COVID-19 Pandemic and Implementation of SDGs in the Arab region?” A representative of ARABOSAI reviewed its role in supporting members’ recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and implementing SDGs in the Arab region. They also presented the results of the organization’s questionnaire carried out on a representative sample of 12 member SAIs. The survey included three main axes: (1) the challenges faced by ARABOSAI before and during the pandemic, including solutions and reforms to overcome challenges, (2) future opportunities for SAIs to support the UNs’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and (3) lessons learned and prioritized procedures to strengthen the role of SAIs and their preparedness to fulfill the Agenda’s mandate of enhancing transparency and accountability in crisis situations, and support the most resistant, inclusive, and environmentally respectful recovery.

Regarding the first axis, the most significant challenge ARABOSAI found its members faced was difficulty communicating with audited entities in the case of partial and full quarantine. This led to challenges in accessing information and records and taking observations directly, as well as exposure to many problems and technological malfunctions. SAIs that lack electronic auditing systems or contact with governments, or where employees cannot communicate remotely, faced further significant difficulties. ARABOSAI recommended resorting to remote implementation of auditing tasks using modern technologies and described the benefits of remote auditing in the continuation of auditing functions. It also noted the need to follow safe auditing pathways by monitoring, documenting, and analyzing government

responses, developing new control methods, and developing the methodologies of SAIs as appropriate.

Regarding the second axis, future opportunities for SAIs to support the 2030 Agenda, ARABOSAI clarified the opportunities that the member SAIs can exploit. The most important opportunity for SAIs is to maintain effective communication with audited entities and other stakeholders during the various stages of crises, improve opportunities for remote communication, and establish remote learning platforms while developing audit and monitoring approaches.



With regard to the third axis on lessons learned, fostering the role of SAIs, enhancing transparency and accountability in crisis situations and supporting the most environmentally respectful recovery, ARABOSAI recommended taking advantage of electronic governance. This includes remote auditing technology, providing secure access to electronic files allowing the auditor to review them virtually, and strengthening capacities to improving the provision of information, knowledge, and experiences exchange about the pandemic and crises with all supervisory, executive and legislative entities. ARABOSAI also indicated that multiple short and rapid reports can be more useful and important than overdue comprehensive individual reports in providing timely contributions to legislative and executive SAIs during crises.

This analysis was conducted by ARABOSAI in the context of its permanent communication with the member SAIs and in its constant endeavor to document the experience generated by audits undertaken in normal circumstances in general and in exceptional circumstances in particular, as well as in its concern to continuously exchange and transfer the knowledge to all member SAIs and all regional and international organizations working in the same field.

Continued from Page 5

## ARABOSAI: The SDGs & Climate Change

The Arab region is one of the regions that is most vulnerable to climate change. In this context, the ARABOSAI SDG Committee participated in the 2022 Arab Regional Parliamentary Forum on the 2030 Agenda. Participating in this forum was a unique opportunity to study the role of parliaments in cooperation with the Arab SAIs in addressing climate change threats in the Arab region, especially after Egypt hosted the UN convention on Climate Change conference (COP 27).



The forum focused on topics related to climate change, including addressing adaptation to the impacts of climate change in the Arab region and assessing its impacts, particularly on water and other food production resources (land and biodiversity) in addition to its social and economic repercussions. Moreover, the forum included analyzing the policy responses needed to adapt to such impacts, along with protection of marginalized and vulnerable groups, and the role of parliaments in collaboration with SAIs in developing them while benefiting from expertise of the region and beyond.

The forum also discussed mitigating the impacts of climate change, taking into account the related socioeconomic commitment in the Arab region.

The forum has paid special attention to expanding climate finance in the Arab region, where the Arab countries have shown their full commitment to reducing the risks of climate change. For example:

- Jordan has developed a Green work plan (2021-2025) as well as adopting an initiative to establish digital platforms in order to keep track of emissions and other indicators.
- Somalia, Sudan, and UAE have cooperated to build centers and networks for climate change research and it is monitoring cooperation with the public sector.

It is obvious that negative impacts of climate change threaten and impede progress in achieving many of the SDGs in the Arab region. Thus, governments, together with SAIs, nongovernmental organizations, and civil society should collaborate to create and implement long-term work plans that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, support renewable energy sources, protect forests, and enhance sustainable agricultural methods, as well as strengthen efforts to support international cooperation to address impacts resulting from climate change.

## OLACEFS COMTEMA's Chair Kicks Off ClimateScanner Design Phase

The ClimateScanner project is now in its design phase. The goal of the project is to develop a tool for rapid assessment of government actions that address climate change. The initiative aims to conduct evaluations at the national level, consolidate data on a global scale, produce useful information for the planning of future work by SAIs regarding climate change, and communicate relevant information to stakeholders.

