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SBTi Corporate Net-Zero Standard Expert Working Group (EWG) Meeting Minutes

**Data Quality, Assurance & Claims EWG,
Session 3: Group reactivation for SBTi
Assurance Framework and Claims Policy**

11/05/2026

Option A: 09:00-10:30 BST

Option B: 15:00-16:30 BST

Virtual

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Session recommendations deemed interim, unresolved or confidential at the EWG sessions remain undisclosed to the public until the date after which the Standard is published, to protect the confidentiality of the Standard before publication, and to prevent sending premature market signals.

As per clause 6 in the EWG Terms of Reference, members serve on the EWG in their individual capacity as technical experts.

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Meeting participants

Option A

Expert Working Group Members present:

1. Chris Bayliss, ASI
2. Tatiana Boldyreva, CDP
3. Paola Delgado Luna, Accountability Accelerator
4. Dan Magrath, Gold Standard
5. Sangwon Suh, Watershed Climate

SBTi

1. Emily Castro, MRV Lead
2. Hugo Ernest-Jones, Scope 3 Lead
3. Mona Karraoui, Head of Quality
4. Francesca Palamidessi, Head of Interoperability
5. Emma Watson, Head of Corporate Standards

Option B

Expert Working Group Members present:

1. Anastasia Behr, UL Solutions
2. Max Eichelbaum, RSB
3. Stephanie Glazer, RMHC. Inc.
4. Vita Jarolimkova, SRT Group
5. Patrick Mallet, ISEAL
6. Brad Schallert, Winrock International
7. Claire Wigg, Exponential Roadmap Initiative
8. Aaron Wu, Slaughter and May

SBTi

1. Emily Castro, MRV Lead
2. Tom Divney, Quality Assurance Manager
3. Alice Farrelly, SME BVCM & Neutralization
4. Mona Karraoui, Head of Quality
5. Leona Maticcevic, Stakeholder Engagement
6. Francesca Palamidessi, Head of Interoperability
7. Emma Watson, Head of Corporate Standards

Technical Council Observers:

1. Laura Draucker, Center for Green Market Activation
2. Owen Hewlett, Gold Standard

Note on the format of these minutes: This meeting was held twice to accommodate the time zones of the Expert Working Group (EWG) members. The content presented by the SBTi team was consistent across both sessions, and participants in each meeting engaged with the same interactive exercises. To avoid duplication, these meeting minutes present the shared content (presentations and framing) and include summaries of participant discussions from the Option A and Option B meetings.

Meeting agenda

Welcome & introducing the focus for the meeting	15 min
Assurance under CNZS V2 & Discussion	35 min
Claims development & Discussion	35 min
Conclusion & next steps	5 min

Note: Please refer to the meeting slide deck for accompanying material

Meeting Objectives

The session aimed to:

- Re-engage the EWG to support the development of key assurance and claims resources underpinning the SBTi Corporate Net-Zero Standard V2
- Present the scope, objectives, and proposed approach for this work
- Introduce the project team
- Outline the key questions to be explored throughout the development process
- Gather EWG feedback, perspectives, and key concerns on the approach and priority issues

Welcome & logistics

The session began with a welcome from the SBTi team, followed by reminders on confidentiality and antitrust guidance, and housekeeping. No new conflicts of interest were raised at any session.

Introduction

- SBTi provided an update on the progression of the Corporate Net-Zero Standard (CNZS) V2.0, noting that the standard is currently undergoing Technical Council approval ahead of Board adoption. SBTi also indicated its intention to reconvene the full Expert Working Groups (EWGs) in the coming weeks to present the latest draft updates, and to continue working with this particular EWG as the claims and assurance work progresses.
- SBTi noted that Assurance and claims were part of the standard drafts to ensure technical alignment with the standard requirements for consultation feedback as they developed. Feedback indicated they required further development once approaches and criteria were finalizing in the standard.

- The frameworks have now been separated from the core technical criteria of the Standard to align with common practice for standard setting schemes. Minimum viable product (MVP) guidance on claims and assurance, including the foundations of the claims policy and assurance frameworks, will be released after the Standard launch.

