



**Founding
Institutions**

Arid Land Research Center
Tottori, Japan

Centro de Investigaciones
sobre Desertificación
Valencia, Spain

Cold and Arid Regions
Environmental & Engineering
Research Institute
Lanzhou, China

Desert Research Center
Cairo, Egypt

Desert Research
Foundation of Namibia
Windhoek, Namibia

Desert Research Institute
Reno, NV, USA

Dryland Research Centre
Hamburg, Germany

Gujarat Institute for
Desert Ecology
Bhuj, Gujarat, India

Instituto Argentino de
Investigaciones de las
Zonas Áridas
Mendoza, Argentina

International Center for Arid
and Semiarid Land Studies
Lubbock, TX, USA

Jacob Blaustein Institutes
for Desert Research
Ben-Gurion University
of the Negev
Sede Boqer, Israel

**International
Organizations**

International Crop Research
Institute for Semi-Arid
Tropics (ICRISAT)

December 21, 2010

**Minutes of
2nd Steering Committee Biennial Meeting
Thursday, November 11, 2010, 15:00-17:00**

Taken by: Naomi Lipstein, MA student, BIDR

Edited by: Uriel Safriel

27 November 2010

Present:

Chair:

- Uriel **Safriel** (GNDRI coordinator, on behalf of BIDR, Israel)

Participants:

- Elena Maria **Abraham**, Gabrielle **Bastor**, Instituto Argentino de Investigaciones de las Zonas Áridas (IADIZA, Mendoza, Argentine)
- Pedro **Berliner**, Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research (BIDR, Ben Gurion University, Israel)
- Vijay **Kumar**, Gujarat Institute of Desert Ecology (GUIDE, Bhuj, Gujarat, India)
- Ute **Schmiedel**, Hamburg Dryland Research Center Hamburg (DRCH, Hamburg, Germany)
- Ando **Takayuki**, Arid Land Research Center (ALRC, Tottori University, Japan)

Apologizing for absence:

- A.C. Correa, International Center for Arid and Semiarid Land Studies (ICASALS, Texas, USA)
- Nick Lancaster, Desert Research Institute (DRI, Nevada, USA)
- Wang Tao, Cold and Arid Regions Environmental & Engineering Research Institute (CAREERI, Lanzhou, China)

Observers from the DDD conference participants:

- Mauricio **Schiortino**, Italian National Agency of New Technologies, Energy, Environment (ENEA) Rome, Italy
- Henri **Rueff**, University of Berne, Switzerland

Introductory segment

Dr. Pedro Berliner, Director of the Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research, GNDRI's host institution, opened the meeting by introducing himself and welcoming everyone to BIDR. He noted that it was imperative to work efficiently, due to time constraints. He then handed the chair to Prof. Uriel Safriel, GNDRI coordinator for the BIDR term of GNDRI chairmanship.

The Chair thanked Dr. Berliner and explained that GNDRI is a network of 12 institutes, noting that five of those institutes were present at this meeting (including BIDR). He then asked everyone to introduce themselves, adding that some of those present had been to the previous biennial meeting, while others had not.

The following agenda was proposed by the Chair:

1. Chair's report
2. Acceptance of a new member – candidacy of INSA (Semi Arid National Institute)
3. GNDRI courses
4. IADIZA proposed course as first in GNDRI courses series
5. Next Chairmanship of the network
6. Others

Dr. Ute Schmiedel (DRCH) asked to include in the agenda an announcement on books produced by the DRCH, and copies brought as present to the BIDR. The agenda, including this item, was then approved.

Chair's report

Item 1: What is GNDRI

The Chair elaborated on the rationale for creating the network. GNDRI is not a network of individuals carrying out research in and on drylands, but a network of research institutes whose mandate is dryland research. The need for such a network had been identified by the BIDR, mandated by the Government of Israel to carry out desert research (mandate later expanded to dryland research). Though researchers in most Israeli universities have carried out research on drylands, only the BIDR has been created for this purpose, and networking with other organizations of a similar mandate the world over seemed interesting.

