

**Minutes of the
Executive Committee Meeting
In Kuwait on 8th April 2001**

- 1- The AARINENA Executive Committee meeting took place at Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) on 8th April 2001.

Present:

- Dr. Mustafa Yaghi, President of AARINENA
- Dr. Youssif Al-Shayji, Vice President of AARINENA.
- Dr. Muhamad Roozitalab, member.
- Dr. Christo Hilan, Executive Secretary.

Absent:

- Prof. Anthony Scicluna Spiteri, member.
- Dr. Ismail Muharam, member

Upon their invitation, the meeting was attendant by:

- Dr. Muhamed El Tamzini (FAO), as Trust Fund Operating Officer for AARINENA.
- Dr. Fernando Chaparro, GFAR Secretariat.
- Dr. Ahmed Rafea, RAIS Consultant.
- Dr. Habib Halila, ICARDA.

- 2- AARINENA President, Dr. Mustafa Yaghi chaired the meeting with an opening word:

- He welcomed the members and especially Dr. El Tamzini as the new Trust Fund Operating Officer.
- He thanked Dr. I. Hamdan for the valuable work and efforts that he provided to AARINENA.
- 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 expressed that the absence of Prof. Spiteri and Dr. Muharam is surely a big loss due to their valuable contributions to AARINENA meetings.
- He stated that the Executive Secretary is going to make a presentation of the most important activities of AARINENA since Malta meeting, stressing that most of his efforts and requests were not answered.
- He hoped that during the afternoon, important decisions could be taken in order to operationalize AARINENA, especially regarding cooperation and coordination between sub-regional representatives, NARS and the Executive Secretary.

- 3- The agenda of the meeting was adopted with minor modifications (see Annex I).
- 4- Dr. Ahmad Rafea made an oral presentation on RAIS Project based on the copy of the proposal distributed to all members. The following include the answers to the main administrative issues raised and taken into consideration during the meeting.
 - The formation of the project steering committee

The formation of the project steering committee was approved as suggested in the project proposal with one addition, a representative of the donor.

- Assuming external funding is obtained for this initiative, would AARINENA be able to act as the signatory of such a contract?

Yes, AARINENA can sign the contract according to its constitution

- If so, would AARINENA ask another agency to manage the day-to-day operational aspects of the project, and which agency would be preferred?

The committee has identified 4 options:

1. *AARINENA secretariat if it became permanent*
2. *A leading NARS*
3. *An International Organization most probably ICARDA*
4. *FAO Regional Office*

A decision has been reached that the permanent secretariat situation is not clear for the time being and therefore, a leading NARS is to be found to take this responsibility if we find one. Therefore, a questionnaire is to be prepared and sent to all NARS's to respond to it if any is interested in taking this responsibility showing its capacity to do so. Dr. Rafea was charged to prepare such questionnaire in collaboration with FAO and AARINENA will be responsible for sending it formally. A deadline is to be determined for receiving answers. Based on answers a decision is to be taken by the Executive Committee during their next meeting and included in the proposal to be submitted to Donors.

- If AARINENA could not sign for the contract, which agency at the regional or international level should be identified to manage and administer the implementation of the RAIS initiative? It is likely that such an agency would charge an overhead fee, which would increase the budget.

This question is now not applicable

- What mechanisms would the Committee of AARINENA wish to put in place to monitor and evaluate the project, aside from the donor's requirements?

Progress report is to be prepared before executive committee meeting and discussed in the regular meeting of the committee, and every year along with the steering committee.

- AARINENA should be able to show financial contributions, if only in kind, and to show commitments from national and international partners, as per the budget?

- Questionnaires are to be prepared asking the NARS's if they are interested to be one of the five pilot sites in the project. One of the criteria of selection is the government contribution that will be provided at the National and Regional Level.

- Letters are to be prepared by Dr. Rafea for the International and Regional Organization to investigate if they are willing to contribute to the project and in what manner.

- 6 persons from the five pilot countries, and 3 from the remaining are going to be trained on Regional Agricultural Information System (RAIS).

- Where should the RAIS Co-ordinator be located, (a) until the AARINENA Secretariat has a fixed location, and (b) once a fixed location is determined?

