


ACHIEVE INNOVATIVE SESSION

# Co-creating A Roadmap for Accelerating High-Integrity Voluntary Climate Action

**Date of event:** Wednesday, September 9th, 2026
**Place of event:** Earth System Governance General Conference, Bath, UK

On 9 September 2026, the ACHIEVE project hosted the innovative session *Co-creating a Roadmap for Accelerating High-Integrity Voluntary Climate Action* at the 2026 Earth System Governance Conference in Bath, UK. Bringing together researchers and practitioners, the session explored how voluntary climate action can be accelerated while maintaining credibility, integrity, and ambition.

The session opened with Louisa Durkin, tracking lead in the Climate High-Level Champions Team, who outlined priorities of the Global Climate Action Agenda, and the crucial role that data plays in ensuring higher integrity voluntary action. This was followed by three practitioner provocations addressing the role of data infrastructure, business and investor confidence, and standards and frameworks in supporting high-integrity climate action.

## *From data infrastructure to standards*

**Kyra Appleby** (Climate Policy Radar) highlighted the need for accessible and interoperable data infrastructure to support climate action. While significant governance and data resources already exist, fragmentation remains a challenge. Different standards and frameworks are developed in different places, making coordination and interoperability essential. Priorities identified included designing data and models for public access, aligning taxonomies to reduce reporting burdens, and ensuring sustained funding for both technological and governance infrastructure.

**Felix Preston** (Climate Arc) focused on the information needs of businesses and investors. He highlighted three dimensions of high-quality climate information: clarity and transparency around implemented climate actions, relevance to business models and investment decisions, and integrity in how information is generated, communicated, and made transparent. A key challenge identified relates to connecting global standards and frameworks with national, sectoral, and local contexts.

**Emily Faint** (British Standards Institution / Oxford Net Zero) discussed the role of standards in building trust and connecting different actors and markets. She highlighted the growing landscape of standards for net-zero action and the importance of reducing reporting burdens. At the same time, questions of fairness, inclusiveness, and differentiated responsibilities need to be considered when standards developed in particular contexts are applied globally.

## *Co-creating building blocks for a roadmap*

The three provocations provided the starting point for facilitated small-group discussions. Participants from research and practice jointly explored what would be needed to enable high-integrity and accelerated voluntary climate action from three complementary perspectives:

The first group explored data, infrastructure and information practices. Participants emphasized that data is not an end-in-itself, but rather a tool for supporting effective climate action. Open access emerged as an important concern, particularly as paywalls can increasingly restrict access to climate-related data. While researchers and civil society organizations are helping to fill these gaps, maintaining open datasets requires sustained funding. Participants discussed the potential value of an open-access data standard and a coalition to promote and maintain it, including through sustained funding and organizations leading by example. They also proposed mechanisms through which externally curated data could be reviewed and verified by the organizations concerned, with open publication and correction mechanisms to improve accuracy and allow organizations to flag or address errors.

The second group, focusing on enabling conditions for accelerated high-integrity climate actions by businesses and investors, highlighted the importance of clear, context-sensitive and stable frameworks. The fragmented landscape of climate-related standards was identified as a barrier to corporate climate action and investment. Two key building blocks for the road ahead emerged: better coordination between existing standards and frameworks while retaining sufficient flexibility for adaptation to local contexts, and national regulation that can help establish a common language and greater certainty for businesses and investors.

The third group discussing the role of standards and frameworks underlined that rather than developing more frameworks, the priority should be to improve the uptake and implementation of those that already exist. Participants highlighted three key areas where well-developed standards are already available: measurement, targets and transition planning, and disclosure. The challenge is therefore less about creating additional standards and more about integrating them into national regulatory systems. This also raised an important conceptual question about the boundaries of “voluntary” climate action when standards become embedded in regulation and subject to enforcement. Participants further highlighted the importance of inclusive standard-setting processes in which all relevant actors have a meaningful seat at the table.

## *Building an enabling environment for high-integrity voluntary climate action*

In the closing reflection, Silke Mooldijk (NewClimate Institute) brought together the discussions and highlighted several cross-cutting themes. First, legislation and regulation are important for creating the conditions for high-integrity climate action, while voluntary standards can provide an important foundation. Second, greater harmonization and coordination of standards is needed to address fragmentation and reduce reporting burdens. Third, the credibility and integrity of both data and frameworks are fundamental to building trust and enabling action.

Finally, the discussions highlighted important questions of equity and inclusion. Many climate standards are developed predominantly by organizations and experts in the Global North, particularly in Europe and North America, but are intended for global application. This raises questions about whose perspectives and circumstances are reflected in standards and how their relevance and legitimacy can be strengthened across different national and regional contexts.

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*“Accelerating voluntary climate action is not simply a matter of generating more commitments or developing additional standards.”*

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Overall, the session highlighted that accelerating voluntary climate action is not simply a matter of generating more commitments or developing additional standards. Data infrastructure, coherent standards, regulation, transparency, and inclusive governance are interconnected building blocks for creating an enabling environment in which climate action can become both more ambitious and more credible. The discussions in Bath provided a starting point for further work on how these building blocks can be brought together into a roadmap for high-integrity voluntary climate action.