

South Africa Multistakeholder Roundtable
Draft ISO/DIS 14060
Net Zero Aligned Organisations

12th August 2026

Summary Report

PART OF ZENIZENI'S SERIES ON
NET ZERO TRANSITION GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE

In collaboration with GRI and Oxford Net Zero

This report is prepared in accordance with Chatham House Rule. It does not identify speakers or participating organisations and does not attribute views expressed during the discussion to particular individuals.

Contents

1 Roundtable summary 4
1.1 The roundtable clarified the architecture of credible transition planning without forcing consensus on every instrument. .. 4
1.2 The most important fault lines concerned the means of implementation rather than the need for action. 4
2 Purpose and participation 4
2.1 The roundtable brought international standard-setting expertise into conversation with South African implementation experience. 4
3 Opening and framing 5
3.1 Net zero credibility now depends on evidence of delivery, not the existence of a distant target. 5
3.2 Trust in climate information must be built into organisational systems rather than added at the end. 5
4 South African corporate transition-planning evidence 6
4.1 Plans are developing faster than capital is moving. 6
5 Understanding the draft international standard 6
5.1 The draft standard turns net zero from a single long-term claim into a staged and verifiable organisational pathway. 6
5.2 Credible net zero planning combines short-term action, comprehensive coverage, restrained use of offsets, public accountability and equity. 7
5.3 The claims framework is designed to make an organisation's public claim reflect where it actually stands on the journey to net zero. 7
6 Reporting and interoperability 7
6.1 The standard will add value only if it simplifies the reporting ecosystem rather than adding another layer. 7
7 Differentiated pathways and organisational responsibility 8
7.1 Equity can shape the pace of transition without weakening the direction of travel. 8
7.2 A credible organisational pathway extends beyond the formal emissions inventory. 8
7.3 South Africa's transition cannot be separated from development, resilience and the allocation of capital. 8
8 Participation in standards development 9
8.1 Standards shape competitiveness and market access long before they become mandatory. 9
9 Deep dives: testing the draft against South African realities 9
10 Carbon credits, removals and residual emissions 9
10.1 The draft standard seeks to protect claims integrity while recognising targeted roles for carbon markets and removals. . 9
11 Practical organisational implementation 11
11.1 A standard can be technically sound and still fail if organisations cannot implement it. 11
11.2 Incentives will determine whether the standard moves from technical guidance into organisational practice. 11
12 Domestic regulation and international best practice 12
12.1 Compliance sets the floor; credible transition planning extends the horizon. 12
12.2 Different instruments can perform different functions, provided they are designed to work together. 12
13 Wider plenary reflections on finance, feasibility and best practice 12

13.2 Financial integration may be one area where international best practice can inform the evolution of domestic frameworks. 13
14 Final plenary discussion 13
14.1 Implementation will depend on technical support, organisational incentives and a clear value proposition. 13
15 Closing reflections and next steps 14
15.1 Credibility, interoperability, context and assurance recurred as important tests of the standard's practical value. 14

1 Roundtable summary

1.1 The roundtable clarified the architecture of credible transition planning without forcing consensus on every instrument.

The dialogue was not designed to negotiate a common position or adopt formal recommendations.

Across the presentations and discussion, however, several propositions recurred with relatively little contestation:

- Credible net zero alignment requires more than a long-term target or published transition plan. It depends on interim milestones, organisational governance, implementation, credible emissions data and evidence that capital and operational decisions are beginning to support the pathway.
- Just-transition considerations need to be addressed alongside emissions-pathway credibility. The discussion demonstrated that strong performance in one of these areas cannot be assumed to imply strong performance in the other.
- Interoperability also remained central. The emerging suite of measurement, transition-planning and reporting standards will be more useful if organisations can draw on common underlying systems and information rather than repeatedly generating similar data for separate requirements.
- Equity and context were recognised as necessary components of transition planning, particularly in emerging economies. At the same time, flexibility needs to support progression rather than weaken the credibility of the pathway.
- Assurance and verification can strengthen confidence in transition claims and disclosures. They should not be an afterthought and require reliable information and effective governance must be must be built into organisational systems from the outset.

Finally, the discussion repeatedly returned to the need for stronger South African and African participation in standards development so that emerging international norms are informed by the circumstances in which they will ultimately be applied.