The Executive Group, which includes representatives from 18 SAIs, is organized into four teams that are developing the methodology for each of three focus areas—governance, public policy, and finance—as well as for a survey to identify SAIs' training needs related to climate change.

The design phase officially started with virtual project kick-off meetings, held February 27-28, 2023, with

representatives from the Executive Group member SAIs. In the future, each team will hold separate meetings to plan the work for their respective area.



Continued on Page 7

Continued from Page 6

External experts from international institutions are also participating in the development of ClimateScanner, including representatives from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), the UN Development Program (UNDP), and the World Bank.

From May 22-26, 2023, SAI-Brazil (Chair of COMTEMA) held, in Brasilia, Brazil, the ClimateScanner Technical Workshop: Tool Design, where the Executive Group SAI representatives and the external experts met to develop the methodology for each team's area as well as for the ClimateScanner tool. The Executive Group approved the first version of the methodology in July 2023, during a high-level meeting with the heads of the SAIs represented in the Executive

Group. Subsequently, pilot tests will be conducted by different SAIs, in order to have the final product ready to be presented at the 2023 UNFCCC in Dubai. Then, the tool will be used by SAIs around the world in 2024.

The ClimateScanner project is part of the WGEA 2023-2025 Work Plan. The project is led by SAI Brazil and the WGEA Secretariat.

The Executive Group includes SAI representatives from Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Finland, India, Indonesia, Kenya, the Maldives, Morocco, New Zealand, Philippines, Slovakia, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Court of Auditors.

## EUROSAI WGEA Activities in 2022-2023, To Date

Climate change, water scarcity, post-pandemic reality, and warfare have influenced the activities of the EUROSAI Working Group on Environmental Auditing (EWGEA) in 2022. The group managed to encourage and support professional cooperation among its members as well as continued to facilitate knowledge and experience sharing. The National Audit Office of Poland is the current Chair of EWGEA.

The 2022 spring session on water supply and water quality was held on 10-11 May. The event was attended by representatives of the European Commission; European Environment Agency; European Regional Center for Ecohydrology of the Polish Academy of Sciences—UNESCO; Chair of Ecohydrology and Applied Ecology of the University of Lodz (Poland); University of Malta; European Court of Auditors; Secretary General of INTOSAI's Working Group on Environmental Auditing; and European Remote Sensing Association.

Keynote speakers presented the importance of the desalination process in arid countries. The working group became acquainted with discussed challenges, innovative methods, and systemic solutions for the reduction of pollution in river systems and seas in the context of the newest strategic documents from the UN. Discussions also focused on water resources across Europe.



The 20th Annual Meeting was held on 29-30 November 2022, entitled “Environmental Protection in Turbulent Times” (post-COVID era, warfare, and climate change issues). During the meeting in Warsaw, the results of recent audits by European SAIs were discussed. Topics included the transparency of funds for counteracting climate change and the implementation of sustainable development goals; adaptation of the economy; co-financing of various sectors with negative effects on the environment; coastal protection; and reduction of greenhouse gases.

In spite of difficult circumstances, colleagues from SAI Ukraine presented on the effectiveness of measures to



Continued on Page 8



Continued from Page 7

reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Ukraine and the impact of military operations. The annual meeting also hosted speakers from the European Environmental Agency, the European Commission, and the European Regional Ecohydrology Center under the auspices of UNESCO.

In April 2022, twelve SAIs published the results of a cooperative audit: the Joint Report on Management of Plastic Waste in Europe. The main audit question was “Have the relevant public authorities developed policies and implemented measures aimed at achieving goals (adopted in such policies) regarding generation and management of plastic waste?” The findings of this coordinated audit show that, for the time being, Circular Economy is more prominent as a theoretical concept than as practical action taken by the particular countries covered by the audit. Substantial change will be needed in the waste management system to fully embrace the Circular Economy model.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC)—a project led by SAI Estonia, focused on promoting, using, and developing e-learning tools in cooperation with stakeholders—took place earlier this year. Environmental auditing e-courses ran from January to April 2023.

Finally, the 2023 EWGEA spring session was held 25-26 May in Warsaw (Poland). The topic was progress made in climate change adaptation efforts.

### What next?

The EWGEA annual meeting is planned for 25-26 September 2023 in Prague, Czech Republic. The topic of this meeting is sustainable energy, which includes concepts and topics such as energy security, energy independence, or self-sufficiency; support of renewable energy sources; and energy savings. These topics are very current with regard to the political situation in Europe.

More information may be obtained at [eurosaiwgea.org](http://eurosaiwgea.org) or [eurosaiwgea@nik.gov.pl](mailto:eurosaiwgea@nik.gov.pl).



