



**THE NATIONAL REPORT  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND**  
on the implementation of the  
**UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION  
TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION**  
in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or  
desertification, particularly in Africa



**PREPARED FOR THE 3RD SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE  
REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION TO  
COMBAT DESERTIFICATION  
(CRIC 3)**

*Warszawa, November 2004*

## **Explanatory note**

Poland's National Report for the 3rd session of the Committee on the Review of the Implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification (CRIC 3) is the initial national report on the implementation of the Convention. Therefore, it summarizes the context of the accession of Poland to the Convention and provides the background information on activities related to the development co-operation between Poland and other Parties, in particular countries with economies in transition and developing country Parties.

## **A. Introduction**

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa (“the Convention”) had been ratified by Poland on 2 October 2001 and entered into force on 12 December 2001, as a last one of so called “Rio Convention” (UN FCCC, CBD, UN CCD).

Poland acceded to the Convention with preliminary understanding that it does not belong to those countries affected by desertification, but only by moderate soil degradation (soil degradation due to agricultural overuse, droughts, wind & water erosion.). From the perspective of Poland, the accession to the Convention was an expression of solidarity with affected countries, in particular developing country Parties and of its will to co-operate with all stakeholders in the field of key global environmental issues.

The Ministry of Environment of Poland is responsible for the implementation of the Convention in Poland and doing so it cooperates with other relevant ministries and stakeholders.

The report overviews activities of Poland concerning the implementation of the Convention and most of the important current as well as former activities related to combating drought and desertification, although not necessary directly linked to the Convention.

This report is the first one being submitted by Poland. There are numerous activities that have been undertaken in this field by government institutions, private companies and scientific institutions. The separate institutional structure for the implementation of the convention is still under consideration. Because Poland is listed in Regional Annex V to the Convention, it is committed to undertake the necessary measures, including elaboration and implementation of national programme of actions.

National action programmes shall be an integral part of the policy framework for sustainable development and address in an appropriate manner the various forms of land degradation, desertification and drought affecting the Parties of the Central and Eastern Europe region. Therefore, the first three years after the accession to the Convention were mostly focused on the implementation of the Regional Annex V to the Convention.

## Geographical environment of Poland

Poland is situated in medium geographical latitude ( $49^{\circ}00' . 54^{\circ}50' N$ ) of Central Europe, at the Southern coast of the Baltic Sea. Total national territory, including marine inland waters that comprise the Vistula and the Szczecin Lagoons and harbours, is 312 685 km<sup>2</sup>. Terrain configuration is latitude parallel: from coastal lowlands at the Northern part of the country, through the lakeland highlands and wide lowland belt, to Southern highlands and mountains, where two main rivers originate to run throughout Poland: Vistula River (1047 km) and Odra River (854 km). Landscape in Poland is predominated by vast lowlands: 54% of the national territory is situated lower than 150 metres above sea level, almost 37% on the altitude of 150-300 metres. Highland and mountain areas (above 300 metres above sea level) occupy almost 8% national territory, including 0.1% covered by high mountains. Such latitude parallel terrain configuration, while its altitude grows from the Baltic Sea basin towards the South, constitutes an important factor for the development of climate conditions in Poland, allowing for an unrestrained parallel exchange of air mass. Therefore, the characteristic of climate in Poland is its transience, i.e. impact of both marine and continental climate features is apparent, depending on current activity of atmospheric pressure configurations occurring over Central Europe. This in turn results in significant variation of climate and weather conditions, occurring year after year and day after day, respectively.

