Connecting sustainable forests with better buildings

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Meeting growing demand for affordable, resilient housing while reducing emissions and protecting nature requires closer cooperation across housing, construction, forestry and finance. Responsibly sourced timber and other bio-based materials can contribute to this effort when supported by sustainable forest management, efficient resource use and demonstrable whole-life building performance.

At the Building for Forests satellite event at the Global Bioeconomy Summit in Dublin on 19 October 2026, contributors explored how to turn this opportunity into practical delivery. Discussions highlighted the need to connect policy across sectors, create confidence for long-term investment, and address regulatory, technical and commercial barriers. Drawing on these discussions, Building for Forests proposes the following priorities for action towards COP31 and beyond.

1. Connect housing, forestry and industrial policy

Forest policy, housing delivery, industrial development and climate action are too often pursued separately. Governments should connect these agendas to support affordable, lower-carbon housing, local manufacturing, skilled employment and responsible forest-based value chains, alongside sustainable forest management and biodiversity protection.

Governments should actively review and update policies, regulations and guidance where outdated assumptions create unjustified barriers to timber and other bio-based materials. A presumption in favour of their responsible use should be supported by evidence of whole-life environmental benefits and appropriate safeguards for safety, biodiversity and sustainable forest management. This requires policymakers and regulators to engage with existing scientific evidence and practical experience, and translate it into clear, enabling rules.

2. Deliver better buildings through responsible material choices

Material choices should support safe, affordable and durable buildings with lower whole-life environmental impacts. Timber and other bio-based materials can contribute where responsibly sourced and appropriately designed and used, taking account of resource efficiency, circularity and local conditions.

Increased timber use must be supported by sustainable forest management, biodiversity protection, responsible supply chains. Credible standards, certification and traceability support assurance of forest management and sourcing, alongside building-level assessments of environmental and technical performance.

The Principles for Responsible Timber Construction provide a common framework for connecting these objectives.

3. Create confidence for investment across the value chain

Forest investment operates over decades, while construction businesses and financial institutions often work to much shorter commercial cycles. Investment in sustainable forest management, processing and manufacturing therefore requires confidence in future construction demand. Developers and builders, in turn, need reliable supplies, competitive products and technical expertise.

Governments, public clients and investors should strengthen these conditions through sustainable procurement, clearer demand signals and finance suited to long-term investment. Coordinated action across the value chain can help forest supply, processing capacity and construction markets develop together.

4. Remove practical barriers to implementation

Governments, industry and research organisations should work together to address barriers in building regulations, fire safety guidance, insurance, technical capacity and professional education. Demonstration projects and accessible technical evidence can help regulators, insurers, investors and construction professionals assess performance and make informed decisions.

International exchange of proven approaches can reduce duplicated work and accelerate implementation, while allowing for national and local differences in forest resources, construction practices and regulatory requirements. Sharing technical evidence and recognised construction solutions across countries can help avoid repeated testing and reduce the cost of entering new markets.

From Dublin to COP31

These priorities can inform cooperation through Building for Forests towards COP31 and beyond, connecting existing initiatives and supporting practical exchange across housing, construction, forestry and finance.

We invite governments, international organisations, businesses, financial institutions, research organisations and civil society to contribute implementation examples, identify priority barriers and propose practical next actions. These contributions can help inform cooperation through Building for Forests and demonstrate progress at COP31 and beyond.

Building for Forests can help connect these efforts and amplify a shared message: the future of our forests and the future of our buildings should be considered together.

ABOUT THIS STATEMENT

This Building for Forests statement draws on discussions at its Global Bioeconomy Summit satellite event in Dublin on 19 October 2026. It does not imply endorsement by individual participants or their organisations.