

**Minutes of the
Executive Committee Meeting
In Tehran on 19-20th December 2001**

- 1- The AARINENA Executive Committee meeting took place at the Guest House of the Prime Minister of Iran, Tehran on 19-20th December 2001.

Present:

- Dr. Mustafa Yaghi, President of AARINENA
- Dr. Youssif Al-Shayji, Vice President of AARINENA.
- Dr. Muhamad Roozitalab, member.
- Prof. Anthony Scicluna-Spiteri, member.
- Dr. Ismail Muharam, member.
- Dr. Christo Hilan, Executive Secretary.

Upon their invitation, the meeting was attendant by:

- Dr. Mohamed El Tamzini (FAO), as Trust Fund Operating Officer for AARINENA.
- Dr. Mahmoud Solh, ICARDA.

- 2- AARINENA President, Dr. Mustafa Yaghi chaired the meeting with an opening word in Arabic. A copy of it in English was also distributed:

- He welcomed the members expressing his joy for holding the meeting in the Iranian capital, which has made drastic changes in lots of believes, since the dawn of the Khumeini's Islamic revolution.
- He apologized for not being able to attend Malta Meeting, but he had full trust of the wise decisions and judgments taken by the Committee.
- He made an introduction of the main activities in progress by AARINENA, mainly Durban meeting, Research Priorities, Cooperation with EFARD, Post-harvest Symposium, IFAD meeting, GFAR meeting, Date Palm and Information Networks. He stated that each Subject is going to be presented in details by one of the attendants.

- 3- The agenda of the meeting was adopted without any changes.

- 4- Dr. Mahmoud Solh presented the Agricultural Research Priority settings (ARPS) in the WANA Region.

- He briefed the participants on the main features and chronology of the ARPS process launched in April 2001 in the CWANA region in collaboration with the two sub-regional organizations (CAC NARS Forum and AARINENA) and regional and international consultative group CG and non-CG-centers active in the region.
- He pointed out that the overall goal of this process is to enhance the effectiveness of the CGIAR System in working with the NARSs to tackle the priority sub-regional and regional agricultural problems in CWANA region. Relying on a bottom-up approach and broader participation of various stakeholders such as farmer's organizations, universities, NGOs, private

- sector, investors, etc., in addition to the national agricultural research institutes, the specific objectives of this process consist in: a) re-visiting sub-regional and regional research priorities considering developments at national, regional and global levels; b) identifying the CGIAR niche within the identified regional priorities; c) defining a coherent CGIAR strategy in CWANA; d) developing an action plan to implement such a strategy; e) harmonizing and integrating CGIAR activities within CWANA research priorities; f) identifying operational modalities for the integration of CGIAR activities and cooperation with AARINENA and the CAC NARS Forum.
- The outputs expected to emerge from such process would consist in the following: i) a coherent strategic action plan for CGIAR in CWANA; ii) operational modalities for integration of CGIAR activities and cooperation with AARINENA and CAC NARS Forum; iii) identification of the steps needed to move from the strategic action plan to implementation, with the understanding that implementation will be initiated only after endorsement of the “integration process” by concerned CGIAR bodies and general assemblies of AARINENA and CAC NARS Forum.
 - Dr. Solh then outlined the main elements of the process, which are: a) inventory study of CGIAR activities in CWANA. This inventory includes activities of 12 CG centers (CIAT, CIMMYT, CIP, ICARDA, ICLRAM, ICRISAT, IFPRI, ILRI, IPGRI, ISNAR and IWMI); b) a questionnaire combining questions on research priorities Setting, regional cooperation, and cooperation with CG-Centers and mechanism to enhance integration of the CGIAR activities within the identified research priorities; c) sub-regional brainstorming meetings to be held in each of the five sub-region of the CWANA region; and d) a final regional meeting (CWANA) to be held 8-9 May, 2002, at ICARDA, Aleppo (Syria), and which would build on findings and recommendations from the sub-regional brainstorming meeting and on results of the questionnaire. The minutes would be prepared and the priorities drafted within couple weeks, to be approved during the AARINENA 8th General Conference.
 - During the discussion on this subject, and in order to fulfill a comprehensive questionnaire, the committee agreed that ICARDA would select a focal point among experts nominated by every AARINENA country member. The Executive Committee members showed their willingness to represent their countries. This key person would help completing the questionnaire and submitting it before the end of January. AARINENA would share with ICARDA the expenses (around 300 to 500 US\$ depending on the number of NARS in each country) for assigning these focal points.
- 5- Dr. Roozitalab presented a summary of Main Conclusions and Recommendations, GFAR-SC and NARS-SC Meetings held in Washington D.C. on 27-28th October 2001.
- He pointed that the two modes of operation of Global Collaboration in Agricultural Research are a) Global Partnership Programs (GPP), GFAR approved in Dresden meeting May 2000 and b) The Challenge Program (CP), CGIAR described in Durban meeting May 2001. These modes play different but highly complementary role in the global scientific community of ARD.
 - The proposals for GPPs discussed in GFAR/IFAD meeting, Rome 9-10th Oct. 2001 were listed.

