

Czech Republic

DESERTIFICATION

The Czech Republic is aware of the seriousness of the issue of desertification in affected countries and the related socio-economic aspects, which include factors such as poverty, hunger, migration and limited access to sources of drinking water, and appreciates the role of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, (hereinafter the “Convention”), in which it plays a role in attaining sustainable soil management in those countries affected by desertification and drought.

Since its accession to the Convention on April 24, 2000, the Czech Republic has actively participated in activities connected to the implementation of the Convention and it also continually contributes to activities of the bodies of the Convention. The Czech Republic acceded to the Convention with understanding that it does not belong to the countries affected by desertification in the sense of the Convention, but only to the group of countries affected by moderate soil degradation (e.g. soil exhaustion due to agricultural overuse, contamination with chemicals). The Czech Republic as a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the European Union ranges among so-called donor countries. The Czech Republic provides assistance to the affected developing countries through projects concerning such areas as soil degradation, hydrogeology, hydrology and forestry, particularly within its scope for the Official Development Assistance (ODA). Research and scientific institutions, the academic sector, non-profit organizations and the private sector also contribute to the assistance to the affected countries.

In addition to financial means, the Czech Republic can provide experts, suitable technologies, know-how and information. At its disposal it has considerable experience particularly in the following areas, in which it is able to provide assistance to the affected countries:

- soil and water sustainable management;
- development of maps and background materials employing satellite and aerial photographs;
- geological, hydrogeological and pedological surveys;
- monitoring of the water erosion, floods and drought and preventive measures;
- soil type mapping and definition of indicators for soil degradation;
- forest inventory, typology and sustainable management;
- sustainable forestry;
- afforestation and reforestation of affected areas;
- scientific research;
- landscape protection;
- reclamation of land devastated by mining.

The Czech Republic also participates in assistance to the affected developing countries by means of its ODA projects. The Ministry of Environment, which is responsible for an implementation of the Convention, coordinated preparation, implementation and evaluation of 80 projects in 35 countries in the period 1997 – 2006. A number of these projects have been implemented with a direct impact on the issue connected to desertification and soil degradation. There are currently several ongoing projects closely related to such areas as desertification, development of water resources, hydrogeology, agriculture, and improvement of education of local experts which are coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Industry and Ministry of Education as well. Private companies, universities, research institutions and non-governmental organizations are also involved in the implementation. The Czech ODA to the developing countries is generally well appreciated. The implemented projects have great importance for the recipient countries, both from the viewpoint of their fight against poverty, environmental protection, economic and social development and from the viewpoint of providing education, improving the state of health of the local population and contribution to equal position of

women in society. The Czech Republic thus contributes to the addressing of global environmental issues in the way to pursuit of sustainable development and implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

In 2006, the total volume provided for ODA amounted to USD 163 million of which USD 33 million were allocated for implementation of development projects. In 2007, it is expected to allocate funds in the total amount of USD 35 million for the ODA projects.

ODA projects related to desertification in mil. USD (1997 – 2006)

Africa	3.1
Asia	7.12
LAC	0.28
Europe	3.1
Inter-regional	33.68
Total	47.28

Country Parties of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) Region have expressed on many occasions that they struggle with financial resources for activities supporting implementation of the Convention and combating desertification and land degradation in the region. Since land degradation, desertification, drought and consequent migration are cross-border problems requiring joint action, those countries find strengthening regional and inter-regional cooperation inevitable. The Czech Republic has decided to take an action and in spring 2008 it will organize in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Convention and Global Mechanism and host a Workshop on Financial Resource Mobilization for Strengthening the Regional Cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe within the Convention framework.

Furthermore, the Czech Republic, as an active Party of the Annex V of the Convention dealing with the specific conditions of the CEE Region, established a Regional Reference Centre (RRC) called “Soil conservation strategies and planning” hosted by the Mendel University of Agriculture and Forestry in Brno (MUAUF) on 15 December 2006, which will serve to 22 country partners of that region. Such a centre will provide information on available sources of information in the area of soil degradation and conservation, provide linkages with other information directories and databases within the region and contribute to sharing of the best practices and lessons learnt.