

BSI at COP: From Commitments to Coordinated Action

Advancing credible, coordinated climate action through international standards.



Your partner
in progress

How BSI is helping turn global climate ambition into credible, measurable action

For almost thirty years, the UN Climate Change Conference (Conference of Parties, or COP) has shaped annual international efforts and negotiations to tackle the climate crisis. Yet global temperatures continue to rise, the world is behind on meeting agreed targets, and political momentum is shifting in the wrong direction at a critical time.

The need for credible, coordinated action has never been greater.

As the UK's National Standards Body and UK voice in the international standards system, BSI contributes to this effort by helping to build the trust and accountability needed to deliver lasting change. BSI has played an active role at successive summits, supporting international collaboration and showing how standards can help translate ambition into measurable progress.

COP30 in Belém marks the fifth consecutive year of BSI's participation and an important moment to reflect on how standards continue to support credible climate action worldwide.



Evolving Influence: How BSI is Helping Shape Global Standards for Climate Action

COP26 | Glasgow, UK, 2021

Building Clarity and Consensus on Net Zero

When world leaders gathered in Glasgow, expectations were high. COP26 was a defining moment for climate ambition, but a critical gap remained: countries and companies were making net zero commitments at pace, yet there was little clarity or consistency in how those commitments should be planned, measured and reported. Without a shared framework, progress risked fragmentation.

Recognizing this challenge, the standards community took action. Two months before COP26, BSI hosted the ISO General Assembly in London, where ISO's members approved the London Declaration, a global commitment proposed by BSI to transform the international standards system. In opening the Assembly, the UK Trade Minister highlighted the 'critical role of the London Declaration as supporting our collective aim to galvanize global action on climate change'. By embedding climate science into all international standards, and proactively engaging those most vulnerable to climate impacts in their development, the commitment aims to accelerate progress towards global climate goals. This milestone initiative positions standards as an integral part of coordinated climate governance and global efforts to combat climate change, future-proofing standards would reflect the urgency and realities of the climate crisis.

BSI is proud to lead the development of the London Declaration in ISO. BSI's Chief Executive Officer Susan Taylor Martin noted at its launch: "BSI was the originator of the London Declaration. We are very pleased that this will be taken forward by ISO, its members, and other standards bodies so that we can work together with other countries to ensure that standards become an enabler for organizations of all sizes to accelerate our transition to a more sustainable world".

Echoing Susan's sentiment, BSI's Director-General, Standards Scott Steedman said: "We recognize the urgent need for better guidance and clear metrics for organizations everywhere to track emissions reductions and progress to net zero targets. Agreeing on common standards on principles, processes, products and services that can work with national regulatory frameworks will accelerate the global transition".



That approach came to life through the launch of [Our 2050 World](#), a collaboration between BSI, ISO, the UN-backed Race to Zero campaign and the UNFCCC Global Innovation Hub to accelerate the transition to net zero through standards. Created in response to the IPCC's stark warning of a 'code red for humanity', the initiative aims to reduce the fragmentation of net zero guidance to give non-state actors the tools they need to act with confidence.

The focus was clear: provide clarity on targets and reporting, make climate action easier and accelerate the net zero transition through standards. This laid the pivotal foundations for BSI's forthcoming leadership on net zero in ISO in the COPs to come.

BSI also helped shape the finance conversation at COP26. On Finance Day, the Scottish Government invited BSI to host a discussion on how standards for sustainable finance could integrate net zero considerations into investment decisions. The session explored how common frameworks could improve transparency and accelerate market transformation, laying the groundwork for BSI's later work with the UK Government on transition planning and sustainable finance standards.

Even the summit itself demonstrated the role of standards in practice. COP26 was a sustainable event, achieving [certification](#) to ISO 20121 Sustainable Events Management following an independent audit by BSI and setting a benchmark for how global events can be delivered responsibly, with consideration for environmental, social and economic impacts.

[COP26](#) ultimately crystallized the call to action for standards to turn climate ambition into credible and coordinated action, building the foundations for progress in the years that followed.

