COP30 Action Agenda

Axis IV - Building Resilience in Cities, Infrastructure and Water
Objective 14: Water Management

Acceleration Plan
Water Management and Participatory Governance

Host: International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO)
Initiative: OECD Water Governance Initiative (WGI)

Building on its long-standing experience in participatory and decentralized water governance, Brazil proposes a collaborative approach to strengthen institutional capacity, digital innovation, and inclusive decision-making at multiple levels. This proposal reflects Brazil's commitment to advancing integrated and sustainable water management as a key element of climate adaptation, water security, resilience, and sustainable development.

The Acceleration Plan for Water Management and Participatory Governance therefore seek to consolidate and share methodologies, tools, and governance models, including the experience of the National Water Resources Information Plan, that have proven effective in the Brazilian context and can be adapted to different territorial realities. By engaging governments, local authorities, river basin organizations, civil society, Indigenous and traditional communities, women, youth and international partners, the Plan promotes cooperation and shared learning to improve water governance systems globally.

1. Water Governance as the Foundation for Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Development

Governance is the cornerstone of a nation's capacity to plan, implement, and sustain public policies that are efficient, democratic, and responsive to social and territorial realities. In the context of global climate change, governance is what enables societies to transform long-term visions into practical and equitable solutions that reduce vulnerability and strengthen resilience.

Within this broader framework, water governance emerges as a structuring axis for both sustainable development and climate action. Water lies at the intersection of adaptation, mitigation, and resilience: it sustains ecosystems, drives energy and food production, supports public health, and underpins economic stability. At the same time, it is among the first sectors to feel the impacts of climate change — through droughts, floods, scarcity, and degradation of aquatic ecosystems. Effective water governance, therefore, is not only about managing a resource, but about managing risk, mitigating water security threats, building resilience, and ensuring equity in access to this vital element.

Sound water governance establishes clear responsibilities, transparent rules, and inclusive processes that connect institutions, sectors, and communities. It enables coordination between environmental, climatic, and territorial policies and ensures that decisions are legitimate, science-based, and socially just. When guided by participation, cooperation, and accountability, governance transforms political will into concrete outcomes — protecting lives and ecosystems, securing sustainable livelihoods, and fostering climate-resilient development.

2. Global Relevance and Connection with UNFCCC Processes

Water governance plays a decisive role in achieving global climate and development commitments. Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), water has emerged as a cross-cutting dimension of adaptation and resilience—integrating the environmental, social, and economic systems most vulnerable to climate change.

The Acceleration Plan for Water Management and Participatory Governance align with this perspective and contributes directly to ongoing UNFCCC processes, helping to operationalize global frameworks within national and territorial realities.

The Global Stocktake (GST), concluded at COP28 in Dubai, represents the first comprehensive assessment of collective progress toward the Paris Agreement's long-term goals. Its outcome highlights the urgent need for "integrated, water-informed, and ecosystem-based approaches" to address the interconnections between water, climate, and sustainable development.

The GST explicitly acknowledges that water availability, management, and governance are central to both adaptation and mitigation. It calls for strengthening institutional and planning capacities, promoting basin-level cooperation, and aligning national strategies with climate-resilient water management. The document also emphasizes the role of participatory governance, transparency, and multi-stakeholder engagement in improving adaptation effectiveness—principles directly aligned with Brazil's experience.

At COP28, countries also advanced the implementation of the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience, part of the effort to operationalize the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA). The framework establishes thematic priorities—including water, health, food, ecosystems, and infrastructure—and provides the foundation for measuring collective progress toward adaptation. The subsequent UAE–Belém Work Programme (2024–2025) sets out the process for translating these themes into actionable guidance and indicators. Within this process, water is recognized as a strategic entry point for defining adaptation metrics, particularly on governance, risk management, and multi-level coordination.

The Sharm el-Sheikh Adaptation Agenda (SAA), launched at COP27, sets measurable global adaptation targets for 2030, including universal access to climate-resilient water and sanitation services, protection of freshwater ecosystems, and increased investment in water adaptation. Although the SAA does not explicitly mention "water governance," achieving its targets necessarily depends on robust governance systems that ensure coordination between institutions, participation of communities, and transparent decision-making.

At the national level, Brazil's Second Nationally Determined Contribution reinforces this approach, stating that "strengthening water governance and management systems" is essential to climate adaptation, territorial resilience, and sustainable development. The NDC emphasizes cooperation among federal, state, and local governments—reflecting Brazil's multi-level governance model—and recognizes that resilience depends on inclusive, data-informed water management.