The RAIS Co-ordinator will be located where the RAIS secretariat will be. Dr. Rafea is going to prepare Terms of Reference (TOR) for RAIS Secretary.

- How will the RAIS be sustained once the project finishes? National components will have to cover their own costs, but will AARINENA be able to cover the costs of the RAIS coordinator etc?

If one of the NARS's takes this responsibility he will be committed to cover the cost of the RAIS coordination. Some compensation can be availed from the other NARS's and AARINENA for this purpose once they feel the benefit of RAIS. The responsibility of the steering committee would be during the implementation of the Project. Its sustainability would be the responsibility of each country member.

- It has been decided to distribute a report on the discussion that took place on the RAIS Project Proposal during the meeting.

5- Dr. Roozitalab made his presentation regarding the Consultative meeting held at FAO/Rome – Italy. He explained the common strategy to promote partnership in ARD in the Mediterranean Basin.

- The need to coordinate the AARINENA project proposal with other initiatives that are presently emerging in the region in the area of information management was partially covered. Mainly integrating RAIS with MAIS (Mediterranean Agricultural Information System).
- To establish ARD Network based on Commodity Chain Approach, it was recommended that Olive and Date Palm, which are not mandated by CGIAR, are the most important crops for the region.
- It was suggested that for the implementation of Date Palm Network, a consultant would be appointed to visit all concerned countries and take their inputs from their national programs. Then he should coordinate in order to prepare a final proposal.
- AARINENA Secretary stated that Dr. Michel de Nuce has promised to ensure partnership between Spanish and Italian Experts through a certain form to be filled by both sides. A new call for the project is supposed to be launched through the European forum.

- 6- Dr. Fernando Chaparro made his presentation explaining the important steps that should be taken into consideration for strengthening cooperation in AARINENA and the Mediterranean Region.
 - The development of the AARINENA test Website was analyzed.
 - The importance of a close interaction with EGFAR and with the Websites of other RAIS was illustrated.
 - When the revised version of the AARINENA Website is ready, it would be officially adopted by the Executive Committee during its next meeting and would replace the existing one.
 - Once the website is fully designed and developed, it is easy to place it on a commercial service with very small annual cost. The AARINENA Secretariat with the support and advice of EGFAR Secretariat can directly manage this process.
 - Contact with all country members is going to be done to provide available Website addresses of the NARC's in their country.

- 7- Dr. Habib Halila made a presentation on the proposed steps for integrating the CGIAR activities into WANA region research priorities.

- 8- Dr. Fernando Chaparro presented the initiative of Post-Harvest Symposium. He explained its objectives, goals and plan of action that included:
 - The assigned consultants should prepare sub-regional reports.
 - The regional consultant should coordinate the inputs of the sub-regional consultants and prepare regional workshops.

- 9- Dr. Muhamed El Tamzini, as FAO Trust Fund Operating Officer made a presentation on the financial statement of AARINENA for the year 2000.
 - AARINENA Secretary is going to prepare a table stating the paid and non paid countries for AARINENA membership for the years 1999, 2000, and 2001.
 - The prepared table is going to be sent to FAO/RNE to be matched with their files.

- 10- AARINENA Secretary, Dr. Christo Hilan presented his progress report for all activities, administrative work done after Malta Executive Committee meeting. The main issues presented and discussed were:
 - 10.1- The Seat of AARINENA Secretariat
 - It has been decided to contact Dr. Dennis Fada, FAO Legal Officer for amending the rule concerning the financial contribution to the secretary of AARINENA, erasing the term "free of Charge".
 - It has been decided to contact all country members seeking their interest to host AARINENA Secretary noting that AARINENA would contribute to support Secretarial work for up to 5000 US\$ per year.
 - 10.2- Date Palm secretariat
 - Upon contacting all country members, Iran and Morocco showed interest to host the Date Palm Secretariat, but the decision is going to be taken jointly by AARINENA and European Partners upon the implementation of the project.

