

Minutes on Decisions taken at the 6th General Assembly of DesertNet International (DNI) 22 February 2021 online

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|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Location | Zoom |
| Date | 22 February 2021 |
| Agenda | Annex 1 (page 8) |
| Participants | Annex 2 (page 9) |

Session I - Welcome

Youssef Brahimi opened the session by welcoming the DNI members who participated in the event. Youssef Brahimi thanked the DNI network for its two last years' confidence in him and remarked DNI's good international reputation as well as the successes achieved by the association despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Youssef Brahimi opened the Sixth General Assembly of DNI.

Session II - Outcomes of the DNI elections

Youssef Brahimi introduced Chiara Ceseracciu from DNI Operational Secretariat, who illustrated the election process to the General Assembly. General information and details about the election process are available in **Annex 3** (page 10).

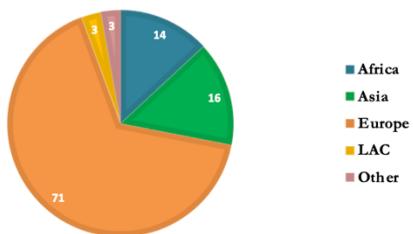
Chiara Ceseracciu also illustrated the number and geographical distribution of current DNI active members as well as of the DNI members who participated in the election (**Figure 1**). More details about the geographical distribution of current DNI active members, see **Annex 4** (page 11).

Figure 1: Election participation

DNI MEMBERS

Total active members*: 113

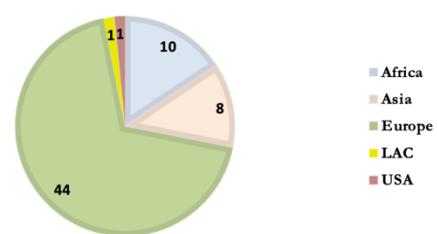
GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF DNI ACTIVE MEMBERS



NUMBER OF VOTERS IN 2021

DNI members who voted in 2021 elections: 64/105 (61%)

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF 2021 VOTERS





**DesertNet
International**

Lastly, Chiara Ceseracciu presented the newly elected members of the Steering Committee, Advisory Board and Bureau of DNI, whose mandate will last two years.

The results of the DNI elections and nominations are as follows:

DNI Steering Committee (2021-2022)

- Abraham Elena Maria (IADIZA- CONICET; Argentina)
- Brahimi Youssef (CAP & DEV; France)
- Cherlet Michael (Joint Research Centre, European Commission; Belgium)
- Essahli Wafa (Consultant; Tunisia)
- Marqués María José (Universidad Autónoma De Madrid; Spain)
- Nadiradze Kakha (Association for Farmers Rights Defense, AFRD; Georgia)
- Raziq Abdul Raziq (Alwathba Camel Dairy, Masaken Alain, United Arab Emirates)
- Seddaiu Giovanna (University of Sassari – Desertification Research Centre; Italy)
- Wang Fei (Institute of Soil and Water Conservation and Institute of Soil and Water conservation; China)

Scientific Areas of expertise:

- Natural Sciences
- Applied Sciences
- Social Sciences & economics

DNI Advisory Board (2021-2022)

- Akhtar-Schuster Mariam (German Aerospace Center, Project Management Agency (DLR-PT); Germany)
- Batlle-Sales Jorge (Universidad de Valencia; Spain)
- Enne Giuseppe (University of Sassari – Desertification Research Centre; Italy)
- Requier-Desjardins Mélanie (CIHEAM-IAMM; France)
- Roggero Pier Paolo (University of Sassari – Desertification Research Centre; Italy)
- Schmiedel Ute (University of Hamburg; Germany)
- Serraj Rachid (Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); Egypt)
- Stringer Lindsay (University of York; United Kingdom)
- Zucca Claudio (University of Sassari; Italy)

Scientific Areas of expertise:

- Natural Sciences
- Applied Sciences
- Social Sciences & economics

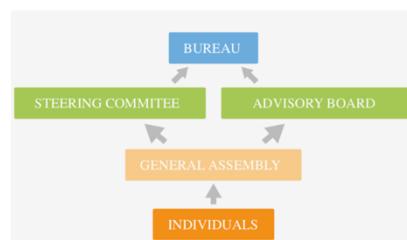
DNI Bureau (2021-2022)