The Brazilian National Adaptation Plan (NAP) identifies water resources management as one of the country's strategic adaptation pillars, with a specific focus on governance mechanisms,

capacity building, and integrated basin management. The Acceleration Plan thus forms a concrete contribution to implementing both the Brazilian NAP and the NDC's adaptation component.

Beyond the UNFCCC, several international initiatives reinforce the importance of water governance for climate adaptation and sustainable development:

- The OECD Water Governance Initiative (WGI) advances global principles of transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement, providing an international reference for institutional and territorial governance frameworks.
- The OECD-Brazil Policy Dialogue on Water Governance was held in 2013 with a view to strengthening water allocation and, in particular, the National Pact for Water Management.
- The Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) partnership strengthens multi-stakeholder accountability in water and sanitation, promoting governance reforms and inclusive monitoring.
- The Transformative Futures for Water Security (TFWS) initiative, coordinated by UN-Water, SIWI, and OECD, focuses on systemic transformations for water governance in the context of the 2030 Agenda and climate adaptation.
- The Action on Water Adaptation and Resilience (AWARE) initiative, launched at COP27, complements these efforts by scaling up water-climate solutions through international partnerships.
- Brazil has a National Water Security Plan, which provides a roadmap for water security in the country, ensuring integrated and consistent planning of water infrastructure, with a strategic nature and regional relevance

Together, these global frameworks reaffirm that effective water governance is the cornerstone of adaptation, resilience, and sustainable development.

The Acceleration Plan thus serves as a bridge between global processes and local implementation, translating international ambitions into participatory, decentralized, and sovereign governance practices that enhance resilience and equity across territories.

3. Foundations Proposed for Effective Water Governance

The Acceleration Plan for Water Management and Participatory Governance does not propose a single or universal model. Instead, it presents a set of foundational elements that reflect the vision of how water governance systems can be strengthened in any country — always respecting national sovereignty and territorial diversity. In addition, it should be aligned with the National Water Resources Plans, ensuring coherence between long-term strategic planning and the implementation of governance acceleration actions.

These elements are proposed as guiding principles for action, adaptable to local contexts:

a) Institutional and Regulatory Coherence: a coherent institutional regulatory framework defines clear responsibilities, enables coordination among government levels, and fosters integration across sectors such as water supply, environment, energy,

agriculture, and land use. Coherence avoids duplication and enhances accountability in decision-making.

b) Social Participation and Transparency: participatory governance ensures that decisions are legitimate, transparent and inclusive. Water users, civil society, academia, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and traditional communities must have meaningful opportunities to influence decisions. Open data, inclusive governance indicators understandable by society, social observatories, and deliberative spaces strengthen trust and accountability.

c) Decentralization and Basin-Based Management: hydrographic basins should serve as the natural units for planning and decision-making. Even within the same country, basins that fall under both national and local authority must adopt integrated regulatory processes to ensure coherent and equitable water management. Decentralization brings governance closer to the people affected, allowing for context-sensitive solutions and strengthening local leadership.

d) Policy and Territorial Integration: water must be managed as a cross-sectoral and territorial issue, connecting urban planning, agriculture, energy, and biodiversity. Integrated planning ensures coherence across national, regional, and local levels, aligning water strategies with climate adaptation and territorial development.

e) Knowledge, Data, Risk-Informed and Integrated Decision-Making: evidence-based governance depends on data availability and transparency. Monitoring systems, open data platforms, digital transformation and early-warning tools enable informed decisions that anticipate risks and guide adaptive management.

f) Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Diversity: good governance is inclusive by design. It must ensure equitable participation of all groups, especially Indigenous Peoples, traditional communities, women, and youth. Traditional and local knowledge systems are valuable assets that complement scientific approaches.

g) Financial Sustainability and Innovation: resilient governance requires stable and diversified financing. Combining public budgets, climate finance, payment for environmental services, and private investment ensures continuity and scalability of water actions. Nature-based solutions can be integrated with traditional water engineering measures, reducing overall investment costs and enhancing the feasibility of resource allocation to mitigate water security threats.

These elements provide a conceptual foundation for building governance systems that are adaptable, transparent, and socially legitimate — Brazil believes this approach can reinforce the sovereignty and institutional capacity of each country.

4. Contributions of the Brazilian Experience to Global Discussions

Brazil's experience offers practical lessons for countries seeking to strengthen their water governance. Over the past three decades, Brazil has consolidated one of the most comprehensive legal and institutional systems in the world, characterized by decentralization, representativeness of stakeholders, integration, and participatory democracy.

