



REPUBLIC OF POLAND
PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

750 THIRD AVENUE, NEW YORK, NY 10017

TEL. (212) 744-2506

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Commission on Population and Development

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“Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development”

Statement by the Republic of Poland

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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Republic of Poland I am honored to address the 54th Session of the Commission on Population and Development, devoted to *Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development*.

This year's session comes at the time of an unprecedented crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It presents a threat to human health, safety and well-being, has unprecedented and multifaceted effects, including the severe disruption to sustainable development, global trade and travel, food and agricultural systems. Its impact will have negative repercussions for achieving sustainable development in economic, social and environmental dimensions, in particular in developing countries, making the prospect of eradicating poverty, hunger and all forms of malnutrition as well as achieving food security and sustainable agriculture and ensuring healthy lives by 2030 more difficult.

Mr. Chairman,

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has nowadays been well integrated into the concept, priorities, possibilities and actions aimed at accelerating sustainable development in Poland.

As to the demographic situation, in order to counteract the observed demographic transitions – including rapid ageing of the population and low fertility - there are many actions within the public health and healthcare system domains, which should contribute to improve the situation. In Poland everyone has the **right for health** protection, all Polish citizens, regardless of their social or economic situation, have equal access to health care services financed by the public funds. The legal frames of the public health were established by the Act of 11th September 2015 on public health and its operational policy paper - the **National Health Program for 2016-2020**. The Program for 2021-2025, a successor of the previous one, is to be introduced this year. The program attributes a more prominent role to publicly funded evidence-based health promotion and prevention, and the concept of health in all public policies. Moreover the **National Health Program** identifies operational objectives such as increasing life expectancy, improving health and health related quality of life, including reproductive health, and reducing social inequalities in health.

Reproductive health is a crucial element of the State health policy. The protection of women in the period of pregnancy, labor and postpartum is ensured in the national legislation and in international agreements ratified by Poland. The Minister of Health issued a number of laws concerning the health of children and women. One of them is an organisational standard of perinatal health care, which determines rules and guidelines of perinatal health care organization for health care providers i.e. during pregnancy, labour, postpartum and the newborn health care. Promoting adequate breastfeeding plays a crucial role in the prevention of obesity, which is currently one of the main challenges in the area of the public health. In order to protect and support the natural nutrition of infants and children Poland has established adequate regulations relating to the marketing and sale of milk substitutes, which define the conditions for labeling of products intended for initial feeding of infants.

The burden of mental disorders continues to grow with significant impacts on health and major social, human rights and economic consequences. Mental disorders, especially depression and suicides, need proper response, therefore **the National Mental Health Program for the years 2017-2022 was developed**, aiming at providing people with mental disorders multilateral and widely available health care and other forms of care and support necessary to live in a family and social environment, as well as preventing stigma and discrimination by creating right social attitudes towards people with mental disorders.

Poland is a low **HIV/AIDS** prevalence country, with a stable epidemiological situation. Since the implementation of the research in 1985 until 30th of September 2019, there were 25 020 HIV infections reported in Poland. All HIV positive patients including those at a risk of marginalization (the inmates, the homeless) who fulfill the medical and legal criteria are covered by a high efficacy ARV treatment program being implemented as part of the national strategy on preventing HIV infections and combating AIDS.

Distinguished Delegates,

One of the major global challenges the world faces in the 21st century is to ensure food security, i.e. physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for a rapidly growing world population. The world's population increase, combined with rising incomes and change in food consumption patterns, where food products of animal origin predominate will, according to FAO forecasts, increase the demand for food by 70% by 2050.

Climate change, poverty, hunger and inequalities are closely interlinked and only a holistic approach to these issues will help to address this problem, especially in the context of the *COVID-19 pandemic*. Therefore, broad cooperation between many countries and the involvement of as many stakeholders as possible is necessary.

The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland states that it is necessary to implement agricultural policy which will increase the resilience of agricultural production to adverse climatic phenomena and maintain control over food management sectors bearing importance to national security and guarantee an appropriate level of food self-sufficiency.

Poland is characterized by a high agricultural production potential which ensures food self-sufficiency and enables export production. It has a constantly growing surplus in agri-food trade, which in 2019 amounted to 10.5 billion EUR compared to 0.8 billion EUR in 2004. A positive phenomenon observed in Polish agriculture is the evolutionary process of rationalization in agricultural structures, professionalization of farming and commercialization of agricultural production, which facilitates an increase in agricultural productivity.

The increase in the competitiveness of farms and agro-food producers will be possible thanks to the improvement of their profitability, integration of the food chain and fairer distribution of added value in this chain based on the principle of partnership. A number of activities will focus on promoting agricultural sector products, including high-quality food, supporting foreign expansion, ensuring equal conditions of competition on the EU single market and eliminating barriers particularly burdensome for Polish exports in access to non-EU markets.

Mr. Chairman,

Food safety is an important element of national health policy and public health protection, especially in the context of the *COVID-19 pandemic*. The role of the state in ensuring the health safety of consumers is undeniably important, and EU law imposes on the governments of member states the obligation to undertake a number of projects and various adjustments in this respect.