## News Briefs from Around the SAI World



### Bahrain

#### Focus on Environmental Issues and Goals

Since its inception, the National Audit Office of the Kingdom of Bahrain (NAO) has recognized its significant role in auditing environmentally related issues. In this context, the NAO conducted various environmental audit assignments covering different environmental issues, which represent a vital part of the NAO’s strategic and annual audit plans.

One of the main environmental-related audit assignments conducted by the NAO is assessing the performance of the governmental entity responsible for setting policies to preserve the Kingdom’s land, water, and air, and monitoring compliance with those policies. The NAO

also conducted a comprehensive audit on relevant governmental entities to assess their readiness to implement SDGs, including environmental-related goals. In addition, the NAO conducted an audit to assess the effectiveness of waste management to minimize the negative impact on the environment.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has committed itself to reach “Net Zero” by the year 2060, in compliance with the goals of the UNFCCC (COP26). The Kingdom has a set of ambitious goals. It aims to reduce emissions by 30 percent by 2035, through carbon removal and implementing efficiency initiatives to increase the deployment of renewable energy sources. In addition, it aims to increase the tree coverage in Bahrain, including mangroves.

Continued on Page 9



Continued from Page 8

To support the achievement of such targets, the NAO has recently conducted audits on relevant environmental issues, such as assessing the initiatives taken to increase renewable energy sources as well as increasing the effectiveness of energy usage, including the green buildings project, district cooling project, and other renewable energy projects. Moreover, the NAO is currently conducting an audit related to preserving water resources and expanding green spaces in the Kingdom. Recognizing the importance of capacity building in relation to environmental audits, the NAO continuously provides training courses for its auditors in various aspects of environmental audits and audits of SDGs. Having capable and well-trained auditors helps to conduct effective environmental audits.



### Cyprus

#### Environmental Management of Akamas Peninsula

SAI Cyprus carried out a very challenging environmental audit regarding the management of the Akamas Peninsula, which has been integrated into the European Union's "Natura 2000" Network. The peninsula is an area of great natural beauty, with important flora, fauna, birds, and habitat diversity, located in the western part of Cyprus. Efforts to protect and preserve the peninsula date back to the 1980s. These efforts have been a matter of great dispute, as the need to protect this special area was weighed against the local communities' wishes for the area to be developed. During this period, a significant amount of public resources were spent on studies and administrative costs, because a large number of public officers were engaged in the matter over the years. The purpose of the audit was to establish whether, after so many years of contemplation, the desired results regarding the effective environmental management and protection of the peninsula have been achieved.

SAI Cyprus' "Special Report: Environmental Management of the Akamas Peninsula—Have the Desired Results Been Achieved?"—for which the services of experts in environmental management and conservation were used—was published on December 9, 2022. The audit highlighted several shortcomings, primarily in relation to the environmental impact assessment. The audit had a great impact through its recommendations in finalizing the Peninsula Local Plan and played a critical

role in supporting good governance by advancing accountability and transparency.

In 2022, SAI Cyprus was the recipient of the INTOSAI WGEA Award for its submission for "Your WGEA Story: Inspiration in Environmental Auditing", which was a part of the celebration of the INTOSAI WGEA's 30th Anniversary. SAI Cyprus is committed to the principles of environmental sustainability, and environmental audits have been of great importance to the SAI, having contributed to the management of environmental resources in the country (such as improved water management and protection of species and habits). The award-winning story describes its efforts and results in the field of environmental auditing.



### Czech Republic

#### Nature Conservation and Landscape Management

The Czech Republic is experiencing a decline in biodiversity and a related deterioration in the functioning of ecosystems and ecosystem services, increasing sensitivity to climate change, and the risk of introducing non-native species. A key objective of the European Union (EU) 2020 Biodiversity Strategy was to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU.

The Czech Supreme Audit Office (SAO) recently published an audit report on state and EU funds to support measures aimed at nature conservation and landscape management, including biodiversity. The audit verified if funds earmarked for measures related to nature conservation and landscape management were spent effectively and in accordance with legal regulations. The SAO audited funds from EU resources under the Operational Programme Environment (2014-2020)—specifically Priority Axis 4: Protection and care for nature and landscape—and from state budget resources under the Ministry of the Environment (MoE). There were 10 entities in the audit, among them the Ministry of the Environment, the Nature Conservation Agency, the State Environmental Fund, and selected recipients of funds, such as the Forests of the Czech Republic and municipalities.

The audit concluded that some indicators used to assess the objectives of the MoE programmes and the

Continued from Page 9

Operational Programme Environment show that the objectives will not be met. For example, the programme objectives set by the MoE on halting the loss of biodiversity and increasing the ecological stability of the landscape will not be fully met. Moreover, the MoE did not monitor or evaluate the benefits of funds provided by the Landscape Care Programme. The funds spent by the MoE through programme funding in 2019-2021 were not used for investment activities, but to finance current expenditures in the protection and care for nature and landscape.

