

CONFLICTED BEYOND CREDIBILITY

An analysis of Big Polluter ties to prominent 'net zero' initiatives



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An analysis of Big Polluter ties to prominent 'net zero' initiatives

The "net zero" political agenda continues to be manipulated by Big Polluters across sectors. They are advancing an illusion of climate action that in reality masks the intention to continue to pollute, locking us into decades of climate catastrophe.¹ Over recent years, numerous "net zero" initiatives, coalitions and platforms have emerged, all claiming to be the key to keeping average global temperature rise to below 1.5°C. Whether The Climate Pledge, Business Ambition for 1.5, the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero, Race to Zero or another - all of these initiatives have major loopholes that fail to hold Big Polluters and Global North countries accountable for the action needed in order to avoid environmental and societal collapse.

Previous analyses have demonstrated some of the myriad weaknesses of these "net zero" initiatives;^{2,3} yet there's one more profound reason to be deeply skeptical of them: their **close ties to the world's largest polluters**.

Below, we analyse these worrying ties of three of the most prominent net zero initiatives: **the Integrity Council for the Voluntary Carbon Market (Integrity Council)**, **the High-Level Expert Group on the Net-Zero Emissions Commitments of Non-State Entities**, and **the Race to Zero**. Ultimately, the credibility and veracity of these initiatives and their outputs remain questionable at best because they are inevitably shaped and weakened by Big Polluters.



INTEGRITY COUNCIL FOR THE VOLUNTARY CARBON MARKET

(ICVCM OR 'INTEGRITY COUNCIL')

The Integrity Council describes itself as "an independent governance body for the voluntary carbon market." Its "purpose is to ensure the voluntary carbon market accelerates a just transition to 1.5°C" and to "set and enforce definitive global threshold standards, drawing on the best science and expertise available, so high-quality carbon credits efficiently mobilize finance towards urgent mitigation and climate resilient development." The Integrity Council is made up of executives with a history of weak regulatory oversight and ties to some of the biggest fossil fuel actors including ExxonMobil, Petrobras, China National Offshore Oil Corporation, Institute of International Finance, Blackrock, Standard Chartered Bank, BP, BNP Paribas, Cargill, Chevron, Drax, Shell and Total.

Governing Board



Annette L. Nazareth, Chair Nazareth is Senior Counsel at a law firm that advises the coal, oil, and gas industry with clients that include major polluters ExxonMobil and Petrobras, China National Offshore Oil Corporation, and oil field servicer Baker Hughes. 5 The firm even has a successful history of suing on behalf of its client ExxonMobil,6 including escaping a US\$2 million fine for not respecting sanctions against Russia.7 During her previous tenure as Commissioner of the **US Securities** and Exchange Commission (SEC) and as the SEC's Director of the Division of Trading and Markets, Nazareth was criticized for "lax oversight of the banking industry"8 and she was accused of being "too closely associated with the weak federal oversight that contributed to the banking collapse."9

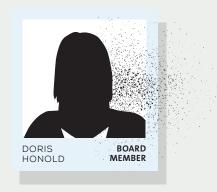


Sonja Gibbs, Board Member Gibbs is Managing Director and Head of Sustainable Finance at the Institute of International Finance (IIF), whose members include 33 of the world's top 50 fossil fuel financiers. 10, 11 In the last three years alone (2019-2021), these 33 IIF member institutions have directed over US\$2 trillion towards fossil fuels, making up over 86% of fossil fuel financing of the world's top 50 fossil fuel financers. 12 IIF members include other non-traditional financial institutions driving the climate crisis, including names like Blackrock,13 **Export Development Canada (EDC)**¹⁴ and Export Finance Australia. 15 IIF is one of the founding sponsors of the ICVCM.16

Doris Honold, Board Member Honold is Group Chief Operating Officer at **Standard Chartered Bank**, which financed over US\$21 billion towards fossil fuels between 2019-2021, making it a **top five fossil fuel financing bank** worldwide.²⁰



Giulia Carbone, Board Member Carbone is Director of Natural Climate Solutions Alliance at the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, whose members include the who's-who of major polluters — Amazon, Apple, BP, BNP Paribas, Cargill, Chevron, Drax, Iberdrola, Microsoft, Nestle, Shell, Total, and Walmart, to name a few.¹⁷ Many of these corporations have used their "net zero" plans to disguise the intent to continue to pollute and circumvent meaningful climate action, and have lobbied for or advanced strategies to weaken and delay climate action.^{18, 19}



Market representatives







All three market representatives advising the Council pose concerns over credibility: **David Antonioli** is the CEO of **Verra**, a carbon offsets certification body whose methodology was criticized by experts in 2021 for being "based on a flawed system" and having a "significant credibility problem."²¹ **Jeff Swartz** is the director of climate at **BP**.²² **Chris Leeds** works for major fossil fuel financier **Standard Chartered**.²³ The Integrity Council's three market representatives suggest a worrisome scenario that major fossil fuel financers and oil and gas companies can increase fossil fuel financing and expansion while certifying and offsetting their greenhouse gas emissions to improve their public image, instead of actually reducing emissions at source.