The National Water Law, launched in 1997, established the Resources Management System (SINGREH) integrating federal, state, and local authorities, and ensuring that water policy is coordinated yet flexible. The National Water Resources Council acts as a collegiate decision-making forum, bringing together representatives from government, users, and civil society to define national guidelines and oversee implementation.

In Brazil, a comprehensive set of instruments has been formally established to guide the implementation of the National Water Resources Policy, including water resources plans, water use permits (grants), water quality objectives, water charging mechanisms, and integrated information systems. In addition, complementary mechanisms have been developed and applied by national and local authorities, in close collaboration with stakeholders, such as water allocation frameworks, the National Registry of Water Resource Users (CNARH), inspection and enforcement procedures, water quality and quantity monitoring networks, drought monitoring systems, water crisis management rooms, and water security plans.

At the local level, River Basin Committees embody participatory democracy, enabling stakeholders to deliberate collectively on allocation, conservation, and revitalization. The National Water and Sanitation Agency (ANA) ensure regulatory and technical coherence and supports evidence-based policymaking.

Beyond its formal institutions, Brazil's model has evolved through the active participation of Indigenous Peoples, riverine populations, and traditional communities, whose knowledge and practices are recognized as essential to the protection and sustainable use of water resources. The inclusion of these actors in decision-making processes has strengthened legitimacy, social cohesion, and long-term sustainability.

Other key contributions of the Brazilian experience include:

- National coordination mechanisms that balance autonomy and cooperation among multiple governance levels;
- Experience in generating and publishing relevant data on water resources which serves as a key instrument to inform planning, regulation, policy formulation, and decision-making processes in water resources management.
- Participatory digital platforms that enhance transparency and citizen oversight;
- Conflict resolution tools for water allocation among competing sectors;
- Payment for ecosystem services schemes that link water management with forest and soil conservation;
- Adaptive legal and institutional frameworks capable of evolving with social and climatic challenges.

This collective experience positions Brazil as a benchmark for participatory, evidence-based, and equitable water governance — a model under continuous improvement and open to exchange and learning.

5. Structured Around Six Pillars

Focused on six priority areas for implementation, the Plan translates global commitments into national practices of participatory public management and proposes a replicable and sovereign model of water governance:

1. **The Brazilian Institutional and Regulatory Experience as a Reference Point**

   Building on Brazil's long-standing experience in water management, the Plan highlights the country's robust legal framework, water allocation and water grants emissions, basin-level governance, and tradition of democratic participation as a reference and source of lessons that can inform international debate. Rather than prescribing a single model, this experience serves as a benchmark for dialogue and cooperation, inviting contributions from other countries, organizations, and communities to exchange practices, enrich approaches, and co-develop effective and inclusive water governance systems.

2. **Decentralized and Participatory Governance**

   The Plan values bottom-up construction, with leadership from communities, users, and public authorities, highlighting river basin committees and councils as concrete examples of water democracy, and water allocation and regulatory processes.

3. **Integration of Resources, Data, and Technologies**

   The Brazilian Water Digital Platform is presented as one of the tools to support decision-making, integrated planning, and transparency, with potential for international sharing. Complementing it, the SIGA PNRH – Evaluation and Management System of the National Water Resources Plan (2022–2040) – enhances monitoring and strategic water resources management in the country. The Plan also considers developing an information structure to support the expansion of this governance model to other countries. In addition, the experience of the National Registry of Water Resources Users (CNARH) can serve as a benchmark for water use data integration across different levels of governance.

4. **Alignment with the Climate and Territorial Agenda**.

   Water management is integrated into policies on climate adaptation, food security, and sustainable territorial development, positioning water as an essential dimension of global climate action.

5. **International Cooperation and Exchange of Best Practices.**

   The Plan seeks to strengthen and connect with existing international initiatives that promote water and climate governance — such as the OECD Water Governance

Initiative (WGI), Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) and Roundtable on Water Finance — to foster technical assistance, technology transfer, and cooperation among countries and across basins.

6. **Exchange of Environmental, Climate, and Water Education Processes.**

   The Plan emphasizes education and cultural exchange, recognizing environmental and climate education, as well as water awareness, as fundamental to building long-term resilience.

The Acceleration Plan for Water Management and Participatory Governance reaffirms that water governance is not only a technical or environmental matter, but a democratic and developmental imperative. Through this Plan, Brazil positions itself as both a contributor and a learner — sharing lessons from its governance experience while remaining open to innovation and collaboration. It invites the international community to work together toward fairer, and climate-resilient water governance, recognizing that water is not only a resource but a foundation for life, peace, and sustainable development.