1.2 The most important fault lines concerned the means of implementation rather than the need for action.

Several issues remained unresolved:

- The treatment of carbon markets is now better understood as a question of how targeted uses of credits, certificates and removals interact with organisational claims, Article 6 of the Paris Agreement (hereinafter 'Article 6'), trade and finance incentives and whether sufficient high-integrity removal capacity can be developed to address residual emissions at the scale eventually required, rather than as a simple question of whether offsets are permitted.
- Questions also remain about how differentiated organisational pathways will aggregate against the global carbon budget, particularly if overall emissions reductions continue to fall short of what climate science requires.
- The relationship between voluntary best practice and binding domestic regulation remains another area requiring further consideration. The roundtable suggested that the two can serve different purposes, but practical interoperability, institutional responsibilities and implementation capacity still need to be worked through.
- The feasibility and value proposition of the standard may also differ substantially across sectors and organisation types. Large listed companies exposed to investor, customer and export-market expectations face different incentives and constraints from unlisted firms and small and medium-sized enterprises.
- Underlying many of these issues is the question of finance. Transition plans will ultimately be implementable only where organisational decisions, public policy and the allocation of capital begin to support implementation.

The roundtable therefore strengthened understanding of the draft standard while also identifying the areas in which further technical work, policy alignment and practical experience will be needed.

2 Purpose and participation

2.1 The roundtable brought international standard-setting expertise into conversation with South African implementation experience.

An online multi-stakeholder roundtable was held on 12 August 2026 to consider the draft ISO/DIS 14060 standard for net zero aligned organisations (hereinafter "the draft standard") and its relevance to the South African context.

The dialogue took place during the public consultation period for the draft standard. It was intended to build understanding of the standard's principles, scope and requirements; consider its relationship with existing greenhouse-gas accounting, target-setting and reporting frameworks; and examine how it might interact with South Africa's evolving policy and regulatory environment.

The programme combined technical presentations, facilitated discussion and deeper examination of selected issues, including differentiated transition pathways, carbon credits and removals, organisational implementation, reporting, assurance, finance and domestic mitigation-plan regulations.

The roundtable brought together stakeholders from think tanks, civil society organisations, academia, standard-setting bodies and consultancies. Their work covered climate and energy policy, sustainable development, corporate accountability, low-carbon transitions, greenhouse-gas accounting, sustainability reporting, carbon markets, industrial policy, just transition, institutional finance, assurance and corporate sustainability.

Invited contributors brought experience in international climate implementation, corporate transition benchmarking, technical standards development, sustainability reporting, carbon-market advisory work, organisational implementation, climate-risk analysis, responsible investment and professional assurance.

3 Opening and framing

3.1 Net zero credibility now depends on evidence of delivery, not the existence of a distant target.

The draft standard was introduced as an attempt to create a consistent and independently verifiable approach to organisational net zero alignment. Its relevance was linked to the need to reduce greenwashing, strengthen the credibility of transition plans, and distinguish between aspiration, planning, measurable progress and achievement.

Interoperability was identified from the outset as a practical test of the standard's value. Organisations already navigate greenhouse-gas accounting requirements, sustainability-reporting standards including multistakeholder and investor-focused climate disclosures as well as domestic regulations. A further standard would be useful if it helped connect these requirements, reduced the risk of fragmentation, did not create unnecessary reporting burdens, and slotted into the existing reporting with GRI and IFRS Standards.

3.2 Trust in climate information must be built into organisational systems rather than added at the end.

The scene-setting remarks drew together experience from emissions accounting, assurance, national climate reporting, corporate operations and international climate action.

Emissions information was described as more than a mechanical output. Organisational boundaries, emissions sources, estimation methods and data choices all influence the reported result and can carry significant consequences.

Reliable climate information therefore depends on governance, internal controls, evidence trails and transparency from the outset. It was emphasised that assurance performed at the end of the reporting cycle cannot compensate for weaknesses in the underlying systems that produce the information.

The wider climate-policy landscape was characterised as moving from commitments towards a more rigorous phase of delivery, measurable results and accountability. Organisations are increasingly expected to establish interim targets, progressively cover emissions across their value chains and demonstrate progress through increasingly complete and transparent information.