- Other areas in GFAR Business Plan and Program of Work/ 2001-2003 were highlighted. These need more attention such as Advocacy for ARD and Key strategic topics of agricultural research.
 - Dr. Roozitalab drew the attendants' attention to strengthening and improving the representation function in the stakeholder constituencies of ARD. He pointed that it was agreed to hold the GFAR Conference in Sub-Sahara Africa in conjunction with the FARA General Conference in 2003. The tentative themes for this meeting include: (a) " Linking research to rural innovation, and development" and (b) "from regional priorities to global action".
 - The important decisions of the General meeting of CGIAR were a) Establishment of Science Council for CGIAR (TAC Transformation); b) Establishment of CGIAR System Office; c) Establishment of Executive Council for CGIAR with non-rotating and rotating members which include one representative from CWANA Region; and d) Formulation and Implementation of challenge programs (CP) based on regional priorities and bottom-up approach.
 - Dr. Roozitalab listed and explained about the ten proposals for CPs in the fast tracking process, pointing that only 3 would be selected and implemented through seeking the contributions and recommendations of the regional fora. According to his opinion the 3 proposals, which have better chances for final selection, are "Water and Agriculture", "Agriculture and Desertification" and "Climate Change". The contribution of AARINENA would be to comment and make suggestions about the proposals with regard to the priorities of the CWANA.
 - Dr. Solh commented that if the proposal on Water and Agriculture was selected, then it should be focused on countries of dry areas.
 - It was also agreed, after discussion, to contact Arab Fund and IFAD to financially support the implementation of the selected proposals in the CWANA.
- 6- Dr. Christo Hilan presented the Cooperation with EFARD listing all the 13 priority project proposals that were submitted to Dr. Fernando Chaparro to be sent to EFARD. A copy of these proposal summaries was distributed to the attendants.
- During discussing this subject, a question emerged "What did GFAR do for AARINENA till now?" GFAR is only asking AARINENA to organize workshops, prepare and submit proposals to be funded without any evident financial support.
 - It was strongly stressed that AARINENA cannot survive with only contribution fees from member countries. AARINENA needs financial support and effective collaboration and cooperation with international organizations and regional fora in order to implement proposals of high interest and importance to the region and the world. It is through the implementation of such projects that AARINENA would verify the necessity of its establishment and show its effective involvement and collaboration in research activities.
 - Finally, it was agreed to send an official letter to the President of GFAR, copied to GFAR-Secretary, Dr. Chaparro, expressing the serious concern of the AARINENA Executive Committee members regarding the services provided by GFAR to the Association.