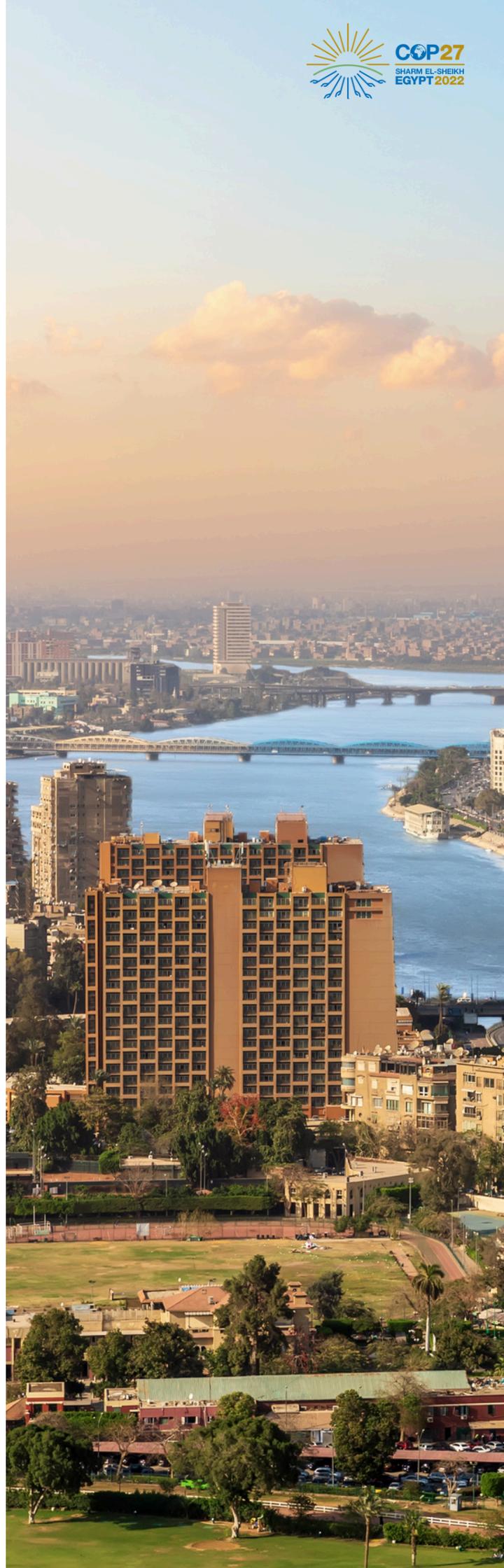
COP27 | Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, 2022

Setting a Common Language for Net Zero

By the time COP27 opened in Egypt, momentum around net zero was growing fast, but so were concerns about credibility. Governments, investors and civil society were calling for clearer, more consistent definitions of what “net zero” actually means and how progress should be measured, with the UN Secretary General convening a High-Level Expert Group on the net zero emissions commitments of non-state entities to address this and set out clear net zero criteria in their Integrity Matters report.

Through the Our 2050 World initiative, BSI led the convening of more than 1,200 experts from over 100 countries in the ISO system. The result was the ISO Net Zero Guidelines, delivered in record time to be launched, by ISO, the UN Race to Zero the UNFCCC Global Innovation Hub, at COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh.

The ISO Net Zero Guidelines make two major contributions to the global net zero transition. First, it harmonizes 33 of the most widely used frameworks and initiatives into a single resource, creating a one-stop shop for practitioners developing credible net zero strategies. Second, it sets out a holistic set of principles and recommendations, grounded in research from the University of Oxford, to help organizations plan their journey and demonstrate progress across all stages of net zero action.



The impact was immediate. ISO was recognized in the UN Secretary-General's Integrity Matters report and the ISO Net Zero Guidelines was recognized as the most aligned net zero guidance with the UN Integrity Matters report. The UN Yearbook of Global Climate Action highlighted the Guidelines as a breakthrough, and the IEA's Breakthrough Agenda Report praised them for harmonizing a fragmented landscape.

What emerged in Sharm El Sheikh was more than a set of guidelines. It was the foundation for what would become the world's first formal international net zero standard for organizations.



COP28 | Dubai, UAE, 2023

Turning Global Commitments into Measurable Action

COP28 in Dubai marked a pivotal moment in the global response to climate change.

The first official stocktake of progress towards the Paris Agreement revealed that the world remained off course to limit warming to 1.5°C, prompting renewed urgency to move from pledges to practical delivery. The conference concluded with a historic agreement to 'transition away' from fossil fuels and accelerate investment in green technologies, underscoring the need for clear frameworks to translate ambition into verifiable results.