The mitigation hierarchy remained central to this framing. Deep emissions reductions within operations and value chains should precede the counterbalancing of residual emissions. High-integrity carbon credits and removals may have a role, but should not substitute for structural transformation.

Emerging-economy circumstances, data limitations and capacity constraints were recognised as real. Flexibility, however, was framed as something that should enable progression rather than create a basis for delay.

Taken together, the opening remarks framed three important tests for the draft standard: whether it could support trustworthy and decision-useful information; preserve the primacy of emissions reductions; and accommodate equity and capacity constraints without weakening progression. The roundtable was also invited to consider whether the draft standard could prevent over-claiming, strengthen trust, and support real-world decarbonisation and a just transition.

These questions provided the backdrop for the first presentation, which examined whether transition planning by a sample of major South African companies was translating into measurable deployment and impact.

4 South African corporate transition-planning evidence

4.1 Plans are developing faster than capital is moving.

The first presentation grounded the discussion in evidence from six large South African companies operating across different sectors.

A global corporate transition-benchmarking methodology was used to distinguish among three dimensions of performance:

- Transition Plan Quality: the quality and completeness of the transition plan;
- Contribution to Low-carbon Transition: evidence that capital deployment and emissions performance were beginning to align with a sector-specific low-carbon pathway; and
- Just Transition: the extent to which workers, communities and affected stakeholders were structurally incorporated into the transition.

The findings revealed a significant gap between planning and implementation. None of the six companies scored above zero on the deployment measure. Only one achieved the highest score for transition-plan quality, while the highest just-transition result was 51.7 out of 100.

Two contrasting sectoral examples illustrated why these dimensions should not be treated as interchangeable. A telecommunications company had the strongest transition-plan score but a low just-transition result. A major electricity utility had the strongest just-transition result in the sample but the least mature transition plan.

The evidence therefore established an important premise for the remainder of the roundtable: the architecture of transition planning in South Africa is developing more quickly than deployment. Plans are increasingly visible, but capital allocation and measurable implementation have not necessarily followed at the pace implied by sectoral low-carbon pathways.

5 Understanding the draft international standard

5.1 The draft standard turns net zero from a single long-term claim into a staged and verifiable organisational pathway.

The next presentation provided an overview of the development, scope and content of ISO/DIS 14060.

The draft standard was described as the outcome of a multi-year process involving technical experts and representatives from more than 100 national standards bodies, with input from business, civil society, government and academia. Its purpose is to establish an internationally agreed understanding of what constitutes a net zero aligned organisation.

A central rationale for the standard is that simply having or disclosing a transition plan does not establish that an organisation is aligned with a credible emissions pathway. The draft standard therefore seeks to define the characteristics of a net zero aligned target and transition plan, and to translate global climate objectives into requirements that can be applied at organisational level.

The standard is intended to apply across different organisational types and sizes, including private companies, public bodies, partnerships, non-governmental organisations and academic institutions. It does not apply to countries, cities, territories, individual products, services, events or brands.

This whole-organisation focus is significant. An organisation would not be able to rely on the alignment of a single product or brand while the wider organisation remained inconsistent with a net zero pathway.

The standard's requirements were presented through four broad areas:

- setting a net zero aligned target and transition plan;
- taking action to reduce organisational emissions and address residual emissions;
- contributing to global net zero through products and services, finance, innovation and policy engagement; and
- aligning governance, reporting, assurance and organisational claims.

Eleven guiding principles underpin these requirements. They include urgency, high ambition, scientific integrity, credibility, transparency, avoidance of adverse impacts, value-chain responsibility, equity and justice.

5.2 Credible net zero planning combines short-term action, comprehensive coverage, restrained use of offsets, public accountability and equity.

The practical logic of a credible net zero transition plan was summarised through the mnemonic 'SCORE': Short-term plans and action; Coverage of greenhouse gases and relevant scopes; Offsetting scarcely using credible and equitable approaches; Reporting and accountability; and Equity for workers, local communities and wider global impacts.

The draft standard adopts a differentiated approach to transition pathways. Organisations with greater resources, higher current emissions or greater historical responsibility are expected to move more quickly. The supporting annexes include differentiated pathways with indicative net zero years of 2050, 2060 and 2070, reflecting differences in national circumstances and capacity.

