

## Minutes

**Location** Zoom Meeting (Agropolis International and DNIs Steering Committee and Advisory Board)

**Date** 30/01/2024

### Participants

**Dr. Kakha Nadiradze (DNI Chair)**

**Dr. Melanie Broin (Agropolis International)**

**Dr. Fei Wang (DNI Co-Chair)**

**Dr. Jean Luc Chotte (CSFD)**

**Prof. Giovanna Seddaiu (DNI Secretary General)**

**PhD Student Chiara Ceseracciu (DNI Operational Secretariat)**

**Dr. Mauro Centritto (DNI Steering Committee)**

**Prof. Quirico Migheli (DNI Steering Committee)**

**Dr. Melanie Requier Desgiardin (DNI Advisory Board)**

**Prof. Claudio Zucca (DNI Advisory Board)**

**Dr. Youssef Brahimi (DNI Advisory Board)**

### Main points discussed

- **Dr. Kakha Nadiradze** delivers introductory remarks and opens the floor to participants. He highlighted the DNIs' new history of its establishment in France, in Montpellier, and the DNI must use this window of possibilities being registered at the Agropolis International Headquarter Office address. He thanked everyone who participated in DNI's past and new perspectives, and he thanked Mr. Youssef, who greatly contributed to the promotion of these processes. He also spoke about the challenges that DNI, as a professional association, must respond to the current and future challenges within the scope of its competence by implementing projects where the degradation, desertification, erosion, drought, overgrazing, protection and conservation of soil micro-biodiversity will have an important place. He thanked personally Dr. Melanie Broin for taking the time for this meeting and the DNI colleagues who participated in this meeting. He also spoke about the important role of soils in decarbonization and also mentioned the possibility of presenting a joint project of DNI and Agropolis International to the Swiss organization - My Climate, dedicated to climate change and decarbonization. He also spoke about the importance of the DNIs workshop and conference in Agropolis International dedicated to Combating Desertification, Land Degradation and Regenerative Methods of Soils Fertility and he mentioned the Project Idea Silk Road of Restored Lands Data where we could have strong support for Research - Scientific Foundations and possibilities to apply for granting the Horizon Europe, Joint Research Center, etc.
- **Prof. Quirico Migheli** provides an overview of the tasks undertaken by the Desertification Research Center of the University of Sassari as the Operational Secretariat for DNI. He highlights the achievement of obtaining a registered SIRET number as a French non-profit association and a PIC number, making DNI eligible to receive EU funds. With this respect, Quirico Migheli outlines DNI's progress, including

its involvement as an in-kind partner within a PRIMA-funded project coordinated by the University of Sassari (SALAM-MED) and the involvement as a partner in a recently awarded Horizon-funded proposal in the current year. This represents a significant milestone for DNI, allowing for budgetary support for its activities that so far have been voluntarily only.

- **Prof. Giovanna Seddaiu** reported on the preparation of a DNI poster for display at Agropolis International headquarters.
- **Dr. Kakha Nadiradze** updated participants on the DNI Academy Initiative, launched the previous year, which led to the organization of several webinars targeting young researchers. This initiative could provide the opportunity for collaboration between DNI and Agropolis International. Except this, he emphasized the importance of Serengeti the DNI's visibility and feasibility, and attractiveness for young scientists and practitioners as a professional Membership-based Association.
- **Dr. Fei Wang** illustrated a PowerPoint presentation with an overview of potential collaboration opportunities (**See Annex 1 Slides**). He presented the priorities of Chinese scientific and research funds, which are parallel priorities for EU grant organizations such as Horizon Europe and The Road and Belt Initiative, RBI, National Natural Science Foundation of China, NSFC, MOST (Ministry of Science and Technology), Chinese Academy of Sciences, CAS, China Scholarship Council, CSC, etc, and he emphasized the availabilities for young for Doctoral and Post Doctoral Students funding in China.
- **Dr. Youssef Brahimi** highlighted the added value of being hosted by AI in terms of enhanced visibility and credibility for DNI. He also highlights DNI's contribution to increasing AI's international dimension through its global network of members. The collaboration between DNI and AI also provides the opportunity for an increasingly significant role within UNCCD. Youssef Brahimi proposes collaborating on a joint position paper before the next COP29.
- **Dr. Mauro Centritto** underscored the importance of strengthening dialogue between CSOs and the scientific community. He announces his role as the representative of Western Europe within the UNCCD CSO panel and suggests developing a joint critical review of the recently published midterm evaluation of the 2018-2030 UNCCD Strategic Framework.
- **Prof. Claudio Zucca** emphasized the importance of improving capacity development, a shared mission for DNI and AI. There is a strong need to showcase innovative multidisciplinary research approaches, effective data collection and analysis methods, and improving training curricula for the next generation of researchers in the field of desertification and land degradation for Universities and Scientific Centers.
- **Dr. Melanie Broin** provided an overview of Agropolis International as a non-profit association whose members are institutions instead of individuals. AI members also include local authorities and training entities. AI's mission is to improve the visibility of its members and to facilitate interaction between science, policy and civil society. Melanie Broin discusses ways in which AI could support DNI, including increasing DNI's visibility through its network and collaborating on grant applications. She emphasized the neighborhood of such organizations in Agropolis as CGIAR, which is one of the important organizations engaged in research about food security, biodiversity, climate change, gender, and poverty and Agropolis International will be happy to offer the event facilities to DNIs events and workshops as our cooperation with DNI aims sustainable management of mutual projects and programs dedicated on best outcomes and results.
- **Dr. Jean Luc Chotte** suggested to DNI 2 key actions: (i) working on a joint policy paper to be published between June and the next COP29, which will held in Azerbaijan, and (ii) organizing a virtual meeting to discuss the issue of effective data collection and analysis to combat desertification and land degradation. Jean Luc Chotte expressed his gratitude for sharing between the DNI Members and Social Media the Policy Brief on Healthy soils sustain food system transformations to contribute to the net zero CO2 emission target by 2050" jointly prepared for the COP28 by Initiative 4P1000, IRD and Cirad. Dr. Jean Luc Chotte suggested to DNI to prepare a **Position Paper** for these high-level events organized by