10.3- Post-Harvest Symposium

- The following assignments have been decided regarding post-harvest consultancy:
 - 1- Maghreb Sub-Region: Dr. ElHadi M. Yahia, Research and Teaching Full Professor at Alfateh University, Tripoli, Libya, with experience on Post-Harvest, Sub-Regional Consultant and Regional coordinator.
 - 2- Nile Valley and Red Sea Sub-Region: Dr. Allam, Expert and Senior Researcher on Post-Harvest Technology, Agricultural Research Center, Egypt, Sub-Regional Consultant.
 - 3- Mashreq Sub-Region: Dr. Najib El Assi, Post-Harvest Specialist, Assistant Professor, Department of Hort.&Plant Protection, The university of Jordan, Amman, Jordan, Sub-Regional Consultant.
 - 4- Arabian Peninsula Sub-Region: Mr. Khalid Bin Mansoor AlZadjali, Director General Assistant for Agriculture Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, Sub-Regional Consultant.
 - 5- West and Central Asian Sub-Region: Dr. Mohammad Ali Shahbake, holder of Ph.D. degree in Post-Harvest Physiology, Research Deputy of Iranian Agriculture Engineering Research Institute (IAERI), Iran, Sub-Regional Consultant.
- These consultants should be informed and contracts should be prepared for them along with the Terms of Reference and signed by the President of AARINENA.
- AARINENA Secretariat should manage the budget allocated for the consultancy and workshops along the preparation of the invitations.

10.4- WANA NARS study Publication

- The publications have been distributed to all AARINENA country members (18 countries) by FAO Pouch, in the following manner:
 - i. 2 copies to the Ministry of Agriculture
 - ii. 2 copies to the FAO/UNDP Representatives
 - iii. 2 copies to the faculties of Agriculture
 - iv. 2 copies to the Agricultural Research Institute.
- Copies of FAO NARS Publication, prepared by FAO have been distributed during the meeting.

10.5- The coordination within the countries of the sub-region during the sub-regional meetings that ICARDA regularly organizes.

- The President of AARINENA, will follow up this issue with the President of ICARDA/Aleppo, Dr. Adel El Baltagi.

10.6- Contribution Fees

- It has been decided that AARINENA Secretary should re-contact the non-paid countries to follow up paying their contribution fees, namely Kuwait (PAFF), Pakistan, Palestine, Tunisia, and Yemen.

10.7- Constitution and Amendments and Rules and Procedures

- The final decision regarding these amendments is going to be taken during the next General Conference.

11- The President of AARINENA, Dr. Mustafa Yaghi, presented an Organigram about AARINENA Coordination (See Annex II). He explained the efficient way of collaboration between the Secretariat and Executive Committee Members, then with all Country Representatives and finally with NARC's Leaders within the same country.

- It has been decided to highlight the responsibilities of the country representatives, by preparing Terms of reference and to be discussed in the next General Conference.
- It has been agreed to correct the model of the Executive Secretariat. It should be a full time job and not a part time with other responsibilities within his Institution as it is the case in the present time.

12- All the attendants thanked the Secretary for his efforts and for the time he is providing for AARINENA activities.