Distinguished Advisory Board



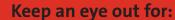




Tim Adams is President and CEO of **IIF**²⁴ (see Sonja Gibbs). **Sandy Boss** is BlackRock's senior managing director;^{25, 26} **BlackRock** is a mega driver of climate destruction.²⁷ **Mark Carney**, former **Bank of England** Governor,²⁸ was founder of the Council's predecessor—the Taskforce for Scaling up Voluntary Carbon Markets—which effectively had to reinvent itself amidst heavy criticism as to its effectiveness.²⁹

Executive Secretariat





The Integrity Council will release its Core Carbon Principles and Assessment Framework in Q4 2022. These are meant to set standards for carbon credits.

As evidenced above, the lack of regulatory oversight and polluter ties associated with these individuals and organisations is alarming.

The Secretariat includes the International Emissions Trading Association (IETA), which operates as Big Polluters' inside man at the UNFCCC^{30,31} and whose current board of directors includes Shell, Enel, Rio Tinto, Chevron, and BP.³² The Integrity Council also includes the Center for Climate and Energy Solutions (C2ES), whose board of directors includes David Hone (Shell's Chief Climate Change Advisor), ³³ a Duke Energy executive, ³⁴ and a Barclays executive. ³⁵ One of its trademarks is the Business Environment Leadership Council, which paves the way for business engagement in climate policy and includes many Big Polluters that also have a track record of delaying or undermining meaningful climate action: Amazon, Barclays, BP, BHP, Duke Energy, Shell, and Wells Fargo. ³⁶



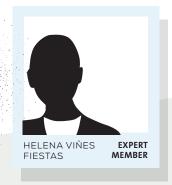
HIGH-LEVEL EXPERT GROUP ON THE NET-ZERO EMISSIONS COMMITMENTS OF NON-STATE ENTITIES (HLEG)

The HLEG seeks to "develop stronger and clearer standards for net-zero emissions pledges by non-State entities – including businesses, investors, cities and regions – and speed up their implementation." ³⁷

Expert Group Members



Catherine McKenna, Chair
McKenna is the former Canadian
Minister of Environment and Climate
Change. Although she branded herself
as a climate action supporter and
some of her actions were celebrated
locally, her term was not without
criticism or controversy. In particular,
she routinely and repeatedly
supported the multi-billion-dollar
Trans Mountain pipeline and
sanctioned the dumping of 8 billion
litres of waste water into a river.³⁸



Helena Viñes Fiestas, Expert Member Fiestas was the Head of sustainability research at **BNP Paribas** Investment Partners. During her tenure, BNP Paribas was the largest financer of fossil fuels in the EU from 2016 to 2020.³⁹ In this period it gave US\$142 billion to the fossil fuel industry, US\$54.8 billion of which went towards companies expanding their fossil fuel portfolios.⁴⁰ Its carbon reduction targets conveniently overlook ending support for new oil and gas projects, a move deemed incompatible by even the IEA's Net Zero scenario and therefore inconsistent with limiting global warming to 1.5°C.41



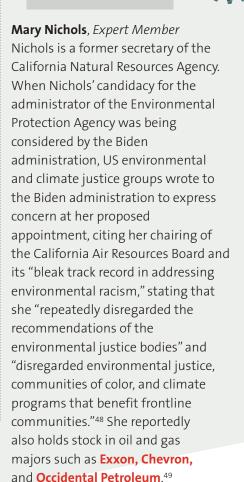
Günther Thallinge, Expert Member Thallinge is an insurance businessman, and Chairman of the **Net-Zero Asset Owner Alliance** (AOA).⁴² AOA is a coalition of major asset owners, including some of the world's most prominent insurers and largest pension funds. Although praised for their 'strong' climate commitments via their prestigious membership, many of the alliance's members actually have major loopholes in their oil and gas policies. For example, Allianz, the alliance's founding member, doesn't have a policy excluding investment in companies that are planning for oil and gas expansion, and it has no phase-out date for unconventional oil and gas.43 Similarly, members Caisse des Depots Groupe, CDPQ, Alecta, AMF, CAIPERS, Nordea, Storebrand, SwissRE and Zurich Insurance Group do not have a full exclusion policy of companies planning for expansion in oil and gas.44

As an official expert group established by Secretary-General António Guterres in 2022, the HLEG has a responsibility like none other in this assessment, which is to aim to provide objective and unbiased guidance on "net zero." However, its members and their affiliations have long been criticised and exposed by public interest organisations globally. Whether Allianz, BNP Paribas, Banco Safra, Petrobras, Exxon or Chevron – the majority of these companies continue to expand their fossil fuel portfolios, as shown in Table 1.