Chair: Youssef BRAHIMI, France

Co-Chair: Elena Maria ABRAHAM, Argentina

Treasurer: María José MARQUÉS, Spain

Secretary General: Giovanna SEDDAIU, Italy



DNI activities

DNI activities in 2018-2020

As defined in Article 6 of the Statutes of DNI, Youssef Brahimi, as the former Chair of DNI, presented a Report on the activities and services of DesertNet in the period 2018-2020:

- **Participation to relevant International Conferences:** for the **UNCCD COP14** (New Delhi, September 2019), the UNCCD asked the SPI (Mariam Akhtar Schuster, Jean Luc Chotte, Annette Cowie and Nichole Barger) to design the scientific program of the Day of Science. Thanks to Mariam Akhtar-Schuster, DNI members actively participated in the debates and presentations that were held during the conference.
- **Development of new DNI Website:** the **DNI Website** is now functional and a strong partnership is being built between DNI Operational Secretariat and the UNCCD Secretariat. This partnership is being built on two levels: on the one hand, through the exchange of information within the **UNCCD CSOs Network**; and on the other hand, through DNI's permanent slot in the **UNCCD knowledge Marketplace**, which can be used to disseminate DNI communication and information material.
- **Activities to promote DNI visibility and interaction with International Organizations:** A **DNI brochure** was designed in 2020, which is fundamental for DNI's external communication. Progress can be made by improving the brochure's design and by translating it into different languages. In addition to the DNI brochure, DNI had the opportunity to enhance its international visibility by participating to an event organized by the Desertification Research Center (NRD) of Sassari University, which was held on the **World Day to Combat Desertification** (17 June 2020). Youssef Brahimi suggested that DNI organizes its own communication event on the next **World Day to Combat Desertification**.

Update on DNI eligibility to apply for projects and external funds

Treasurer María José Marqués provided an update about DNI eligibility to apply for projects and external funds:

- Strategies aimed at **mobilizing resources for financing DNI activities**:
 - i) Submissions of project proposals in cooperation with other DNI members.
 - ii) DNI members working in Universities or Research Institutes can promote and support DNI activities through scientific, financial, logistical or material support:
 - Co-organizing Summer Schools in 2021 or 2022.
 - Co-organizing courses, either on-line or face-to-face.
 - Co-organization scientific events.
 - Encouraging colleagues and students to join DNI.
 - iii) DNI members who are currently managing Research or R&D projects could co-organize events, demonstrations and workshops jointly with DNI.
- Strategies aimed at **mobilizing DNI resources to fund member's activities**:
 - i) Support young researchers to attend events by paying for the registration fees.
 - ii) Support short-term scientific missions of DNI members.

Financial report 2018-2020

As defined in Article 6 of the Statutes of DNI, the newly re-confirmed treasurer María José Marqués presented the DNI financial report for the period 2018-2020. The DNI budget is stable, few expenses were made, and no external resources were collected. The proportion of the

network members regularly paying their fees is around 27%. The detailed financial report is available in **Annex 5** (page 12).

Session III – DNI organizational strategies for 2021-2022

Lessons learned and success pathways emerging in DNI

Chair of DNI Youssef Brahimi expressed his contempt with the fact that DNI is **increasingly well-known internationally as a knowledge hub**. He also highlighted the negative impact that the **COVID-19 pandemic** has had on DNI activities, while recognizing the lessons that can be drawn from the crisis, for instance in terms of remote learning and virtual communication.

Chair of DNI Youssef Brahimi also suggested two aspects that DNI should focus on during its next mandate:

- i) **Proactiveness** in the UN arena and on the field.
- ii) Promotion of a higher degree of **involvement** among DNI members.

Development strategies 2021-2022

The newly elected Chair Youssef Brahimi expressed his interest in committing to further catalyse and improve the DNI network in the 2021-2022 biennium with the support of the new Steering Committee and Advisory Board members and the newly elected DNI Bureau.

Chair of DNI Youssef Brahimi highlighted 2 main objectives for the 2021-2022 biennium:

- i) Strengthening the **international character** of DNI and ensuring a better **regional balance** within the institution's bodies.
- ii) Opening the association to the maximum extent possible to **earlier carrier scientists**.