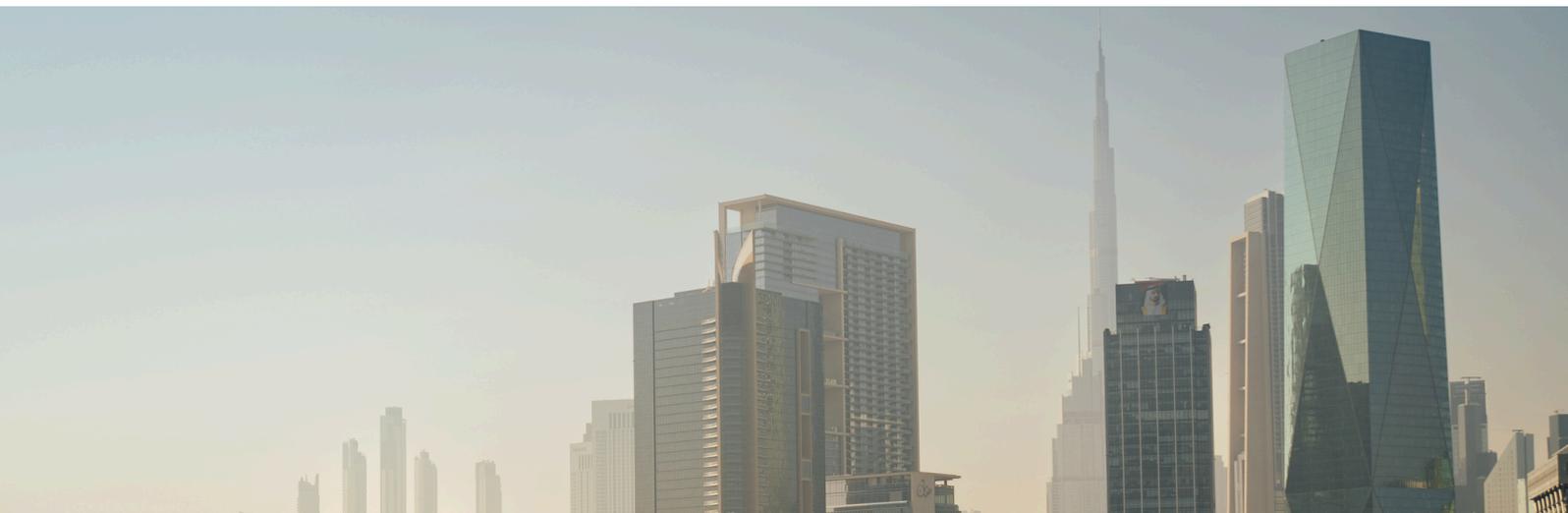
By the time COP28 began in Dubai, the Guidelines were no longer new; they were being used, including by household name corporations and organizations. As the second most downloaded ISO guidance upon launch, after only ISO 9001 — the world's most widely used management system standard, the ISO Net Zero Guidelines had begun shaping strategies across industries and regions.

Early adopters showed their impact, speaking to Reuters at COP28 with BSI on the changes they were progressing. General Motors applied the Guidelines to tie executive remuneration to decarbonization and set out credible interim targets. The FIA reworked its sustainability approach to prioritize real emissions reductions over offsets. Climate Action for Associations used them to enhance the advocacy, and external affairs support it provides to its members.

At COP28, BSI's largest-ever delegation joined emerging global discussions to highlight how standards can help deliver measurable progress on climate commitments. Together with the German Institute for Standardization (DIN), BSI convened the first ISO Sustainable Finance Roundtable, uniting regulators, investors and industry leaders to explore how international standards can strengthen sustainable finance practices and close the gap between intention and investment.

BSI was also appointed to independently audit COP28 against ISO 20121 Sustainable Event Management, ensuring the event was assessed against internationally recognized sustainability criteria.

Closing at the UNFCCC Global Innovation Hub Pavilion, BSI underlined a key point from the latest research on the ISO Net Zero Guidelines and other frameworks: standards are not just tools for incremental change, but drivers of transformative innovation.



COP29 | Baku, Azerbaijan, 2024

Leveraging Quality Infrastructure

By the time COP29 convened in Baku, the conversation had shifted. The challenge was no longer only about setting ambition and integrity through robust standards, but also about ensuring credibility and practical delivery within the systems that support them.

BSI announced ahead of COP29 that it would lead the process of converting the ISO Net Zero Guidelines into the world's first verifiable international standard on net zero for organizations, with an ambition to launch the public draft for consultation at COP30. BSI placed the spotlight on quality infrastructure, following the launch of a major whitepaper on the role of quality infrastructure for net zero at the IEC GM, the system comprised of standards, conformity assessment, accreditation, metrology and market surveillance that underpins trust in the real economy. An essential system to scale trusted climate governance.