Brazil, through a broad institutional arrangement, has several training initiatives in the area of water resource management, among which the following stand out: i) Education and Training Plan in Resource Management and Sanitation aimed at Latin American and Caribbean Countries; and ii) Training Plan on Water Resources Management and Sanitation with the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP).

Description	The Acceleration Plan for Water Management and Participatory Governance positions water governance as a cornerstone of sustainable and climate-resilient development. It recognizes that effective governance — built on transparency, participation, and institutional coherence — is essential to manage risk, build resilience, and ensure equitable access to water in a changing climate. The Plan focuses on six key implementation themes that translate global commitments into national and territorial practices: (i) strengthening institutional and participatory frameworks for water governance, (ii) advancing decentralized management through river basin committees, (iii) integrating data, technology, and monitoring systems to inform decision-making, (iv) aligning water management with climate and territorial policies, (v) enhancing international cooperation and exchange of best practices, and (vi) promoting environmental and climate education for long-term resilience. Anchored in the principles of the Paris Agreement and directly connected to UNFCCC processes — including the GST, the GGA under the Roadmap from Dubai to Belém, and the SAA — the Plan contributes to operationalizing these frameworks at the national level. It also supports the implementation of the NDCs and NAPs. By linking international processes with territorial action, the Plan promotes participatory, inclusive, and data-informed governance, and contributes to strengthening global efforts under initiatives such as the OECD Water Governance Initiative (WGI), Sanitation and Water for All (SWA), and the Valuing Water Initiative (VWI).
Why this solution matters?	• reinforces water governance as a structuring element of climate adaptation and territorial sustainability, integrating environmental management, water planning, and social justice, while ensuring the sovereign and sectorally integrated management of each country over its water resources. • strengthens participatory democracy as a mechanism for legitimate and effective decision-making, promoting the leadership of local communities, users, and civil society. • builds institutional and social capacity through a decentralized, transparent, and evidence-based model, supported by digital platforms and the monitoring of governance indicators. • offers a concrete and successful experience of basin-level management that can be adapted and replicated by other countries in diverse contexts, particularly those facing water scarcity and climate vulnerabilities. • promotes the articulation of public policies on water resources, the circular water economy, food security, environmental conservation, and social inclusion, demonstrating the interdependence between water, territory, and sustainable development. • stimulates international cooperation by creating opportunities for the exchange of best practices, technology transfer, and technical assistance among countries and river basins. • responds to a real demand for water governance models that are sustainable, participatory, integrated, and capable of being implemented at multiple scales, from local to global.

Relevant scopes	• Environmental and Climate Governance • Institutional Strengthening and Decentralization • International Cooperation and Transboundary Water Management • Water Security and Equitable Access to Water • Water allocation and regulation • Social Participation and Strengthening of Individual and Collective Citizenship • Integrated Territorial Planning • Information Systems, Open Data, and Monitoring.

Axis IV – Building Resilience for Cities, Infrastructure, and Water

Key Objective: 14 – Water Management

Solution: Water Management and Participatory Governance

Host: International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO)

Scope:

- **Geographic:** International / Regional, promoting cooperation among countries and institutions responsible for basin managment
- **Sectoral:** Management and Participatory Governance
- **Other Aspects:** The Plan is rooted in Brazil's national experience but designed to be adaptable and replicable in diverse contexts. It positions Brazil as both a contributor and a learner in the global dialogue on water governance, offering tested mechanisms and participatory models that can inspire cooperative implementation under the principle of sovereign and integrated management of each country's water resources. By fostering inclusive and efficient governance, the Plan also contributes to climate change action, effective water allocation , strengthening adaptation, resilience, and co-benefits for mitigation. Coordination across government levels, sectors, and communities is key to promoting effective public policies, regulation and international cooperation toward inclusive and climate-responsive water governance systems.

Evaluation of Levers:

- Risk-informed Decision-making (medium maturity):
  Rationale: there is a need to expand and consolidate participatory processes and strengthen water governance.
- Technological Change (medium maturity):
  Rationale: there are technologies that significantly contribute to governance; however, further progress is required in developing and implementing tools that consistently support decision-making processes.
- Knowledge and Capacity Development (medium maturity):
  Rationale: existing knowledge and programs strengthen water governance capacities, but a systemic approach is needed to align results across environmental, social, and economic dimensions of the SDGs.
  - *Inclusive* Governance and Decision-making Design (high maturity):

Rationale: a solid legal and institutional framework supports decentralized, participatory, and integrated water governance, fostering inclusive and transparent decision-making that can be replicated in other contexts.