The newly elected Chair Youssef Brahimi presented a work program to achieve the aforementioned objectives. A report of the proposed work programme is available in **Annex 6** (page 13), which includes the contribution of DNI Steering Committee and Advisory Board members.

DNI Chair illustrated the pillars of the proposed work program for the 2021-2022 biennium:

- **Improving DNI Governance** by supporting **regional initiatives** in **Africa** (Support to and evaluation/assessment of the implementation of the Great Green Wall), **Asia** (to be determined) and **Latin America** (to be determined).

The expected results of such strategy are:

- A visible regional DNI presence.
- An interest from DNI members to get involved in a well-known cause.
- An interest from scientists in the region to join DNI.

DNI Chair also illustrated a tentative proposal for the distribution of Steering Committee and Advisory Board members within the regional initiatives:

- Africa: Youssef Brahimi, Wafa Sahli, Giovanna Seddaiu, Ute Schmiedel, Giuseppe Enne, Rachid Serraj, Lindsay Stringer, Mélanie Réquier-Desjardins
- Asia: Wang Fei, Mariam Akhtar-Schuster, Raziq Abdul Raziq, Kakha Nadiradze
- Latin America Elena Abraham, Maria José Marqués, Jorge Batlle Sales, Claudio Zucca, Michael Cherlet

- **Organizing global fora and scientific events:**

- DNI should celebrate each year the Desertification and Drought Day (June 17).
- DNI should organize 2 scientific events in the 2021-2022 biennium: Jorge Batlle Sales (Universidad de Valencia) is invited to lead the organization of a DNI event in 2021.

- **Increasing cooperation, both among DNI members and with external partners.**

- **DNI Participation to UN meetings:** DNI should list the most relevant international and UN meetings that DNI should attend and ensure that DNI is able to participate. The forthcoming UNCCD meetings are: **CRIC 19 (March 2021) and COP15 (in 2022)**. DNI should also strategically look for being more present in the other Rio Conventions bodies, particularly the IPBES and the IPCC.
- **Developing a PhD program on desertification:** Chair Youssef Brahimi proposed that the University of Sassari, in particular Pier Paolo Roggero and Giovanna Seddaiu, take the lead of a DNI working group, extended to external partners, for setting up a PhD program on desertification.
- **Developing a strong communication strategy:**
 - The DNI Website is now functional and a strong partnership is being built between DNI Secretariat and the UNCCD Secretariat.
 - DNI should develop factsheets and information material as well as translate existing brochure in different languages.

Discussion and proposals about the DNI organizational strategies for 2021-2022

Several points below were discussed and approved:

- It is important to find solutions to create stronger **connection** between DNI members and the association.
- DNI should link the issue of desertification with other crucial topics when planning initiatives or project proposals: **climate change, biodiversity conservation, food security, water availability and conflict mitigation**.
- DNI should **develop project proposals as a network**, rather than directly as DNI. DNI could be involved as a **means of capacity building on desertification** within proposals applied for by DNI members' institutions.
- Melanie Requiers proposed to consider the possibility to accept the invitation of the journal MDPI Land to publish a special issue on "Land degradation and restoration in Europe". This option will be explored by Melanie Requiers, Yousseff Brahimi and Pier Paolo Roggero which will report later to the DNI Steering Committee and Advisory Board on this matter.
- Organizing a summer school on desertification would be a key strategy to both mobilize resources and increase DNI's visibility.
- DNI could play a role with respect to the **Great Green Wall** initiative, for instance by providing scientific support to and evaluation/assessment of the implementation of the Great Green Wall (GGW). This support could consist in: the establishment of a regional scientific exchange platform, the organization of scientific conferences on topics related to the GGW, the development of an independent and objective position paper about the problems and opportunities related to the (GGW), and so on.
- DNI should create both **regional and thematic working groups**, which would have a specific mandate and would be open to all DNI members.
- DNI should increase its presence to international conferences, especially **to UNCCD meetings**, both through DNI members' participation and through the development of relevant **position papers**.
- DNI should develop **information and communication material** and leverage UNCCD knowledge marketplace to disseminate such material.
- It is advisable that someone be responsible for **managing relations with partners** (particularly 4per1000) and with the networks that DNI is part of. Melanie Requier is proposed for the role.