Mean annual air temperature in Poland in the period of 1951-1980 was 7.4 °C, but during the decade of 1981-1990 it rose up-to 7.9 °C, whereas the next nine-year period was yet warmer, and mean annual air temperature in that period (1991-1999) rose up-to 8.0 °C. Maximum temperature in Poland in the period of 1981-1999 varied in particular regions of the country from 23.6 up to 38.0 °C, whilst minimum temperature varied in the same period from 18.2 to 35.4 °C. Amplitude of extreme temperatures varied then from 51.9 °C in coastal zone up-to 70.9 °C in Eastern area. Most frequently, the warmest month is July, when mean temperature grows gradually towards the South, and it amounts from 16.3 °C in coastal zone up-to 18.1 °C in Southern lowlands (1951-1980), and it did not exceed 9 °C over the highest mountain areas. January usually is the coldest month of the year, with its mean monthly temperature varying meridionally from 0.1 °C in Western coast to 4.2 °C in the East. The influence of terrain configuration in Poland can be the most apparently perceived in the distribution of annual sums of precipitation. Mean annual sums of precipitation amount to 600 mm, whilst its minimum sums are noted in lowland Central Poland (about 500 mm), the maximum in high mountain areas (about 1500 mm), whereas summer precipitation is prevailing over winter precipitation. Precipitation can be characterised by its both significant spatial variation and strong fluctuation, year after year. Mean annual sums of precipitation in Poland in the period of 1951-1980 (excluding mountain meteorological stations) amounted to 611 mm, and in the decade of 1981-1990: to 578 mm, and in nine-year period of 1991- 1999: to 615 mm.

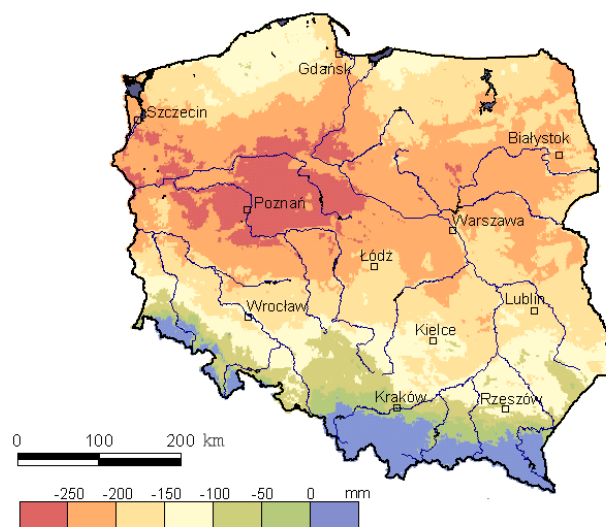
Poland is one of the poorest countries in Europe as concerns water resources, resulting in about 1800 m<sup>3</sup> water per capita annually, that is three times less than the European mean, and more than four times less than a global mean. Additionally, the characteristics of these resources are their seasonal variation and territorial differentiation. This in turn leads to either periodical danger of water deficit or surplus in many regions of the country. The capacity of retention reservoirs in Poland is rather small, and they are able to retain only 6% of annual water outflow from the country territory, and therefore they do not provide for adequate protection against droughts.

## B. Activities Concerning Implementation of the Convention

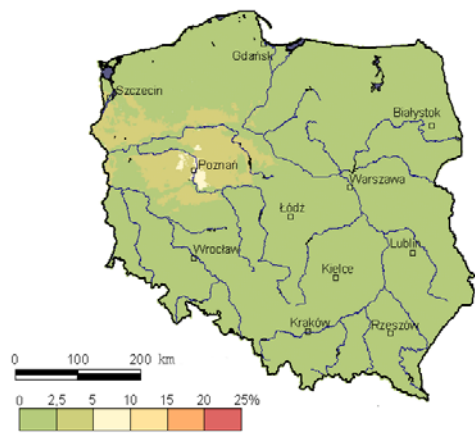
Shortly after accession to the Convention, a comprehensive scientific study had been started with the aim to:

- provide exhaustive reliable information on the issues related to soil degradation and erosion in Poland, water regime in soils etc. (Part I);
- prepare a draft strategy for soil conservation (programme of actions) , including measures necessary to combat erosion, effects of droughts, water shortages etc. (Part II).

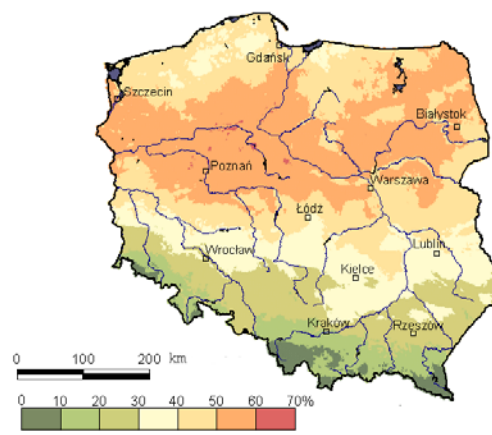
Part I of the study has been completed in the end of 2003. For the first time the existing threats to soil quality had been thoroughly explored and assessed on the country level. A number of maps has been produced to illustrate i.a. water regime in soils, areas threatened by water shortages, processes influencing negatively the soil quality in Poland and many others. The key conclusion of the study is that following the provisions of the Convention Poland can not be identified as an affected Party. Despite many negative impacts on soil condition, both of natural origin (water regime, soil structure etc.) and caused by human activities (agricultural activities, atmospheric pollution, contamination) the desertification process as defined in the Convention does not occur in Poland. However, a number of threats have been identified which may lead to soil degradation at local and regional scale. Part II of the study will provide a proposal for strategy for actions to address these threats in an effective way.