The opportunity for this came during a session on desertification organized by the Desert Research Institute (DRI) of Nevada, USA as part of the program of an annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences (AAAS) taking place in St. Louis, Missouri, USA on 17 February 2006. Following this session, the BIDR initiated talks with DRI on establishing GNDRI. These resulted in inviting the institutes present at the St. Louis meeting to attend a Founding Meeting of GNDRI to take place back to back with the 2007 annual meeting of the AAAS in San Francisco, California, USA. This meeting, taking place at the Medici Room of the Renaissance Park Hotel, in San Francisco, California, USA, on Saturday, Feb 17, 2007, became the "First Organizational Meeting". In this meeting the objectives, structure and by-laws of GNDRI have been agreed by the representatives of the institutes

present, and later also approved by additional two institutes that could not attend the meeting. It was also agreed then on a rotating chairmanship of the network, and the BIDR was then elected as first Chair of GNDRI, to be followed, after two years, by the Desert Research Center (DRC), Cairo, Egypt. It was also decided in that meeting that the institutes involved in the founding process would constitute the Steering Committee of the network. The first Steering Committee Biennial Meeting took place nearly two year later, on 17 December 2008, back to back with the 2nd Drylands Deserts and Desertification conference in Sede Boqer Campus of the BIDR, Israel. The current meeting is therefore the second biennial meeting, when GNDRI is by now four years old.

Item 2 – Questionnaire application for new members

Following Decision 3 of the 1st Biennial Meeting “3.1 BIDR will compile a questionnaire to be filled-in by candidate institutions. The draft questionnaire will be sent to members for comments, will then be revised and resent to members for approval. Once the questionnaire is approved it will be sent to the two institutes that requested to join GNDRI.

3.2. The Co-Chair institute for membership will inspect the filled-in questionnaires and will be responsible for handling the accession process. It will also explore which existing institutes over the globe may qualify as candidates for membership, and approach them with regard to becoming candidates”, a questionnaire draft was produced and circulated to all members. Only a few comments have been sent back, and the product passed to DRCH’s webmaster, Mr. Thomas Hillmann, for placing the questionnaire on the web and making it interactive. Following several interaction between the webmaster and the GNDRI coordinator, the questionnaire was put into test by INSA, the first candidate member to use this facility.

Item 3 – GNDRI publications database

Assuming that it would be interesting for members of each institute to learn about new publications of the peer-reviewed literature are being produced by all members of the network, an interactive metadata database was created by DRCH webmaster on the GNDRI website. Each institute was asked to appoint one person that would have secured access to the network, and be responsible for putting each new publication’s metadata (name, abstract) on the GNDRI website. Then, everyone who enters the website would immediately see the info about this publication. By the day of reporting, there are 472 publications on the database. The website indicates that no new publication was entered during the last 14 days.

This reporting elicited a discussion, in which Dr. Abraham (IADIZA) said she did encourage the researchers of her institute to input information about their publications, but they did not know how to do that. The Chair responded in describing a procedure developed by the webmaster, in which each institute was asked to appoint one person – who would receive a permit from the webmaster, and will enter the website and introduce the information on-line. Dr. Abraham (IADIZA) said that appointing a person in IADIZA to do that wasn’t feasible, and each researcher was asked to insert the information on his/her publications on their own, which did not really work. The Chair responded that in the BIDR, which is a conglomerate of three institutes, the secretaries of each of them was appointed to do job, and they found themselves

running after the researchers, which shows that the researchers themselves seemed not to be interested in getting their publications on the website. Nevertheless, due to the work of the secretaries, most publications of the BIDR are on the database. Nevertheless, the Chair noted that the use of the website by GNDRI member is extremely low, something to be further explored and taken care of. Ideas regarding how to make the website useful both internally and externally were brought forward to the webmaster, but action in this regard is still pending.

Item 4 - GNDRI as a CSO

An action for making GNDRI a Civil Society Organization accredited to the UNCCD was initiated prior to Buenos Aires COP. This included filling-in a complex questionnaire and a set of communications between GNDRI office in the BIDR and the UNCCD Secretariat. The plenary of the UNCCD approved this accreditation. This allows GNDRI to participate in all UNCCD functions, to contribute to statements delivered by the UNCCD CSOs forum, and to contribute to the deliberations and negotiations under this convention.

Item 5 – Launching GNDRI Side Event in COP9

"Launching GNDRI" Side Event took place on 24 September 2009, in the Buenos-Aires Hilton Hotel, under the auspices of the ninth Conference of the Parties of the UNCCD (COP9). A couple of days prior to the event, it was announced during a segment of the "Scientific Conference" of the Committee for Science and Technology (CST) of the UNCCD, under the heading of "Global Initiatives". The two-minute PowerPoint presentation briefly described GNDRI and extended an invitation to the participants of the "Scientific Conference" to attend the Side Event. In addition, two hundred flyers were handed out to the delegates of the UNCCD and were posted in the various meeting rooms of COP9.