- It is important to show that DNI can be a **think tank** by developing scientific assessments. It is fundamental to deliver products that are independent, objective and of scientific value.
- A focus of DNI for the 2021-2022 biennium should be promoting the involvement of members from non-European regions in order to ensure **regional balance** within the association.
- DNI should ride the wave of **digital innovation** and plan to organize a **series of webinars**.

Wrap Up:

1. Kick off with DNI working groups.
2. Launch a debate on pressing issues related to desertification (climate change, biodiversity conservation, food security, water availability and conflict mitigation) through webinars, courses and so on.
3. Plan 2 scientific events for 2021-2022.
4. Develop a PhD program on desertification.
5. Develop a communication strategy for DNI.
6. Develop scientific assessments and position papers to be disseminated.

Annexes to the minutes

Annex 1 of the minutes: Agenda of the 6th General Assembly of DesertNet International

Annex 2 of the minutes: Participants to DNI 6th General Assembly

Annex 3 of the minutes: DNI Election Process

Annex 4 of the minutes: Geographical distribution of currently active DNI members

Annex 5 of the minutes: DNI Financial Report 2018-2020

Annex 6 of the minutes: Proposed DNI work programme for the biennium 2021-2022



Annex 1 – Agenda of the 6th General Assembly of DesertNet International

Welcome (Chair **Youssef Brahimi**)

14:00 CET: Opening of the Sixth General Assembly of DNI

- Welcome by DNI Chair

Outcomes of the DNI elections (Chair **Youssef Brahimi**)

14:15 CET: Elections' results

- DNI election process and its results (Chiara Ceseracciu, **DNI operational Secretariat**)
- Proclamation and inauguration of the new Steering Committee, Advisory Board and Bureau of DNI (Chair **Youssef Brahimi**)

DNI activities (Chair **new DNI Chair**)

14:30 CET: Status report

- Financial report 2018-2020 (**María José Marqués**)
- DNI activities in 2018-2020 (**Youssef Brahimi**)
 - Participation to relevant International Conferences
 - Activities to promote DNI visibility and interaction with International Organisations
 - Development of new DNI Website
 - Update on DNI eligibility to apply for projects and external funds (**María José Marqués**)
- Lessons learned and success pathways emerging in DNI (**Youssef Brahimi**)
 - COVID-19 impact on DNI activities
 - DNI increasingly well-known internationally as a knowledge hub
 - Necessity to be more proactive in the UN arena and on the field
 - Necessity to promote higher degree of involvement among DNI members

16:00 CET: Coffee Break

DNI organizational strategies for 2020-2022 (new DNI Chair)

16:15 CET: Development strategies 2020-22

- Relevant meetings in 2020-2022
- Research and innovation initiatives
- Capacity building initiatives
- Communication strategy and increased cooperation with UNCCD Knowledge Hub

16:40 CET: Discussion

17:00 CET: Wrap up and conclusion

Annex 2 – Participants to DNI 6th General Assembly

| Name | Affiliation | Email |
|-------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Wafa Essahli | Consultante | wafa@essahli.com |
| Maria Jose Marques | Universidad Autónoma de Madrid | mariajose.marques@uam.es |
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| Lindsay Stringer | University of York | lindsay.stringer@york.ac.uk |
| Mohamed Zaoui | Collège de France | zaoui@college-de-france.fr |
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| LAXMIKANT SHARMA | CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF RAJASTHAN | laxmikant_evs@curaj.ac.in |
| Jean ALBERGEL | Institut de Recherche pour le développement | jean.albergel@ird.fr |
| Elias Symeonakis | Manchester Metropolitan University | e.symeonakis@mmu.ac.uk |
| Jorge Batlle-Sales | Universitat de València. Spain | Jorge.Batlle@uv.es |
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| Simonetta Bagella | University of Sassari | sbagella@uniss.it |
| Youssef Brahimi | NGO La Route du Sel et de l'Espoir - LA ROSE, France | y.brahimi@larouteasso.org |
| Giuseppe Enne | Desertification Research Centre, University of Sassari | ennegiuseppe@gmail.com |
| Pier Paolo Roggero | Desertification Research Centre, University of Sassari | pproggero@uniss.it |
| Rachid Serraj | FAO | Rachid.Serraj@fao.org |
| Chiara Ceseracciu | Desertification Research Centre, University of Sassari | cceseracciu@uniss.it |
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| Pandi Zdruli | CIHEAM IAMB | pandi@iamb.it |
| Thomas Falk | CGIAR | T.Falk@cgiar.org |
| Giovanna Seddaiu | Desertification Research Centre, University of Sassari | gseddaiu@uniss.it |