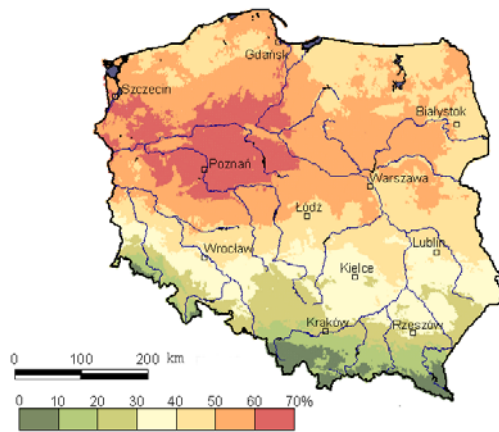
**Map 1. Climatic water regime from April to September (summer season)**



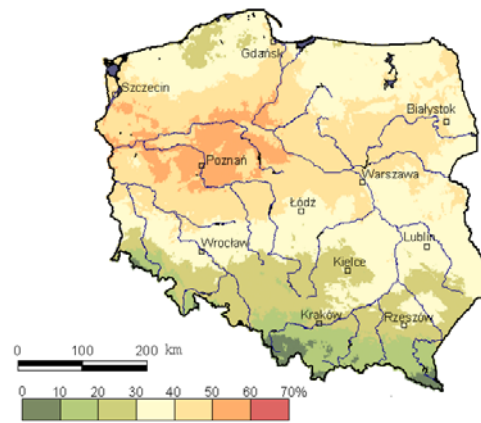
April



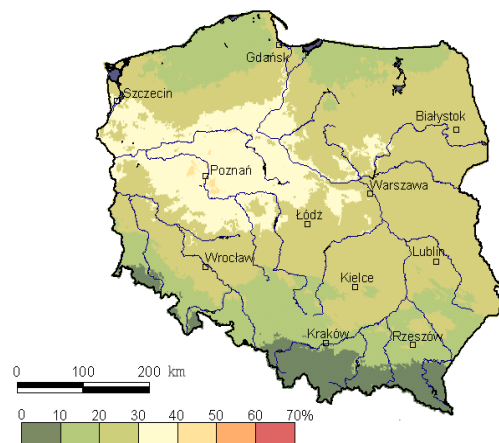
May



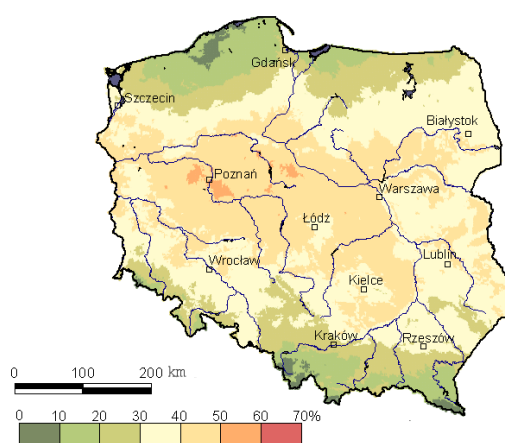
June



July



August



September

**Map 2. Probability of moderate drought appearance from April to October**

Among other key findings, the Part I of the study clearly identified the need for exchange of information, expertise and experience with other Parties – members of the Regional Annex V (Central and Eastern Europe). Before accession to the Convention, in 2000 Poland suffered a huge drought on large area of the country. To minimize the negative effects of similar disaster in the future, the cooperation with neighbor countries, in particular with Ukraine, will be important, e.g. with a view to adaptation measures in agricultural activities.

The Part II of the study is at the final stage of elaboration. Therefore, the results of the study, including the overview of draft strategy for soil conservation in Poland will be presented in the second national report.

