Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Sustainability report 2025 *Walk our talk*

We're here. Working for the Netherlands, worldwide.

Sustainability report 2025

Mission Sustainable - *Walk our Talk*

Climate action

40% reduction in total carbon emissions (scope 1, 2 and official travel) by 2030 compared to 2022.

Results in 2025

- Travel Smart - Impact dashboard for official travel launched, giving departments and missions more insight into their travel data
- BZ's total carbon footprint reduced by over 3% compared to 2024
- Premium Economy pilot rolled out, encouraging staff to swap Business class for Premium Economy and benefit from other perks instead
- Carbon emissions from air travel, a thorny issue for BZ, reduced by 5% compared to 2024 (excluding flights on government aircraft and claimable trips)
- Government-wide research into the feasibility of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF)
- Intensive discussions with departments and missions about air travel for official trips

Plans for 2026

- For the first time, BZ will set a ministry-wide target for air travel, aiming to reduce carbon emissions from this source by 15% compared to 2024
- The multidisciplinary sustainability team in the Housing and Real Estate Worldwide Department (DHF) will take a comprehensive approach to making BZ real estate sustainable, working within existing processes

Circular economy

We are working to become an organisation that reuses products, components and raw materials as much as possible.

Results in 2025

- Circular economy strategy drafted and completed (DHF)
- Knowledge sessions enabling more than 30 missions to share best practices for waste management
- BZ's current IT environment mapped out with a focus on governance, sphere of influence and footprint
- Exploratory study examining carbon emissions pricing, with a focus on both climate and circular economy

Plans for 2026

- Round off the BZ-wide circularity strategy
- Develop a circularity benchmark for real estate
- Aim to give IT hardware a second lifespan
- Organise sessions on circular procurement in facilities management

Our operational management and policy implementation has a particular impact on the following Sustainable Development Goals:

Affordable, clean energy

Decent work and economic growth

Responsible consumption and production

Climate action

You can submit your questions to the Mission Sustainable team via missionsustainable@minbuza.nl

Supply chain responsibility

BZ seeks to minimise the risks of human rights violations and breaches of international labour standards in our operational management and procurement.

Results in 2025

- Implementation of the living wage policy in consultation with stakeholders and missions
- Interim monitoring of policy and progress on supply chain responsibility
- Formulation of key performance indicators for housing projects
- A new risk analysis was commissioned
- Cooperation with Consular Service Organisation (CSO) on supply chain responsibility in their processes

Plans for 2026

- Evaluate living wage policy
- In the context of housing projects, work out practical details of supply chain responsibility
- Complete risk analysis
- Update CSO audit systems

Working together on a sustainable organisational culture

Across the globe, our employees have a crucial role to play in making our operational management more sustainable. That is why we are working to build a sustainable organisational culture.

Results in 2025

- Discussions with many individual missions on opportunities and challenges in sustainable operations
- Creation of the Green Allies Community of Practice, offering online support and a place to share examples of sustainability practices
- Launch of the Sustainable Best Practices Database, offering examples of sustainability practices for missions
- 'BZ Buitenhof' – an in-person inspirational event with Tom Middendorp to remind BZ staff of the importance of climate policy
- Launch of the Mission Sustainable toolkit
- Online lunchtime talk on the topic of sustainable catering

Plans for 2026

- Improve accessibility and understanding of sustainability results at missions
- Strengthen the active Green Allies Community of Practice by facilitating quarterly sessions with a special focus on a single Mission Sustainable theme
- Design and further develop the Mission Sustainable toolkit and expand the Sustainable Best Practices Database
- Increase BZ-wide support for Mission Sustainable through lunchtime talks and awareness-raising events

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Introduction

Becoming future-proof in a changing world

Mission Sustainable in 2025

The international context in which the Netherlands operates has changed substantially in recent years. Geopolitical tensions, shifting power balances and economic insecurity all require the constant attention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These developments also confirm the importance of our ongoing work towards a sustainable, resilient future.

Issues such as supply security, strategic autonomy and resilience are increasingly important concerns for the Netherlands, the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom and Europe as a whole. The transition to cleaner energy, more efficient use of resources and fairer and more sustainable supply chains not only helps us achieve our climate goals, but also helps us reduce dependencies, reinforce economic stability and build a more just world. As a result, our geopolitical interests and our sustainability goals are overlapping more and more often.

'The Mission Sustainable programme helps our ministry translate its sustainability objectives into concrete actions in our daily work, both in The Hague and at our missions around the world'

Sustainability remains a key objective for our ministry. With a network of missions around the globe, BZ is a large and diverse organisation. The ways we choose to travel, make purchases, manage our buildings and work together have a direct impact on our footprint. At the same time, our missions abroad give us a visible stage on which to apply our sustainable solutions, and they serve as a global showcase for Dutch knowledge and innovation.

We manage our approach to sustainability through the Mission Sustainable programme, which helps us translate our sustainability ambitions into concrete actions in our organisation's daily work. Doing so requires cooperation between departments in The Hague and our representations worldwide and an ongoing commitment to finding new ways of working, organising and making decisions.

Hans Docter
Deputy Secretary-General (Photo: Josje Deekens)

This report looks back at progress in 2025. As in previous years, activities are grouped in three themes: climate, circular economy and supply chain responsibility. We show which steps we took, the lessons we learned and areas where further progress is still needed.

In this way we can move step by step towards becoming a ministry that is prepared to meet the future and whose operational management contributes to broader international sustainability goals.

1 About Mission Sustainable

Mission Sustainable is the sustainability programme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BZ). Since its launch in 2021, the programme has helped us work towards the ministry's sustainability objectives. Our slogan is 'Walk our Talk', and we do that together, both in The Hague and at the missions.

SDG Circle

Mission Sustainable's task is to translate the ministry's sustainability policy into sustainable actions. We want to set the right example for other governments, businesses and organisations, both in the Netherlands and abroad, through impactful sustainable operational management around the world. So it's important we live up to our own standards.

We're working together to make the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the world more sustainable.

Our objectives

Mission Sustainable focuses on three key themes: climate action, circular economy and supply chain responsibility. These have been chosen because of their scope for material impact and because they play an important part in BZ policy.

Each theme has a specific objective:

1. **Climate:** 40% reduction in carbon emissions (scope 1, 2 and official travel)[1] by 2030, compared to 2022.
2. **Circular economy:** a learning approach to a circular economy in which we draw on experience gained in test projects to develop a circular strategy for our operational management.
3. **Supply chain responsibility:** minimising the risk of human rights violations and breaches of international labour standards in our operational management and procurement.

A tailored approach

Mission Sustainable also offers tailor-made support, helping missions address unique opportunities and challenges that arise locally and may not correspond to the three main themes, such as local water shortages, biodiversity loss or air pollution.

The programme team

The Mission Sustainable programme team represents a wide range of expertise in areas such as data management, human rights, transport and mobility, and communication. The team is a driving force for sustainable action in BZ units and work processes.
We work with policy departments to ensure BZ's policy is reflected in its sustainability programme. The Deputy Secretary-General bears final responsibility for the programme. The programme team reports on progress directly to the director of the Operational Management Branch (HDBV), and every six months to the Board of Deputy Directors-General. Each year our sustainability report provides public accountability for the results of the Mission Sustainable programme.

The Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 global goals to end poverty, inequality, injustice and climate change by 2030.
They serve as an important compass for our ministry and form the basis of our sustainability programme. In this way, we contribute to the Netherlands' efforts to achieve the goals both at home and abroad.
Through our operational management and policy implementation, BZ contributes towards four SDGs in particular: clean and affordable energy (SDG 7), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), responsible consumption and production (SDG 12) and climate action (SDG 13).

Our support in dealing with local challenges, for instance the scarcity of fresh water or threats to biodiversity, touches on all four of these SDGs. We also consider the potential effects on the achievement of other goals, such as inclusion, gender equality and sustainable water management. This is consistent with the interconnected approach that the SDGs advocate.

[1] *More information can be found in the chapter on Climate action.*

2 Climate action

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs aims to reduce its carbon emissions, and by extension its impact on climate change. This is one of the core objectives of the Mission Sustainable programme. The focus is on the biggest sources of carbon emissions: air travel and energy consumption at the missions. We encourage sustainable solutions and demonstrate them in practice. This is one way of showing that we 'Walk our Talk'.

Electric vehicle at charging station (Photo: Paul Voorham).

Reducing carbon emissions

BZ aims to achieve a 40% reduction in total carbon emissions (scope 1, 2 and official travel)[1] by 2030 compared to 2022.[2] This is no simple task, as staff will always need to fly due to the nature of BZ's work. Some missions remain reliant on diesel generators and gas heating. However, renovating existing buildings, building new ones and performing regular management and maintenance can bring opportunities for improving sustainability. The local context determines which measures will be sustainable and effective.

BZ's carbon footprint

The ministry's total carbon footprint in 2025 was around 3% smaller than in 2024. Our total emissions in 2025 were 32,691 tonnes of CO_2 (tCO_2), compared to 33,831 tCO_2 in the previous year. The results per scope are explained below.