Interim targets would generally be required within five years of target-setting and at intervals of no more than ten years thereafter. For Scope 3 emissions, the draft standard seeks to focus organisational effort on emissions that are both significant in magnitude and subject to meaningful influence, rather than requiring organisations to pursue every source of value-chain emissions equally.

5.3 The claims framework is designed to make an organisation's public claim reflect where it actually stands on the journey to net zero.

A particularly significant feature of the draft standard is its 'four-stage claims framework'. Rather than treating a distant net zero commitment as evidence of present alignment, the framework distinguishes between different stages of organisational progress:

1. a net zero aspiration;

2. a published net zero aligned transition plan;

3. demonstrated progress along a net zero aligned pathway; and

4. achievement and maintenance of organisational net zero.

An organisation beginning with an aspiration would be expected to progress to a transition plan within a defined period. Organisations that already have a net zero aspiration would not be able simply to reset the clock, but would be expected to progress to the transition-planning stage.

Progress claims would depend on performance against interim targets and milestones, while the net zero achievement claim would only apply once the organisation had reached the relevant point on its pathway and counterbalanced remaining residual emissions with eligible removals.

The draft standard also recognises that organisational pathways may not proceed in a perfectly straight line. Defined remedial provisions allow an organisation that has moved off its pathway within specified limits to adjust its transition plan and demonstrate corrective action while retaining or regaining an appropriate claim.

Taken together, these provisions position the standard as more than a target-setting framework. They connect long-term ambition to interim milestones, transition planning, organisational action, monitoring and progressively stronger claims. The distinction between simply having a transition plan and demonstrating alignment with a credible pathway became an important reference point for the discussion that followed.

6 Reporting and interoperability

6.1 The standard will add value only if it simplifies the reporting ecosystem rather than adding another layer.

The technical discussion of the draft standard was followed by consideration of how its reporting requirements relate to existing global sustainability reporting and climate-disclosure standards.

Comprehensive climate reporting was described as requiring two complementary perspectives. The first concerns the organisation's effects on people, the environment and the economy. The second concerns climate-related risks and opportunities that may affect financial performance and enterprise value.

These perspectives are not alternatives. Together they provide a fuller picture of both the impacts associated with an organisation's transition and the financial implications of climate change and transition for the organisation itself.

The human dimensions of transition planning received particular attention. Relevant information can include workforce redeployment, employment impacts, training and reskilling, remuneration, impacts on local communities and the outcomes of stakeholder engagement. Environmental impacts arising from the implementation of the transition plan also form part of this wider reporting picture.

Significantly, the draft standard does not require organisations to produce a standalone net zero report. Organisations may use their normal reporting arrangements and reporting cycles, allowing net zero information to be incorporated into existing disclosure processes.

This was presented as an important feature of interoperability. Existing reporting standards can disclose what an organisation is doing, while ISO/DIS 14060 seeks to define what a net zero aligned transition plan should contain. The two functions are therefore intended to complement rather than duplicate one another.

The reporting presentation closed with an invitation to use the consultation process to identify any remaining interoperability challenges and to begin preparing for implementation through stronger impact assessment, stakeholder engagement and transition planning.

7 Differentiated pathways and organisational responsibility

7.1 Equity can shape the pace of transition without weakening the direction of travel.

The open discussion following the technical presentations brought national commitments, sectoral pathways and organisational responsibility into the same frame.

The differentiated 2050, 2060 and 2070 pathways were presented as an attempt to balance climate science with differing national circumstances and economic capacity. The approach developed through the standard-setting process assumes that large organisations should generally move ahead of national net zero dates, leaving additional time for smaller organisations and the wider economy to transition.

Country income and other contextual factors had also informed the differentiation. The resulting pathway design was described as a negotiated attempt to introduce common but differentiated responsibility into organisational target-setting while remaining within the broad temperature objectives of the Paris Agreement.

The discussion nevertheless exposed a difficult unresolved question. Even if individual organisations follow credible pathways, aggregate company emissions may still diverge from the global carbon budget if overall progress is insufficient.

The exchange therefore left open how company-level pathways would ultimately be reconciled with sectoral and national trajectories if aggregate emissions remained inconsistent with the available global carbon budget.

7.2 A credible organisational pathway extends beyond the formal emissions inventory.

The standard also places responsibility on organisations to address some of the conditions that affect whether their own transitions can succeed.