4. Assurance under CNZS V2

SBTi presented the following topics related to SBTi assurance:

- Introduction of the SBTi assurance model with two important elements: clarifying the oversight, transparency, and roles within the framework, and technically integrating the new validation cycles from the foundational standard to ensure impartiality and consistency in how assurances are conducted.
- The new target validation cycle, including entry into the system, initial target validation, annual reporting and potential interim reviews during the target cycle, and end-of-cycle assessment implemented by SBTi-recognized validation bodies and supported by independent third-party assurance in specified cases.
- The SBTi assurance framework is intended to define the processes, policies, and requirements applicable to validation bodies, company submissions, validation and end-of-cycle assessment processes, non-compliance management, and specified third-party assurance requirements for relevant metrics.
- SBTi also noted ongoing exploration of formal mechanisms for independent third-party recognition, interoperability, and equivalence with other standards systems.
- SBTi further highlighted key considerations under development, including balancing assurance rigor with operational efficiency, clarifying which assurance activities are critical for credibility and consistency, and exploring transparency measures to strengthen confidence in the assurance system.

Discussion

Option A meeting:

- One EWG member congratulated the team on the decision to delay the claims work until having a final version of the Standard, which makes sense given the evolving development process. The member also suggested establishing governance bodies to allow for efficient discussion and adaptation based on learnings during the transition period, as many elements of the Standard are changing.
- One EWG offered to set up a meeting with their head of oversight, to share insights on setting up third-party oversight, training academies, and platforms for validator training, which is relevant given the significant work involved.
- One EWG member inquired whether the summary or synthesis of the second round of public consultation feedback had been released and if it contained relevant points on verification and assurance. SBTi confirmed that the plan is to publish the report when the standard is launched, and it was added while there were no specific assurance questions in the second consultation draft, a legal risk analysis flagged

high-risk areas in the standard where no recognized standards (such as for GHG inventories) exist.

- One EWG member asked about the mechanism for handling potential future changes stemming from the Greenhouse Gas Protocol and ISO 14067, especially regarding topics like hourly matching and land sector guidance, given the standard's imminent publication timeline. SBTi acknowledged the complexity of the GHG Protocol revision process, which runs until 2029, so SBTi is planning to develop a policy to guide companies on how to deal with these moving parts and avoid confusion on whether to refer to drafts or wait for final revisions.

Option B meeting:

- One EWG member asked if the Standard introduces a distinction in terminology between validation and verification. "Validation" is used as an umbrella term encompassing SBTi's target validation and end-of-cycle assessment, while recognizing that verification often implies an ex-post check of progress. The EWG member argued that the shift to checking if companies "did what they say they would do" aligns with the language of verification against a standard, even if SBTi uses assurance as the broad term
- One EWG member asked if the "Assurance Foundations" arrow on the timeline was the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) policy, which was confirmed by the SBTi team, which added that more public consultation might be needed for claims, but for the assurance an internal consultation with engagement of the EWGs is rather foreseen.
- One EWG member questioned if SBTi would automatically accept third-party validation/verification bodies recognized under standards like ISO for GHG verification. SBTi stated that it is starting an interoperability effort, suggesting that an initial framework for recognition would be developed, allowing companies to present their existing third-party assurances against SBTi criteria.

5. Claims development

SBTi presented the following topics related to SBTi claims:

- Introduction of SBTi Claims System, developed in response to stakeholder feedback, legal review, and the evolving structure of the Corporate Net-Zero Standard V2.0. The system is intended to strengthen governance, transparency, substantiation, and consistency of claims, while mitigating legal and greenwashing risks and aligning claims with the standard's target implementation hierarchy.
- The proposed structure of the Claims System, comprising an external SBTi Claims Policy and an internal Claims Management Procedure. The Claims Policy is intended to establish general requirements, conditions, claim language, substantiation elements, and processes applicable across SBTi standards, while the internal procedure will support validation, oversight, and surveillance activities.
- The proposed claims architecture, including Ambition Claims, Progress Claims, and Conformance Claims. Ambition Claims are forward-looking statements enabled following target validation, while Progress Claims are backward-looking statements linked to end-of-cycle assessment outcomes and target implementation actions.