Scope 1

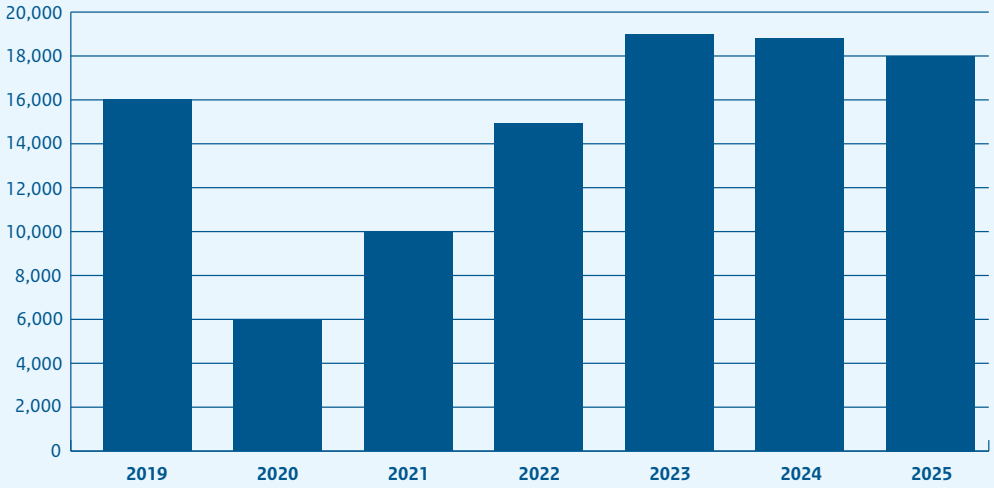
Scope 1 emissions increased slightly in 2025. This was due in part to a 15% increase in diesel consumption at missions, which was necessitated by more frequent power outages in some countries in that year.

Gas consumption decreased across the mission network but increased in ministry buildings in The Hague. One reason for this was the greater number of cold days compared to the previous year, which meant more heating was required.

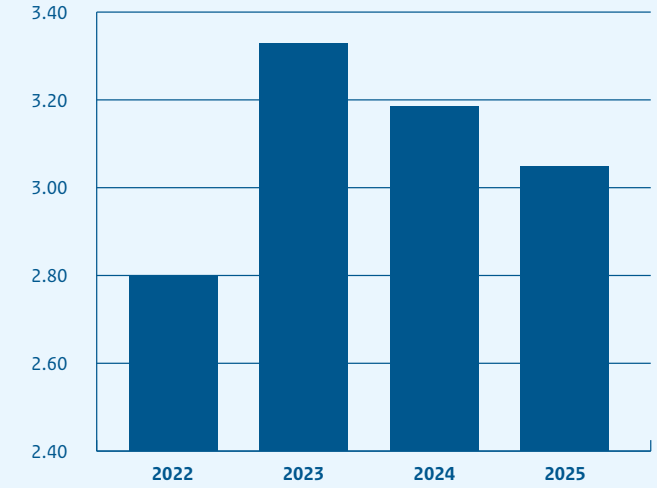
[1] *Performance ladder: 1) Direct carbon emissions from burning fossil fuels (scope 1 emissions); 2) Indirect carbon emissions associated with purchased energy (scope 2 emissions); and 3) Indirect carbon emissions associated with official travel (part of scope 3 emissions). Scope 3 emissions are, however,not fully included. For instance, emissions associated with the procurement of goods and services and policy implementation are not included.*

[2] *In 2023, central government decided that carbon offsetting may no longer be included in the calculation of CO_2 emissions reduction. Since this meant that the objective of climate neutrality by 2030 could no longer be achieved, BZ set a new climate objective.*

Graph 2a: tCO_2 emissions air travel BZ



Graph 2b: tCO_2/FTE (tons of CO_2 per Ministry of Foreign Affairs employee per year)



Scope 2

BZ's main strategy for reducing scope 2 emissions entails making our real estate more sustainable. The official residence in Budapest is a good example of this: it is a historic building that has been made sustainable and now generates as much energy annually as it consumes.

The new mission building in Vilnius was awarded BREEAM Excellent certification, which means it also contributes to our objectives as an environmentally-friendly, future-proof building in terms of energy consumption and construction materials.

Besides reducing emissions through energy-saving measures, we also aim to generate as much of our own electricity as possible.

When construction of the new mission building in Ankara is completed, it too will be energy neutral thanks to solar panels and battery units for storing energy, rather than diesel generators. This project was well under way in 2025 and will soon be completed.

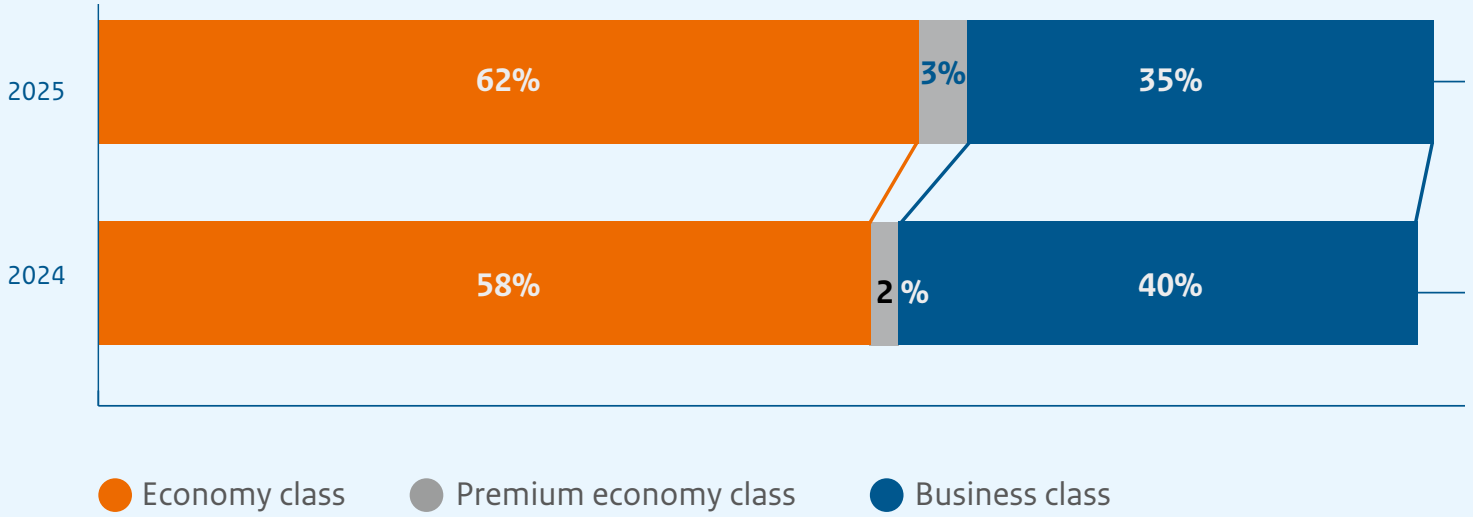
DHF schedules maintenance at real estate locations according to a multiannual maintenance programme extending to the year 2050. Scheduled maintenance is also a good time for measures to improve sustainability.

We buy renewable energy certificates to cover the rest of our electricity needs.[3] In some countries missions buy these themselves, but since 2024 the ministry in The Hague has also bought certificates centrally to cover a large portion of worldwide consumption.

In 2024 this resulted in a major reduction – more than 50% – in scope 2. Electricity consumption and carbon emissions resulting from electricity consumption in scope 2 fell further in 2025. However, increased use of district heating in The Hague and the sharp rise in the emission factor[4] meant that emissions resulting from district heating rose in 2025.

[3] *Certificates guaranteeing that the stated amount of electricity has been produced from renewable sources. These certificates provide assurance of the origin of green energy, and are therefore known as Guarantees of Origin in the EU.*
[4] *The emission factor for district heating systems rose by 53% compared to 2024. This significant increase was primarily the result of major problems in a few of the larger district heating systems, which caused them to rely more on natural gas and less on sustainable sources to produce heat.*

Graph 2c: CO_2 travel classes



Scope 3: air travel

Carbon emissions from air travel fell by 5% compared to 2024 (excluding flights on government aircraft and claimable trips). Average carbon emissions per individual staff member also dropped from 3.19 tCO_2 to 3.05 tCO_2. There are a number of reasons for this. For one thing, both the total number of kilometres travelled and emissions from Business class travel both fell.

At 87%, Economy class flights make up the biggest share of trips by BZ staff members. This is true across the board, whether flights are for short regional trips or cross-continental or intercontinental journeys. The large number of Economy class flights staff take add up to a substantial number of aircraft kilometres and account for 62% of flight emissions.

Business class flights are fewer in number (11%) but long-haul flights in particular have higher emissions per kilometre, with Business class ultimately accounting for 35% of emissions. In other words, BZ's total emissions are determined to a large extent by the large number of economy class kilometres and the higher emissions of Business class flights per kilometre.

A considerable share of trips, referred to as ACRU flights,[5] are for the purpose of job relocation, repatriation, family visits and moving house when staff are posted abroad.

Economy class is already the standard for these trips, which are often unavoidable. This means that the greatest potential for reduction is in official travel and travel for the purposes of training. Reducing emissions means reducing air kilometres (travelling less) and choosing the right travel class (travelling more sustainably).

Emissions from flights account for a relatively large portion of BZ's total carbon footprint: 68% compared to 69% in 2024. These figures do include flights on government aircraft in both years.

