

COP27: Net Zero guidelines aim to drive higher standards and counter 'greenwashing' accusations

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To counter accusations of greenwashing and vague sustainability targets, a clear [set of guidelines](#), has today been published at COP27, establishing standards for the pathway to net zero, by the International Standards Organization.

Coming in response to the United Nations' call for comprehensive standards for policymakers, business and individuals, the [new guidelines](#) were drafted by an international team including Oxford's Kaya Axelsson, a researcher from Oxford Net Zero and the Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment.

Kaya Axelsson, who is a technical author for the [guidelines](#), says, "People are tired of having the wool pulled over their eyes when it comes to false climate claims."

She points out, "These new guidelines mean when we see products and labels that say 'net zero' or '[carbon neutral](#)' we now have a rubric against which to question whether these organizations are actually doing what it takes to get there."

Criticism of greenwashing and vague targets set by organizations inspired the move to create the guidelines, which provide clarity for non-state organizations and set out common policy definitions—enabling a coordinated global effort towards net zero.

Nigel Topping, UN Climate Change High-Level Champion of the U.K., COP26 said, "I am delighted to welcome ISO's publication of the Net Zero Guidelines and congratulate all those who have worked on them....These Net Zero Guidelines helpfully build on the Race to Zero voluntary criteria and can be used as a core reference text on net zero to bring global actors into alignment, ratchet up ambition and address greenwashing."

The guidelines were developed through a public and transparent process, with participants from [civil society](#), industry, government and academia. In just three months, more than 1,200 experts across 100 countries came together to develop the reference text. This open, consensus-led process included academics and policy experts from across the University of

Oxford.

Kaya Axelsson drafted the seed document for the guidelines, based on her previous mapping of the climate [standards](#) and the voluntary initiative landscape. The guidelines provide common terms and definitions alongside specific recommendations on net zero guiding principles for all organizations. This includes incorporating net zero into strategies and policies, what net zero means at different levels and for different types of organization, and more.

Provided by University of Oxford

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