- 7- Dr. Christo Hilan presented the activities concerning organizing the post-harvest workshop and changing its scheduled date and venue due to the critical international current situation.
- After several discussions, final decision was taken in order to finalize the contracts for the consultants and coordinator and all logistic arrangements for holding the workshop.
 - It was agreed to hold the workshop on 4-6 February in Cairo. An official letter is going to be sent to Dr. Fawzi Naim Mahrous to get the approval from the Minister of Agriculture on organizing the workshop in Cairo.
 - Dr. El Tamzini, FAO/RNE along with Dr. Mahrous are going to send official invitations to all participants, according to the list provided by the regional coordinator, Dr. El Hadi, to facilitate their entry visa to Egypt.
 - Dr. El Hadi is supposed to urgently contact all speakers informing them of the new agreed date and venue of the workshop for arranging their reports.
 - Dr. Hesham Allam, the sub-regional consultant is requested to help in finalizing the local logistic arrangements.
- 8- Dr. Christo Hilan presented subjects concerning the RAIS Secretariat.
- A proposal for the establishment of a Regional Agricultural Information System (RAIS) in West Asia and North Africa (WANA) was prepared by FAO/GFAR and agreed on by AARINENA. On the other hand, some initial work has been completed by AARINENA members to develop the basis of a new website for the association, which should be launched soon.
 - The opinion of the members of AARINENA was sought, through contacting them, to establish whether any member wishes to take on the duties of RAIS Secretariat. An official positive response was received from Iran.
 - The request of Iran was accepted and it was agreed to inform Dr. Ghareyazie, the deputy Minister and Dr. Chaparro, GFAR Secretariat of the approval of AARINENA's Executive Committee on Iran hosting RAIS Secretariat.
 - During discussions, it was highly stressed that since the proposal has been formulated and finalized, no follow-up has been done by GFAR regarding finding financial support for project implementation or further steps towards establishing AARINENA's own website.
- 9- Dr. Christo Hilan presented subjects concerning Date Palm and Olive Networks.
- He pointed out that no activities have been established since the last meeting in Kuwait especially appointing a consultant to visit all concerned countries and take their inputs in order to finalize the proposal.
 - He stated that Dr. Chapparo, during a telephone call, suggested that Dr. El Tamzini would visit all interested countries and collect information for establishing the network.
 - It was agreed to separate the date palm network from the olive network.
 - It was agreed that AARINENA would assign and support a consultant for each network. The Executive Committee members are going to send nominations and CVs for these assignments according to TOR (Term of References) prepared by Dr. Roozitalab. The TOR are going to be commented by the Executive Committee members within 15 days. Dr. Yaghi will make a first selection (mainly 3 names) among the list provided but the final decision is going to be taken by the Executive Committee members by mail.