Annex 3 – DNI election process

The roadmap to the candidate selection process is as follows:

- 22 December 2020: letter sent out to DNI members to request candidatures
- 22-29 December 2020: circulation of reminders
- 5 January 2021: deadline for returning nominations (9 candidates presented their candidatures for the Steering Committee and 9 candidates presented their candidatures for the Advisory Board)
- 12 January 2021: deadline for selection process by DNI Steering Committee and Advisory Board.

Candidatures were screened by DNI Steering Committee and Advisory Board, based on the following criteria:

- i) Good and longstanding knowledge of international science-policy processes within the international Desertification community.
- ii) Good knowledge of the UN(CCD) processes and other international science-policy programs.
- iii) Good record of leadership activities within science-policy initiatives.
- iv) Good record of scientific publications on dryland and desertification.
- v) Guarantor for geographic balance in the Steering Committee or Advisory Board.
- vi) Guarantor for thematic balance in the Steering Committee or Advisory Board.
- 25 January 2021: circulation of candidate lists (9 candidates for the Steering Committee and 9 candidates for the Advisory Board) with instructions on voting procedures.
- 26 January – 2 February 2021: reminder about upcoming elections and (not active) personal electronic link to the ballots sent to all eligible voters of DNI.
- 3-4 February 2021: Electronic ballot for Steering Committee and Advisory Board elections.
- 12 February: Announcement of the results of the elections and the composition of the newly elected Steering Committee and Advisory Board.
- 22 February 2021: Sixth General Assembly via Zoom and announcement of the new DNI Bureau.

The electronic election system was set up by an experienced data manager in Sassari selected by the DNI Operational Secretariat and the DNI Bureau.

The electronic election system met the specific requirements set by the DNI Bureau:

- i) to allow each DNI member to cast only 1 vote (expressing 6 preferences for SC and AB candidates respectively);
- ii) to guarantee anonymity, confidentiality and security.

Annex 4 – Geographical distribution of currently active members



Annex 5 – DNI Financial Report 2018-2020

| | Costs/Payments | Incomes | Balance € |
|---|----------------|---------|---------------|
| 2018 → 31 Dec / DNI Balance | | | 1,849 |
| ICoN-SLM Project | | | 39,864 |
| 2018 Balance | | | 41,713 |
| Bank commissions | 156.42 | | |
| Elections. Electronic voting system | 468 | | |
| Costs Gen. Assembly 16/Jan/2019 | 1,471 | | |
| Membership fee incomes | | 340 | |
| 2019 → 1 Jan to 31 Dec / Balance | | | 39,958 |
| Bank commissions | 159 | | |
| DNI website update and design | 3,660 | | |
| Membership fee incomes | | 380 | |
| 2020 → 1 Jan to 31 Dec / Balance | | | 36,518 |

Financial statement as of 31st December 2020

| Deposit | € |
|---|---------------|
| PayPal | 1,054 |
| Bank account, including ICoN-SLM Project | 36,518 |

Annex 6 – Proposed DNI work programme for the biennium 2021-2022

DNI General Assembly, 22/02/2021

Draft elements of the work programme 2021-2022

Introduction

The DNI Steering Committee and Advisory Board met jointly on 12/01/2021 to elect Bureau members, in accordance with the Association's statutes. The members of the SC and AB, noting that, due to the pandemic, the activities of the association in 2020 have been very significantly affected and that it has not been possible to continue the momentum initiated the previous year to revitalize DNI, it was agreed that it was judicious to ensure the stability of the bodies of the association in these difficult times by reappointing part of the Bureau and, at the same time, develop the basis to ensure a better regional balance within the institution's bodies and strengthen the international character of DNI.

The other fundamental orientation that emerges from the situation analysis is the imperative need to open the association to the maximum extent possible to earlier carrier scientists from all over the world, in order to utilize the DNI to its full capacity.

This draft work program is against this background. It also takes up, synthesizes and translates into concrete proposals the rich debates engaged between the members of the Steering Committee and the Advisory Board during the two meetings of December 12, 2020 and January 12, 2021.