The MoE did not implement, or only partially implemented, some of the measures defined by the basic strategic documents—the Biodiversity Strategy and the State Programme of Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection—within the set deadlines. The achievement of some of the objectives by the end of 2025 is uncertain. Furthermore, the MoE did not proceed according to the Act on Nature and Landscape Protection. It failed to submit registration applications for the preemptive right of the state in the land registry and in some cases failed to comply with the statutory deadline for buying land located in specially protected areas.

*The full report is available at*

[https://www.nku.cz/assets/kon-zavery/K22009\\_en.pdf](https://www.nku.cz/assets/kon-zavery/K22009_en.pdf).

*For further information, please contact Benjamin Groll ([benjamin.groll@nku.cz](mailto:benjamin.groll@nku.cz)), Sylva Müllerová ([sylva.mullerova@nku.cz](mailto:sylva.mullerova@nku.cz)), or Michal Rampír ([michal.rampir@nku.cz](mailto:michal.rampir@nku.cz)).*



### Ecuador

#### Comptroller General Awarded "Green Initiative Distinction"

On November 28, 2022, the Office of the Comptroller General of the State submitted the project "National Directorate of Public Procurement, the first Green Point of the SAI for the Efficient Use of Paper" to the Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition. The material was submitted to obtain the Green Initiative Distinctive for printing savings of approximately 623,000 sheets at the date of submission of the project, and about 800,000 sheets in savings by March 31, 2023.

On April 4, 2023, Mr. José Antonio Davalos, Minister of the Environment, awarded Mr. Carlos Riofrio González, Comptroller General of the State, with the "Green

Initiative Distinction", under the category of Sustainable Production and Consumption, for his support of environmental management, having implemented a 100 percent digital process in the issuance of relevant reports.

The Office of the Comptroller General of the State carried out the Management Audit of the National Directorate of Climate Change Mitigation.

The Comptroller General's Office conducted a management audit of the National Directorate of Climate Change Mitigation of the Undersecretariat of Climate Change of the Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition (formerly the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Environment and Water), for the period from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2021. The final report was published in 2022.

The analysis concluded:

- More staff are needed to develop and deliver all products and services related to climate change mitigation.
- It was not possible to Implement the National Climate Change Strategy because the National Climate Change Mitigation Plan was still under development.
- The National Climate Change Strategy was not monitored on an annual basis, resulting in the failure to verify progress on the objectives, identify risks, or issue recommendations.
- There are opportunities to improve the goals of the Directorate in charge of Climate Change Mitigation in the Ministry of Environment, Water and Ecological Transition. The goals can be based on a disaggregated planning activities and setting milestones and timelines that allow for evaluating progress and measuring the efficiency of management.
- The process of issuing regulations for the implementation of the National Greenhouse Gas Inventory System was interrupted, preventing the implementation of the regulatory framework.
- It is necessary to improve inter-institutional coordination in order to carry out annual follow-up and evaluation of the First Nationally Determined Contribution, the country's plan for climate change mitigation required by the Paris agreement, as well as to assess progress in mitigating and reducing of greenhouse gas emissions.

Continued on Page 11

## News Briefs from Around the SAI World

Continued from Page 10



### Egypt

#### SAI Egypt Participates in INTOSAI WGEA Steering Committee Meeting

SAI Egypt participated in the 19th INTOSAI WGEA Steering Committee Meeting hosted by SAI Morocco from 13-16 March 2023. This was the first time that SAI Egypt participated in such a meeting, and it was a significant milestone for the SAI in the field of environmental auditing.

During the meeting, SAI Egypt had the opportunity to present its work related to environmental auditing and share its experiences with other WGEA member SAIs.



Participating in this meeting was an important step for SAI Egypt, as it seeks to strengthen its capacity in the field of environmental auditing, as well as contributing to global efforts to promote sustainability. It also demonstrated the SAI's commitment to working collaboratively with its peers. Moreover, the SAI learned about new developments in environmental auditing and gained insights into how other SAIs are addressing environmental challenges.

In addition, SAI Egypt participated in the first Senior Officials' Meeting of the SAI20 engagement group held 13-15 March 2023, hosted by SAI India in Guwahati. SAI20 aims to promote a coordinated effort where SAIs are active partners in achieving governance and in promoting transparency and accountability. The meeting focused on two principal issues, namely, the Blue Economy and Responsible Artificial Intelligence (AI).



The SAIs agreed on the “Zero” draft communique and provided valuable ideas and suggestions to produce an inclusive, decisive, and action-oriented communique for the SAI20 summit held in Goa, India, in June 2023.

SAI Egypt recognizes the importance of these issues and is committed to promoting sustainable development practices in Blue Economy and AI related topics.



