



WWF Submission to Belém Mission 1.5

July 2026

Executive Summary

On behalf of WWF, we welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Belém Mission to 1.5.

Our core observation is that nature is not peripheral to the effectiveness of NDC and NAP ambition and implementation: it is already doing more to keep climate change in check than any single policy lever we have.

- Oceans, forests and soils have absorbed **over half** of human-caused emissions over the past decade
- NDC and NAP effectiveness assumes nature provides a constant contribution. However, this assumption is breaking down. For example, the Amazon's carbon sink is weakening; coral reefs are already dying off at scale due to drivers including increasing atmospheric GHG emissions.

This submission responds to Question 1, proposing that Belém Mission 1.5 should secure integrity in NDC and NAP implementation through actions safeguarding critical carbon sinks and reservoirs. This focus makes it distinct from, yet complementary to, the Global Implementation Accelerator's focus on advancing priority initiatives to boost NDC/NAP implementation through the Action Agenda.

We propose Belém Mission 1.5 organise around four solution areas:

Area	Objective	Methodology (facilitated by Belém Mission 1.5)
1. Reduce pressure on nature	Cut atmospheric GHG emissions with urgency — above all through the energy transition	Capacity building on nature's role in energy-sector GHG reduction
2. Strengthen resilience	Safeguard natural sinks against tipping points — ecosystem function matters as much as stock size	Global assessment of critical carbon sinks and reservoirs led by indigenous knowledge
3. Conserve	Halt destructive activity in critical natural carbon sinks — sink loss is often irreversible	Assessment on protecting critical carbon sinks - strengthening governance and enforcement against destructive extraction

4. Enhance

Restore degraded ecosystems to unlock new sink/mitigation potential, supporting overshoot limits

Consultation on enabling finance for priority carbon sinks and reservoirs

This submission also responds to Question 2 (strengthening cooperation), by recommending Belém Mission 1.5 itself act as the facilitation mechanism for these four areas through to COP31. Here, the Mission benefits from the existing strengths and opportunities the respective Presidencies have already begun championing. This facilitation role would:

- Convene dedicated workstreams, assessment or consultations on each area at key international fora;
- Deliver a report at COP31 identifying the barriers, enabling conditions and opportunities for each area, and;
- WWF envisage Belém Mission 1.5's recommendations as a standing input into the ongoing Troika (including the COP32 Presidency) creating a lasting legacy that feeds into the second Global Stocktake, the UN Secretary-General's priorities and the post-2030 agenda.

Introduction

Nature and its ecosystems provide an essential baseline for global climate implementation efforts. This baseline helps ensure that mitigation and adaptation efforts by Parties, as well as international cooperation, are genuinely additional rather than compensating for the continued degradation of ecosystems that regulate climate, store carbon, buffer extreme events and sustain livelihoods. **If that baseline is weakened, the effectiveness of implementation under the Global Mutirão Decision is weakened along with it.**

Consistent with the preamble of the Global Mutirão Decision, the Belém Mission to 1.5 offers a critical opportunity to address this vulnerability by embedding action on ecosystems and carbon sinks into implementation, so that Parties can ensure implementation secures the continued enabling function of critical sinks and reservoirs.

A structural element in the Paris Agreement's theory of change is the assumption that key external conditions, most notably the functioning of natural carbon sinks, remain stable. However, IPCC AR6 findings and the [2025 Global Tipping Points](#) report show that climate change is increasingly risking large-scale disruption to systems such as ocean circulation and polar ice formation, alongside the ecological processes that underpin carbon storage in forests, oceans and other natural systems.

Nature does over half the work of keeping climate change in check

- **Nature is a major climate ally for both mitigation and adaptation:** Oceans, plants, animals and soils absorbed **54%** of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions over the past decade, while healthy ecosystems also reduce our exposure to climate hazards directly.
- **Wetlands, mangroves and coral reefs illustrate this dual role:** they store carbon while also reducing exposure to worsening climate hazards, including extreme weather and sea-level rise.

- **This natural support is not guaranteed:** For example, the Amazon's role as a carbon sink is already weakening, and parts of the southeastern Amazon have shifted to becoming a net carbon source. Continued degradation undermines climate resilience and weakens the foundations of ambitious climate implementation.
- **The implication is urgent.** Without conserving, protecting and restoring nature, even successful climate implementation efforts will be undermined by the loss of nature's own climate protection.
- **Critical carbon sinks and reservoirs should therefore be treated as the ultimate enabling condition for keeping 1.5°C within reach:** effectiveness of every other lever of mitigation and adaptation depends on these systems continuing to function.