The clear message that emerged from the discussions on the future of DNI can be summed up in these words: consolidate the foundations and open up the institution wide-open, especially for earlier carrier scientists.

Consolidating the institutional bodies of DNI so that they are both efficient and strengthened in their international character, and at the same time able to building spaces of increasing interest for DNI members.

The following proposals are therefore the translation of these basic orientations, marked by the fact that 2021 will still be a particular year in which travel will be extremely limited and the financial resources of the association relatively limited.

1. Improving DNI governance

The current DNI bodies are the General Assembly, the Steering Committee and the Advisory Board. These are elected bodies. However, the question is raised as to whether the international character of the elected bodies can be strengthened so that it reflects a better regional balance. It is clear that the

elective character of the bodies does not allow decisions to be taken on their composition, such as quotas, for example. This is an important question, but I believe that the answer to this legitimate concern lies in broadening the reflection to the entire functioning of DNIs.

In fact, if not so many DNI members are running for election, perhaps it is because they do not see sufficient interest in doing so. The fact that there are no more candidates than positions to be filled on DNI bodies is in itself a real concern.

In an effort to stimulate the interest of DNI members to become involved in DNI's institutional bodies, the recommended way would be to develop a process and mechanisms for work and exchange that could match individual scientific interests with the relevant scientific issues DNI is addressing, and that could generate vocations and thus encourage new members to become involved in the life of the association. Creating the enabling environment for attracting committed members.

We therefore propose to overcome this situation by establishing a positive dynamic for change, a process that promotes vocations to the service of DNI through initiatives that would stimulate the interest of members to engage in DNI activities, that would also respond to their vocations or scientific interests. With this in mind, the following proposals are made for 2021 and 2022, focusing on two main components: the establishment of thematic groups and investment in regional initiatives.

1.1 Establishing Working Groups

In the past, DNI established several Working Groups on general themes, which are as follows:

- Economics of Sustainable Land Management
- Livestock
- Science-Policy Interface
- Modelling
- Soil Salinisation
- Environmental Management

The underlying idea was certainly to make these working groups as many spaces of exchange on important issues for the scientific community working on the fight against desertification and on sustainable land management. However, experience shows that it is very difficult to maintain such permanent structures. They require significant human investment for their management and imply to be able to maintain the interest of its members over time.

Proposal: Create ad hoc working groups on specific topics driven by current international concerns. The work of these groups would be based on the internal expertise of the DNI, but could be open to other resource persons.

Main characteristics of these working groups:

- **Duration:** Limited time work, created in respect of a particular deadline (an international event, a contribution to an international report...).

- **Expected result:** A working group oriented towards a product clearly defined in advance: a report, a positioning document, a policy brief, etc.
- **Topics:** it is proposed to create, in a first stage, 3 working groups to work on terms of reference that would be defined by the SC and the AB, focusing on 3 issues:
 - **SPI** : science-policy dialogue
 - **Soil**
 - **Environmental management and dryland conservation**

Procedure: The SC and AB will establish the terms of reference for these working groups, and will select the leader following a call for expressions of interest within the network. The group would therefore be created on a voluntary basis and individual interest in participating.

It is anticipated that the ongoing work of the UNCCD (SPI), UNFCCC, CBD, IPCC and IPBES be used as a framework for establishing the specific ToRs of the working groups. If this approach is to be adopted, the working groups' specific themes should contribute directly to the work of these bodies, for greater recognition and visibility of DNI.

The promotion of the work of the groups will be made through a:

- Wide information on the initiation of the work, names of the members of the working group, regular information on the work in progress
- Targeted information of DNI's main partners (UN institutions, international organizations concerned by the theme, institutions that support DNI ...)
- Targeted information to the UNCCD Secretariat, for them to include it in their regular reporting on matters related to UNCCD implementation.

Valuation of the results, through:

Publications, reports, conferences, communications, capacity building workshops, etc.

Another objective of the working groups could be to build a project proposal. In this case The working groups would be driven by funded projects coordinated by DNI members or by teams willing to present a project proposal. Others could join such working groups. This would help the networking of projects dealing with similar topics.

1.2 Support to Regional initiatives

In addition to the thematic working groups, it also appears extremely important for DNI to be present in the regions, in order to combine a thematic approach with the further enhancement of the international character of DNI.