[5] *The supplementary collective labour agreement for central government staff posted abroad (ACRU), which covers specific agreements prior to, during and after postings abroad. These entitlements are in addition – and somewhat different – to the entitlements under the collective labour agreement for central government staff (CAO Rijk).*

Data quality

To obtain the most precise picture of our carbon footprint as possible, BZ is working to improve the quality of its data. While the quality of data has improved significantly compared to previous years, it is still difficult to form a clear picture. A major reason for this is the fact that BZ operates in a global context, and it is not always possible to obtain information from the owner of a rented building or an energy provider. It is also difficult to map actual emissions in some countries, for instance when doing so means taking account of UN flights, compounds shared with other countries and energy providers who do not keep full records. When data is lacking, estimations are made based on historical data and/or average values per m² of gross floor area or on the number of FTEs.

Looking ahead to 2026

DHF has set up a multidisciplinary sustainability team for comprehensive action to improve the sustainability of BZ's real estate. In 2026 the team will help integrate sustainability into existing processes. BZ will also step up activities in its Travel Smart programme in order to further reduce emissions from air travel. Besides these activities, the use of sustainable airline fuel (SAF, also known as synthetic kerosene) is another way to reduce emissions. In 2025 central government investigated how it could use this sustainable type of fuel. In 2026 it will look at how these findings can be applied in the various ministries.

Table 2d: CO_2 footprint of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (t CO_2)

t CO_2	2022	2023	2024	2025	Difference 2025 vs 2024
Scope 1	3,743	2,985	2,950	2,976	(+)0.9%
Car travel	520	509	566	589	
Diesel generators	724	873	937	1,076	
Gas	2,499	1,503	1,447	1,312	
Scope 2	9,434	10,548	6,917	6,942	(+)0.4%
Electricity	8,602	9,834	5,864	5,738	
Total purchased	*8,602*	*10,668*	*15,322*	*13,946*	
Green purchased	-	*-834*	*-9,458*	*-8,208*	
Car travel		14	33	42	
Heating & cooling	832	699	1,021	1,162	
Scope 3	**20,755**	**25,159**	**24,054**	**22,806**	**-5.2%**
Car travel	92	118	120	262	
Public transport	147	277	327	300	
Air travel	20,516	24,764	23,607	22,244	
BZ-staff	*16,657*	*20,759*	*20,745*	*19,630*	
Government aircraft	*3,859*	*4,005*	*2,862*	*2,614*	
Total	33,932	38,692	33,921	32,724	-3.5%

Tabel 2e: Broken down energy consumption over 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025

	2022	2023	2024	2025	Difference 2025 vs 2024
Real estate electricity use	27,155	28,741	28,716	28,112	-2.1%
Diesel	208,525	251,807	270,248	310,703	15.0%
Gas	1,198,454	770,822	677,996	614,652	-9.3%

Travel **Smart**

Sustainable travel moving forward

Worldwide working is essential to BZ. Diplomacy requires people to meet and forge connections, which involves moving from one place to another. But we're also responsible for minimising our climate impact. Can worldwide work and sustainable travel go hand in hand? Yes, if we make smart, deliberate choices. The Travel Smart programme can help. After taking shape three years ago as a conversation about travel, step by step this programme has become a permanent approach to working.

Notable developments in 2025:

The same work, more deliberate travel choices

Carbon emissions fell by about 5%, even though the number of trips and the number of kilometres travelled decreased only slightly (about 1.2% and 1.65% respectively). This indicates a change in our travel patterns.

The most visible change was the shift to around 15% fewer Business class flights and significantly more Premium Economy flights, up by 33%. International work and travel continued, but the approach to it changed.

Premium Economy as an attractive alternative

Premium Economy class is slowly becoming a fully accepted option, as it is more comfortable than Economy class but cheaper and more sustainable than Business class. The Premium Economy pilot helped bring this about. While the collective labour agreement allows for Business class on long-haul flights, staff could opt for Premium Economy in exchange for other perks that improved comfort, such as more legroom (compared to Economy class), lounge access at airports and an extra rest day.

From insight to action

The launch of the Travel Smart – Impact dashboard gives departments and missions access to their travel data, and a way to actively influence behaviour and results. Insight is the starting point for dialogue, deliberate choices and new behaviour.

From conversation to habit

Thanks to intensive conversations with departments and missions, sustainable travel is gaining traction in the organisation. It is no longer an abstract theme, but instead factored into annual plans, management team meetings and day-to-day decisions. That doesn't only reduce emissions: it also saves money.

Tailor-made solutions for conscious travel

Conscious travel isn't a standard set of options. Instead, it requires a careful balance of quality and effectiveness, cost, welfare and carbon impact. When travelling longer distances, Premium Economy can be a comfortable and more sustainable alternative in many cases. But Business class must remain possible if that will make the difference for someone's health, work pressure or effectiveness.

2026: ensuring lasting effects

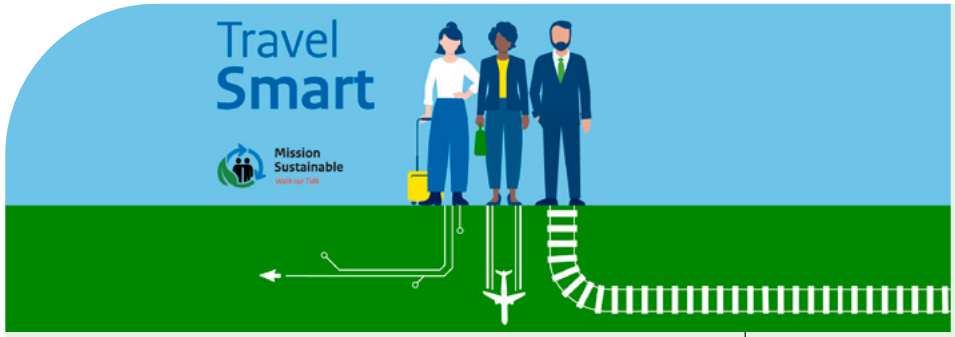
The next step is to ensure this trend continues. In 2026 BZ will for the first time set a ministry-wide target with regard to air travel for official trips, aiming to reduce carbon emissions by 15% compared to 2024. It will be up to departments and missions to decide how they do this. In other words: sustainable travel is a responsibility we all share.

Worldwide working is an essential part of BZ. Diplomacy requires people to meet and forge connections, which entails moving from one place to another. But we're also responsible for minimising our climate impact.

Travel smart in a changing world

The 5% reduction in carbon emissions from flights was a major step forward in 2025. But we're not there yet. The goal of reducing emissions by 40% in 2030 (compared to 2022) is ambitious and will require constant attention and careful decisions. We're making those decisions in a world that is changing rapidly.

With a new government, geopolitical tensions and ongoing crises, there will always be unanticipated, last-minute travel. That can stand in the way of sustainability. And that's why Travel Smart is more relevant than ever. We don't need to reduce our diplomatic work, but instead plan smarter, make more conscious decisions and encourage specific behaviour where we can.



▲ *Campaign image*

Carbon budget reduces flight emissions by 40%

Air travel is responsible for a large share of BZ's carbon emissions. The Inclusive Green Growth Department (IGG) has demonstrated that further reductions are always possible. In the first half of 2025, IGG reduced its travel-related carbon emissions by nearly 40%. They did it by allocating a carbon budget to each section of the department and planning future trips in Excel.

'A carbon budget works just like a financial budget,' says IGG's Ivo Walsmit. 'It shows you the consequences of your choices, and it's both tangible and fair. This worked well for IGG because we could all see how much budget was left. And that automatically made us plan our trips more carefully.' Staff chose Economy class tickets over Business class more often in 2025. 'The strength of this approach is that sections can make their own travel choices,' Ivo says. 'They also take substantive considerations into account. Anything is possible, including flying Business class on an overnight flight, as long as the choice is made after careful deliberation and the section doesn't exceed the total budget. We focus on results rather than rules.'

BZ is making a major effort to reduce emissions from flights. A dashboard designed by BZ shows how many flights and train journeys we make each quarter, how many kilometres we travel and the total carbon emissions of each department and mission. Tools like this make it easy for IGG and other departments to reduce emissions.

'A carbon budget works just like a financial budget,' it shows you the consequences of your choices, and it's both tangible and fair.'

Ivo Walsmit, Inclusive Green Growth department.

Java: by train when possible

For staff at the Dutch embassy in Jakarta, rail is the way to go. This is set out in the mission's new standards on official travel. Staff fly only when they have a compelling reason to do so. In recognition of this approach, the mission received the Walk our Talk Travel Smart Award in 2025.

It all started with a staff member who had a sudden flash of inspiration. He'd opted to take the train on a trip to Yogyakarta so he could admire the Indonesian countryside, and on the journey he realised that many things make rail travel an attractive alternative to flying. Operational manager Berry Spaan agrees. 'Flying usually takes just as long when you add up the time it takes to get to the airport, check in, fly, collect your luggage and then travel from the airport to your destination. The train takes you from one city centre to the other without interruption. So you can work during the journey as well.'

The Jakarta embassy is taking a range of measures to become more sustainable. For instance, it has swapped its regular scooters for electric ones and started a project for reusing rainwater. It also uses 'pop-up' embassies in Bali and elsewhere so Dutch nationals there don't have to travel as far to obtain a passport.

