

In response to the call for submissions issued by the COP Presidencies, to inform discussions and contribute to the joint shaping of the Belém Mission to 1.5°C (submission: 30 June 2026; presidencies@unfccc.int).

Submission by Saudi Green Building Forum (SGBF)

Sufficiency First: High-Impact Opportunities, Barriers, and International Cooperation to Strengthen NDC and NAP Ambition and Delivery

The Saudi Green Building Forum welcomes the opportunity to provide inputs on high-impact action areas, barriers, and opportunities that can support the ambition, submission, and implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs).

The built environment remains one of the most immediate and scalable implementation domains for translating climate commitments into measurable local action. Buildings and urban systems intersect directly with energy, water, materials, mobility, infrastructure resilience, public health, and economic productivity. Green Building should therefore be recognized not merely as a technical sector, but as a practical implementation pathway for climate mitigation, adaptation, and sustainable development.

Since 2010, the cumulative built area of projects associated with the Saudi Green Building Forum has reached approximately **164,340,012.89 square meters**, representing a substantial urban footprint accumulated through fifteen years of institutional and professional engagement in sustainable built environment practices. This reflects long-term implementation capacity and demonstrates the scale at which civil society-led technical platforms can contribute to sustained climate action outcomes.

The highest-impact opportunity lies in shifting from efficiency-only approaches toward a **sufficiency-first implementation model**. Particularly in hot-arid regions, climate ambition cannot depend solely on incremental efficiency gains, smart technologies, or downstream carbon balancing. Climate action should begin by reducing unnecessary demand for energy, water, land, materials, and infrastructure intensity at the source, while preserving resilience and human well-being.

This implementation model has generated measurable operational outcomes. In 2025 alone, Green Building projects registered under **saaf® CAS – Conformity Assessment Scheme** achieved an estimated annual operational avoidance of approximately **62,800 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e)**, based on approximately **785,000 square meters** of registered project area. This figure reflects annual operational performance from projects registered in 2025 only and does not represent the cumulative historical impact of projects associated with the Forum since 2010.

The methodological basis for this estimate is the sufficiency benchmark embedded within **saaf® CAS**, whereby each square meter of a conforming Green Building avoids, on average, approximately **80 kg CO₂e annually** under hot-arid operating conditions. This reflects the principle that climate mitigation should begin with demand reduction before technical optimization, creating measurable, recurring, and verifiable operational outcomes.

High-Impact Action Areas and Priority Solutions

Priority solutions with strong implementation potential include:

- sufficiency-first urban planning and demand management;
- climate-responsive building regulations and passive design;
- water-sensitive urban systems and conservation strategies;
- circular construction materials and life-cycle resource optimization;
- district-scale renewable energy integration;
- performance-based conformity assessment and verification systems;
- green workforce development and climate implementation capacity-building;
- localized implementation indicators aligned with national climate commitments.

Key Barriers to NDC and NAP Delivery

- fragmented governance across sectors and institutions;
- insufficient technical implementation capacity;
- limited access to localized performance data;
- weak integration between climate policy and urban development;
- inadequate finance mechanisms for verified green infrastructure;
- insufficient recognition of credible non-governmental implementation platforms.

Priority Areas for International Cooperation

Finance: expanding blended climate finance for verified built-environment mitigation and adaptation projects.

Technology: accelerating deployment of climate-responsive systems, water innovation, and low-impact materials.

Capacity-building: strengthening professional competencies, certification pathways, and institutional readiness.

Institutional cooperation: enhancing collaboration among governments, standards institutions, accreditation bodies, financial actors, civil society organizations, and the private sector to support measurable implementation.

From Climate Commitments to Measurable Urban Transformation

The implementation gap between climate ambition and real-world delivery remains a significant global challenge. Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans will be strengthened when supported by practical, measurable, and scalable implementation pathways.

The built environment offers a practical route for climate delivery by connecting mitigation, adaptation, resilience, water security, infrastructure efficiency, and sustainable economic development.

A sufficiency-first approach offers a credible pathway to strengthen climate ambition by addressing demand at its source, reducing long-term emissions, and improving resilience outcomes simultaneously.

The Saudi Green Building Forum therefore recommends that future international engagement prioritize:

1. integrating Green Building and sufficiency-first methodologies into NDC and NAP implementation frameworks;
2. supporting measurable project-level verification systems that generate credible implementation evidence;
3. strengthening international cooperation around finance, technical capacity, conformity assessment, and urban resilience delivery.

Climate ambition must now move decisively from commitment to implementation, and from implementation to measurable transformation.