

World Basin Summit 2026 High-level Session Report

Water resources management at basin level for water security in Brazil



June 16th - 19th 2026, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



Session Report



Introduction and Strategic Context

Held in June 2026 in the city of Rio de Janeiro, this session of the World Basin Summit took place at a time of consolidation for Brazil's national water policy, which will mark its 30th anniversary in 2027. The session built upon the guidelines established at the 3rd Brazil Water Forum of May 2026 by positioning water governance as the central pillar for the country's sovereign and resilient development. In light of the severity of extreme weather events that have challenged urban and productive infrastructures, Brazilian water management reaffirmed its transition from a technical discipline to a fundamental strategic focus.

The session brought together key stakeholders, such as the National Secretariat for Water Security (SNSH), the newly created São Paulo water agency SP-ÁGUAS, the Committee for the Integration of the Paraíba do Sul River Basin (CEIVAP), and the Brazilian Network of Basin Organizations (REBOB). The consensus reached was clear: decentralized and participatory management, with the basin as the fundamental unit, is the only path to water security. The complexity of the Brazilian system, while requiring exhaustive coordination, is what ensures the democratic legitimacy and local effectiveness of the solutions. To understand the robustness of current responses, however, it is necessary to map the density of the hydrological and institutional challenges facing Brazil.

Challenges and Problems Faced in Water Management

The “crisis of complexity” (a term coined to describe the current scenario) stems from the clash between the multiplicity of users (agriculture, sanitation, industry, energy) and unprecedented climate variability. The central challenge lies in coordinating a system densely populated by actors with often divergent interests, operating in an environment of hydrological uncertainty.

The Technical Rigor of the Water Shortage Protocol: Water vulnerability was technically addressed through SP-ÁGUAS’s “Shortage Protocol,” formalized by Resolutions No. 11/2025 and 12/2025. The state of critical scarcity in the Upper Tietê basin and the São Paulo portion of the Piracicaba River forced the suspension of new water concessions. Continuous monitoring uses detailed indicators that determine the level of government response, divided into four stages: Stage 1 (Attention Status); Stage 2 (Alert Situation); Stage 3 (Critical Situation); and Stage 4 (Emergency Situation).

Institutional Complexity and Governance: The Brazilian system faces implementation bottlenecks due to the enormous number of stakeholders. In the state of São Paulo, for example, management must coordinate 21 State Basin Committees and participate in 4 interstate committees. Maintaining institutional memory and providing ongoing technical support to the basin agencies (which operate as the “executive arm”) are vital to preventing political transitions from disrupting long-term plans.

This density of challenges has driven the emergence of new regulatory frameworks and more agile agency models.

Implemented Solutions and Successful Management Models

Brazil has responded to the crisis through a combination of institutional innovation and continent-wide infrastructure. The river basin has evolved from a geographical concept into a unit of intelligence and action.

Institutional Innovation (SP-ÁGUAS and AGEVAP): The enactment of Complementary Law No. 1,413/2024 established SP-ÁGUAS, an agency that acts as a regulator, oversight body, and driver of water security. Its modern structure, comprising 5 Management Offices and 10 Divisions, enables a widespread presence throughout the state of São Paulo. At the federal level, CEIVAP’s operational success is ensured by AGEVAP, established by Law No. 10,881/2004. As the first entity in the country to be delegated the functions of a river basin agency, it serves as the institutional engine that oversees revenue collection and investments.

Federative Maturity and the CEIVAP Case: CEIVAP, founded on March 22, 1996 (Federal Decree No. 1,842), celebrated its 30th anniversary as a leader in terms of integration. The Integrated Water Resources Plan (PIRH-PS), updated in 2021, reinforced the idea that the Paraíba do Sul River is the “Water Heart of the Southeast.” Its management ensures the transfer of water to vital receiving basins,

including the Guandu System and Guanabara Bay (Rio de Janeiro), and the Piracicaba Capivari Jundiaí (PCJ) and Alto Tietê basins (São Paulo).

Success Stories in Infrastructure and Nature-Based Solutions (NbS): The hydraulic interventions carried out in the Baixada Campista region, which focus on the renovation of hydraulic infrastructure to ensure local water security and flow control, are an example of strategic planning.

Entity / Program	Primary Management Tool	Observed Impact / Scope
AGEVAP (Law 10.881/04)	Basin Agency (Delegated Entity)	Primary institutional driver for fee collection; technical support for CEIVAP/PIRH-PS.
PISF (São Francisco River)	Continental Infrastructure (Northern and Eastern Corridors)	12 million beneficiaries; 477 km of canals; reduced vulnerability in the Semi-Arid Region.
“Água Doce” Program	Groundwater Desalination	Access to drinking water in scattered communities; sustainable use of brine.
“Semeando Águas” project	Nature-Based Solutions (NbS)	Protection of springs and riparian forests; restoration of the territory’s productive capacity.

Strategic Recommendations and Future Pathways

For Brazilian governance to maintain its resilience, the following key actions are required:

1. Institutional Strengthening and Exchange of Experiences: It is imperative to expand cooperation through Brazilian Network of Basin Organisations (REBOB) and INBO, allowing the success of mature committees such as CEIVAP and PCJ to guide basins in their early stages. This integration must also include state management agencies.
2. Technological Modernization and Decision Support: Monitoring must be fully based on real-time data. Basin intelligence must be translated into early-warning systems and infrastructure automation (such as the floodgates in the Baixada Campista).
3. Financial Sustainability and Revenue Optimization: Revenues from water usage fees must be optimally allocated to infrastructure programs and ensure financial complementarity among municipalities, states, and the federal government.
4. Sectoral Integration (Nexus Approach): Water resources management must integrate sanitation, energy, and agriculture. The control of losses

and the expansion of water supply must be mandatory components of basin management plans.

Conclusion: The Future of Water Management

The session concluded with a reaffirmation that the river basin committee is the “Grand Parliament” where the needs and paths toward water security are defined. CEIVAP’s 30th anniversary and the institutional strengthening of SP-ÁGUAS symbolize Brazil’s technical maturity. The challenges of climate change require that environmental awareness be translated into ongoing action. As highlighted in the water agencies’ strategic vision: “The agency transforms this awareness into ongoing action.” The future of Brazilian water security depends on the protection of every watercourse spring and on technical rigor in every water concession, ensuring that water remains the driving force behind national prosperity.



Credits: Fabiano Veneza/SEAS