Keep an eye out for:

- The HLEG set out to create
 "standards and definitions
 for setting net zero targets
 by non-State actors";
 "Credibility criteria used to
 assess the stated objectives,
 measurement and reporting of
 net zero pledges by non-State
 actors"; and "Processes for
 the international community
 to verify and account in a
 transparent manner non State actors' progress."
- It is set to provide a report to the Secretary-General with its findings and recommendations by the end of this year (within 9-12 months of its first meeting in early 2022).

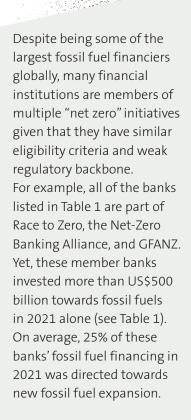


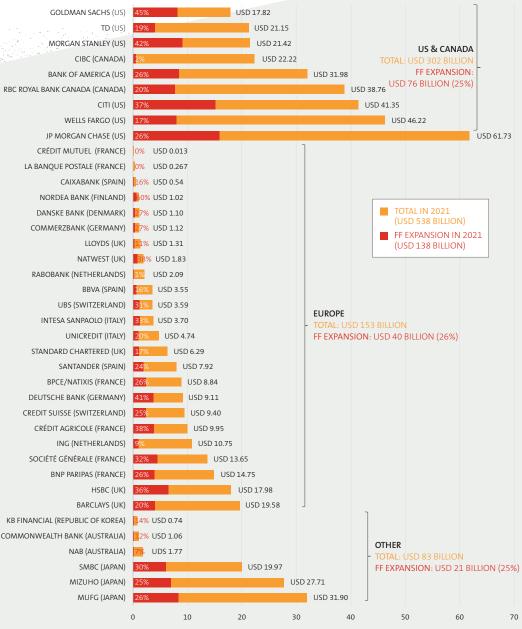
RACE TO ZERO

The UN-convened Race to Zero is the "largest ever alliance committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 at the latest" and "mobilizes a coalition of leading net zero initiatives". ⁵⁰ The alliance is made up of other alliances, including for example Net Zero Banking Alliance (NZBA), the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero (GFANZ), and the UN-Convened Net-Zero Asset Owner Alliance (see below for Big Polluter ties).

Table 1: Fossil fuel financing 2021 for members of Race to Zero, Net-Zero Banking Alliance, GFANZ (in USD billions)

Data adapted from Banking on Climate Chaos 2022.51





BILLION LISD

As one of the more prominent UN-backed "net zero" initiatives, Race to Zero might be expected to have the highest standards. Yet as its fossil fuel financier members demonstrate, there's little need to walk the walk, only talk the talk. For one example of this, look no further than when Race to Zero recently weakened its criteria on phasing out coal projects. Why? Its member banks threatened to walk out on the initiative after they received warnings from their fossil fuel partners.⁵²



Keep an eye out for:

A public consultation on the Race to Zero criteria has been conducted over the course of 2022, and its findings and way forward are expected in the near future.





COP27: THE COP OF "NET ZERO" GREENWASH

Big Polluters are greenwashing their dirty business plans by rolling out the red carpet and promenading "net zero" climate plans. The fine print of these usually involves little to no action for decades and relies overwhelmingly on unproven schemes that risk harm to communities and ecosystems.^{53, 54} At the same time, Big Polluters advance their deadly agenda through their high-level leadership and direct involvement in global "net zero" initiatives, including UN-backed ones. This allows them to position themselves as solutions to the very crises they have caused and intend to continue to exacerbate, all with the backing and branding of the United Nations. It also allows them to circumvent meaningful regulation, sideline the sovereignty of nations, and write the policy rulebook from the top down.



Keep an eye out for:

Expect the red carpet and flashy lights to be rolled out at COP27 for major announcements from these initiatives, distracting from the urgent and necessary official negotiations happening in the negotiating rooms. The voluntary, Big Polluter-backed platforms will be used to sideline the need for regulation that actually decreases emissions at source.



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