

2 - SUMMARY

The Water Resources Secretariat of the Ministry of the Environment, in charge of conducting the National Policy on Desertification and Draught Control in the country, presents in this document a view of the desertification process occurring in the country, previous occurrences in the world and the current situation of the phenomenon in Brazil. Approximately 10% of the semi-arid region, or 98,595 km², have been very seriously affected; 81,870 km², seriously affected; and 393,897 km², moderately degraded. Economic losses associated with desertification are estimated at US\$ 300 million per year, and the cost of reclaiming affected areas would require US\$ 2 billion over a 20-year period.

This document sets forth the guidelines, objectives and strategies to combat desertification, emphasizing the modern view of integration and participation of public and private entities and non-governmental organizations, as well as the communities involved, with emphasis on the information process, education and training programs and the importance of decentralizing actions. The strategy adopted encourages investments on human resources and seeks to develop the sense of ownership required to ensure the sustainability of actions.

It is also a matter of Policies and Institutional Structuring and of the instruments that will enable the actions, highlighting the legal, institutional, economic/financial, and technical aspects. Great importance is attached to ecological/economic zoning of the territory, a necessary input in planning sustainable regional development.

In addition, this document covers various aspects of the desertification process, in terms of its actual dimension and degradation potential, the importance of environmental protection of the semi-arid, and the experience of the Water Resources Secretariat with hydrographic basins, which requires interactive and participatory procedures, as well decentralized actions, as recommended in this document.

Lastly, the preparation of the future National Plan to Combat Desertification (PNCD) is discussed, together with the most relevant themes to be considered in its design, including the strategic components, financial resources and indicators to evaluate outcomes.