

Climate Glossary: Guiding Climate Communication for Hong Kong Businesses

This glossary is a sample on what would be in a full standardised glossary of climate-related terms. This climate glossary will have easily understandable definitions that can help standardise terms commonly used in climate communication. Standardising climate-related terms clarifies the meaning behind common buzzwords or phrases in climate rhetoric. We recommend that the BEC expand our current climate glossary and encourage Hong Kong businesses to utilise such a glossary.

There are eight terms outlined with definitions, relevance, and the sources of the information.

- The definitions should provide a clear explanation of the term’s meaning and concept. They should not be ambiguous.
- The relevance section provides details about the term’s relationship with other terms, further information on the term, and or common misinterpretations. It should provide more clarification for the definition. Our literature review, and interviews provided information for this section.
- The references below indicate where these definitions originated or are derived from.

Climate Glossary

	Term	Definition	Relevance
1	Carbon neutrality	Carbon neutrality is a state of net-zero carbon dioxide emissions, achieved by either complete net-zero or by carbon offsetting. In other words carbon neutrality means the CO ₂ released into the atmosphere from a company's activities is balanced by an equivalent amount being removed. ¹	This term should not be confused with <i>Net-zero emissions</i> . <i>Net-zero emissions</i> goes further than carbon neutrality as it aims to eliminate emissions from all greenhouse gases, not just carbon emissions ¹ .
2	Carbon offset	Carbon offset broadly refers to a reduction in GHG emissions that is used to compensate for emissions that occur elsewhere. This involves compensating for carbon emissions that have already been generated by investing in projects or activities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions elsewhere. Carbon offsets are used to balance out emissions that cannot be avoided through carbon reduction measures ^{2,3} .	This term should not be confused with <i>Carbon reduction</i> . <i>Carbon reduction</i> aims to decrease the existing amount of carbon emission while <i>Carbon offset</i> aims to compensate for carbon emissions that have already been generated ^{2,3,4} . It is important to note that the sources cited for <i>Carbon offset</i> used <i>Carbon offset</i> interchangeably with greenhouse gas emissions.

	Term	Definition	Relevance
3	Carbon reduction	Carbon reduction is the process where an organisation directly reduces greenhouse gas emissions through efficiencies. This involves implementing measures to reduce the amount of carbon emitted into the atmosphere. This can include actions such as reducing energy consumption, using renewable energy sources, and improving the efficiency of industrial processes. The goal of carbon reduction is to decrease the amount of carbon emissions that are generated in the first place ⁵ .	Carbon reduction is commonly confused with <i>Carbon offset</i> . Refer to <i>Carbon offset</i> for the distinction between these terms. The sources and definitions cited for <i>Carbon reduction</i> , referred to <i>Carbon reduction</i> more generally. In other words they did not specifically talk about the type of carbon emissions.
4	Carbon removal	Carbon removal is the process of removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and locking it away for decades, centuries, or millennia ^{5,6} .	Carbon removal is often confused with carbon capture, as they both involve removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. However, there are important differences between the two concepts. Carbon capture is mainly focused on preventing carbon dioxide emissions from entering the atmosphere, while carbon removal is focused on removing carbon dioxide emissions that have already been released into the atmosphere ^{5,6} . It should be noted that <i>Carbon removal</i> was specifically defined as the removal of carbon dioxide rather than the removal of carbon in general.
5	Climate communication	Climate communication is the field of communication that focuses on the causes and effects of climate change. At a deeper level, climate communication studies the practices of those who communicate about climate change, researching the ways in which they educate about climate change problems and mobilising audiences to take up climate action solutions ⁷ .	Climate communication can take many forms, including media coverage, social media engagement, and community outreach. It can help to build public support for climate action, increase understanding about the causes and impacts of climate change, and promote the development and implementation of policies and practices that support a sustainable future ⁷ .

	Term	Definition	Relevance
6	ESG (Environment and Social Governance)	ESG is a broad set of environmental, social and corporate governance considerations that may impact a company's ability to execute its business strategy and create value over the long term. ESG is a framework used by investors and companies to evaluate the environmental, social, and governance performance of businesses. ESG factors are used to assess a company's risk and potential for long-term financial performance. Environmental factors include issues such as climate change and resource usage. Social factors include employee relations, diversity and inclusion, and community engagement. Governance factors include issues such as executive compensation, board diversity, and shareholder rights ^{8,9} .	<p>ESG is commonly confused or used interchangeably with sustainability.</p> <p>ESG is related to <i>Sustainability</i>, but encompasses a smaller scope of concepts that focuses more on evaluating the environmental, social, and governance performance of businesses^{8,9,12}.</p> <p><i>Sustainability</i> is a broader concept that covers social, environmental, and economic issues.</p>
7	Net-zero emissions	Net-zero emissions refers to achieving balance between greenhouse gas emissions produced and greenhouse gas emissions taken out of the atmosphere. The goal of achieving net zero emissions is to limit the increase in global temperatures caused by human activities. By achieving net zero emissions, the amount of greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere will be balanced by the amount removed, resulting in no additional warming of the planet ^{10,11} .	Refer to <i>Carbon neutrality</i> for the distinction between these terms.
8	Sustainability	Sustainability is defined as the quality of causing little or no damage to the environment and to prevent the depletion of natural or physical resources, so that they will remain available for the long term. The term has been coined at the United Nations Brundtland Commission in 1987 in which sustainability has been defined as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" ¹² .	Refer to <i>ESG</i> for distinction between Sustainability and <i>ESG</i> .

References

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