- 10- Dr. Christo Hilan presented the progress report of other AARINENA issues since the last Executive Committee meeting such as: Priority Settings in CWANA Region, The Seat of AARINENA Secretariat, The Contribution Fees, The Sixth Executive Committee meeting of APAARI, and other related issues.
- 10.1- Priority Settings in cWANA Region
- The first Brainstorming meeting was held in Cairo/Egypt on 26-27 September 2001 and Dr. Christo Hilan represented AARINENA.
 - Dr. Yaghi, Dr. Roozitalab and Dr. Christo Hilan represented AARINENA during the next Brainstorming meeting that was held in Aleppo/ICARDA on 18-19 November 2001.
 - The President was invited along with Prof. Anthony Scicluna-Spiteri by ICARDA to attend the third brainstorming meeting to be held on 8-9 January 2002 in Hammamet (Tunisia).
 - Dr. Roozitalab, and Dr. Christo Hilan will represent AARINENA in the forth Brainstorming meeting to be held in Kuwait on 24 January 2002.
 - All Executive Committee members would be invited to attend the last meeting for priority setting to be held on 8-9 May at ICARDA, Aleppo.
- 10.2- The Seat of AARINENA Secretariat
- Dr. Christo Hilan listed the positive responses received from AARINENA country members (Cyprus and Jordan) to host the Secretariat seat. The response from Cyprus was conditioned regarding the financial support provided by AARINENA, but the one from Jordan accepted to host the secretariat for 2 years instead of 5 years mentioned in the Terms of Reference.
 - During discussions, Dr. Solh proposed to contact the Ministry of Agriculture in Jordan to clarify that the Secretariat should be hosted for 5 years irrespective of the President mandate and according to the Terms of Reference for AARINENA Secretariat that it should be seconded by a NARS with a full time secretary.
- 10.3- Contribution Fees
- Dr. Hilan listed the non-paid and paid countries according to his inputs and some information provided by Dr. El Tamzini.
 - Dr. Hilan stated that efforts to contact Algeria and Pakistan by fax or e-mail failed, as they have no available information. He has no responses from Tunisia after several contacts.
 - It was decided to ask for the contribution fees starting the beginning of the year.
 - Since Palestine and Iraq are facing difficult situation, it has been decided to postpone asking for their contribution fees.
 - It has been highly agreed on that every Executive Committee member should help the Executive Secretary by following up the payment of the contribution fees of the member countries in their region.
- 10.4- The Sixth Executive Committee Meeting of APAARI and Expert Consultation on ARD Priority Setting
- The Secretary stated that he received a letter from APAARI Secretary asking for a copy of AARINENA's report on Priority Settings in order to benefit from the document for revising the research priorities for South-Asia Region.
 - It has been decided that a copy of Dr. Solh's presentation on "Development of Agricultural Research Priorities in Central Asia and WANA Region" should

be sent to the secretary of APAARI. Dr. Solh is willing to supply further information upon request.

10.5- Other Issues

- No comments have been raised while listing the activities on "Technical Workshop in Methodologies, Organization and Management of Programmes of a Global Nature on 9-10 Oct 01, IFAD", Collaboration with AOAD on a workshop, INASP Directory, and AARINENA Newsletter.

11- Dr. Mohamed El Tamzini presented and distributed his report on financial statement and contribution fees.

- He stated that the AARINENA Fund Balance till 26 November 2001 is 167,720.76 US\$.
- He requested AARINENA to pay an incentive for his secretary for handling AARINENA issues related to FAO.
- It was stated that Dr. Bukhari has promised to help and support logistics for AARINENA. After discussion, it was agreed that the President would re-contact Dr. Bukhari asking for his help and support especially regarding the incentive mentioned above.

12- AARINENA Next General Assembly

- The issue was discussed and it was agreed to hold the 8th General Conference in Jordan during the last week of May, precisely 26-28 May 2002.
- The date should be finalized with Dr. Fardous (Jordan) and Dr. Chaparro, GFAR Secretary.
- The General Assembly would be followed by a workshop for 2 days organized by Dr. Maddur from FAO.
- The Agenda of the assembly should include general progress report on AARINENA activities to be approved, finalization of AARINENA Secretariat, and the Presidency. It was highlighted that for the benefit of AARINENA, the President could be elected from any member country in conformity with the constitution and irrespectively of the hosting country. The nominee for the presidency should read his CV before the elections.
- Prof. Anthony Scicluna-Spiteri proposed that in the presentation of the constitutional amendments at the next General Meeting, we should not include the proposal made by Dr Fadda to add French as the third official language of AARRINENA as this will add to our expenses. All members agreed on it.

13- Finally, the President thanked the Executive Committee members, Dr. Solh and Dr. El Tamzini for their contribution and support. He apologized for his shortcomings in attending some of the meetings due to his heavy schedule. He stressed that in each time, he asked to be presented by one the Executive Committee members because he is sure that the success of the job is more accountable than the work of the person. The President and the Executive Committee members expressed to Dr. Roozitalb their special thanks for his hospitality and the perfect organization of the meeting. Special thanks were addressed to Dr. ElHadi for his valuable efforts regarding the post-harvest symposium.