To bring this message to life, BSI co-hosted the first-ever Standards Pavilion at COP with ISO, convening international partners and policymakers to explore how this system can scale trusted climate governance across markets and sectors.

COP 29 also saw the publication of the UN Taskforce on Net Zero Policy's report, Net Zero Policy Matters, which spotlighted the development of the ISO net zero standard and the role of quality infrastructure as a critical development that 'can support policy makers in driving high integrity on net zero among all actors'. This was followed by the UN Secretary General's second Integrity Matters report, which also highlighted the development of the ISO net zero standard as an example of convergence and harmonization of net zero governance.

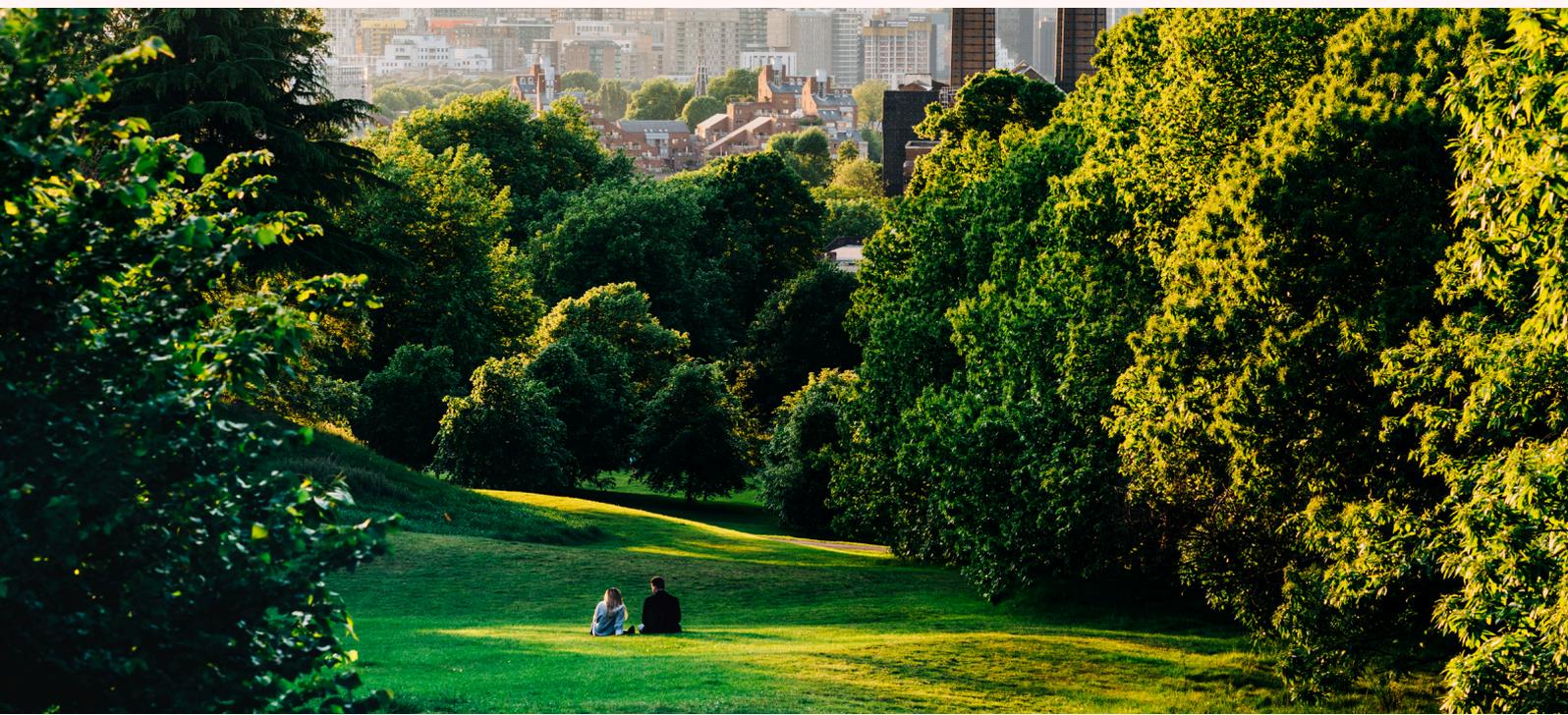


Alongside Canada's Standards Council (SCC) and Brazil's ABNT, BSI co-led the development of the ISO ESG Implementation Principles. Informed by contributions from more than 1,300 participants across 128 countries, the Principles provide organizations with a consistent, practical way to embed ESG into strategy, culture and reporting. They also bring much-needed comparability across disclosure frameworks such as ISSB and EFRAG.

