

The Vancouver Secretariat

March 2026 edition



Overview

1. **Evolution & Purpose:** To organize and oversee the process of transforming the Vancouver Declaration into action.
2. **Rationale:** Governments need this body, and there are significant advantages to establishing it now while governments can still shape the contours of their engagement.
3. **Objectives:** Members will pick and choose from the secretariat's offerings to supplement their CDR policy priorities and activities as needed.
4. **Structure & Function:** Determined by the bylaws (a draft version has been developed).
5. **Finance & Sustainability:** Members will contribute a set amount toward the sustainability of this organization, with equitable levels to be determined by the group. Additional funding will be provided by philanthropies as available.

1. Evolution & Purpose

In the fall of 2025, fifteen senior government policy experts from within CDRANet convened online as the Vancouver Transition Committee (VTC). The purpose of the VTC was to examine how best to transition the Vancouver Declaration from aspiration to global action and to identify the issues the future Vancouver Secretariat will need to address. Participants emphasized that successful implementation will require building bridges among key stakeholders—including researchers, industry leaders, civil society, and national governments—to ensure carbon removal technologies are deployed safely, effectively, and equitably. Overcoming political inertia will also be critical. To maintain momentum toward the planned 2026 signing conference, the group encouraged pairing the launch with concrete deliverables that demonstrate the initiative's practical value. Ultimately, the goal is to develop a focused, transparent, and achievable roadmap for atmospheric carbon removal—not a diffuse set of aspirational objectives, but a practical plan for drawing down atmospheric CO₂ grounded in real action. (See Annex 1 for a more detailed summary of the discussions.)

To continue advancing this work, a broader engagement phase—referred to as the Vancouver Process—will begin by mid-2026. This phase will bring together participating governments and other stakeholders, alongside advisors, to identify the most realistic and effective pathways for collaboration under the Vancouver Declaration. An early milestone in this process will be the establishment of the Vancouver Secretariat: a fully funded, appropriately staffed body designed to support coordination and implementation across the participating community. While the Vancouver Process can proceed without full funding for the Secretariat, securing adequate resources will significantly strengthen its ability to serve this high-level international effort.

2. Rationale

The Vancouver Declaration Secretariat will serve as the neutral coordination body supporting voluntary, nonbinding collaboration among governments on CDR. Its role is to translate high-level political intent into practical cooperation—across policy design, science coordination, technology pathways, finance readiness, and regional initiatives—while preserving flexibility, sovereignty, and optionality. But why this body, and why now?

- **Governments have crossed the coordination threshold**
Governments are no longer asking whether CDR will be needed, but how they will govern it responsibly. Officials are beginning to compare approaches, identify gaps, and explore collaboration. The Vancouver Declaration fills this gap, but the Declaration’s work needs to be coordinated. Without a neutral coordination body, early momentum risks dissipating into bilateral conversations, duplicative pilots, and inconsistent standards. Funding now preserves institutional memory and converts exploratory dialogue into durable cooperation.
- **The pre-Secretariat window is where leverage is highest and costs are lowest**
The 2026 Vancouver Process is intentionally lightweight: small staff, focused outputs, rapid learning. This is precisely the point where modest, catalytic funding has outsized impact. If support waits until after governments formalize structures, the Secretariat will be forced to retrofit coordination after paths diverge. Funding now allows the Secretariat to be designed with governments, not imposed on them, avoiding later friction, inefficiency, and mistrust.
- **Markets aren’t evolving fast enough**
Private CDR activity is accelerating unevenly across jurisdictions, technologies, and standards. Governments are under pressure to respond, but most lack comparative policy insight, shared guardrails, or venues for peer learning. Absent coordination, governments will default to fragmented rules or solutions that don’t leverage or scale. The Secretariat provides a forum for governments to learn together and scale together.
- **No existing institution is positioned to do this job**
UN bodies, standards organizations, and market platforms all play important roles—but none are structured to facilitate voluntary, government-to-government coordination across the full CDR landscape. The Secretariat is intentionally non-binding, non-promotional, technology-neutral, and government-centered. Funding now avoids the vacuum being filled by actors whose mandates, incentives, or credibility do not align with public-interest governance.
- **Early funders are catalytic**
Supporting the Secretariat now enables a global transition to get underway from market-led solutions to government-led. This is a sea-change in our approach to

CDR, and the success of this new approach will catalyze investment in CDR, catalyze participation in CDR policy, and make real the full potential of CDR for halting global warming. Demonstrating the effectiveness of this approach through early investment will be key to the Secretariat’s success, so it can be properly staffed to meet the moment.

- **Delay has asymmetric downside**

If funding is delayed, governments will disengage quietly, coordination will become harder to recover, and norms will be set elsewhere, by default. If funding moves now, governments retain agency, cooperation remains flexible, and the cost of course-correction stays low.

3. Objectives

The objectives of both the Vancouver Process and the Vancouver Secretariat will be to connect stakeholders; convene discussions on issues of shared need and interest—such as MRV policy—while leveraging existing expertise and resources; de-risk early action by building networks of first movers; collect and communicate best practices; provide outreach materials and engagement support; and develop concrete action plans that respond to the needs of participating members. Multiple pathways for engagement will be available, as outlined in the Structure & Function (Bylaws) section.

4. Structure & Function

January 2026 Draft Bylaws

Article I – Purpose

The Vancouver Declaration Secretariat (“the Secretariat”) exists to facilitate voluntary, non-binding collaboration among participating governments on the policy, institutional, and governance challenges associated with carbon dioxide removal (CDR). The Secretariat does not advocate, negotiate, regulate, or bind its participants.

Article II – Nature of the Secretariat

1. The Secretariat is facilitative, not directive.
2. It has no independent policy agenda.
3. It acts at the request of, and for the benefit of, participating governments.
4. Participation in all Secretariat-supported activities is voluntary and opt-in.

Article III – Participation

1. Participation is open to governments that express interest in the Vancouver Declaration.
2. No participant is required to engage in all activities.
3. Different groups of participants may engage at different depths and speeds (“variable geometry”).
4. There is no requirement for consensus for activities to proceed.

Article IV – Activities

The Secretariat may support, at the request of participants:

1. Information sharing and peer learning
2. Policy comparison and synthesis
3. Convening of interested participants
4. Time-bound working groups or task forces
5. Capture and dissemination of lessons learned

Article V – Initiation of Workstreams

Workstreams may be initiated through:

1. A request from two or more participating governments; or
2. A time-limited pilot proposed by the Secretariat and taken up voluntarily.

No vote or consensus approval is required.

Article VI – Governance and Oversight

1. The Secretariat may be advised by a Government Steering Group, if established.
2. The Steering Group:
 - provides strategic guidance
 - reflects participant priorities
 - does not exercise fiduciary control
3. The Steering Group does not require unanimity.

Article VII – Hosting and Legal Status

1. The Secretariat may be hosted by an external organization for administrative and legal purposes.
2. Hosting does not confer agenda-setting authority.
3. Any change in hosting or legal status shall be participant-driven.

Article VIII – Relationship to Other Bodies

1. The Secretariat does not replace or supersede existing initiatives.
2. It may draw on external expertise, including expert networks such as CDRANet, without delegating governance authority.
3. The Secretariat serves as a coordination interface, not a gatekeeper.

Article IX – Amendment and Evolution

These Terms may evolve based on participant experience and demand. No amendment shall create binding obligations without explicit participant agreement.

5. Finance & Sustainability

Year 1: Vancouver Process (2026)

Staffing: 3 × \$150k = \$450k

CDR26 conference = \$50k

Focus: Inventory priorities, identify capacity gaps, design initial structure, catalyze financial support

Total Year 1: \$500k

Year 2: Operational Secretariat (2027)

Staffing: 6 × \$150k = \$900k

CDR27 conference = \$100k

Administrative & engagement costs = \$250k

Focus: Program delivery, expanded government participation, global visibility

Total Year 2: \$1.25m

Year 3: Scaling & Global Coordination (2028)

Staffing: 12 × \$150k = \$1.8m

CDR28 conference = \$100k

Administrative & engagement costs = \$500k

Focus: Multiple workstreams, regional initiatives, sustained presence

Total Year 3: \$2.4m

Fiscal Growth

Short term funding will be provided by institutional supporters. Long-term funding will include a mix of institutional and government support, as well as other revenue streams as warranted to ensure capacity.

Hosting

During its initial phase, the Secretariat will operate under the administrative and legal auspices of the Science Communication Institute (SCI), the US-based nonprofit which oversees CDRANet. This hosting arrangement is explicitly transitional and exists solely to provide fiduciary oversight, staffing, and operational continuity while governments determine the Secretariat's long-term institutional home. As set out in the Secretariat's draft bylaws, hosting does not confer agenda-setting authority, and any change in legal status or institutional placement will be participant-driven and may occur as early as Year 2, should governments choose to establish an independent entity or alternative hosting arrangement.

Annex 1: Recommendations from the VTC

Executive Summary

The transition from theoretical climate goals to the practical implementation of CDR requires a shift toward "realpolitik" policy—frameworks grounded in existing political, economic, and regulatory constraints. The Vancouver Declaration serves as a primary vehicle for this transition, acting as a "soft-law" agreement designed to catalyze international cooperation without the decade-long delays associated with formal treaties.

The core mission of this initiative is to serve as the world's indispensable convener for empowering government action. While the private sector and markets are essential, they are insufficient to scale CDR at the required speed. Strategic government intervention—through infrastructure investment, research funding, and the creation of robust Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) standards—is the critical lever for success. To maintain momentum toward a 2026 signing conference (CDR26), the initiative must prioritize building a "coalition of the willing" that de-risks political action through mutual assurance, ensures social license through deliberate community engagement, and avoids the "greenwashing" traps by maintaining financial independence from the fossil fuel industry.

The Strategic Framework for CDR Action

Defining the Transition to Action

"Transitioning to action" is defined not merely as setting targets, but as identifying specific opportunities for governments and influential entities (foundations, corporate leaders, civil society) to initiate commitments, investments, and regulations.

- **Realistic ambition:** Drawing on the concept of "abundance" and realpolitik, the initiative argues for climate policy that works within existing constraints rather than idealized versions.
- **The soft-Law advantage:** As a soft-law framework, the Vancouver Declaration allows for immediate implementation by a coalition of the willing. It integrates with existing national policies rather than supplanting them.
- **Government-led scaling:** Historical parallels (e.g., steam engines, the internet) suggest that science and technology require massive government involvement to move from ideation to implementation. Scaling CDR will require governments to establish regulations, build infrastructure, and act as primary buyers of carbon removals.

The Three-Phase "Convener & Connector" Model

To address political inertia, the initiative employs a three-phase model designed to move governments from hesitation to leadership:

Phase	Objective	Key actions
Phase 1: Communicate	Establish the "why"	Frame CDR as an industrial strategy for job creation and innovation; highlight it as a low-cost "risk hedge" (tiny share of GDP).
Phase 2: Convince	Establish "why act together"	Use the coalition as a political "mutual assurance" pact to de-risk first-mover investments and prevent loss of economic competitiveness.
Phase 3: Support	Establish the "how"	Connect government demand to expert supply (MRV bodies, finance experts) and share best practices for community engagement.

Policy Usability and Stakeholder Integration

The Distinction Between Declaration and Framework

A strategic decision was made to split recommendations into two separate instruments to enhance signability:

1. **The Vancouver Declaration:** A "vanilla," aspirational call-to-action intended for official signatures. It remains high-level to avoid "tripping over the details."
2. **The Policy Framework:** A detailed, non-signed companion document containing technical specifics on infrastructure, climate restoration, and public investment.

Identified Strengths and Implementation Barriers

The current documentation is praised for its comprehensive view of CDR deployment and its emphasis on collaboration. However, several barriers to entry remain for certain governments:

- **Abstract concepts:** Terms like "climate repair" or treating carbon removal as a "public good" may be too novel for some nations.
- **Prescriptive hurdles:** Significant public investment requirements and government-led infrastructure construction may be difficult for some ministries to action in the short term.
- **Social license:** There is low literacy regarding carbon management technologies. Public acceptance is not guaranteed and requires deliberate, sustained effort rather than being treated as a peripheral activity.

Stakeholder Mapping: The "Puzzle Pieces"

The initiative identifies several critical groups that must be "at the table" to ensure legitimacy and scale:

- **Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs):** Needed for convening power and international legitimacy.
- **Funders:** Engaging voluntary carbon market players and tech leaders (e.g., Frontier, Stripe, Google, Microsoft).
- **Academic/Research leaders:** Utilizing experts from the *State of CDR* report and national science agencies.
- **Mission Innovation:** Engaging the MI CDR Secretariat to broaden governmental awareness.

Regional Momentum: The Australian Context

Australia serves as a primary example of a nation currently in the "transition to action" phase. The government's approach includes:

- **Capacity targets:** Acknowledging a need for approximately 14 million tonnes of CO₂e removal annually from novel CDR technologies.
- **CDR roadmap:** A focus on scalable, durable, and economically viable approaches, including:
 - Direct Air Capture (DAC).
 - Biomass with Carbon Removal and Storage (BiCRS).
 - Enhanced Rock Weathering (ERW).
 - Mineral Carbonation.
 - Ocean Alkalinity Enhancement.
- **Policy integration:** Using roadmaps to inform cost capacity forecasts and national policy development.

Risk Mitigation and Failure Modes

Avoiding the "Greenwashing" Trap

To maintain credibility, the initiative has established strict boundaries regarding funding and messaging:

- **Exclusion of fossil fuel funding:** The project explicitly declines money from oil companies to prevent the skeptical public from using it as a "cudgel" to discredit the effort.

- **Messaging unity:** Avoiding a "hodgepodge of industry marketing" in favor of a unified call-to-action from trusted societal corners.

Overcoming Political and Skeptical Resistance

- **"Just words" criticism:** To avoid being perceived as a ceremonial statement, the 2026 signing should be coupled with concrete deliverables, such as the capitalization of a joint CDR/CCS fund, advance market commitments, or signed offtake contracts.
- **The veto power dilemma:** While public engagement is vital, proponents argue that governments must be prepared to act decisively. The challenge is "how to make CDR work, not whether to do it at all."
- **Resource deficit:** Success requires significant resources—estimated at approximately \$2.5 million annually—to move beyond a "hand-to-mouth" nonprofit model and achieve the necessary vision.

Long-term Legacy: CDR26 vs. Conventional Conferences

The initiative distinguishes itself from other industry gatherings (e.g., Carbon Unbound) through its singular focus on policy alignment:

- **Policy-driven vs. market-driven:** While other events focus on business networking and investment matchmaking, CDR26 is designed to shape governance and create the institutional foundations for deployment.
- **Annual accountability:** CDR26 and its successors (CDR27, CDR28) are intended to serve as annual progress checkpoints for implementing the Vancouver Declaration, tracking policy evolution and technical benchmarks over time.