Sources: IPCC. 2023. [AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change](#). Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; WWF. 2022. [Climate's Secret Ally: Uncovering the Story of Nature in the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report](#); WMO (2021) [Role of Amazon as carbon sink declines: Nature study](#).

This points to a condition that is often left implicit in the mitigation pathway: emissions reductions in NDCs depend on carbon sinks continuing to function as assumed, and adaptive measures in NDCs and NAPs depend on the resilience that healthy ecosystems provide. If sink capacity weakens or becomes less predictable, both mitigation and adaptation efforts will deliver less than planned, regardless of how ambitious they are on paper. This will determine whether the ambition expressed through 2030–2050 NDC and NAP cycles can actually be realised.

WWF response to (Question 1) Highest-impact action areas and solutions for NDC/NAP ambition and implementation

Safeguarding the integrity of critical carbon sinks and reservoirs is a high-impact action area, as a critical enabler for effectiveness of NDC and NAP implementation. This is a distinct and complementary action area to the Global Implementation Accelerator's (GIA) focus on advancing priority initiatives to boost NDC/NAP implementation through the Action Agenda. Where the Accelerator drives scale, this action area ensures Belém Mission 1.5 protects the efficacy and integrity of that scaled action by promoting international cooperation to safeguard natural systems on which a stable climate depends. With this in mind, WWF proposes Belém Mission 1.5 orientates discussions around the following four solution areas:

1. Reducing pressure on critical carbon sinks and reservoirs from energy system transitions

Priority solutions should focus on reducing the anthropogenic activities that most directly and urgently degrade natural carbon sink and reservoir function — above all the transition away from fossil fuels, given the scale, urgency and tractability of energy-sector emissions relative to other sources. Delay is costly to the integrity of critical carbon sinks. Every year of deferred reductions allows preventable emissions to accumulate, degrading carbon sinks across both immediate and longer timescales and putting long term goals, including overshoot scenarios at risk. For example, carbon dioxide removal (CDR) cannot substitute for near-term energy transition.

CDR is a necessary component of 1.5°C-consistent scenarios — but using it to justify delay simply prolongs the destructive emissions that removals would later need to offset.

Such discussions would be undertaken with the aim of supporting critical ocean and cryosphere systems, including polar ice, tropical forest ecosystems, permafrost and ocean carbon sinks, where tipping-point risk is high and resilience options are limited. Rapid emissions reductions can also help trigger positive system tipping points in the shift toward decarbonised, electrified systems.

Belém Mission 1.5 should facilitate knowledge sharing and capacity building on the interaction of the energy transition and critical carbon sinks integrity. Implementing actors would benefit from better understanding of how the timing of transitional elements in the energy sector interact with the integrity of critical carbon sinks, including fiscal changes, fossil fuel extraction moratoria, methane reduction and new fossil fuel and transition fuel infrastructure.

This should account for the destructive impact of new fossil fuel infrastructure on nature, beyond extraction itself (including pipelines, terminals and processing facilities). This is an emerging risk as some countries backtrack on climate commitments. The IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report finds that new or continued extraction is incompatible with remaining within 1.5°C pathways, including overshoot. Current energy transition milestones and planning do not yet account for these sink-related risks. Addressing this gap would also complement the COP30 Presidency's TAFF Roadmap directly, ensuring sink-related risks are reflected in its milestones and planning.

2. Strengthening Resilience of critical natural carbon sinks and reservoirs to climate change

This solution area addresses the underlying resilience of the critical ecosystems that store and sequester carbon. Ecosystem resilience, not just stock size, determines whether sinks remain net-positive under continued warming. A forest, wetland or reef can retain much of its physical extent while losing the ecological function that allows it to maintain its storage capacity: resilience depends on the ecological processes that sustain that function, not on habitat area alone.

This distinction matters because ecosystems can cross functional thresholds well before their extent is visibly lost. For example, the [Global Tipping Points Report 2025](#) found that warm-water coral reefs have already passed such a threshold, with widespread die-off now underway even where reef structures remain physically present. Comparable resilience thresholds are relevant across forests, wetlands and other blue carbon ecosystems, where continued function under warming depends on ecological integrity as much as on continued extent.