The mission works actively to raise awareness and encourage staff to embrace sustainability measures like opting for train travel.

'Sustainability is an attitude, and awareness is the keyword.'

Berry Spaan, Operations Manager in Jakarta, Indonesia

▼ *The first high-speed train in Southeast Asia (Photo: Usiswantoro)*

3D printed partition in office area (Photo: Norbert Tukaj)

New office areas (Photo: Norbert Tukaj)

Sustainable relocation in Vilnius

After information security measures were tightened, embassy staff in Vilnius were no longer allowed to work from home. But as more staff joined the mission, there were no longer enough workspaces available. Rather than building an expensive addition to the existing premises the embassy opted to move to an office building two streets away. Sustainability was a major consideration in choosing this building, which has BREEAM Excellent certification, the gold standard for sustainable construction and real estate management.

It received the certification in part thanks to its particularly efficient use of water and energy and for using green electricity, and because materials were reused for its construction. Circular techniques were also applied to the interior design. For example, the partition that screens off an open working area was 3D printed from recycled plastic bottles. The partition also helps start conversations about sustainability with people visiting the building.

BREEAM Excellent certification recognises the building's particularly efficient water and energy consumption, its use of green electricity, and the fact that materials were reused for its construction.

3 Circular economy

The traditional linear economy approach of 'take, make, waste' is not tenable. Supplies of critical raw materials are being depleted and the amount of waste we produce keeps rising. At the same time, geopolitical tensions are putting increasing pressure on critical raw materials. BZ wants to use its real estate portfolio of more than 150 missions worldwide to encourage the responsible use of materials in a wide range of locations. The objective is to achieve full circularity by 2050.

Raw materials have value

In a circular economy, products, components and materials are used and reused for as long as possible. That means we need to see used materials not as waste but as things that have value, and look more critically at whether we actually need new or virgin raw materials. Products can also be designed in a way that allows their components and materials to be reused in high-value applications in the future. This requires collaboration between parties across the production and supply chain.

Human Environment and Transport Inspectorate (ILT) waste inspection (Copyright: Rijksoverheid)

Closing the loop helps keep critical raw materials available and affordable. There are other benefits too, such as lower carbon emissions, which helps combat climate change, a cleaner environment because fewer polluting materials are used, and a transparent supply chain, because circularity requires knowing a product's origin and how it was made.

BZ's circular objectives contribute to two of its other goals: a 40% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 (compared to 2022) and increased supply chain responsibility.

A learning approach to circular economy strategy

In recent years BZ has learned more about a circular economy through a number of pilot projects. Given the international context in which its work takes place and its dependence on outside parties, this is a complex theme. In some of the pilot projects, market analysis has contributed to an understanding of how materials can (or can't) be used circularly in the local context. This can differ by region and even by country. Lessons have also been learned about material passports, and the first award criteria have been developed for use in contract award procedures in Europe, Africa and elsewhere.

Staff have also learned about refurbishing furniture, which requires a different approach to planning, quality and logistics. Generally speaking, local context is important when aiming for worldwide impact.

As the first circular steps are being applied to projects, the development of a circular strategy is taking place in parallel. Mission Sustainable works closely on this with the Housing and Real Estate Worldwide Department (DHF), the Information and Digital Innovation Department (IDI) and procurement. For instance, there have been discussions on how BZ defines a circular economy, how to make circularity measurable in the context of operational management and how to make use of what we already have.

Talks have also focused on how to raise the bar in some projects so as to make the most of our own ability to act and exert influence. The Dutch Pavilion at World Expo Osaka is an example of this: it was designed to be reused, and is now in use at another location in Japan.

Sustainable IT

Efforts in 2024 focused mainly on communication and were aimed at raising awareness of the importance of using IT equipment sustainably and disposing of it properly. In 2025 we reported on the impact and sphere of influence of IT at BZ based on a baseline measurement. This helps us develop a clearer picture of how BZ can use IT more sustainably, which in turn helps develop targeted actions. We are also looking for interministerial cooperation for a new action programme for sustainable digitisation. This central government-wide sustainability programme focuses on circular use of hardware and other topics, but also on energy efficiency, sustainable procurement and reducing unnecessary data use. BZ participates actively in some of these action lines, including sustainable IT procurement.

Other circular initiatives

Throughout the year, an online knowledge session on waste management was made available to BZ's missions abroad in conjunction with Holland Circular Hotspot. This follow-up to working group sessions held in 2024 was intended to help people share knowledge about waste reduction and better waste management. About 30 missions around the world took part.

Finally, an exploratory study of carbon pricing was begun. It will focus on the themes of climate and circular economy, and look at whether carbon pricing in BZ's operational management can contribute to effective and sustainable decisions. The study will gather practical examples from outside BZ and transpose them to BZ's own context.

Looking ahead to 2026

One major priority for 2026 is to complete the BZ-wide circularity strategy. When the IT sustainability strategy is ready, operational management aspects of IT can also be incorporated in the circular strategy. Concrete actions can begin in parallel to this, such as ensuring returned laptops are reused. DHF intends to apply measurable key performance indicators for sustainability in its real estate projects.

BZ's real estate portfolio is located in many countries around the globe and subject to special requirements, for example with respect to security. DHF is therefore developing a circularity benchmark that will provide more insight into what is possible within this context. This will make it easier to work in line with the key performance indicators for circularity.

BZ will continue to participate in some of the action lines in the sustainable digitalisation programme with the aim of effectively aligning its own objectives with those of central government.

Sessions on sustainable and circular procurement will also be organised at the missions in 2026. These will mainly focus on operational matters such as catering, events and office supplies.

Old wooden crates transformed into a planter in Maputo (Copyright: Rijksoverheid)
Old banners transformed into bags in a circular project at the Dutch embassy in Bern (Copyright: Rijksoverheid)

Circular initiatives at the missions

Chairs, bags and planters

BZ applies its circular strategy every day at locations around the world. Alongside major overarching projects focusing on real estate and sustainable IT, the missions also come up with their own creative initiatives for reducing consumption of materials. Examples include:

- **Accra (Ghana):** chairs with worn-out upholstery are no longer discarded, but instead repaired using local materials. This extends their lifespan and adds colour to the office.
- **Bern (Switzerland):** promotional materials from the mission, such as banners and neckties, are used to make bags. Materials are given a new lease of life, with a touch of the Netherlands on show.
- **Maputo (Mozambique):** the wooden shipping crates in which goods arrive at the mission are repurposed as planters. They're decorative and contribute to a pleasant working environment, while also reducing expenditure on interior decoration.
- Several missions collect waste streams separately and recycle waste where possible. Recyclable items include paper and batteries as well as food waste, which can be composted. In Astana, where waste collection is not standard practice, the mission collects waste in separate streams and plastics are actively recycled. Doing this together is a way to achieve gradual change in the local system.

Top quality architecture that is also circular

Osaka now knows how to do it

Visitors to the Dutch Pavilion at World Expo Osaka 2025 were introduced to our country, our innovations and our ideas. The Expo is over now, but the pavilion lives on. BZ staff member and project manager Aino Jansen and architect Thomas Rau look back on a special project.

Rented equipment, clothes and furniture made from waste materials, and sustainably produced raw materials sourced in Japan: is that enough to design a sustainable pavilion for World Expo Osaka? How much more can you even do when you're working on a construction project on the other side of the world?

A lot more, says Thomas Rau, the founder of RAU Architects. Even so, during the tender phase, he often wondered whether it was a good idea to focus so squarely on sustainability, even though the government set out very high ambitions in the tender. 'You can never be certain how many of those ambitions will stick. Ultimately, clients will often opt for something that feels familiar.'