### **Participation in the work of the Convention bodies**

At sixth Conference of the Parties held in Havana, Cuba in 2003, Poland for the first time participated as a Party to the convention. During previous Conferences of the Parties and meetings of the Convention bodies, Poland have had an observer status. The representative of Poland – Prof. Ryszard Debicki has been appointed as scientific expert in the Group of Expert (GoE) of the Committee of Science and Technology (CST).

From the very beginning, Poland actively participated in many activities undertaken by various bodies of the UNCCD:

- Poland elaborated a review paper on “Land degradation in Central and Eastern Poland”, presented during Annex V Regional Meeting in Brussels;
- Poland elaborated thematic topic 3, i.e. “Resource mobilization and coordination, both domestic and international, including conclusions of partnerships agreement – Case study of Poland”, presented during CRIC-1 Session in Rome;
- Poland acted as rapporteur of the Annex IV and Annex V meeting in Geneva, and presented final conclusions and recommendations during wrap-up session in Rome;
- Poland presented report on “The role of the Committee on Science and Technology and the specific role of the Group of Expert of the UNCCD”, during the UNCCD-JRC meeting on “Land degradation in CEE”, held in Ispra;
- Poland actively acts in the a.m. GoE, being responsible for regional coordination of various activities and tasks within the work programme of this Group, and specifically for “Developing a clear communication strategy between the activities of the GoE, end users and the research community”, following the Decision 16/COP(6).



## **C. Other activities of Poland relating to Combating drought and desertification.**

The basic goal of Poland's development co-operation as provided in the official Strategy of Poland's development co-operation is promotion of sustainable development and reduction of poverty in countries benefiting from Polish aid. The principles of Poland's development co-operation follow Millennium Development Goals, Plan of Implementation adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in September 2002 as well as principles of the development policy of the European Union.

The Millennium Development Goals include i.a:

- eradicate extreme poverty and hunger – reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day by 2015, reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by 2015;
- achieve universal primary education by 2015; ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary education;
- promote gender equality and empower women: eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and at all levels by 2015
- reduce infant mortality by two thirds by 2015
- reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio by 2015
- reduce by half HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases by 2015
- ensure environmental sustainability: integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources; reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015; achieve significant improvement in lives of slum dwellers, by 2020

Many of the MD goals are directly or indirectly linked with drought and desertification.

Development aid for the countries of the South is an important element of Poland's assistance and its significance is bound to grow in the nearest future. Due to limited resources allocated in the past years, Poland's development assistance has been focusing on aid programmes for countries like Afghanistan, Cambodia and a number of African countries. More streamlined and project oriented activities started in 2001. In 2002/2003 the implementation of a number of projects in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mali, Angola, Uganda, People's Republic of Congo, Rwanda and other African countries has started.

In the past three years Polish assistance was used mainly for the construction of schools, hospitals, hospices and drinking water intakes. In addition, a number of

educational courses were organized for children and youth. Besides providing direct aid, Poland participates in voluntary financing of multilateral foundations supervised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and United Nations Personnel Security, The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, UNICEF, UNDP, WFR, UNRWA, International Migration Organisation, International Red Cross and Onchocerciasis Control Programme. The majority of projects is pursued with aid of non-governmental organisations such as Caritas Poland, Polish Medical Mission or Polish Humanitarian Action.

On 30 August – 1 September 2001 took a place the meeting of Ministers of Environment of the Visegrad Group countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia). The Executive Secretary of the UN CCD Secretariat, Mr. Hama A. Diallo participated in the meeting. At this occasion, he informed the ministers of the need to address desertification, and he emphasized the importance of foreign development aid.

On 18 – 24 August 2002 the representatives of Poland took a part in the 1<sup>st</sup> International Summer School of Development Aid for the countries of the Visegrad Group which took place in Olomouc, Czech Republic.

### **Bilateral and Multilateral assistance for countries affected by desertification**

Within the foreign development aid, a number of projects have already been implemented or are in a various stage of implementation. Many activities have been financed by universities and research institutes, and in a few cases by private investors or non-governmental organizations. The overview of activities related directly or indirectly to desertification, which were implemented in the last few years, is contained in Annex I to this report. There is also a list of projects proposals, which can be implemented in the coming years.