Food monitoring plays an important role in ensuring product safety. **The Early Warning System for Dangerous Food (RASFF)** launched in the country ensures exchange of information between official control bodies in Europe that are members of this system. Information on food, feed and food contact materials that are potentially hazardous to human, animal or environmental health and follow up as a result of identifying such products is entered into the system.

Distinguished Delegates,

The Polish government has undertaken a number of actions aimed at raising public awareness of diseases related to people's healthy or unhealthy lifestyle choices and behaviors, such as: physical activity, nutritional habits or addictions. **Overweight and obesity** became in Poland, as in the world, a serious health problem.

In the spring of 2020, 54.5% of Poles were overweight (BMI ≥ 25) (64.2% of men and 45.5% of women). According to a nationwide survey carried out by the National Food and Nutrition Institute, more than 20% of children and young people, i.e. every fifth student, suffers from overweight or obesity. It is estimated that every year in Poland there will be 400 000 more overweight and obese children, including 80 000 with obesity. The generation of today's teenagers will live shorter than the generation of their parents due to complications related to overweight.

The current health status of children and young people is the particular concern, and all kind of activities promoting healthy lifestyles, such as promotion of proper dietary habits and physical activity are essential. Promoting a healthy lifestyle among adults as well as children and adolescents is considered to be one of the most crucial priorities, which will result in a reduction in the percentage of overweight and obese people. Health education has been included in the priorities of education as well as compulsory sets of educational goals and content of teaching determined in core curriculum for all types of schools - primary and secondary.

Proper nutrition is another factor, apart from physical education, which has a significant impact on the health of children and youth. With regard to the latter, provisions of the law govern the issues associated with the foods offered by school shops and canteens in order to reduce high-energy foods in the diet of children and youth as effectively as possible and thus shape proper eating habits. Eliminating bad eating habits requires comprehensive intervention and must be stimulated not only by restrictions, but also by the additional dietary awareness. One of them is the act promoting pro-health consumer choices, introducing the so-called sugar fee, for non-alcoholic beverages containing at least one substance with sweetening or active properties.

Ministry of Education introduced to **the 2019-2023 Multiannual Government Program *Meals at School and at Home*** (module 3) on the equipment for school canteens (cooperation with the Ministry of Family and Social Policy). MEN cooperates with the National Centre for Agricultural Development - the coordinator of the implementation of the ***Program for Schools*** in Poland, established by the European Commission under the Common Agricultural Policy. In the aim to change the eating habits in children by increasing the proportion of fruit, vegetables, milk and milk products in their daily diet and promoting a healthy diet.

On the basis of the Cooperation Agreement between the Minister of Education, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Sport on the promotion of health and prevention of activities in the field of health promotion and prevention of problems in children and adolescents are implemented. By the end of 2022, solutions in the field of health education at schools will be developed in **Educational Health Program for Schools**.

Cooperation of the Chief Sanitary Inspectorate and the Polish Federation of Food Industry, in line with the several international documents have been running the **"Keep Fit!" National Educational Program**. The aim of the program is to promote a balanced diet and physical activity among teenagers. The "Keep Fit!" The Program mitigates adverse trends, as overweight or obesity in teenagers, as well as qualitative malnutrition and dangerous eating disorders like bulimia and anorexia, through the dissemination of practical knowledge on a healthy lifestyle in a reliable and interesting way.

Mr. Chairman,

The modern world faces numerous challenges that one of the most important is to ensure food security for the rapidly growing world population, especially in the context of the *COVID-19 pandemic*. The **many threats to food security include food loss and waste**.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that around 1/3 of the food produced is wasted annually in the world, and about 1.3 billion tonnes of edible food in terms of weight. Food losses and waste have reached such a high level that they should be treated as a global problem, manifesting in the entire agri-food chain, from primary production through harvesting, storage, processing, distribution to consumption.

According to the estimates 9 million tons of food is wasted annually in Poland, i.e. an average of 235 kg of food per capita. On 18th September 2019 the food waste prevention regulations came into force in Poland, according to which large shops and wholesalers must sign an agreement with a selected non-governmental organisation and provide it with food free of charge.

In Poland, non-governmental organisations play the crucial role in reducing the food waste. **Food Banks** have been conducting social activities in Poland for over 25 years in order to reduce the scale of food waste and to help those in need. Food Banks are a proven social model operating both in Poland as well as in many other countries around the world.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

Improving the quality of life is possible thanks to the sustainable use of natural resources. Poland ensures the implementation of SDGs at the national level by including them in the most important strategic documents shaping the social and economic development of the country. One of them is the **National Ecological Policy** with an outlook to 2030. This policy develops the environmental area of SRD and will implement 11 out of 17 SDGs.

Polish performance in the implementation of **Goal 2. Eliminate hunger, achieve food security and better nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture** reached 2nd degree on the international 3-degree scale of list of indicators of their values.

This approach will ensure both the continuation of current activities in the field of the environment and the appropriate rank of the implementation process in the 2030 horizon.

Thank you for your attention.