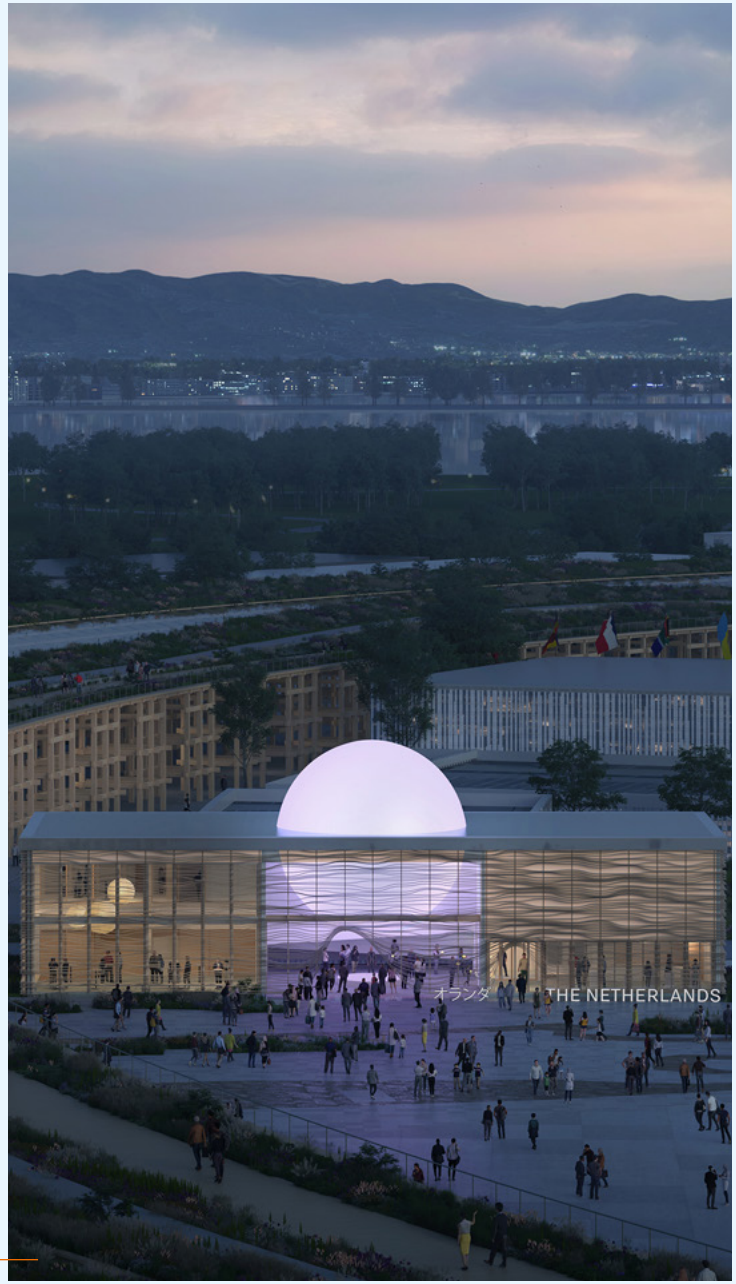
Working towards a new system

Working together as the consortium AND BV, RAU, engineering company DGMR, design studio Tellart and the Japanese construction company Asanuma decided to go for it anyway. In part, this was because a climate-conscious is more in line with their own corporate vision. Thomas: 'Improving sustainability is not enough. That will optimise our system. But I think we need a different system. We humans need to learn a new way of using materials. If we don't change voluntarily then, ultimately, we will be forced to change.'

Circularity is our future. That's precisely the philosophy that the Dutch Pavilion in Osaka was meant to illustrate. Not only in the experience would be offered here, but certainly also inside the building. So the design consortium decided not to simply rent projectors and use waste materials to build benches, but to devise a fully circular construction. This was a steel structure that could be disassembled fairly easily after use and reassembled elsewhere.

Priorities

That decision was a good one. For the World Expo team, which consisted of BZ staff in The Hague and at the Dutch consulate in Japan and staff of the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), sustainability wasn't only a theoretical possibility. 'It was one of the main priorities of our request,' says project manager Aino Jansen. 'Alongside criteria for costs, visitor experience and originality in the building's design.'



Exterior of the Netherlands' circular pavilion at Osaka Expo 2025 (Photo: Plomp)

BZ was determined to make a statement on this topic. Through its Mission Sustainable programme, since 2021, it has invested heavily in making BZ more sustainable and inspiring others through 'Walk our Talk'.

Transitioning to a circular economy and a closed-loop consumption cycle for materials is one aim in this area. By commissioning a building that could be disassembled and reused again elsewhere, the mission is taking responsibility for the effects of its actions both today and in the future.

Thomas: 'Cooperation in the project team was certainly difficult at times. But it was precisely then that we encouraged each other to keep living up to those big ambitions, or to go even further. It was really special. I've rarely experienced something like that.'

Ice cream cone

The World Expo has traditionally been a stage on which innovations are displayed and admired. It has been the backdrop for the presentation of the first telephones, the first lifts, and even the ice cream cone. As globalisation and technological progress have increased, and certainly since the arrival of the internet, that role has become less important. Aino: 'Today the focus is mainly on addressing global challenges. Like food security and demographic ageing. One thing we wanted to highlight was sustainability.' That was especially important given that a World Expo is far from being sustainable. Hundreds of new buildings are constructed for this event every five years, each time at a new location, and demolished again six months later. That creates a volume of wasted materials and carbon emissions that is difficult to justify, given our concerns for our planet. 'We wanted to prove that it didn't have to be that way,' says Aino. 'And to show other countries, particularly Japan, what is possible with regard to sustainability and circularity.'

Common Ground

The Dutch Pavilion hosted more than 140 events, along with trade missions and a visit by King Willem-Alexander and then-Prime Minister Dick Schoof. And more than 1.2 million ordinary visitors learned more about the Netherlands in 'Common Ground', as the pavilion was named. It told the stories of the shared history between the Netherlands and Japan, the Netherlands' relationship with water and, naturally, our own sustainable innovations, like the hydrogen-driven car and floating solar panels.

Among the results of the many trade missions was a cooperative energy transition project between Osaka and Rotterdam. Thomas noted plenty of interest in their approach. 'Circularity is still a relatively new idea in Japan. But it's an interesting topic there too, in part due to today's geopolitical situation,' he says. 'Since Expo we've been in contact with several Japanese companies with the intention of working together and making our philosophies applicable in the context of Japanese culture and working methods. We showed that circular construction and high-quality architecture can go hand in hand.'

Exterior of the Netherlands' circular pavilion at Osaka Expo 2025 (Photo: Plomp)

Interior of the Netherlands' circular pavilion at Osaka Expo 2025 (Photo: Plomp) - page 19

‘With the Dutch Pavilion in Osaka, we’re raising the bar for circular construction. By using materials smartly and organising the project just a little bit differently, we can ensure the building has a second lifespan.’

Martine Verhoeven, Mission Sustainable’s project leader for a circular economy

The Dutch Pavilion’s new site on the island of Awaji

Asanuma is currently disassembling the pavilion. That step was already taken into account during the design phase of the Common Ground building. Disassembly was necessary to ensure that it would have its intended second lifespan on the island of Awaji, in the Osaka Bay. The multinational company Pasona Group acquired it as part of its plans for sustainable development in the area.

And even if it eventually needs to be moved from there, the materials can be reused yet again, together or separately. Pasona Group has not merely acquired a pavilion, but also the material passport that is registered in Madaster. This document system registers the materials, components and products in buildings to make options for reuse understandable and predictable. As long as the passport is kept up to date, the steel structure could perhaps even begin its third life in 2126, for example.

A final challenge: **the foundations**

Taking a building apart and putting it back together somewhere else is a big operation. But giving its concrete foundations a second life is even more complicated. Thomas: ‘Especially for this we put down insulation sheets to prevent the foundations from coming into contact with the ground. After the pavilion itself is taken apart, we can remove those too, down to the last piece. But we don’t yet know what we will do with the concrete.’

4 Supply chain responsibility

Everyone has a right to fair and safe working conditions. Not only people working directly for the ministry, but also people employed by external contractors to work indirectly for BZ. We seek to minimise the risk of human rights violations and breaches of international labour standards throughout the entire supply chain.

Living wage

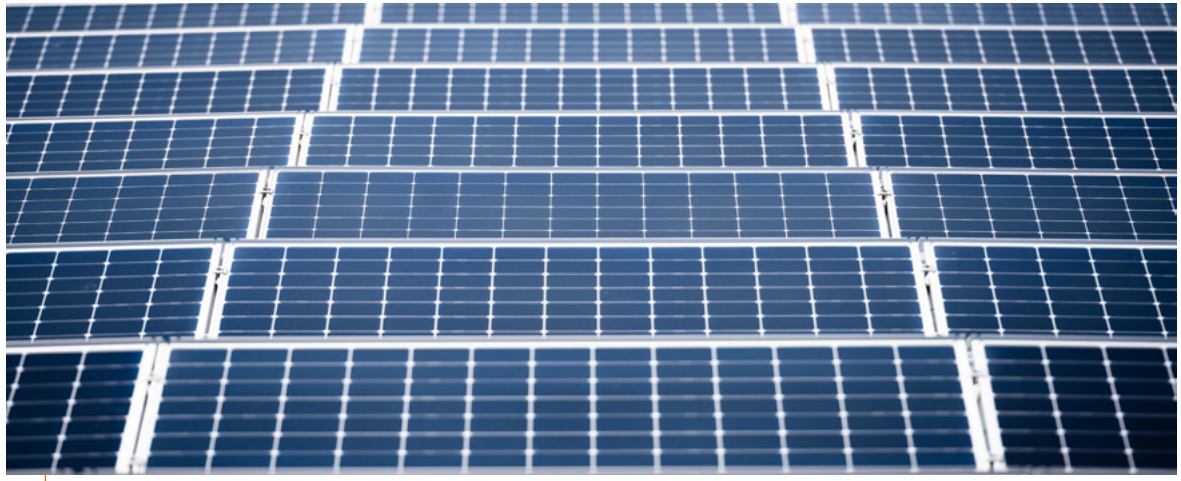
The living wage policy that took effect on 1 March 2025 applies to external providers of facilities services at missions. Since that date we have actively checked wage levels whenever we sign new contracts for cleaning, security and garden maintenance services at missions. If wages are currently below the living wage of our preferred benchmark, then the amount paid under the new contract must be 10% higher than the current wage. In this way, we try to encourage the market to pay staff better without creating a large wage gap.

BZ concluded a total of 22 contracts in 2025 under the living wage policy. To implement the policy, DHF and the Financial Service Organisation (FSO) worked closely with the missions. Their experiences will be a particularly relevant contribution to further progress on this policy. The living wage policy will be evaluated in 2026 and adapted and changed where necessary to ensure it is optimally aligned with what is necessary and possible.