Organisations may identify dependencies relating to policy, innovation or finance that constrain their ability to follow a sectoral pathway. Under the draft standard, identifying such a dependency would not in itself be sufficient. Where the organisation has the capacity to act, it would also be expected to take reasonable steps to address those constraints. This could include investment in innovation, climate finance or climate-aligned policy engagement.

The approach reflects a broader conception of organisational net zero alignment. It is concerned not only with emissions inside the organisation's Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 inventory, but also with the organisation's products and services, financing activities and influence on the wider enabling environment.

7.3 South Africa's transition cannot be separated from development, resilience and the allocation of capital.

The conversation then widened to the relationship among national climate commitments, domestic carbon budgets, mitigation-plan requirements and voluntary international standards.

The links among these systems were recognised as incomplete. A common understanding of what organisational net zero alignment means could provide one useful building block, but it would not by itself align South Africa's wider policy, regulatory and economic architecture.

The allocation of capital emerged as a central tension. The discussion highlighted the challenge of balancing mitigation with adaptation, resilience, infrastructure and developmental needs in a country facing significant climate impacts alongside persistent socioeconomic constraints.

The issue was not resolved as a simple choice between development and decarbonisation. Rather, the discussion highlighted the difficult question of where limited finance should be directed and how the transition should account for immediate development and resilience needs alongside long-term emissions reductions.

The willingness of organisations to move ahead of national target dates was also considered. Evidence presented during the exchange suggested that many organisations making net zero commitments had already adopted target dates of 2050 or earlier. The more important credibility question was therefore whether those long-term dates were supported by realistic interim milestones, investment and implementation.

8 Participation in standards development

8.1 Standards shape competitiveness and market access long before they become mandatory.

The post-break discussion began with a reflection on the role of South African and African stakeholders in international standard-setting.

Standards were described not simply as technical documents, but as instruments that can shape organisational competitiveness, trade and access to markets. Their implications can therefore extend well beyond voluntary reporting.

The discussion emphasised that African stakeholders have often been underrepresented in the processes where such standards are negotiated and developed. A consultation process was therefore framed as an opportunity to become more active in shaping rules that may later influence economic activity in the region.

Meaningful participation requires more than a formal invitation to comment. It depends on technical expertise, institutional coordination, time and financial resources. Academia, research organisations, civil society, industry and the standards community all have potential roles in developing and articulating informed perspectives.

The national standards process provides an important channel for engagement, but the wider stakeholder ecosystem also needs to monitor relevant standards developments and create the capacity to contribute before positions become settled.

The discussion also suggested that stronger participation requires strategic coordination, not simply more individual submissions. African stakeholders may need to identify where collective positions can amplify the region's influence while recognising areas in which national, sectoral or organisational interests legitimately differ.

9 Deep dives: testing the draft against South African realities

The second half of the roundtable moved from understanding the standard to testing some of its most contested provisions against implementation experience and South Africa's policy and economic context.

Three areas were selected for closer examination: the treatment of carbon credits and residual emissions; the practical realities of organisational implementation and reporting; and the relationship between the draft international standard and South Africa's emerging domestic mitigation-plan framework.

The discussions were not designed to produce consensus. Instead, they surfaced areas where the standard appeared to provide useful clarity, where implementation challenges remained and where different perspectives on the appropriate balance between ambition, feasibility and incentives persisted.

10 Carbon credits, removals and residual emissions

10.1 The draft standard seeks to protect claims integrity while recognising targeted roles for carbon markets and removals.

The first deep dive examined one of the most contested areas of organisational net zero standard-setting: the role of carbon credits, certificates and removals.

The discussion opened from the perspective that carbon markets can enable organisations to finance mitigation opportunities beyond their own operations and value chains, including in developing economies where mitigation may be achieved at lower cost. This raised broader questions about how an organisational net zero standard should interact with international carbon markets, developing-country finance needs and the mechanisms established under Article 6.

Concerns were raised about the draft standard's relationship with Article 6 and whether insufficient recognition of these mechanisms could have implications for carbon-market transactions involving developing countries. A related concern was that standards influencing the purchasing decisions of companies in major markets could, in some circumstances, affect access to markets for carbon credits generated in developing economies. This was presented as a potential technical-barrier-to-trade issue requiring further consideration rather than as an agreed conclusion of the roundtable.

