Adoption of the Polish Polar Policy

From Past Expeditions to Future Challenges

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**An Information Paper submitted by Poland**

***Summary***

The document, entitled “**From past expeditions to future challenges. Polish Polar Policy,**” adopted by Council of Ministers on September 11th 2020, both summarises Polish presence and activity in the Arctic and Antarctic to date, and outlines the long-term objectives of Poland’s polar policy.

***Background***

Polish Polar Policy, adopted by Council of Ministers on 11 of September 2020 is a first, Polish strategic document that covers both polar regions. It constitutes part of the Polish policy aimed at safeguarding key interests and strategic needs of Poland related to the Arctic and Antarctic regions. This task involves both activities undertaken in the implementation of foreign policy in a broad sense, as well as activities in the domestic dimension. The acquired experience and the awareness of probable challenges and threats in the future (medium- and long term) currently require not only a summary of the achievements to date, but primarily a clear definition of goals and solid Poland’s position in rapidly developing polar affairs.

The document recognizes as the principal long-term objective that Poland should constantly and actively be present in dialogue, cooperation, and the programming of polar policy in the world while using its own resources and looking for new ones. Informed planning in the strategic dimension must be based on knowledge which can be used to project various possible scenarios for the future. Poland's activity to implement polar policy must have an inclusive and inherently multidisciplinary character. It requires constant monitoring, analysing, and planning of activities and engaged participation on the international forum.

The principal objective should be achieved through a wide range of political, legal, institutional and investment measures, by pursuing the following specific goals:

1. ensuring Poland’s active participation in and influence on processes affecting the future of polar regions,
2. enhancing Poland’s presence in polar regions, including ensuring the development of scientific activities of Polish researchers,
3. ensuring that polar policy is given due attention in domestic policy,
4. actively looking for new and innovative paths to develop Poland's position in polar affairs.

The detailed goals of Polish polar policy with respect to the Antarctic include:

1. maintaining and expanding permanent Polish presence in the Antarctic, including through academic research and scientific and logistical infrastructure;
2. maintaining the diplomatic presence of Poland and expanding its influence in the Antarctic, including through the active involvement on the international arena (especially within the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM)) in all activities related to management of the Antarctic;
3. taking advantage of the opportunity associated with Antarctic presence to conduct world-class research in key areas of priority for Poland, including areas related to the protection of the unique Antarctic environment;
4. leveraging economic prospects offered by Antarctic presence, especially as in the area of innovative technologies.

Overall the Policy emphasizes the importance of Poland’s position in the Antarctic in accordance with international law. In particular, Poland ratified the Antarctic Treaty in 1961 and began to take steps to obtain consultative status. This objective was achieved on 29 July 1977, when Poland joined the then exclusive club of states governing the Antarctic as its 13th member. This was possible due to Poland’s involvement in Antarctic scientific research (for instance through organising scientific expeditions, and the establishment and maintenance of a research station). Since joining the Treaty, Poland has actively participated in drafting the Convention on Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources, of which it is one of the authors, and was one of the countries who moved to adopt the Protocol on Environmental Protection.