Housing and Real Estate Worldwide Department (DHF)

DHF is currently developing a sustainability strategy. In support of this, it has formulated key performance indicators (KPIs) for supply chain responsibility. From now on these KPIs will make it easier to set goals for supply chain responsibility for housing projects and to work towards them proactively. DHF will continue to work on the practical implementation of supply chain responsibility in 2026.

Supply chain responsibility is a major consideration when purchasing solar panels. As much as possible, DHF tries to purchase the panels from producers who can offer a clear overview of their supply chains. To help achieve this, in general and on a case-by-case basis, DHF has compiled an integrated assessment of solar panels based on climate impact, circularity and supply chain responsibility. Minimum requirements and desired criteria are shown for each of these. This makes it easy to decide whether specific panels score acceptably based on the information provided by producers. With regard to supply chain responsibility, these requirements and criteria pertain mainly to transparency in the value chain.



Solar panels. (Photo: Erik Jansen)

Other projects

In 2025 we held our first consultations with the Consular Service Organisation (CSO) on the subject of working conditions at visa application centres around the world. These centres process applications for Dutch visas – and sometimes also passports – and are therefore very important to the ministry. As we work with them, we do our best to pay greater attention to the working conditions of both their own employees and those of their suppliers. This cooperation will continue to take shape in 2026.

Transparency is essential for companies hoping to improve working conditions along the chain.

We also started work on a new risk analysis for Mission Sustainable. The analysis made in 2021 was the basis for several years of work to establish appropriate mitigating measures. This new analysis will be completed in 2026.

Looking ahead to 2026

In 2026 we will place a considerable emphasis on evaluation. We will evaluate both the living wage policy and the risk analysis in order to define next steps and the focus of our efforts regarding supply chain responsibility. BZ and DHF will work continually to anchor supply chain responsibility in work processes. Work will also continue in areas in which supply chain responsibility has more recently become a focus of attention, such as at CSO.

▲ *FSO's procurement team (Photo: Josje Deekens)*

Price indexation? Apply it to staff wages too

The Procurement division of the Financial Service Organisation (FSO) helps missions and departments deal with contracts and procurement procedures. The team makes sure that procurement takes place in line with legislation and BZ's own rules.

Supply chain responsibility is an increasingly important focus. For instance, one supplier consistently increased prices in line with inflation, but never adjusted their employees' wages. 'Six years with no pay raise: that's unacceptable,' says procurement adviser Regie van Gestel. So our contracts now include a standard provision that index-linking also applies to employees' pay.'

All of Mission Sustainable's objectives come together in Ankara

Climate friendly, circular and with a focus on human rights

Sustainability played a major role in the construction of a new location for the mission in Ankara. This is reflected in the decision to apply for BREEAM Excellent certification – the gold standard for sustainable building and real estate management. The new building is all electric and features a full solar roof with solar chimneys. Intelligent design solutions also help minimise energy consumption, and energy stored in a battery container improves resilience.

Besides the focus on energy, materials and waste were also considered carefully. The building has a material passport, and the environmental impact of the materials used to construct it has been clearly defined. Circular alternatives were sought out for insulation, equipment and interior furnishings, with an eye to reducing consumption and enabling future reuse. And the team took an active approach to separating and reducing waste into various streams during construction. One good example of this is the furniture: most of it has been reused in the new building after any necessary refurbishment.

Transparent supply chain

The solar panels were a focus of particular attention. They were not chosen purely on the basis of how much clean energy they generate, but also based on information about their supply chains and possible human rights violations or poor working conditions. The team worked with the local contractor to find panels that met sustainability criteria while also being readily available locally and easy to maintain in the local context. A local solar panel producer was found that not only had a human rights policy but could also provide transparency about much of the supply chain.

This transparency is essential to proper implementation of human rights policy. The fact that these panels can be easily purchased and maintained locally also made them an appropriate choice.

Learning from each other

Because some of these sustainability concepts are relatively new in Türkiye, a market consultation was part of the contract award procedure. Local contractors were informed of BZ's ambitions for sustainability certification and the material passport. This enabled BZ and the local market to learn from each other, which was important given that sustainability was among the criteria for the contract.

With its consideration for climate, circularity and human rights, the construction of the building in Ankara is an outstanding example of BZ's Walk our Talk ethos.

New embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Ankara.

‘With its consideration for climate, circularity and human rights, the construction of the building in Ankara is an outstanding example of BZ’s Walk our Talk ethos.’

Nils Merrienboer, senior project manager at DHF.

5 Working together on a sustainable organisational culture

Achieving our sustainability objectives will require everyone's help, both at the ministry in The Hague and at the missions. That's why we are integrating sustainability measures into every part of our operational management. And it has paid off. Interesting measures for sustainability were implemented at a range of missions around the world in 2025, and there was also work to raise awareness more broadly.

On King's Day, people in Toronto were encouraged to cycle more (Photo: Resi Mennen)

Inspiring, informing and helping each other

The Ministry of Foreign affairs has missions around the world. That gives us the potential to make a sustainable impact in many places, and plenty of opportunities to do so. However, sustainability is not the top priority in these times of geopolitical tensions and budget reductions, and it's a challenge to keep Mission Sustainable at the top of the agenda.

Moreover, the local context largely determines the nature of the sustainability measures we can take, and therefore each mission has to consider local conditions when looking for sustainable solutions. That requires a tailor-made approach. Even so, it's always helpful for us to share examples with each other. Because we can still learn from each other even when local conditions differ.

Even so, it's always helpful for us to share examples with each other. Because we can still learn from each other even when local conditions differ.

The geographical distance separating all the missions complicates cooperation, but we work from The Hague to make this distance as small as we can. For example, through the Mission Sustainable communication toolkit. Using posters and handouts with additional information, we provide missions with tips and tricks on various themes that they can use to get started with sustainability.

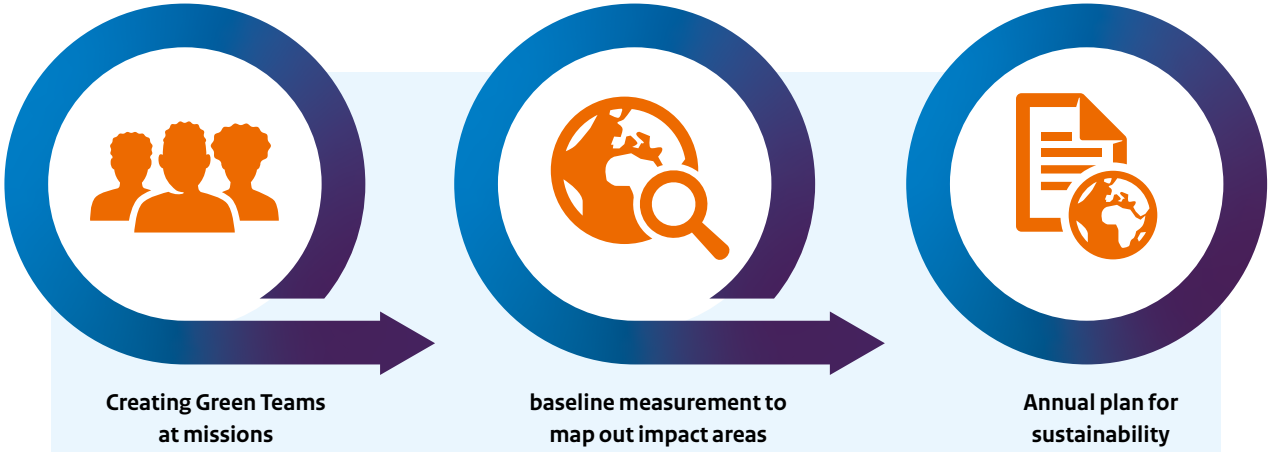
In 2025 we also developed the Sustainable Best Practices Database, a database that all BZ staff can access via the

Mission Sustainable website. It has examples of sustainable initiatives at various missions, with explanations, images and videos that bring them to life and inspire other missions to come up with their own new ideas.

The first session of the Green Allies Community of Practice also took place in 2025. This online community brings missions together to share examples of sustainability practices and help each other implement initiatives. These sessions will take place in each quarter of 2026. The Green Allies Community of Practice helps ensure missions work sustainably, but we also took steps to raise awareness among staff in The Hague. For instance, we organised in-person inspiration talks, online lunch lectures and a tour of our Rijnstraat 8 office building featuring some of its most sustainable features. Its scores for energy efficiency, waste management and sustainable catering make it one of the most sustainable buildings in use by central government. Through events like these, we can inform staff about the importance of sustainability in their work and private lives.

Sustainability teams at the missions

Mission Sustainable encourages missions to set up Green Teams, which consist of staff from a range of departments who meet to discuss progress and set sustainability goals for the short and long term. This helps missions anchor sustainability in their work and contributes to a sense of shared responsibility. We advise teams to draw up an annual plan for sustainability, which is also beneficial for continuity and progress. Mission Sustainable also encourages missions to take baseline measurements so they can see where they're making an impact. This enables them to measure the combined impact of all operational management themes, or specific ones such as catering so they can make specific plans in areas where improvement is possible.



The route Mission Sustainable encourages: The ideal path to anchoring sustainability at the missions.