Finance was another critical theme. As the world looks to mobilize capital for a just and equitable transition, the financial sector faces growing expectations to demonstrate credible, transparent plans for decarbonization. At COP29, BSI advanced the development of the ISO Transition Finance Standard (ISO 32212), created to bring rigor and scalability to transition planning across the financial sector.

Building on the work of GFANZ, IIGCC and others, the draft standard sought to answer a pressing question: how can financial institutions demonstrate thorough, consistent and credible transition plans aligned with the goals of the Paris Agreement? The session in Baku laid the groundwork for a series of global roundtables with regulators, financial institutions and international organizations, aimed at building consensus on what 'good looks like' in credible transition planning.

COP29 was a critical milestone for expanding the dialogue on how to convert climate commitments into action, underpinned by a just and equitable transition. It showed how not just standards alone, but the wider system of quality infrastructure, can anchor climate commitments in accountability, scale them across markets and support the delivery of policy and regulatory outcomes.



COP30 | Belém, Brazil, 2025

Looking ahead

The fifth year of BSI's COP journey will be pivotal. In Belém, anticipation is building for an announcement on the progress of the ISO Net Zero Standard as international negotiations on the draft standard continue into October, converting the Guidelines into the first verifiable international standard for net zero. Furthermore, a new OECD report on Reinforcing Regulatory Frameworks through Standards, Measurement and Assurance will be presented and show how policy, regulation and QI systems can work together to strengthen climate governance.

Alongside this, the ISO 32212 Net Zero Transition Planning for Financial Institutions standard will provide financial institutions with a credible framework for transition planning, while new strategic directions are defined for how the global standards infrastructure can shape sustainable finance practices.

As the leader of ISO's activities to implement the London Declaration commitment, BSI will co-facilitate a policy lab workshop with ISO to address the critical role international standards play in national and multilateral climate policy and action. This will equip policymakers, negotiators, and actors within the international standards system with clear pathways to integrate standards into climate policies and implementation efforts.



How Standards Drive Lasting Impact Beyond COP

BSI's role in the global climate agenda is to connect people, ideas and systems, creating the frameworks that help translate ambition into credible, measurable action. Across recent COPs, one theme has remained constant: credible climate action depends on trusted systems. For nearly a century, international standards have provided the backbone for that trust, aligning governments, investors and organizations on what good looks like, and ensuring that progress can be measured and verified.

The London Declaration, agreed by ISO's national members, set the direction by committing the global standards community to integrate climate science into every new and revised international standard. Since then, its implementation has gathered pace, with national standards bodies around the world developing action plans and collaborating through ISO to embed climate considerations across sectors.

That commitment translated into practical outcomes. The ISO Net Zero Guidelines brought clarity to a fragmented landscape, helping organizations of all sizes design credible transition plans. Their adoption by several companies has shown how a shared framework can turn ambition into measurable results.

Finance has been another pillar of progress. Work on the ISO Transition Finance Standard (ISO 32212) is helping define what transparent, high-integrity transition planning looks like across the financial sector, a step vital to scaling investment in the low-carbon economy.

Together, these initiatives show how the international standards system underpins climate governance: providing a common language, ensuring integrity in finance and reporting, and helping countries and organizations move from pledges to proof.