The discussion also focused on the feasibility of removals. Land-based removals continue to raise questions concerning permanence and reversal risk, while technological approaches such as direct air capture and carbon capture and storage remain relatively costly and are not yet available at the scale that may eventually be required. These practical constraints were particularly relevant because the draft requires residual emissions at the net zero target date to be counterbalanced using durable carbon dioxide removals.

A further issue concerned the overall availability of removal capacity. One contribution cautioned that global carbon uptake may itself be scarce because removals may be required not only to counterbalance organisational residual emissions but also to support global temperature stabilisation and, potentially, temperature decline after an overshoot. The subsequent discussion emphasised that natural systems alone are unlikely to provide sufficient additional capacity and that removals of different types — including ecosystem restoration and technological approaches — will need to scale substantially. Private-sector finance was identified as likely to play an important role in that expansion.

The subsequent technical explanation clarified that the latest draft does not treat carbon credits and other market instruments as a single catch-all form of offsetting. Instead, it distinguishes several targeted uses for credits, certificates and removals within an organisational net zero pathway.

These uses include:

- using removals to counterbalance residual emissions at organisational net zero and to meet removal milestones on the pathway towards that point;
- using value-chain certificates for difficult-to-reach value-chain emissions where direct engagement is not feasible;
- making a financial contribution to mitigation beyond the organisational inventory as part of action towards global net zero;
- using climate finance or credits as part of remedial action in specified circumstances where an organisation has moved off its pathway; and
- voluntarily addressing historical emissions as an additional high-ambition action.

These instruments would not, however, be used to cancel organisational emissions for the purpose of claiming progress against interim emissions-reduction targets. The distinction is intended to preserve the integrity of the organisation's own decarbonisation pathway while still recognising roles for carbon markets and climate finance.

Following this clarification, the earlier critique of the draft's treatment of offsets was substantially qualified. It was acknowledged that the latest version of the standard had evolved since earlier stages of the drafting process and that the current approach represented a constructive compromise between positions that had previously been more polarised.

The discussion nevertheless suggested that the compromise may continue to evolve. One technical perspective identified market-based value-chain and supply-chain solutions as an area where the framework might eventually go further, while still regarding the current differentiated treatment of credits and certificates as a workable compromise.

A practical question nevertheless remained. Experience shared during the roundtable suggested that some organisations may be reluctant to finance mitigation outside their value chains where the expenditure does not produce a sufficiently visible benefit within their own transition strategy or accounting. The issue therefore shifted from whether the standard permits carbon-market instruments, to the more practical question of whether its recognised uses provide sufficient incentives for organisations to mobilise finance at scale.

The deep dive ultimately highlighted three areas for continued consideration: the relationship between the draft standard and Article 6; the possible trade and market-access implications of evolving carbon-market rules; and the availability, durability and cost of removals required to counterbalance residual emissions.

Rather than revealing a simple disagreement over whether carbon credits should be permitted, the discussion showed that the latest draft has moved towards a more differentiated approach. The remaining questions concern how that architecture will work in practice, particularly for developing economies seeking both credible organisational decarbonisation and increased flows of climate finance.

11 Practical organisational implementation

11.1 A standard can be technically sound and still fail if organisations cannot implement it.

The second deep dive shifted the lens from the technical design of the draft standard to the realities of implementation inside organisations.

The discussion highlighted that credible transition planning depends on more than the availability of technical guidance. It also requires internal authority, reliable data, budgets, organisational buy-in and the ability to translate sustainability requirements into everyday business decisions.

Sustainability teams are often small and may have limited influence over strategy, budgets and capital allocation. Senior management and boards may still approach climate action primarily through the lens of compliance or reporting, leaving sustainability practitioners to build support across the organisation and make the case for implementation.

Developing a credible emissions baseline can itself require substantial time and effort. Organisational data may be incomplete or inconsistent, and improvements in data quality may require previous figures to be restated.

Reporting and assurance can also impose significant costs. While the draft standard was regarded as comparatively accessible, implementation would still require practical guidance and support. The discussion highlighted that many organisations need help not only interpreting technical requirements, but also understanding the business value of adopting them.

11.2 Incentives will determine whether the standard moves from technical guidance into organisational practice.

This led directly into a wider discussion about what would motivate organisations to adopt and implement the standard.