To this end it is proposed that DNI, as a network, invest in and provide scientific support to regional initiatives.

There is currently a proposal for Africa: scientific **support to and evaluation/assessment of the implementation of the Great Green Wall**. This support could consist in: the establishment of a regional scientific exchange platform, the organization of scientific conferences on topics related to the GGW, the training of young scientists, the supervision of theses, etc. The purpose being to be in a position to offer, within the specific framework of an emblematic initiative, all that DNI could provide in terms of support.

The same approach could be applied in **Latin America and Asia**, under the leadership of DNI members.

Concretely, it is proposed for the next 2 years to set up 3 regional initiatives: Africa, Asia, Latin America.

Expected results:

- Strengthened scientific capacities at the regional level
- A visible regional DNI presence
- An interest by DNI members to get involved in a well-known cause
- An interest from scientists in the region to join DNI.

Modalities:

- Designate leaders within DNI ST/AB (or a small team per initiative) to ensure the establishment of a working group and the coordination of each initiative.
- Establish a partnership with the institution in charge of the Initiative

Tentative proposal for distribution of SC/AB members within the initiatives :

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Asia | Wang Fei, Mariam Akhtar-Schuster, Raziq Abdul Raziq, Kakha Nadiradze |
| Latin America | Elena Abraham, Maria José Marqués, Jorge Batlle Sales, Claudio Zucca, Michael Cherlet |
| Africa | Youssef Brahimi, Wafa Sahli, Giovanna Seddaiu, Ute Schmiedel, Giuseppe Enne, Rachid Serraj, Lindsay Stringer, Mélanie Réquier-Desjardins |

1.3 Improving the functioning of DNI bodies

If the working groups and initiatives are put in place, the work of the DNI bodies will thus be strengthened by the need to provide guidance or adopt positions on certain issues and to find ways to strengthen the working groups or initiatives. It is therefore proposed to increase significantly the number of body meetings so as to strengthen exchanges within DNI by videoconference.

To this end it is proposed to hold at least 4 meetings per year of the Steering Committee and 2 meetings per year of the Advisory Board.

2. Organizing global fora/symposia /scientific events

This will depend on the availability and capacity of each DNI member to organize such scientific events (technical and financial capacity). Moreover, especially in the present period, these events can also be organized as online conferences to save costs and reduce carbon footprint

One proposal is to systematically organize a DNI event on Desertification and Drought Day (June 17, 2021). The thematic of this year is: "Restoration. Land. Recovery. We build back better with healthy land"

We propose that Jorge Batlle Sales takes the lead of a DNI team, for organizing a scientific debate at the University of Valencia, in cooperation with UNCCD, FAO and other key stakeholders. This event should be open to **post-graduate students**.

Objective for 2021-2022: organization of 2 scientific events

3. Increasing cooperation among DNI members

In reference to the Knowledge Market Place put in place by our colleagues of the UNCCD Secretariat it is important, within DNI, to know each other and to exchange information on what each DNI member could offer in terms of scientific capacities and opportunities for building cooperation and partnerships. A call for expression of interest should be launched within DNI network to identifying the level of the scientific and technical potential of DNI.

The DNI website could be used to this end: list of topics/areas of interest that DNI members are working on, matching offer and supply within DNI network...

This would be carried out under the responsibility of the Steering Committee

4. Increasing cooperation with partners

4 per 1000 The international initiative "4 per 1000", launched by France on 1 December 2015 at the COP 21, consists of federating all voluntary stakeholders of the public and private sectors (national governments, local and regional governments, companies, trade organisations, NGOs, research facilities, etc.) under the framework of the Lima-Paris Action Plan (LPAP). DNI, thanks to our colleague Mélanie Requier-Desjardin, was invited to attend the Forum of Partners which was organized on 11 December 2019 in Santiago de Chile, in the margins of the UNFCCC COP 25. Even if our representative could not attend this meeting, it shows that we are fully partners of this initiative. It is proposed to look for a more visible involvement of DNI in 4 per 1000, maybe by designating a DNI member, Mélanie if she agrees, as the official representative of DNI in the 4 per 1000 initiative.