UNCCD and UNFCCC and recommended the preparation of **Terms of Reference (ToR)** for the organization of side events within upcoming COP29 and building up an international consortium for research and development projects. He suggested the cooperation availability with **Data Terra** for Data sharing and Data aggregation for mutual benefits to be linked with infrastructure dedicated to Earth-observation data.

- **Dr. Melanie Requier Desgiardin** noted that the DNis Advisory Board should be more actively involved in the activities that ensure international awareness of DNis, including European institutions and programs.
- **Dr. Kakha Nadiradze** summarized this meeting and emphasized the fact that it was the first introductory meeting with the Dni Agropolis for the development of future cooperation and successful models, through which such organizations as CGIAR, IAMM will also be involved in our projects, and with our projects we will respond to the many challenges of We are also facing climate change, land degradation and environmental pollution. He thanked Agropoli on behalf of DNis for this meeting and hoped for future successful cooperation.

### **Actions to be taken**

---

- *Circulate minutes.*
- *Create a working group for the development of a Concept Note on data-focused meeting and ultimately a joint position paper for the upcoming COP29.*
- *Finalise the DNI's poster.*
- *Keep each other informed about possible collaboration opportunities;*
- *Preparation of Terms of Reference, ToR;*
- *Outline the Agropolis International and DNis' Priorities, Tasks and Goals for future joint projects and programs for funding;*
- *Work jointly with Agropolis International and CSFD scientists and extend the DNis Academy for multidisciplinary sessions and presentations from other partners;*
- *Contribute to fundraising for research projects according to the French Legislation for NGOs by Local and International Donors;*
- *Initiate the Joint Research Programs to tackle land management issues for Asian and African Countries;*

### **Regarding the Mission and Tasks of Working Group:**

- **A new Working Group for strengthening the DNI's engagement in International Events and High Panel will be created by 15 February 2024 and coordinated by DNI, Agropolis International and CSFD to determine the substantial eligibility criteria for participation in the Calls and grant programs for NGOs Registered in France as the project proposals must meet the criteria that requirements for international and interdisciplinary cooperation to produce relevant competitive projects ;**
- **To consider the engagement and involvement of Agropolis International, CSFD in cooperation and other stakeholders, CGIAR, CIRAD, CIHEAM, and IAMM and determine ways and cooperation platforms of DNI and Agropolis International, CSFD to be involved in the agenda of International organizations and events organized under UNCCD and UNFCCC**
- **Building up an International Consortium with Agropolis International and CSFD for Horizon Europe, Scientific-Research Foundations of China, JRC, EIP-AGRI Operational Group (OG) projects; ERANET; EU Partnership; LIFE; INTERREG; ERASMUS; Public national/ regional funds etc.**

Signed:

Dr. Kakha NADIRADZE  
Chair



Dr. Giovanna Seddaiu  
General Secretary



Photos of the Meeting:



