

ZENO



# DEALS WITHOUT THE US

Why COP30 Could Move  
Faster, and What Brands  
Need to Do Now

# BELEM IS THE MOMENT

## Ignore It at Your Own Risk.

In the second week of November, the climate conversation moves to Belém, the gateway to the Amazon river. Holding COP30 in the world's largest rainforest is a deliberate signal of what matters now: nature is taking centre stage.

Governments will arrive under pressure to file sharper, longer-term climate plans and to show how finance promises made in Baku will start reaching real projects. Behind the scenes, negotiators will be working to tighten carbon market rules and advance a global goal on adaptation.

Brazil holds the presidency and has made its priorities clear: forests, funding and faster delivery. The EU is ready to move. *With Washington largely out of the frame, this may be the best shot in years at striking real deals.*

## The US May Be Out. That Could Change the Pace

Donald Trump has famously called climate action a “hoax”. His administration has followed that lead and started the formal process of leaving the Paris Agreement, with withdrawal due to take effect in January 2026 unless overturned. The climate team within the State Department has been dismantled and, as a result, US involvement at COP30 is likely to be limited and symbolic.

This won't help the finance talks, but contrary to popular opinion, it may end up helping everything else. Because without Washington blocking progress, the road to consensus looks a lot shorter and straighter.

History tells us as much. The last time the US walked away, the world didn't wait. In 2020, the EU passed a tougher 2030 target and locked in its climate law. Shipping emissions and border tax rules moved ahead. Then, when the US rejoined under Biden, it returned to a new status quo and had to fall in line.

We predict a similar moment in Brazil. With forests at the centre of its agenda, the biggest and most economically powerful country in South America has motive and opportunity to use its presidency to push things forward.





# WHAT'S ON THE TABLE?

## Forests and Nature

*Show up in one credible way*

Brazil is proposing a new “Tropical Forest Forever Facility” of around \$125 billion. The goal is to link public and private capital to verified forest outcomes, backed by clear measurement and verification. The location of COP30, at the mouth of the Amazon, is designed to make this priority unavoidable.

**What to Watch:** Details on facility design, governance, MRV (measurement, reporting, verification) and how companies can take part.

**Trigger to Act:** If corporate participation rules are published with transparent oversight, decide whether to join in or explain your decision not to publicly.

**Implication:** If you take part, state your rationale and provide delivery milestones. If you don't, make your position clear. Staying silent is not a strategy.

## National Plans to 2035 (NDCs 3.0)

*Translate policy into brand decisions*

Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) are at the heart of the Paris Agreement. These documents set out how each country plans to reduce emissions and manage climate risks. Before COP30, the UN will publish a synthesis of the new round of plans.

**What to Watch:** If the EU, UK or another major economy sets sector-level expectations in its plan – such as for energy, transport or materials – those signals are likely to shape regulation and investment.

**Trigger to Act:** If your sector is named in a plan, prepare a statement for customers and investors. Refresh your product roadmap FAQs.

**Implication:** Pre-clear any claim that mentions national targets. Hold proof for each line, including methodology, baseline year and internal owner.

## Finance Architecture

*Connect money to narrative*

COP29 established a new collective finance goal of \$300 billion per year by 2035. It also called for total annual flows to grow to \$1.3 trillion. The “Baku to Belém” roadmap is expected to define how those targets translate into actual financial tools.

**What to Watch:** Progress on development bank reforms, risk guarantees for lenders, concessional loans, grants, first-loss capital, public insurance mechanisms and green bond updates.

**Trigger to Act:** If new financial tools appear that lower cost or risk, tell the story. Concessional capital means projects can go faster or become cheaper. Investors and customers will expect to hear how.

**Implication:** Refresh your investor materials and public messaging. Explain how new financial tools will create practical ways for money to be channeled to projects more quickly, speeding up delivery. Move away from abstract language about green funding and show real timelines, projects and outcomes.

## Carbon Markets and Guardrails

*Build integrity into your claims*

Article 6 of the Paris Agreement governs how countries and companies can use carbon markets. The rules are still evolving. Work is ongoing around reporting, authorisations, registries and methodologies. The core issue is credibility – not just of the credits, but of the claims attached to them.

Brazil supports carbon markets but has warned against overuse. Others are pushing to limit what companies can say when credits are involved.

**What to Watch:** Article 6.2 reporting templates, Article 6.4 registry timelines, buyer claims guidance and host country rules on authorisation and disclosure.

**Trigger to Act:** If guidance emerges that limits use of credits in claims, retire “carbon neutral” language the same week. Replace it with specific underlying data showing where emissions have been measured.

**Implication:** Prohibit vague wording. Require credit details including type, scope, vintage and standard. Set a maximum threshold for offsetting residual emissions.



## What Corporate Communicators Should Set in Motion Now

**COP 30 may shape the climate conversation, but sustainability storytelling must be continuous. Reputation will belong to brands whose credibility and clarity outpace their promises.**

### Lead from the Front

Visibility matters more than volume. Prepare leadership to speak with authenticity, not assurance. Make their words match their evidence. Equip them with proof points that stand up under scrutiny and an honest tone that acknowledges what remains to be done.

#### Activate Allies and Advocates

No brand can own the climate story alone. The most persuasive voices are the ones that echo you, including partners, employees and NGOs who share your proof points. Bring them into your preparation, and align data, timing and tone so that your message is amplified through trusted messengers.

#### Align the Narrative Across Channels

Fragmented messages create doubt. Whether it is a CEO interview, a LinkedIn post or a short video, every piece should ladder up to the same core idea: action over ambition. Consistency builds credibility. Use a single narrative spine, adapted for depth or speed, but never for convenience.

#### Operate in Real Time

Treat COP30 as a live newsroom, not a campaign moment. Track decisions daily, anticipate shifts and respond within hours. Speed without accuracy undermines trust. Be ready with data, spokespeople and a holding line for each scenario.

#### Protect Trust Above All

Research from Zeno found that half of consumers, 49 percent, say they lose trust or feel suspicious when companies stay silent on sustainability. If your progress has gaps, say so. If you have proof, share it plainly. The era of abstraction is over; what matters now is delivery you can defend.

## This COP Might Actually Deliver – Make Sure You’re Ready

**The COP gathering in Belém could be faster, more focused and harder to ignore than its predecessors. The stage is already set and brands that act early will set the tone. Everyone else will be playing catch up.**





For more information  
contact Zeno Group

**Rebecca Wagstaffe**

*Head of Business Development  
and Integration, Europe*

[rebecca.wagstaffe@zenogroup.com](mailto:rebecca.wagstaffe@zenogroup.com)

+44 07818413385

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