Investor and customer expectations were identified as important drivers, particularly for organisations operating in global supply chains or export markets. Increasing restrictions on unsupported environmental claims may create further demand for credible and verifiable approaches to net zero alignment.

The discussion also distinguished between the emerging evidence on the organisational and financial benefits of sustainability reporting and the much newer question of ISO 14060 adoption. It was considered too early to draw equivalent conclusions about the direct financial returns from adopting the draft standard.

Public procurement was also discussed as a potentially powerful mechanism for encouraging adoption. Governments could incorporate net zero alignment into supplier criteria, helping align public expenditure with climate objectives.

The discussion, however, cautioned against assuming that this would work equally well for all organisations. Applying demanding requirements without proportionality or implementation support could create additional barriers for small and medium-sized enterprises seeking access to public procurement opportunities.

One suggestion was that procurement-linked requirements could initially focus on larger contracts and larger organisations, where capacity is greater and the potential market signal is stronger. The draft's dedicated SME provisions were relevant in this context because they provide a more proportionate route for smaller organisations rather than applying identical requirements across all firms.

Regulation was also considered from a broader perspective. Clear and consistently applied regulatory expectations can provide certainty for markets rather than functioning only as a punitive instrument.

The wider enabling environment remained central throughout the exchange. Fossil-fuel subsidies and other market distortions can weaken incentives to invest in cleaner alternatives, while industrial policy, energy infrastructure, regulation, access to finance and procurement can either support or undermine organisational transition pathways.

No common position emerged on whether the draft standard should itself be embedded in regulation. The discussion instead highlighted the interaction between organisational action and the wider policy and market conditions in which implementation takes place.

12 Domestic regulation and international best practice

12.1 Compliance sets the floor; credible transition planning extends the horizon.

The final deep dive compared the draft standard with South Africa's developing carbon-budget and mitigation-plan framework.

The two frameworks share several structural features. Both require entity-level planning, quantified measures, senior or board-level approval, annual monitoring, defined planning cycles and some form of validation or verification. Their purposes and boundaries are nevertheless different.

The domestic framework was presented primarily as a compliance mechanism. It applies to organisations allocated a carbon budget, focuses principally on direct emissions and requires specific mitigation measures linked to facilities or emissions sources. Performance is assessed within a defined commitment period, with possible carbon-tax implications if the budget is exceeded.

The draft international standard has a wider organisational and strategic scope. It covers direct emissions, purchased-energy emissions and significant value-chain emissions. Its transition-planning provisions explicitly connect the pathway to business and financial planning, including investment, divestment, asset management and cash-flow implications. It also follows the organisation towards a long-term net zero target rather than concentrating only on compliance within a single commitment period.

The comparison therefore did not attempt to suggest that one framework should replace the other. They were understood as serving different purposes. Domestic regulation provides a binding compliance framework. The international standard has the potential to establish a broader benchmark for organisational best practice.

The discussion also clarified that voluntary standards do not displace regulation. Regulation establishes the legal boundary within which organisations operate, while standards can support regulatory objectives by providing common methodologies, third-party assurance and elements of the wider quality infrastructure.

12.2 Different instruments can perform different functions, provided they are designed to work together.

The discussion that followed moved away from treating domestic regulation and an international voluntary standard as competing alternatives.

A recurring view was that different tools can serve different functions: regulation can establish minimum legal requirements; reporting frameworks can provide information to different users; transition-planning standards can define credible organisational practice; and finance can provide incentives for implementation.

Distinguishing legal requirements from voluntary best practice was not intended to imply that organisations should aim only for minimum compliance. The wider objective is to use regulation, standards, reporting, finance and other instruments together to maximise real-world impact.

The challenge is to align these tools sufficiently well that organisations do not face contradictory requirements or unnecessary duplication.

This raised questions about institutional roles and capacity within South Africa. If mitigation plans are submitted for regulatory approval, the responsible public institution will require the capacity to assess the quality and credibility of those plans. The roundtable did not seek to resolve where such capacity should ultimately sit.

13 Wider plenary reflections on finance, feasibility and best practice

The discussion broadened from standards and regulation to the actors whose decisions ultimately determine whether transition plans are financed and implemented.

The role of institutional capital brought the discussion back to the gap between planning and deployment identified at the start of the roundtable.