### India

#### Netting Open Resources for Seas

Wedged behind towering skyscrapers in Mumbai is the 800-year-old Worli Koliwada, the home of the Koli community. A lively fish market typically awaits visitors at the entrance of these settlements. However, behind the charm of such “artisanal fishing” are threats to the very source of their livelihood, fishes. These threats include a receding and restricted shoreline. A coastal road is being built on land reclaimed from the sea, and the long-term impact of the reclamation on availability of fish stock hasn't been assessed.

Worli Koliwada is just a tiny blip on the 7,516 km long jawline of the country that abuts the sea. This long coastline was the subject of a performance audit conducted by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India last year that covered ecological, societal, and economic issues on the coastline, under the larger gamut of the Blue Economy.

The Blue Economy emerged as one of the two priority areas for collaboration amongst SAIs of G20 nations—the

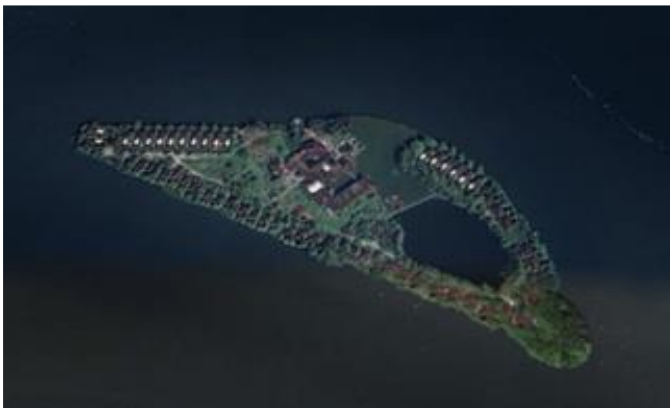
Continued on Page 12



Continued from Page 11

SAI20—in the meeting in Guwahati in mid-March under the Chairmanship of the CAG of India. The Blue Economy encompasses a wide range of crosscutting sectors ranging from fisheries and aquaculture to maritime transportation and renewable energy, making it a complex and labyrinthine landscape to navigate in an audit.

In part, the audit examined the extent of compliance with management plans for grids along 6,100 km of the coastline, which would have been impossible to check but for the use of a technology-enabled toolkit. Using GIS software, auditors assigned the grids geographical attributes that transformed the management plan maps to dynamically active spatial files with grids colour-coded by the grade of their ecological sensitivity. By transposing the images from Google Earth (of “what is”) on this base (of “what should be”), the auditors could see how far the on-site reality differed from what is mandated. For example, the toolkit revealed a racetrack in an area of Pattipulam in Tamilnadu that is categorized as one of the most ecologically sensitive areas in the hierarchy of regulated areas. Resorts and shopping malls dotted “no development zones” along the coastline of Kerala.



This toolkit can be adapted for use by the government for oversight on compliance with coastal management plans. Because it uses open resources, the same tools can also be put together in an app that allows communities to partner with the government in conservation as “blue marshals”. What if the Koli community could join hands with other fishing communities along the coast—just as auditors and governments join hands under the G20 banner—to protect the waters that recognise no grids or boundaries? The waters bind us on one earth, one family, and one future and, as Amitav Ghosh reminds us,

“no place was so remote as to escape the flood of history”.

*The full report is accessible at CAG of India’s website at <https://cag.gov.in/en/audit-report/details/116707>.*



### Kuwait

#### Evaluating the Efficiency of Government Entities in Dealing with Climate Change Impacts

In 2021, the State Audit Bureau of Kuwait (SAB) prepared an audit report on the role of government entities in dealing with climate change impacts from 2017-2019. SAB examined the risks of climate change across several sectors, including public health, transportation, infrastructure, and energy and water production. In addition, SAB evaluated the government’s efforts toward achieving UN SDG 13.

Based on Kuwait’s meteorological data on temperatures, rainfall amounts, and frequency of sand storms and dust for the last 10 years, the audit found that Kuwait is affected by impacts of climate change, such as high temperatures, drought, and sand and dust storms, with the possibility of increasing intensity in the future. These factors increase the risks of food insecurity due to the depletion of soil fertility, water evaporation in crops, the disappearance of vegetation cover, and the exacerbation of desertification.

Regarding public health risks, the audit noted an annual increase in the number of patients with respiratory diseases who were admitted to public hospitals. Owing to a lack of data, it was not possible to investigate the root cause behind such an increase. However, SAB found an indication that unstable weather conditions, such as sand storms, dust, and heat waves, pose a serious risk to patients with respiratory problems.

Further, negative effects of climate change on infrastructure and transportation sectors were observed mostly during the rainy season. Changes in the amount and days of rainfall in the examination period, notably in 2018, caused flash floods that damaged asphalt as well as the structure of buildings and led to major traffic accidents. The audit also found that existing contingency plans are not effective, as the same problem persisted in every rainy season during the examination period. This proves that the current infrastructure and responsible entities are not resilient enough to adapt to climate change.