ICON SLM– Independent consortium of research and knowledge networks on land degradation, desertification and sustainable land management. Its purpose is to generate, share, assess and exchange knowledge on land degradation and desertification (LDD) and sustainable land management (SLM) related needs and opportunities in drylands in order to provide multidisciplinary and policy-relevant knowledge in support of the UNCCD (NSBs) of other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and advisory bodies on the science-policy linkages; to strengthen the role and visibility of science and other forms of knowledge in the identification and implementation of appropriate SLM and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This mission is very similar to that of DNI, that is why it is important to be actively involved in it. If in the last two years few activities have been recorded, it remains that ICOM SLM is an opportunity to be preserved in order to get our messages across, especially since the Presidency of the Consortium will be given to a member of DNI for this year (NRD, University of Sassari).

5. DNI Participation to UN meetings

DNI should list the most relevant international and UN meetings that DNI should attend, and ensure that DNI is able to participate, either through member(s) of the SC/AB or through any other DNI member.

For UNNCCD the forthcoming meeting are: CRIC 19 (March 2021, Visio conference) and COP15 (in 2022).

In addition to the participation to UNCCD meetings DNI should also strategically look for being more present in the other Rio Conventions bodies, particularly the IPBES and the IPCC.

6. Developing a PhD program on desertification

This is an ambitious challenge that fundamentally meets the DNI's objectives. It also represents a means for mobilizing DNI's scientific and technical capacities for an inspiring project.

The proposal is to ask the University of Sassari, Pier Paolo and Giovanna, to take the leadership of a DNI working group, extended to external partners (to be identified), for the setting up of a PhD on desertification. This would be an excellent opportunity to cooperate with other universities in Africa, Asia and Latin America. A priori, all DNI members should be interested, from near or far, by the development of a PhD on Desertification.

7. Developing a strong communication strategy

The DNI Website

The new website is an essential tool for DNI visibility and outreach. Thanks to the involvement of nrd and the University of Sassari (Pier Paolo Roggero, Chiara Ceseracciu) in cooperation with Hamburg University (Ute) and Mariam, the DNI website is now functional and Chiara is taking care of DNI communication, as well as of the website and the DNI page on the social medias.

Cooperation with the UNCCD Secretariat on communication

A strong partnership is being built between DNI Secretariat and the UNCCD Secretariat on communication. This is an asset and should be strengthened.

Involvement in the UNCCD CSOs network

DNI being a member of the UNCCD CSO Network, the DNI Secretariat receives and disseminates news from the UNCCD CSO Network on a regular basis. Conversely, this network should be used as a channel for disseminating our own information and key messages.

Developing factsheets and information material

A DNI brochure was designed in 2020 and constitutes a basic and useful product to inform on DNI missions and organisation. This brochure is currently in English. A French version exists. It is proposed to translate the brochure in different languages (with the contribution of DNI members for the translation) as a means to reach more people than only anglophones (I am referring to the different persons who could be interested by DNI activities, not only the scientists).

In the future, it is anticipated that communication will be close to the working groups and initiatives presented above, to present their activities and develop information support products (factsheets, reports, etc.).

Need for strengthening the DNI Secretariat

The contribution of the DNI Secretariat in the organization of DNI meetings has been critical (Pier Paolo and Chiara). The work done is commended and we must think how to strengthen this vital DNI structure for it to efficiently support all the forthcoming activities.

8. Mobilizing resources for DNI activities

Mobilizing resources is always a challenge, and not only for DNI.

We must, each of us according to our capacities and networks, try to mobilize resources for the financing of DNI activities, in the form of a request or possibly a project submission. However, this takes time and the result is not certain.

Other ways to support DNI's activities are possible, such as :

- Organizing a summer school, in 2021 or 2022, to mobilize DNI expertise to the benefit of young scientists, and raise some funds for the association.
- Supporting DNI activities through the Universities and institutions to which some members belong. DNI has been able, up to day, to carry out some activities supported by some Universities or Research Centres. This is very positive and it would be desirable, in a more general way, that DNI members who have responsibilities at the level of Universities or Research Centers could see how they could provide financial, logistical or material support to DNI activities (co-organization of scientific events, involvement of their students in DNI activities, encouraging them to join DNI ...).
- Some DNI members are currently managing Research or R&D projects. They may also see how to involve DNI in their activities, or co-organize in cooperation with DNI events that are part of their program of activities, and thus give more visibility to the network.

These are some avenues of work for the concrete mobilization of resources, which will necessarily have to be deepened during this Biennium.