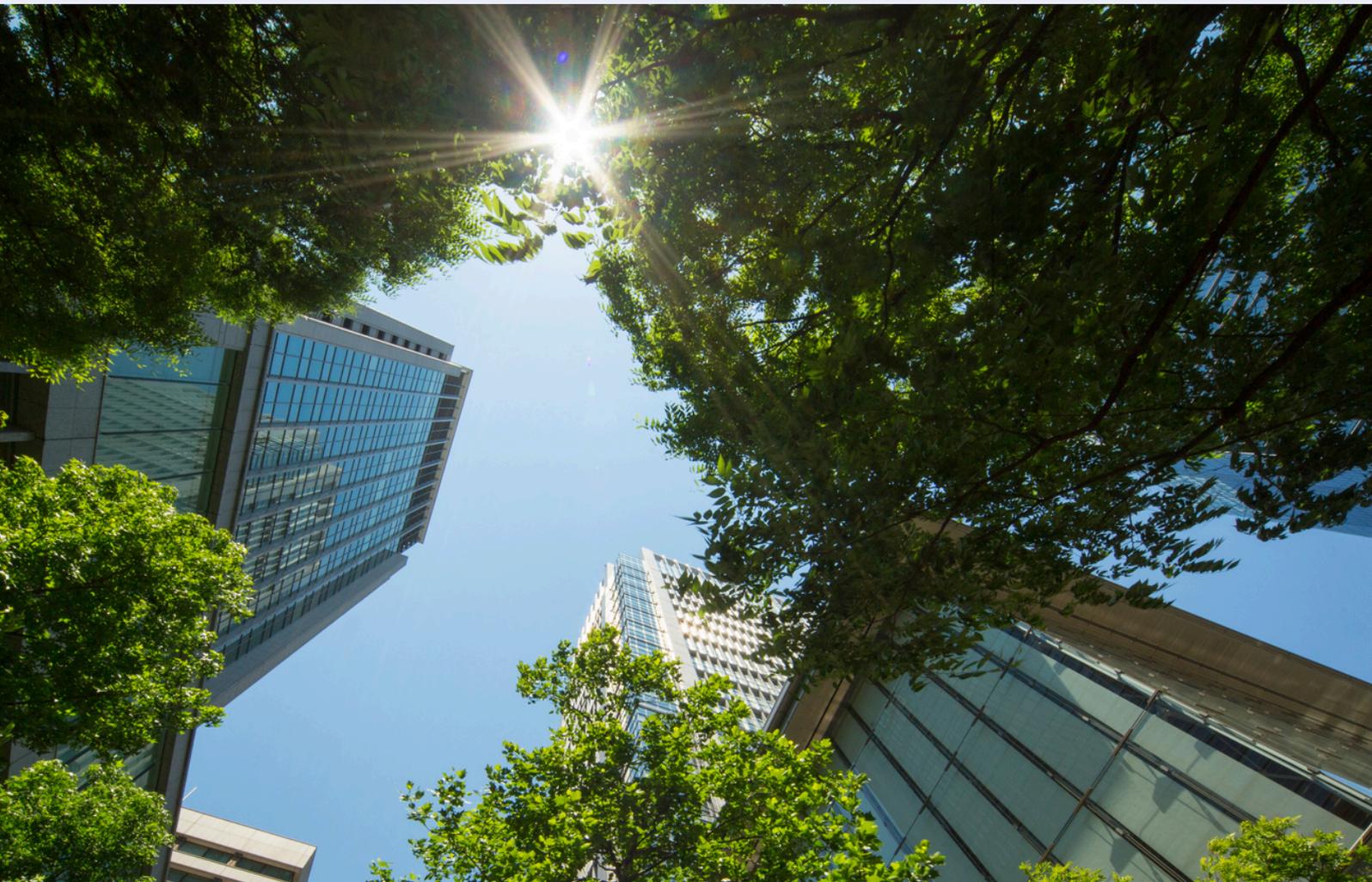


Reflections and Learnings

Across five COPs, the role of BSI has evolved from convening collaborations to shaping the frameworks that underpin credible climate action.

The journey reinforces three key lessons:

- **Standards bridge ambition and delivery.** They turn aspirations into measurable, actionable outcomes.
- **Inclusive consensus builds trust.** Thousands of experts have contributed to the Net Zero Guidelines and ESG Principles, showing that collaboration strengthens credibility and shared purpose.
- **Embedding standards within quality infrastructure accelerates progress.** When aligned with accreditation, measurement, and assurance, standards enable markets to move faster and with greater confidence.



The Path Forward

The journey from COP26 to COP30 shows two things: how far the international community has come in aligning on credible climate action; and how much more remains to be done.

Standards are tools for building trust, consistency and measurable progress across borders, but their true impact depends on continued adoption and collaboration.

As international frameworks for climate action continue to evolve, the focus now shifts from development to implementation. The next phase is about ensuring these tools are understood, adopted and embedded across sectors, so that the systems designed to support climate ambition can deliver measurable results in the real economy.

From commitments to credible action, see how standards are driving delivery.

[Learn more here](#) about BSI's work across global initiatives and discover how we're supporting measurable progress toward a sustainable future.





BSI Group
Seventh and Eighth Floors,
The Acre, 90 Long Acre,
London, WC2E 9RA
0345 086 9001
bsigroup.com

 Your partner
in progress