Continued on Page 13

Continued from Page 12

The audit also found an average annual increase in the maximum electrical load, reaching a record high of 14,420 megawatts in the summer of 2019 when temperatures hit 50 C°. As for water, the average annual increase in production and consumption was 3.3 percent.

Finally, the audit found that Kuwait's total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions constituted only 0.246 percent of the global GHG emissions in 2018. Therefore, Kuwait's activities do not contribute to climate change risks but rather are affected by them. However, Kuwait's efforts to mitigate climate change risks were not sufficient. Notably, Kuwait does not have a unified strategic plan between responsible entities to implement risk mitigation projects or meet SDG 13 requirements.

SAB recommended that the Environment Public Authority and the concerned entities work on finding and implementing effective methods to follow up on GHG emissions reduction projects based on SDG 13 requirements within a specific timeframe in order to mitigate environmental, economic, and health risks caused by climate change.



### Latvia

#### Management of Mineral Resources

Latvia is rich with raw material resources for building (e.g., sand, gravel, dolomite, clay, and limestone) and with peat, spropel, and other resources used in the national economy. Most of these minerals are non-renewable. Therefore, it is crucial to use these minerals sustainably and effectively, while ensuring the replacement of non-renewable resources with renewable resources or recyclable materials. This is especially important due to a significant increase in the demand for building materials following the implementation of several large-scale infrastructure construction projects.

The State Audit Office of Latvia (SAO of Latvia) conducted a compliance/performance audit on the management of mineral resources in Latvia. SAO of Latvia concluded that the government lacks a strategy for the sustainable management of mineral resources, which involves balancing environmental, economic, and social aspects to ensure the development of the national economy. There is a shortage of structured data and risk-based controls, poor cooperation among state institutions, incomplete information about mineral

resources, and deficiencies in laws and regulations on recultivating mining sites. This could lead to difficulties in the industry and create a favourable environment for a shadow economy.

Because of the lack of political will to solve subsoil ownership issues, a systematic identification of new mineral resources has not been conducted and, due to insufficient financial resources, the digitization of geological information is limited. The government also fails to provide sufficient incentives to promote using secondary raw materials, resulting in Latvia's below-EU-average consumption rate. The State Environmental Service does not plan inspections based on specific requirements, laws, and regulations for mineral resource extraction, thus missing violations. The audit revealed several instances where minerals were obtained after a license or permit expired, indicating incorrect information in the Register of Mineral Resource Deposits and a failure to detect potentially illegal mineral extraction.

The current legal framework for recultivating mineral resource mining sites is insufficient. There are no criteria for recognizing when mineral resource extraction is completed in order to start monitoring recultivation. In addition, there is no requirement for financial security (e.g., financial guarantee or deposit) for recultivating mining sites. This lack of regulation increases degraded areas, and the cost to reclaim degraded mining sites increases every year. Audited entities agreed to implement audit recommendations to tackle the deficiencies.

*The summary in English is available at <https://lrvk.gov.lv/en/audit-summaries/audit-summaries/is-sustainable-management-of-mineral-resources-ensured-in-latvia>.*

*For more information, please contact Mr. Jānis Salenieks at [Janis.Salenieks@lrvk.gov.lv](mailto:Janis.Salenieks@lrvk.gov.lv).*



### Lithuania

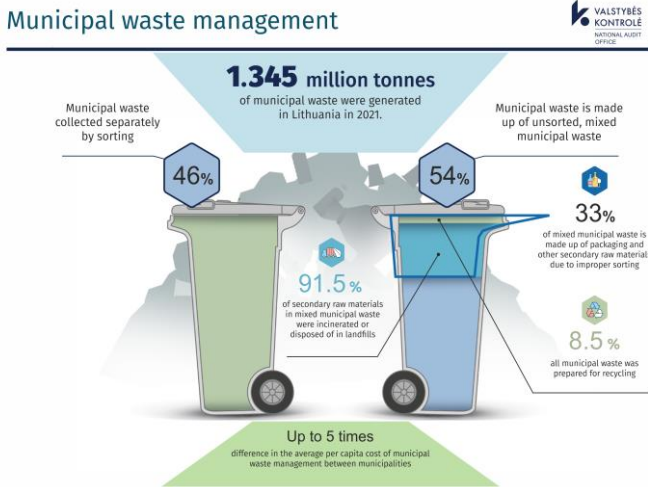
#### Municipal Waste Management

Like other EU countries, Lithuania aims to have at least 55 percent of its municipal waste recycled or ready for reuse by 2025. Lithuania has therefore set targets for its population to sort at least 70 percent of municipal waste by 2025 and to send less than 5 percent of municipal waste to landfills by 2030.