For example, the embassy in Bratislava calculated the impact of various types of catering, and the missions in Toronto and China looked specifically at King's Day events. For more information on this, see the text boxes.

Resilience in an era of climate change and political unpredictability

During National Climate Week, BZ's Inclusive Green Growth department and Mission Sustainable organised an inspiration session featuring non other than Tom Middendorp. During the session, the 'Climate General' and former Chief of Defence stressed the important role of climate policy for our country's security and stability. In his view, climate change is not only an environmental problem, but also threatens our security and our economy. Scarcity and climate disasters such as drought cause competition and conflict, which in turn have destabilising effects on migration, trade routes and stability. In other words, climate policy is also security policy.

Later, Minister of Climate and Green Growth Stientje van Veldhoven, at the time President of the World Resources Institute, wrote a column on leadership and the power of the imagination. She drew a parallel with the construction of the Delta Project in the 20th century, when the Netherlands successfully completed a huge and complex project in order to protect itself. She thinks it's essential to take a smarter approach to using raw materials, to cooperate with other countries and to work with the environment instead of against it – for instance, using trees for carbon storage. Each contribution was followed by a roundtable talk with the directors of the Inclusive Green Growth Department (IGG), the Sustainable Economic Development Department (DDE), DSH and the deputy director of the Security Policy Department (DVB). This instructive session emphasised that sustainability is directly linked to our national security and is therefore related to these departments' day-to-day work.

Missions with Green Teams (or another active approach to sustainability)

Where our Green teams are located

Green Teams work to make operational management at missions more sustainable. They help raise awareness, ensure continuity and get real results.

Abidjan – Côte d'Ivoire
Abu Dhabi – United Arab Emirates
Accra – Ghana
Algiers – Algeria
Ankara – Türkiye
Astana – Kazakhstan
Athens – Greece
Baku – Azerbaijan
Belgrade – Serbia
Bengaluru – India
Bogotá – Colombia
Budapest – Hungary
Mumbai – India
Bratislava – Slovakia
Buenos Aires – Argentina
Canberra – Australia
Caracas – Venezuela
Dakar – Senegal
Dubai – United Arab Emirates
Dhaka – Bangladesh
Doha – Qatar
Geneva – Switzerland
Hanoi – Vietnam
Harare – Zimbabwe
Helsinki – Finland
Hong Kong – China
Ho Chi Minh City – Vietnam
Islamabad – Pakistan
Istanbul – Türkiye
Jakarta – Indonesia
Yerevan – Armenia
Cairo – Egypt
Kigali – Rwanda
Kuala Lumpur – Malaysia
Lima – Peru
Lisbon – Portugal
Ljubljana – Slovenia
Luanda – Angola
Madrid – Spain
Manila – Philippines
Maputo – Mozambique
Mexico City – Mexico
Miami – United States
Milan – Italy
Muscat – Oman
Nairobi – Kenya
Niamey – Niger
Oslo – Norway
Ouagadougou – Burkina Faso
Paris – France
Prague – Czech Republic
Pretoria – South Africa
Pristina – Kosovo
Rabat – Morocco
Riga – Latvia
Rome – Italy
São Paulo – Brazil
Sarajevo – Bosnia and Herzegovina
Seoul – South Korea
Shanghai – China
San José – Costa Rica
Sofia – Bulgaria
Stockholm – Sweden
Tbilisi – Georgia
Vancouver – Canada
Vienna – Austria
Warsaw – Poland
Washington – D.C., United States
Wellington – New Zealand


Finland
Sweden
Norway
Czech Republic
Latvia
Poland
Slovakia
Hungary
Austria
Luxembourg
Switzerland
France
Slovenia
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Serbia
Bulgaria
Kosovo
Turkey
Georgia
Armenia
Azerbaijan
Kazakhstan
China
South Korea
Portugal
Spain
Italy
Croatia
Greece
Tunisia
Morocco
Algeria
Egypt
Qatar
Oman
Pakistan
India
United Arab Emirates
Bangladesh
Vietnam
Philippines
Malaysia
Singapore
Indonesia
Niger
Nigeria
Burkina Faso
Senegal
Ghana
Côte d'Ivoire
Angola
Uganda
Kenya
Rwanda
South Africa
Mozambique
Zimbabwe
Australia
New Zealand

Sustainable catering in Bratislava (Photo: Remco Zwinkels)

In Bratislava, catering that is cheaper and more environmentally friendly

To establish the carbon footprint of the food it serves at events, the embassy in Bratislava measured the carbon emissions of a reception for 30 guests. The measurement identified animal proteins as the source of 56% of emissions resulting from catering. It compared three menus: 1) Fully vegetarian; 2) chicken soup and a main course consisting of 50% beef; and 3) beef soup and a main course consisting of 50% beef. The results were clear: not only did the vegetarian menu represent lower carbon emissions; it was also considerably cheaper. Based on these findings, the embassy decided to switch to fully vegetarian catering. This is a great example of how taking baseline measurements can lead to action that really makes a difference.

‘100% vegetarian catering significantly reduced our environmental footprint. It doesn’t just reduce carbon emissions, but also requires less land and water and saves money!’

Mark Reichwein, deputy head of mission in Bratislava

King’s Day in Toronto (Photo: Resi Mennen)

Measuring the impact of King's Day in Canada and China

The Dutch consulate-general in Toronto and the three missions in China measured the carbon emissions of their King's Day events. The findings shed light on which event components were responsible for the highest carbon emissions and helped staff draw a range of useful conclusions. 'Choose a location that will require the least amount of travel for the majority of your guests,' says Maarten Willems, operational manager in Shanghai. 'Using an outdoor location also significantly reduces energy consumption.'

The consulate-general in Toronto hired an event planner specialised in sustainability. The aim was to celebrate King's Day while creating the lowest possible level of carbon emissions. The Sustainable Events Forum helped the mission measure results, which were compared with generally available information on carbon emissions from events. Now the mission will be able to promote sustainable events in the future too. The measurement revealed three important considerations that other missions can also use: 1) set goals for sustainability; 2) choose a location that takes sustainability into account; and 3) make a difference with the menu.

'Sustainability goals, a carefully chosen location and a responsible menu: that's how you make the difference.'

Resi Mennen, operational manager in Toronto

From green IT to sustainable gardening: the power of a workshop

A good way to create enthusiasm is to let people set to work themselves. Mission Sustainable is happy to see workshops and training sessions being organised at so many different missions in order to bring sustainability topics to life. These have included drivers in Dakar teaching people how to maintain their cars for a longer lifespan and a workshop on green IT in Kuala Lumpur, for example.

'Technology is the motor that drives our world. But it has a big environmental footprint,' says Berbel van Ass, who is responsible for communication and public diplomacy in Kuala Lumpur. 'DASCIN's Green IT Awareness Training helped us understand that sending an email uses as much energy as making a cup of tea. Its Green IT Framework provides clear steps for reducing environmental impact and simultaneously enhancing efficiency.'

Staff in Muscat learned about sustainable gardening, from choosing the right houseplants and outdoor plants to planting and caring for them. This helped them make their working environment greener, healthier and more pleasant.

'Technology is the motor that drives our world. But it has a big environmental footprint.'

Berbel van Ass, communication and public diplomacy in Kuala Lumpur

▲▲ *Green IT workshop for staff at the embassy in Kuala Lumpur (Copyright: Central government)*

Sustainable initiative in Peru

Ceramics that change lives

The Dutch embassy in Lima and social workers active in Peruvian prisons are engaged in sustainable cooperation.

How do our colleagues help make our world and our organisation more sustainable? Together with Mission Sustainable, we look at one of the most sustainable initiatives in our mission network.

In the heart of Lima, Peru, away from the everyday bustle of the city, ceramics ateliers in one of the country's largest prisons have become the unlikely setting for creativity, dignity and hope. The Dutch embassy in Peru has cooperated with the NGO Asociación Dignidad Humana y Solidaridad (DHS) for many years. Their 'Ecosystems of Cooperation' project is an initiative designed to help prisoners and their families improve their technical and business skills. Its aim is to promote a reintegration model that is more humane and sustainable, with a focus on human rights.

The origins of this initiative go back a long way. In the 1970s, the embassy began supporting reintegration programmes in Peruvian prisons in close cooperation with the Belgian priest Hubert Lanssiers, a major advocate of prisoners' rights. That cooperation laid the foundations for decades of work in projects that still continue today. These projects combine traditional artisanship with social and environmental innovation.

Textiles made by Peruvian prisoners (Photo: National Penitentiary Institute)

A project that puts people first

Ambassador to Peru Alexander Kofman explained: 'The Ecosystems of Cooperation project is based on the simple but powerful realisation that detention has an impact not only on prisoners, but also their families and others around them. That's why this project aims to create opportunities for both prisoners and their families. Particularly their wives and girlfriends, since they are often the ones who bear the emotional and financial burden of a partner's detention.'

The project's technical training and workshops promote entrepreneurship by encouraging women and their incarcerated family members to start micro-enterprises. This focus aligns with major priorities of Dutch foreign policy: gender equality, economic empowerment of women and reducing gender-based violence.

Sheltered workshop with prospects

With nearly 30 years of experience in Peruvian prisons, DHS is an indispensable partner. Close cooperation with the National Penitentiary Institute (INPE), which heads the nationwide 'Productive Prisons' programme, ensures that workshops are run safely and effectively.