There is a huge variety of institutions and bodies who have participated in the implementation of different projects in combating desertification. The majority of this activities were financed through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland in collaboration with other ministries responsible for projects within their respective competence. Some of the projects have been supervised by the Polish Ministry of Environment.

The National Geological Institute co-operates with Egyptian side in implementation of a programme entitled “Analyse of a danger of sand dune field in Abu El-Mahariek (Egypt) with a satellite pictures”. Within the confines of a project there were researches and analyse of the satellite pictures. In addition to that a couple of international seminars on geoindicators and their applications in arid regions were organized at Assiut University in Egypt in the course of 2003. The

seminars provided scientific knowledge on the use satellite techniques in viewing landscape changes on desert terrains.

Poland also gives a financial support to Mozambique. In this country a number of wells were built in villages. These villages were chosen by local authorities. The construction works of wells were made by local companies. In the coming years Polish diplomatic missions in Mozambique will continue to provide financial assistance for the construction of wells, drinking water pipelines etc.

Poland also co-operates in provision of assistance for a number of projects in the following countries: Senegal, Sierra Leone, Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi and Malawi. Since the foreign development assistance is not well institutionalized yet, Poland intends to provide financial assistance mostly through diplomatic missions. However, following the recent decisions taken by the government to establish a specific institutional framework and structure for these activities, in a few years the assistance will be provided through specialized agencies/missions in specific countries, mostly in Africa.

The above given information demonstrates that Poland as an emerging donor country is preparing to be ready to contribute more to addressing issues related to desertification in developing countries. However, the financial aid provided by Poland will not, for a certain period of time, reach the levels of Official Development Assistance by developed donor countries.

## **D. Summary**

Poland became a Party to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, on 12 December 2001, with the intention to assist with addressing the global issues of today's world. It is the poorest countries who mostly suffer from global threats like climate change, desertification, natural disasters etc.

Poland doesn't belong to the affected country parties as defined by the Convention. Although the financial resources of Poland for the foreign development assistance are still very limited, a number of projects in the field of combating desertification have already been implemented or are under implementation. The assistance to the affected countries is also provided by scientific and research institutions, universities and private companies, as well as NGOs. So far Polish development assistance is focused on technology transfer, know-how, information sharing and education.

Some of the NGOs and other national stakeholders are interested in getting involved in the work of the Convention. There is a need for the improvement in the information exchange between affected developing countries and the countries which may provide assistance in various forms, not only in the financial matters but also in the scope of technology transfer, education and other activities addressing desertification issues.

More attention need to be paid to the potential of the countries having experience, know-how and technologies, but without adequate financial resources. Every support from the traditional donor counties within the framework of multilateral project shall bring higher quality results and additional effectiveness.

Poland intends to provide assistance to the affected countries in many new possible areas of cooperation, like hydro-geology, scientific researches and many others.

## Annex I

### Examples of Poland's assistance activities related to desertification

No.	Country	Project title	Implementing agency	Timeframe	Budget (USD)	Project Scope
1.	Senegal, Sierra Leone, Mali, DR Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Zambia, Malawi	Small aid projects in African countries	Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2004 – 2006	150.000,00	Education, human health
2.	Mozambique	Building ground wells in Mozambique villages	Polish Ministry of Economy, Labour and Social Policy	2003 - 2006	20.000,00	Provision of safe drinking water for the poor people in villages.
3.	Egypt	Sand dunes migration	Polish Geological Institute, Polish Academy of Science	2001 -	100.000,00	Analysis of sand dunes migration with the use of satellite images
4.	Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger	Liptako- Gourma – transboundary cooperation between Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger in the field of combating desertification	UNCCD, UNDP, non-governmental organisations from the recipient countries	2002 -	80.000,00	Support for sustainable management of natural resources – pastures, forest ecosystems, agricultural land
5.	Sahel	Geoindicators and their Applications in Arid Regions	State Geological Institute	2003	10.000,00	Several seminars focused on using satellite techniques in analysing landscape changes on desert terrains
9.	Cambodia	Support for education	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	2000 - 2001	75.000,00	Educational activities for sustainable land management
10.	Republic of Congo	Aid programme for Democratic Republic of Congo	Caritas Poland	2003 -	120.000,00	To help people to survive drought disaster, provision of food