We suggest action would be undertaken to strengthen the resilience of critical natural ecosystems (such as forests, soils, wetlands and other blue carbon ecosystems) which underpin critical carbon storage, food systems and livelihoods. This should recognise that, for many marine carbon sinks and reservoirs, neither carbon stocks nor their full spatial extent have been reliably measured. As a result, both their contribution to climate mitigation and the emissions released when they are degraded are routinely underestimated or omitted entirely.

Building this resilience can unlock sustained sequestration and positive land-use, coastal and ocean governance, supply-chain and finance and positive tipping points (e.g. deforestation and conversion-free (DCF) supply chains, nature-positive finance, Indigenous-led stewardship).

Belém Mission 1.5 should facilitate an assessment across relevant fora on the resilience of critical carbon sinks identifying barriers, enabling conditions and priority actions. This should be developed at key multilateral discussions ahead of COP31, to facilitate Party engagement and information exchange. Indigenous Peoples, local communities and local stewards should be central and present throughout, contributing ground-level ecosystem knowledge essential to the assessment's integrity.

The assessment could be supported by knowledge from IPCC, IPBES and summary reports from technical workstreams under the Paris Agreement such as the Ocean Climate Dialogue and Research and systematic dialogue.

3. Conservation of critical natural carbon sinks and reservoirs against destructive behaviour

This too is a matter of urgency. Unlike many forms of climate damage, the loss of mature carbon sinks and reservoirs is frequently irreversible, or recoverable only over timescales far beyond what 1.5°C, including overshoot, can afford.

Carbon sink integrity means safeguarding critical carbon sinks from destructive actions separated from national climate strategies that can weaken the impact of NDC and NAP implementation.

- Forest carbon sinks are consistently at risk from deforestation and degradation, particularly where driven by agricultural expansion and unsustainable production systems.
- Marine carbon sinks, including ocean sediments, face unchecked destructive activities such as bottom trawling and resource extraction.
- Grasslands and savannahs are being lost and degraded faster than almost any other biome, through conversion to cropland and pasture, but also through afforestation that fails to distinguish degraded land from old-growth grassland, itself a destructive practice carried out in the name of climate mitigation.
- Peatlands and other wetlands face similar risks: where legal protections already exist, the binding constraint is often enforcement, not new legislation.

Some of these risks are compounded by an absence of measured stocks or agreed accounting, particularly for marine and coastal ecosystems. This should not be mistaken for a reason for delay. Under the precautionary principle, uncertainty about the full scale of a sink's contribution is itself a reason to limit destructive activities now, rather than delay action until complete data is available.

Belém Mission 1.5 should convene a consultation track across relevant fora on the governance, enforcement and practice-based conditions needed to protect critical carbon sinks, identifying barriers, enabling conditions and priority actions for Parties and stakeholders. This includes strengthening enforcement of existing protections against destructive extractive practices, such as bottom trawling and illegal deforestation, and identifying

destructive activities that remain legally permitted despite their impact on critical carbon sinks. It also includes shifting production and supply-chain practices that drive demand-based pressure on forest carbon sinks.

The consultation should draw on financing mechanisms capable of accelerating action, such as the Tropical Forest Forever Facility (TFFF), and NDC-linked initiatives that elevate biome conservation, such as the Blue NDC Challenge and the Action Agenda's 'Oceans and Seas' and 'Blue Package'. For forests, Belém Mission 1.5 can serve as an enabler of existing commitments, including contributing to the Forest Roadmap, helping Parties accelerate delivery of what has already been agreed.

The objective of the consultation should be to identify concrete ways for Parties to recognise critical carbon sinks through instruments they already use. This includes NDCs and National Adaptation Plans, reported through Biennial Transparency Reports, and linked to conservation objectives in National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and other nationally determined strategies.

Delivered through Belém Mission 1.5, this consultation can go further than prevent further loss. It could explore how to identify and unlock positive tipping points, enabling large-scale ecosystem recovery and supporting local community adaptation in turn.

4. Enhancement of critical natural carbon sinks and reservoirs

Enhancement of carbon sinks is the fourth pillar in maintaining the long-term integrity of climate action under NDCs and NAPs. While conservation protects existing carbon stocks and resilience measures help maintain ecological function, enhancement creates additional climate-regulating capacity by restoring degraded ecosystems, expanding carbon sinks and unlocking under-realised mitigation potential. As emissions reductions narrow the flow of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, enhancement can increase the capacity of natural systems to remove and store carbon, supporting the continued effectiveness of pathways consistent with 1.5°C.