Besides expertise and financing, the embassy also provides real opportunities for economic activity. For some years, it has commissioned a range of products from the prison

‘ The Ecosystems of Cooperation project is based on the simple but powerful realisation that detention has an impact not only on prisoners, but also their families and others around them. That’s why this project aims to create opportunities for both prisoners and their families.’ w

Alexander Kofman, Ambassador to Peru

Textiles made by Peruvian detainees (Photo: National Penitentiary Institute)

Ambassador to Peru Alexander Kofman visits a ceramics market near a Peruvian prison (Photo: National Penitentiary Institute).

ateliers, ranging from ceramic gifts to textiles such as the orange t-shirts staff in Lima wear on King’s Day. These commissions help prisoners and their family generate income, while also promoting sustainable ways of thinking and showcasing the talents of people in the Peruvian prison system.

Ceramics and textiles: artisanship, income and sustainability

Ceramics is not only an art; it is also a route to emotional expression and personal transformation. For many prisoners, working with clay brings therapeutic release, new skills and a healthier routine. At the start of the Productive Prisons programme our embassy donated high-temperature kilns and specialist tools. It was also instrumental in finding additional partners to help get the programme up and running.

The textile ateliers are based on the same vision. Making t-shirts and other handcrafted items is not only a creative outlet, but also contributes to a circular economic model that emphases local production and reducing environmental impact. In this sustainable approach, items are produced locally, materials have a small environmental footprint and income is invested in new supplies. This is the focus of our embassy’s work and in line with BZ’s sustainability objectives.

An ecosystem that links prison to the outside world

The most innovative aspect of the Ecosystems of Cooperation project is its focus on the entire ecosystem in which the prisoners’ and their families’ micro-enterprises exist. The production process starts inside the prisons and continues outside through sales, marketing and reinvestment. Many families promote the products online, transforming their creativity into income and strengthening family ties. After its success in the Lurigancho and Miguel Castro-Castro prisons, the project was expanded to include the Santa Mónica prison for women. There, working with ceramics gave a small group of women space to recover emotionally and start planning their futures.

Finding strength in clay

What started as a modest, low-budget project has grown to become a model of impactful and meaningful transformation. The cooperation between the embassy, DHS, INPE and prisoners’ families demonstrates that sustainable opportunities are available even in the most challenging circumstances. The workshops enable participants to develop their skills, increase their self-confidence, repair family relationships and set out a realistic path towards reintegration. At the same time, they promote a circular model of local production and responsible consumption. We hope that these experiences will inspire other embassies and international partners to support similar initiatives. Projects like this show just how much impact is possible with dignity, creativity and hope.

About this report

This is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' fourth sustainability report. It describes the activities we undertook in 2025 that have contributed to our three sustainability objectives, as well as our collaborations with our stakeholders in pursuit of these goals. It also shows how much progress we've made towards achieving our objectives. This report covers the ministry as a whole, including missions abroad.

Standards and guiding principles

The report is structured around the three themes of Mission Sustainable: climate action, circular economy and supply chain responsibility.

We use the annual cycle of the CO_2 Performance Ladder and the sustainability report to monitor our progress and ensure that measures are implemented and adapted as necessary.

Our carbon footprint is determined based on the requirements of the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol and the guidelines for quantifying and reporting GHG emissions and removals at organisation level (ISO 14064-1). To measure it, we adhere to the approach laid down in the CO_2 Performance Ladder Handbook version 3.1.

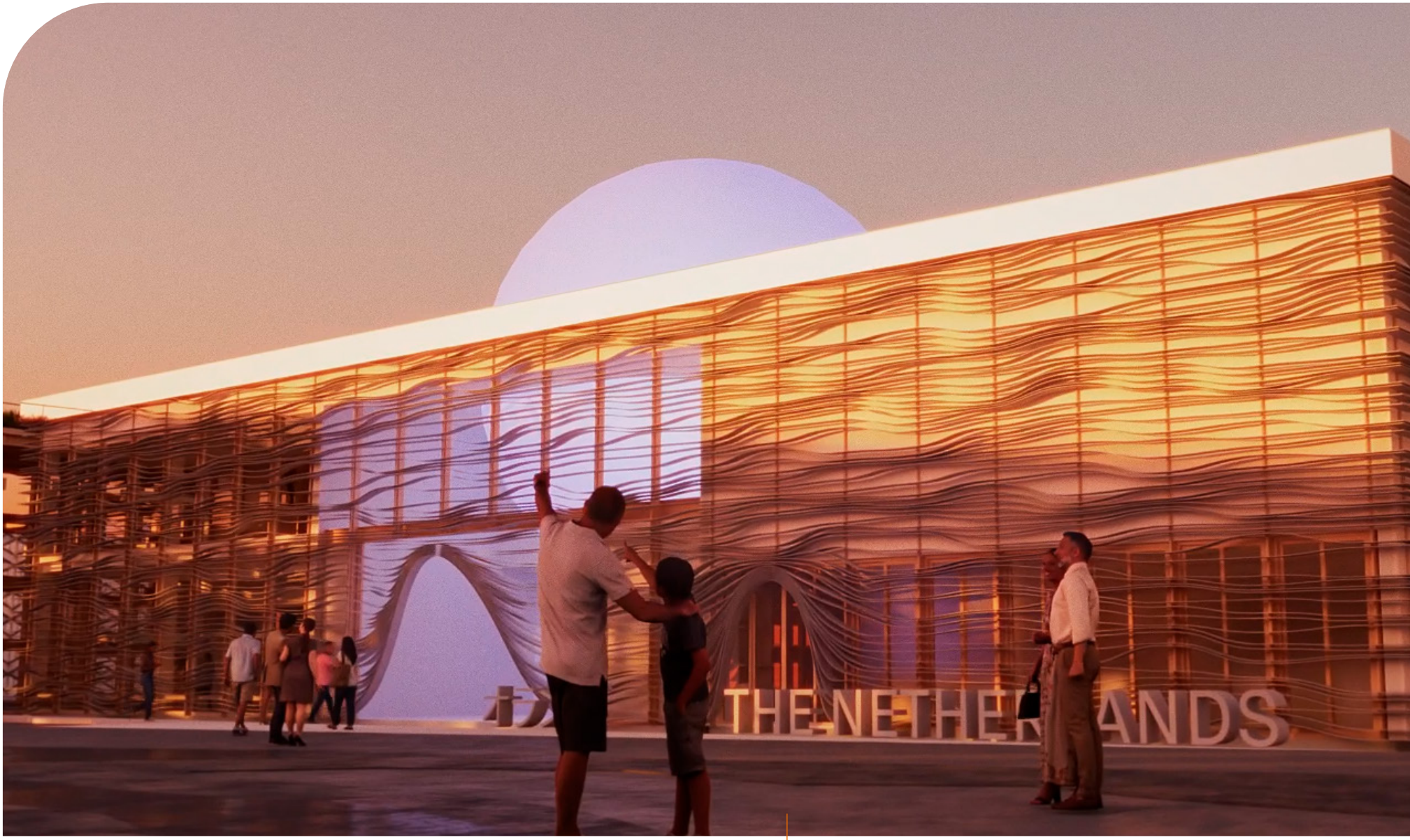
The footprint comprises all emissions in scope 1 and 2, plus business travel. Emissions are calculated using the basic factors provided on CO_2emissiefactoren.nl. For the energy consumption of mission buildings located abroad, we use each country's basic factors as shown on www.carbondi.com/#electricity-factors/. This is a different database than the one used for last year's report, which explains some of the differences in building emissions. BZ switched to this new database because it is more comprehensive and more transparent.

The missions themselves are responsible for providing accurate consumption data. This data is collected at one central point, checked for any major discrepancies and processed to produce a complete carbon footprint for the ministry as a whole. Air travel data is managed and collated centrally. When data is lacking, assumptions are made based on historical data and/or average values per m² of gross floor area or per FTE.

BZ will continue exploring efficient means of improving the quality of the data we use. For this we use historical data (for instance, data from 2024 or the last time consumption data was available) or make a calculation based on a building's gross floor area in m² and average energy consumption per m² of gross floor area. If mobility data is lacking, estimations are made based on historical data in combination with the number of FTEs in the organisation.

Continuous improvement

To ensure data reliability, both internal and external audits are carried out annually. In 2026 the Central Government Audit Service (ADR) will conduct an extensive study to determine whether the Mission Sustainable is due for enlargement after its first five years. Independent verification of the emissions inventory also takes place periodically. Over the next few years we will continue to improve our reporting in various ways, including by consistently following the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle and fine-tuning our sustainability strategy. In 2025 we launched a new dashboard that provides a quarterly overview of flights and train journeys undertaken, total kilometres travelled and the carbon emissions of each department and mission. However, more time is needed to collect this data and apply it to our working methods. This will also be a major focus of attention in the years ahead.



Exterior of the Netherlands' circular pavilion at Osaka Expo 2025 (Photo: Plomp)

Published by:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Sustainability report 2025
4th edition

Date of publication: Wednesday 20 May 2026

Editor: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Communications Department, Mission Sustainable
Copy editor: Sabel Communicatie
Design: Sabel Communicatie

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