A contribution from the institutional-investment perspective noted that South African retirement funds hold more than R5 trillion in assets and that this capital ultimately finances many of the companies that could fall within the scope of the standard.

The observation highlighted an asymmetry. The draft standard places financial-integration and capital-allocation expectations on operating organisations, while asset owners do not necessarily have an equivalent binding reference point for assessing what net zero alignment should mean at portfolio level.

This raised a wider question about how transition expectations placed on companies connect with the decisions of trustees, asset owners and other providers of capital.

13.2 Financial integration may be one area where international best practice can inform the evolution of domestic frameworks.

The capital perspective also sharpened the earlier comparison with South Africa's domestic mitigation-plan framework.

ISO/DIS 14060 explicitly asks organisations to connect transition plans with investment, asset management and cash-flow decisions. The domestic mitigation-plan framework, as presented during the roundtable, does not contain an equivalent requirement for financial integration.

This prompted the observation that South African regulators and professional bodies could draw on aspects of international best practice when developing sustainability and climate-related policy and reporting approaches.

Integrating climate considerations into strategic planning, budgeting and management accounting could help connect emissions commitments more directly to organisational decision-making.

At the same time, the discussion cautioned against assuming that voluntary international standards will automatically be feasible for all sectors. High-emitting and primary industries in developing economies may operate within infrastructure, licensing, energy and investment conditions that make rapid adjustment difficult.

If organisations consider a voluntary framework unrealistic or insufficiently adapted to their circumstances, they may simply choose not to adopt it. This reinforced the importance of market incentives: in some sectors, customers, investors and providers of capital may exert stronger pressure for improved transition performance than voluntary standards or regulation alone.

14 Final plenary discussion

14.1 Implementation will depend on technical support, organisational incentives and a clear value proposition.

The final plenary contributions returned to participation in standards development, the costs of implementation and the incentives available to different types of organisations.

A recurring concern was that organisations may miss opportunities to influence international standards because they are unaware of consultations or lack the time and resources required to prepare technically informed submissions.

This was seen as particularly important for South Africa and other developing economies. Without stronger participation and coordination, standards may evolve without sufficient input from organisations expected to implement them.

The incentives facing unlisted companies and smaller organisations were also less clear. These organisations may experience less pressure from investors and public reporting requirements and may be particularly sensitive to the costs of data collection, implementation and assurance.

Similar concerns were raised in relation to industrial and carbon-intensive businesses already facing substantial regulatory, financial and competitiveness pressures.

The discussion therefore emphasised the importance of practical implementation support and a clear value proposition. Organisations are more likely to engage where the relationship between climate action, resilience, access to markets, access to finance and long-term business value is made visible.

Funders, advisers and other market institutions may have an important role in helping organisations translate technical standards into investable actions and practical business decisions.

15 Closing reflections and next steps

15.1 Credibility, interoperability, context and assurance recurred as important tests of the standard's practical value.

The closing reflections drew together several themes that had recurred across the morning.

- **Credibility** centred on the distinction between aspiration and progress. Net zero claims need to be supported by science-based pathways, measurable implementation and governance capable of demonstrating that the organisation is acting consistently with its stated commitments.
- **Interoperability** remained central because South African organisations already operate within a complex reporting and regulatory environment. The practical value of the standard will depend in part on whether it can complement existing requirements rather than generate unnecessary duplication.
- **Context** consistently shaped perspectives throughout the discussion. South African organisations must pursue decarbonisation while navigating energy-security constraints, industrial competitiveness, employment, development and just-transition considerations. The draft standard's provisions on differentiation, equity and proportionality were therefore particularly relevant.
- **Assurance and governance** were also recurring themes. Credibility depends on transition planning being embedded into organisational systems, strategy, controls, budgeting and decision-making. Validation of forward-looking plans and verification of historical performance can strengthen confidence in claims, but neither can compensate for weak underlying systems.
- A **possible area for further work raised during the dialogue was to apply the draft methodology to a small number of South African companies** and compare the resulting organisational pathways with relevant national and sectoral pathways, including those reflected in South Africa's climate-planning processes. Such an exercise could help identify areas of alignment, divergence and practical implementation difficulty.
- The final discussion also returned to **participation in the consultation process**. Those present were encouraged to contribute informed views on the draft standard and, more broadly, to strengthen South African and African participation in international standards development.