Continued on Page 14

Continued from Page 13

Although the involvement of the Lithuanian population in managing household waste is increasing, the aim is to increase the population's involvement and motivation to sort their waste. According to 2021 data, of the 1.35 million tons of municipal waste collected in Lithuania, more than half (54 percent) is mixed municipal waste, of which around 33 percent is improperly sorted packaging and other secondary raw materials.



However, the results of the 2023 audit “Municipal Waste Management” carried out by the National Audit Office of Lithuania revealed that the infrastructure for the collection and treatment of municipal waste is not capable of ensuring that the objectives for the management of this waste are met. The audit also found that only about 8.5 percent of the packaging and other secondary raw materials contained in mixed municipal waste were separated and prepared for recycling in the facilities dedicated to the treatment of such waste.

In order to achieve the targets by 2025 and 2030, municipalities need to further develop the infrastructure for the collection of food and kitchen waste and other secondary raw materials, increase the motivation of the population to properly sort their waste, and ensure that collected municipal waste is managed in the safest way for human health and the environment.

The summary of the audit report is available at <https://www.valstybeskontrolė.lt/EN/Product/24156/municipal-waste-management>.



## South Africa

### Identifying Material Irregularities during Public Sector Audits

The poor state of financial and performance management in local government in South Africa is reflected in ongoing adverse audit outcomes coupled with non-compliance with legislation. This situation has resulted in material financial losses at some municipalities, as well as substantial harm where municipalities were unable to fulfill their mandate and deliver assigned services to the public.

Past audits highlighted material irregularities, which not only resulted in negative impacts but also were not appropriately dealt with by the appropriate authorities. This led to amendments to the Public Audit Act, which came into effect on 1 April 2019 and expanded the Auditor-General's mandate to report on these matters as material irregularities and to take action if accounting officers do not deal with the issues appropriately.

“Material irregularity” means any non-compliance with, or contravention of, legislation, fraud, theft or a breach of a fiduciary duty identified during an audit performed under this Act that resulted in or is likely to result in a material financial loss, the misuse or loss of a material public resource, or substantial harm to a public sector institution or general public.”

This new enforcement mandate allowed the Auditor-General's office to continue expanding its participation in the accountability processes of government. The intent is not to take over the legislated responsibilities of accounting officers and authorities, executive authorities, or public bodies with investigative and enforcement mandates, but rather to be a complementary mechanism in this process.

From an environmental perspective, there is a clear link between the failure to perform assigned municipal roles and functions, non-compliance, and the environmental or communal impact resulting from collapsed municipal services and infrastructure. The material irregularity definition is specific to legislative non-compliance that give rise to potential harm to the public or public sector institutions, in both financial and non-financial terms.



Continued from Page 14

Environmental audits performed during the 2021-2022 oversight period involving water, wastewater, and solid waste management showed many material irregularities where pollution occurred or environmental resources that the population depend on were depleted. These procedures centered on poor or failing municipal infrastructure that adversely affected municipal service delivery, causing environmental pollution and, ultimately, harm to the public.

The inclusion and identification of material irregularities strengthens the SAI's public-sector auditing methodology processes and means to pursue environmental risks and impacts. It also assists and directs the government's focus on the most significant environmental risks and impacts on the annual financial statements, environmental resources, service delivery, and ultimately the life of citizens.

*For more information, please contact Dr. Eric Smith, [erics@agsa.co.za](mailto:erics@agsa.co.za).*



### Tanzania

#### Management of Invasive Alien Species

On April 6, 2023, the Controller and Auditor General (CAG) of the United Republic of Tanzania, Mr. Charles Edward Kichere, submitted to the Parliament his Performance Audit Report, "Management of Invasive Alien Species in Terrestrial Environments in Tanzania".

The overall objective of the audit was to determine whether the Vice President's Office–Division of Environment (VPO-DoE), in collaboration with Sectoral Ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT), and the President's Office–Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG), have effectively managed invasive alien species in terrestrial environments. The scope of the audit covered three financial years from 2018/19 to 2021/22. The audit examined several aspects of the management of invasive alien species, including prevention measures, control measures, coordination, and monitoring and evaluation.

The audit found that VPO-DoE, in collaboration with the Sectoral Ministries, had not ensured effective prevention of invasive alien species. In particular, the audit uncovered inadequate identification and management of the priority pathways and vectors of invasive species

introduction and spread in the country. The audit further found that the VPO-DoE, in collaboration with the Sectoral Ministries, had not ensured effective control of invasive alien species in the country and had not developed the National Invasive Species Database. Inadequate prevention and control of invasive alien species was caused by limited coordination among key stakeholders and inadequate monitoring and evaluation of measures to prevent and control such species in Tanzania.

In addition, the audit found there was inadequate use of performance indicators for assessing the performance of government entities in addressing the national strategy for the management of invasive alien species. The audit attributed this to inadequate prioritization of the management of invasive alien species by VPO-DoE.