Conformance Claims are intended to communicate procedural compliance with SBTi requirements and serve as a prerequisite for other claim types.

- The proposed approach for claim substantiation, including mandatory claim language elements, publicly available supporting information, consideration of disclaimers, and potential integration with the SBTi Dashboard. For Progress Claims, SBTi is exploring differentiated reporting linked to implementation approaches, including actions at the activity, activity-pool and sector-levels.
- Key challenges and ongoing areas of development, including operationalizing the new end-of-cycle assessment stage, translating technical requirements into robust substantiation approaches, aligning claims with assurance and third-party recognition frameworks, and balancing standardization with flexibility for different communication uses and audiences. Initial Minimum Viable Product materials are expected after the launch of CNZS V2.0, with further policy development and consultation planned thereafter.

Discussion

Option A meeting:

- One EWG member highlighted the challenges associated with substantiating final claims due to the ongoing burden of proof and supported the proposed shift toward progress-based claims. The member emphasized the importance of contextualizing progress claims to reflect sector-specific barriers, challenges, and demonstrated efforts. The member presented the idea of performing an annual analysis to identify these barriers and challenges to recognize remarkable efforts.
- One EWG member stressed the importance of understanding the types of claims companies seek to make, cautioning against developing overly complex systems misaligned with market needs. The member also highlighted the distinction between company-made claims and SBTi-issued statements, as well as the need to differentiate between Business-to-Business (B2B) and Business-to-Consumer (B2C) claims, noting that technically accurate claims may still be perceived as misleading in consumer-facing contexts. Regarding the proposed public consultations, advised focusing the discussion around the necessary archetypes for creating effective claims and matching them to market needs.
- One EWG member requested clarification regarding the timeline and relationship between third-party certification and progress claims. SBTi noted that this work remains at an early stage and that progress claims, assurance approaches, and recognition frameworks are expected to evolve iteratively over time.
- One EWG member asked whether companies would be permitted to assess and communicate interim progress before completion of the target cycle. SBTi clarified that annual progress reporting is required under the standard, but interim assessments would not constitute SBTi-validated determinations of target achievement.
- One EWG member suggested a process of "design level certification" where SBTi approves the strategy for decarbonization at the target validation, and third parties oversee the implementation and compliance assessment.

Option B meeting:

- One EWG member noted that the term “progress claims” may be misleading, as it suggests ongoing progress reporting rather than end-of-cycle assessment outcomes, and suggested alternative terminology such as “end-of-target claims” or “end-of-target performance claims.” SBTi acknowledged the concern and noted that the shift from “performance claims” to “progress claims” was intended to reduce legal risk, while recognizing the need for clearer terminology for end-of-cycle statements.
- One EWG member strongly recommended conducting a full public consultation with participating companies to test the applicability of the claims framework, arguing that an open forum is crucial for identifying how the standards apply to various scenarios and for course correction.
- Several EWG members supported the proposal for a pilot project on progress assessment, including testing the framework with companies nearing the end of their current target cycles and evaluating draft claims language proposed in the Claims MVP draft against practical examples to strengthen the minimum viable product.
- One EWG member requested clarification on whether the proposed workstream sprints aligned with planned EWG engagement points, which SBTi confirmed.
- One EWG member asked how claims guidance would apply to companies with existing valid targets. SBTi noted that transitional approaches are being considered, including the exploration for such companies to voluntarily undergo progress assessment prior to adoption of Version 2, with related provisions likely to be addressed through transition guidance rather than normative documents.

6. Next Steps

The SBTi shared the next steps as follows:

- SBTi will request a confirmation of participation in EWG for development process
- SBTi Opportunity for further EWG feedback to Work Plan, key concerns or priority issues via email, or by setting a meeting
- SBTi will review the Work Plan for claims and assurance based on the feedback and internal coordination.
- SBTi to share proposal of following engagement sessions, based on the Work Plan.