Many ecosystems already possess significant unrealised potential to contribute more strongly to climate mitigation and adaptation outcomes, but remain constrained by persistent financing shortfalls. Forest landscapes, peatlands, wetlands, mangroves, seagrasses and other blue carbon ecosystems can all generate additional climate benefits when ecological function is restored or expanded. Investment in enhancement should therefore be understood not simply as environmental spending, but as investment in strengthening the climate-regulating services upon which future NDC and NAP implementation will increasingly rely.

Belém Mission 1.5 should convene consultations to define the enabling conditions for strengthening investment in priority carbon sinks and reservoirs, focused where funding shortfalls are most acute relative to mitigation and adaptation potential. This includes forest and peatland systems such as the Amazon and Congo basins, where degradation risk is high and coordination often needs to span multiple countries. It also includes coastal and blue carbon ecosystems such as mangroves, saltmarshes and seagrasses, which remain chronically underfinanced relative to their sequestration value. And it includes degraded lands and urban systems, where restoration can deliver dual mitigation-adaptation benefits alongside community co-benefits.

Such consultations could take place at global, regional or ecosystem-specific level as appropriate, building on the Presidencies' existing initiatives on access to finance for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). This would involve exploring:

- de-risking private investment in sink-related projects, including through blended finance structures, guarantees and first-loss capital;
- harmonising accreditation standards, application procedures, safeguards and reporting requirements across multilateral climate funds (MCFs) to reduce the administrative burden on low-capacity national entities;
- identifying and elevating access to existing finance planning tools and channels, with the NDC Partnership's Climate Investment Planning and Mobilization Framework (CIPMF) and the Blue NDC Challenge as examples of specific initiatives helping countries structure investment plans and connect priority sink-related investments with available finance; and
- identifying the barriers and disenablers faced by developing countries in financing climate action.

Through Belém Mission 1.5, these consultations would provide a coordinated pathway to closing critical investment gaps, shifting sink finance from one-off, opportunistic funding toward a structured, investment-ready pipeline that Parties, MDBs and private investors can act on with confidence. In this way, enhancement investment does more than protect what exists — it can actively transition degraded or passive landscapes into active contributors to mitigation, reinforcing the long-term integrity of NDC and NAP implementation.

WWF response to (Question 2): Strengthening international cooperation through Belém Mission 1.5 as a facilitation mechanism

Beyond proposing the four solution areas as content, WWF recommends that Belém Mission 1.5 itself take on the role of facilitating discussion, tracking progress and driving implementation across them through to COP31. In practice, this facilitation role could build on work each Presidency has already begun.

- The COP29 Presidency's focus on climate finance points naturally to leadership on enhancement, including finance for restoration and nature-positive investment.
- The COP30 Presidency's work to halt and reverse deforestation and forest degradation, alongside its experience on ocean and broader ecosystem conservation and its track record of engaging Indigenous Peoples and local communities, positions it to champion resilience activities and drive progress across all four solution areas.
- The Türkiye COP31 Presidency's work on fossil fuel subsidy reform and transition planning, alongside its focus on oceans and seas, aligns closely with reducing anthropogenic pressure.
- The Australian COP31 Presidency's focus on methane reduction across fossil fuel production and use and its ocean priorities points to a complementary leadership role in both reducing pressure and strengthening

the resilience assessment. This should recognise the leadership of Indigenous Peoples and local communities and be developed in partnership with Pacific Island nations.

WWF believes this facilitation role is what would distinguish Belém Mission 1.5 from a purely diagnostic exercise: by actively convening, tracking, and channelling discussion on these four areas into concrete implementation pathways, the Mission can ensure that safeguarding carbon sink and reservoir integrity keeps pace with the scaling of NDC/NAP ambition and implementation.