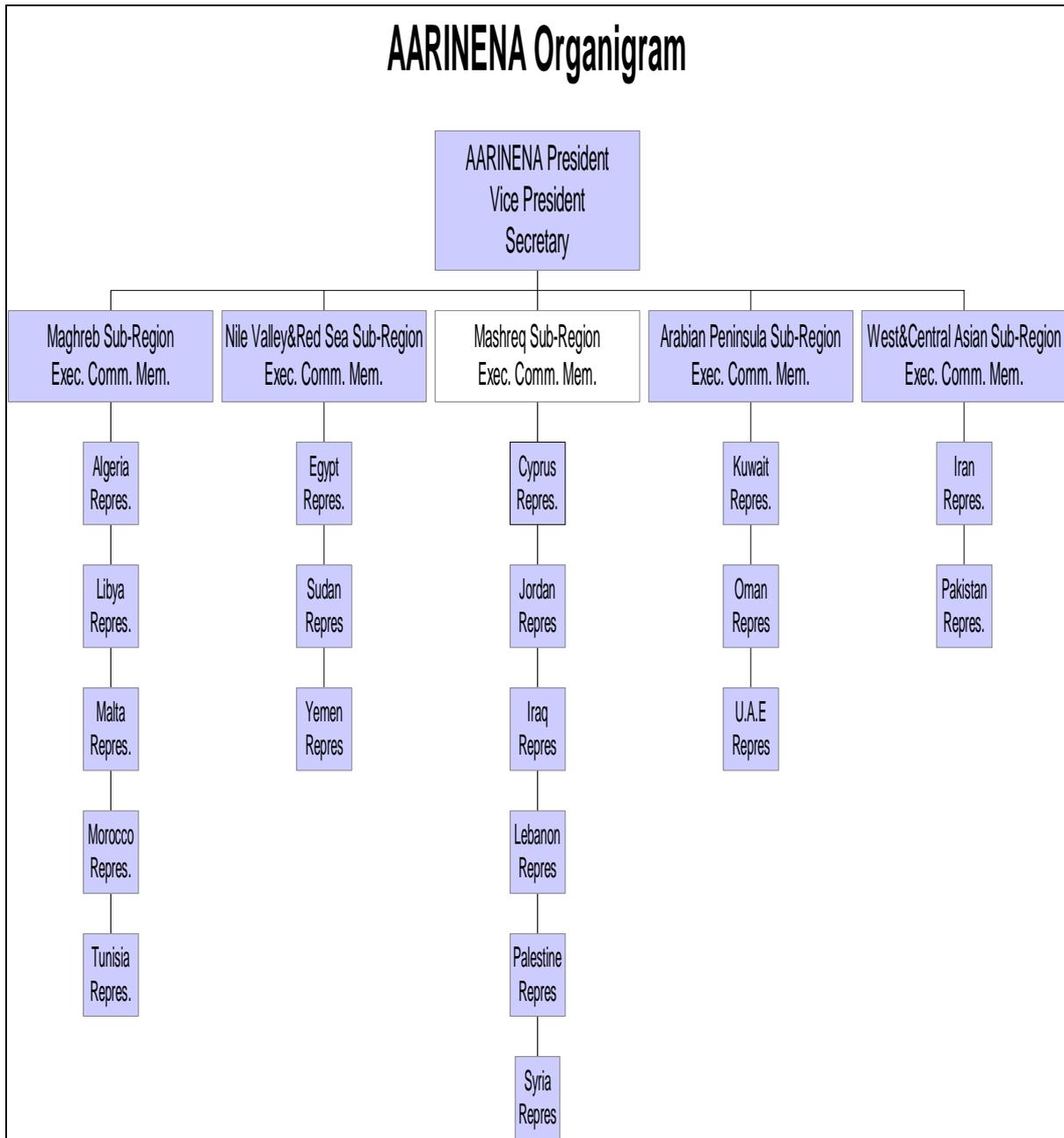
13- It has been decided to hold the next Executive Committee Meeting in November along with the Post-Harvest Coordination Workshop and the Mediterranean Virtual Forum meeting (INRA-NAGREF initiative) in Cairo. The exact date is not fixed yet.

ANNEX I

The Tentative Agenda
For the Executive Committee Meeting
Kuwait, 8th April, 2001

9:00 - 9:15	Opening Session	Dr. Mustafa Yaghi
9:15 - 10:45	RAIS Project + Pilot Web Site Presentation + Proposal + Discussion	Dr. Ahmed Rafea & Dr. Nihad Maliha
10:45 - 11:15	Coffee Break	
11:15 - 11:45	Consultative Meeting, FAO/Rome	Dr. Mohhamad Roozitalab
11:45 - 12:15	Mediterranean Virtual Forum Discussion	Dr. Fernando Chaparro
12:15 - 12:45	Priority Setting Exercise for Agricultural Research and Integration of the CGIAR Activities into WANA Research Priorities	Dr. Habib Halila
12:45 - 1:15	Post-Harvest Symposium Discussion	Dr. Fernando Chaparro
1:15 - 15:00	Lunch Break	
15:00 - 15:30	Financial statement	Dr. Mohamed El-Tamzini
15:30 - 16:00	Progress Report	Dr. Christo Hilan
16:00 - 16:30	Country Representatives suggestions	All participants
16:30 - 17:00	Operationalization of AARINENA	Dr. Mustafa Yaghi
17:00 - 18:30	General Discussion and Recommendations	All participants

ANNEX II



Every Country representative should coordinate with all NARCs in his country