- Standards and Taxonomies (high maturity):
  Rationale: a solid legal framework defines standards for water management that integrate technical, environmental, and social dimensions in line with sustainability and democratic participation.
- Supply (high maturity):
  Rationale: governance is supported by a consolidated system aimed at the efficient and sustainable management of available resources to meet social, environmental, and economic demands.
- Demand (medium maturity):
  Rationale: there is a growing need for coordinated and collaborative efforts to implement effective and sustainable solutions for water resources management.
- Public and Private Financing (medium maturity):
  Rationale: It is necessary to foster convergence and alignment of public and private resources to ensure the financial sustainability of water governance actions.
- Partnerships and Collaboration (medium maturity):
  Rationale: Effective water governance relies on broad collaboration among governments, civil society, the private sector, and international partners. Greater coordination is needed to enhance outcomes and ensure sustainable results.
- Policies and Regulation (high maturity):
  Rationale: Water governance in Brazil is supported by a strong legal and regulatory framework based on decentralized, participatory, and integrated management principles. While this structure is well established, there remains room for improvement, and many countries still face challenges in developing or strengthening similar governance frameworks.
- Public Opinion (medium maturity):
  Rationale: Despite significant social participation in water governance processes, it is necessary to expand knowledge dissemination so that more people understand their role and rights within this context.

Expected Impact of this Plan on the 2030 Targets

The Acceleration Plan for Water Management and Participatory Governance seeks to deliver coherent and lasting contributions toward the 2030 global targets, with particular emphasis on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Global Climate Agenda, and the enhancement of integrated public policies.

By consolidating a participatory, decentralized, and evidence-based model for water resources management, the Plan enhances water security and promotes equitable access to water.

Drawing on Brazil's experience, the Plan advances participatory democracy by fostering the leadership of local communities and integrating users, civil society, and public authorities in legitimate and effective decision-making processes. This model strengthens environmental and climate governance, expanding the resilience of water systems to the impacts of climate change, including prolonged droughts, floods, and the degradation of natural resources.

By integrating nature-based solutions, river basin revitalization, and technological innovation through digital platforms for monitoring and transparency, the Plan promotes sustainable water management and environmental conservation, with positive impacts on food security, public health, and sustainable territorial development. This contributes directly to the advancement of SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 15 (Life on Land).

Furthermore, the Plan is aligned with the priorities of the Paris Agreement, the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), the Global Stocktake (GST), and the Sharm El-Sheikh Adaptation Agenda (SAA), reinforcing the role of sound water governance as a key element for both climate mitigation and adaptation. Institutional strengthening and the strategic use of open data ensure more effective, adaptive, and inclusive decision-making, enabling crisis response and long-term planning.

In summary, the Acceleration Plan for Water Management and Participatory Governance advances fair, integrated, and sustainable water governance that strengthens climate and territorial resilience. Aligned with global frameworks, including the Global Stocktake (GST), the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) under the Roadmap from Dubai to Belém, the Sharm el-Sheikh Adaptation Agenda (SAA), and Brazil's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), the Plan translates international commitments into concrete territorial actions. By fostering cooperation, innovation, and shared learning, it reinforces Brazil's strategic role in advancing the global adaptation agenda and in promoting inclusive, climate-responsive, and resilient water governance systems.

Output	Scope of Action	Action	Type of Action	Implementation Lever	Responsible	Time Horizon	Stakeholder Engagement
Institutional and regulatory model consolidated and adapted to different territorial realities	Legal, regulatory and institutional framework for water governance	Dissemination and promotion of watershed management and exchange of international experiences	Strategic / Institutional	Strengthening of legal framework and technical capacity	MIDR ANA	Jul.2028	National and subnational governments River basin organization International organizations Academia Civil society Local communities
Decentralized and participatory governance strengthened in Brazil and other partner countries.	Social and institutional participation in water management	Strengthening of national and basin committees and management councils	Operational / Participatory	Capacity building, incentives for social participation, and decentralization	MIDR ANA	Dec.2027	National and subnational governments River basin organization International organizations Academia Civil society Local communities
Shared digital platform methodology and implementation	Integration of data, resources, and	Development and dissemination of digital platforms for management	Technological / Operational	Investment in technology, training, and	MIDR ANA	Dec. 2027	National and subnational governments

Output	Scope of Action	Action	Type of Action	Implementation Lever	Responsible	Time Horizon	Stakeholder Engagement
framework developed and publicly available	technologies for water management	and monitoring		access to information			River basin organization International organizations Academia Civil society Local communities