Concretely, we recommend that the Presidencies' work plan includes:

1. Convening a dedicated workstream or discussion track for each of the four solution areas, with a standing invitation to Parties, finance actors, civil society, and representatives of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to contribute, with a specific session at COP31 dedicated to reduction of anthropogenic pressure.
2. Scheduling recurring convenings across 2026, aligned with existing Belém Mission 1.5 engagements and major international meetings, specifically structured to surface progress, blockers and emerging solutions within each of the four areas, culminating in a dedicated session on reduction of anthropogenic pressure at COP31. Indigenous Partners should be resourced to engage and should include UNPFII, IIPFCC/LCIPP and WWF¹.
3. Facilitating technical capacity building for implementors² about integrating sink and tipping-point risk into energy transition planning, particularly under action area 1, where fossil fuel subsidy reform and methane reduction are too often designed without sight of the pace and timing required to avoid critical thresholds in carbon sinks and reservoirs. Delivery partners could include Regional Climate Centres, the NDC Partnership, the IPCC, IPBES and WWF.
4. Using inputs to directly inform the COP31 report, looking beyond the current NDC cycle to 2030, 2035 and 2050 and accounting for potential overshoot scenarios, ensuring the four areas are reported individually with both barriers and enabling conditions or positive drivers identified for each, as part of a global assessment of critical carbon sinks.
5. Explicitly linking each solution area's discussions to relevant existing finance, technology and capacity-building channels (e.g. MDB windows, Indigenous-led finance mechanisms, and active coalitions such as the Blue NDC Challenge and its Implementation Taskforce), so that Belém Mission 1.5's facilitation role translates into implementation pathways rather than discussion alone.

¹ E.g. UNCCD COP17 (Desertification) (17–28 Aug 2026); UNFCCC Regional Climate Week (Baku) (07–11 Sep 2026); Standing Committee on Finance (SCF) Forum on Financing Climate Action in Water Systems and the Ocean (September 2026); UN General Assembly High-Level Week (21–27 Sep 2026); CBD Regional Meetings (01 Sep–18 Oct 2026); COP31 Pre-COP, Fiji (05–08 Oct 2026), elevating ocean priorities; Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM17) and Mission Innovation (11–13 Oct 2026); Africa Climate Forum (13–14 Oct 2026); CBD COP17 (Convention on Biological Diversity) (19–20 Oct 2026)

² through NDC Partnership networks, SBTi and UN constituencies, for example.

6. Championing a further structured engagement phase throughout 2027, through targeted presentations in key political and regional fora, to build convergence and document recommendations and responses, gathering input to refine priorities and support alignment of efforts across Parties and stakeholders.
7. Securing a space at COP32, in partnership with Ethiopia, to present a synthesis of responses and a refined set of recommendations. This should be adopted as a standing input to the ongoing Troika — a shared framework linking individual Presidency initiatives to the Paris Agreement's long-term temperature goal, and establishing clear political recognition and a durable legacy for Belém Mission 1.5. The COP32 Presidency currently sits outside the Mission scope, so this offers Ethiopia a ready-made framework for carrying the integrity agenda forward into COP32 and beyond.

In doing so, Mission 1.5 would also create a broader legacy on climate integrity, providing strategic inputs into upcoming global processes and milestones. It would contribute evidence on implementation effectiveness to inform the second Global Stocktake. The outputs could also feed into the UN Secretary-General's priorities and post-2030 agenda processes, and strengthen the Climate Action Agenda and other Presidency-led initiatives.

Conclusion

The Belém Mission to 1.5 is an important opportunity to reinforce that nature is not peripheral to credible implementation to achieve 1.5°C aligned pathways. Indeed, this blind spot could compromise the very implementation of the Paris Agreement. Ecosystem integrity is critical to support the effectiveness of mitigation, adaptation and resilience efforts through NDCs and NAPs, while also supporting sustainable development. In summary, if ecosystem integrity continues to weaken and tipping points take place, the effectiveness of all NDC and NAP implementation under the Global Mutirão Decision is weakened with it.

As outlined in our submission, Belém Mission 1.5 is best placed to address this gap. This involves reflecting on what this means for mitigation efforts, as well as what more is needed to safeguard nature's contribution through critical carbon sinks and reservoirs. This element of the implementation package can be realised through Belém Mission 1.5: building the leadership of the Presidencies and the unique strengths of the COP29, 30 and 31 COP Presidencies.

WWF would welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission further with the Presidencies and other interested Parties and stakeholders ahead of subsequent Belém Mission 1.5 engagements in 2026.

For further information contact:

Shirley Matheson

Fernanda de Carvalho

WWF Climate and Energy

WWF International

NDC Enhancement Coordinator

Global Climate and Energy Policy Head

smatheson@wwf.eu

fcarvalho@wwfint.org



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