The audit concluded that the government, through the VPO-DoE in coordination with the PO-RALG, MoA, and MNRT, had not devised mechanisms to ensure effective management of invasive alien species in Tanzania. Finally, the CAG recommended that the government address the above-mentioned issues to eradicate or minimize the threat posed by invasive alien species in the country.

*A copy of the Performance Audit Report on the Management of Invasive Alien Species in Terrestrial Environments in Tanzania is available at [https://www.nao.go.tz/uploads/Performance\\_Audit\\_on\\_the\\_Management\\_of\\_Invasive\\_Alien\\_Species\\_in\\_Terrestrial\\_Environment.pdf](https://www.nao.go.tz/uploads/Performance_Audit_on_the_Management_of_Invasive_Alien_Species_in_Terrestrial_Environment.pdf).*

*For further information, please contact Mr. George C. Haule at [George.Haule@nao.go.tz](mailto:George.Haule@nao.go.tz) and Mr. Joseph Nkengele at [Joseph.Nkengele@nao.go.tz](mailto:Joseph.Nkengele@nao.go.tz).*



### Thailand

#### SAI Thailand Leads Research on Climate Finance Accountability

The State Audit Office of the Kingdom of Thailand has taken the reins as the project leader for the groundbreaking cooperative research on "The Role of Supreme Audit Institutions in Promoting Climate Finance Accountability" under the umbrella of the Asian Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ASOSAI) WGEA. This research is crucial as it investigates the key role of SAIs in strengthening Climate Finance Accountability (CFA) in the face of the global climate

Continued on Page 16

Continued from Page 15

crisis. By ensuring transparent, accountable, and effective management of climate finance resources, SAIs can significantly contribute to the fight against climate change and the transition to a more sustainable future.

In a remarkable display of international collaboration, the research invites Dr. Sandra Guzman, Coordinator of the Climate Finance for Latin America and the Caribbean Group, to share her innovative ideas about the Sustainability Finance Index. The research team also includes experts from SAI Indonesia, SAI Vietnam, SAI India, and SAI China, who bring a wealth of knowledge and experience in promoting CFA. By examining the critical relationship between SAIs and CFA through the Theory of Change lens, the study aims to provide an initiating conceptual framework to guide SAIs in fostering CFA and ensuring responsible management of climate finance resources.

The contributions of this research are various, with the introduction of the Sustainability Finance Index for CFA being one of its key components. Developed with the invaluable input of Dr. Sandra Guzman and the research team, this index serves as a valuable tool for SAIs to assess the performance of their respective countries in terms of climate finance management. The study also provides valuable insights for policymakers, government agencies, and other stakeholders to better understand the importance of SAIs in the broader context of climate finance. By implementing the lessons gleaned from this research, SAIs can play a crucial role in enhancing the transparency and accountability of climate finance, ultimately driving positive change in the global fight against climate change.

*For further information, please contact Dr. Sutthi Suntharanurak, Director of the International Affairs Office, State Audit Office of the Kingdom of Thailand, [sutthisun@gmail.com](mailto:sutthisun@gmail.com).*



### Türkiye

#### UN-SAI Country-Level Collaboration on SDG Audits: Recommendations for Auditors

The EUROSAI project group on “Collaboration with national-level UN agencies in the context of SAIs’ SDG-related audit processes,” led by the Turkish Court of Accounts (TCA), has finalized its study. The main output “UN-SAI Country-Level Collaboration on SDG Audits:

Recommendations for Auditors” is now available to all interested parties.

The report focuses on exploring new channels for the mutual exchange of expertise, experience, and knowledge with UN entities at the country-level, based on an understanding of the inter-connectedness of SDG implementation and SDG auditing. The report defines the main areas of cooperation between the UN and SAIs in the SDG-related audit processes. Possible interaction points are also presented along with sample SDG-related audit question sets in order to help create a mind-set for the involved auditor(s) and provide a useful starting point.

The Office of the UN Resident Coordinator in Türkiye and the United Nations Development Programme Türkiye Country Office acted as external partners. In the national context, negotiations were carried out between TCA and UN entities in Türkiye throughout the project, and discussions were held at the Multi-stakeholder Consultation Workshop with UN entity representatives in June 2022. Furthermore, a short survey was provided to EUROSAI members to ensure inclusiveness and create room for different perspectives.



In terms of lessons learned, TCA considers it important that the contributions of respective SAIs that carried out a peer-review of the report added great value to the development and quality control of the document. TCA also highlights that the statements and suggestions in the report are the product of brainstorming carried out by experts in the field and that freethinking is always necessary to take innovative and relevant steps. Every statement in this document is always open to discussion and development, which will be facilitated through feedback from key players once the report is launched.