The "Side Event" was opened by an introductory presentation delivered by GNDRI coordinator, in which the rationale, mission, programs, website and governance structure of GNDRI were described. This was followed by short presentations delivered by researchers representing each a GNDRI member institute and describing its activities, especially those relevant to UNCCD implementation. The presenters were Professor Atsushi Tsunekawa (ALRC, Japan), Professor Pedro Berliner (BIDR, Israel), Dr. Gary Bastin (CSIRO, Alice Springs Lab), Dr. Mary Seely (DRFN, Namibia), Professor Elena Abraham (IADIZA, Argentina), Dr. Aderbal C. Correa (ICASALS, USA), and Dr. Suhas Wani (ICRISAT, India).

Prof. Jose Rubio (CIDE, Spain), Dr. Norbert Jurgens (DRCH, Germany), Professors Nicholas Lancaster and Dave Mouat (DRI, USA) and Dr. Vijay Kumar (GUIDE, India) prepared presentations on their respective member institutes, which the GNDRI Coordinator delivered. Thus, the only GNDRI member institutes not presented in this Side Event were CARRERI (China) and DRC (Egypt).

The meeting, lasting one and a half hours, was attended by around 70 members of national delegates to the UNCCD and scientists participating in the "Scientific Conference". In closing

the meeting, GNDRI Coordinator announced that GNDRI is open to new member institutes, provided they are committed by their mandate to dryland research. Indeed, after closing I received a number of requests for joining the network.

The event was preceded by a complimentary lunch provided by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of Israel in Buenos Aires, the latter printed the flyers.

Item 6 - Communication with GNDRI members

Following decision 1 of the 1nd biennial meeting, all communications with members have been by both electronic and regular mail.

Item 7 – Decisions not implemented yet

The Chair listed Decision of the 1st Biennial Steering Committee meeting that have not been implemented, as follows:

1. Decision 4, requesting BIDR to prepare a first draft of a proposal of the Network of Dryland Monitoring Sites.
2. Decision 3.2, requesting the Co-Chair for Membership to explore which existing institutes around the world may be viable candidates to become GNDRI members.
3. Decision 6, requesting the BIDR to contact with the Israeli Man and Biosphere Committee, for exploring options and modalities for cooperation between UNESCO's Man and Biosphere program, and GNDRI.
4. Decision 7, requesting the BIDR to explore the option of using Google Groups portal for GNDRI communication management.

Acceptance of a new member – INSA of Brazil

The Chair presented the filled-in questionnaire submitted by INSA. He explained that INSA is the first institute to apply for joining the network, and it is the first one to “test” the procedure. The request has come before the questionnaire was in place, and it took a while to design the questionnaire, to approve it by the members, and then to make it a component of the website, and interactive. Once the application was submitted, it was checked, and some clarifications were asked for. The final version was sent to IADIZA, who functioned as co-chair for membership, and also to all other members of the GNDRI, for electronic communication approval (the members were notified that no response is to be regarded as approval).

The Chair noted that the mission statement of INSA demonstrates its commitment to dryland research, and is also backed by a government decision regarding the establishment of an institute dealing with the semiarid region of Brazil, specifically. Furthermore, INSA is not a university institute, but is an independent, government entity. The meeting went through each of the items in the filled-in questionnaire, and finally, based on the application form, ratified the acceptance

of INSA to GNDRI. The Chair informed the meeting that BIDR would notify the Brazilian institute that it had been accepted as a member. He will also apologize for the long time the procedure took.

Dr. Abraham (IADIZA) brought up some misunderstanding about IADIZA specific role in handing the membership issue. The chair explained that at the 1st Biennial Meeting the participants decided to form several committees, one of which a “Membership Committee”, whose task is to handle the admission proposals, such that candidates for admission would not have to wait for a steering committee meeting in order to become members. However, the membership of this Committee was not finalized in the first Biennial Meeting, and it was impossible to finalize the process through internet communications, due to lack of response from some members on this issue. Nevertheless, since a proposal was unofficially made that IADIZA will take this role, the Chair handled the INSA candidacy to IADIZA, who approved INSA questionnaire, this to be followed also by an internet poll among all members. The issue of new membership was later discussed and a new decision reached (see later).

GNDRI Courses

Decision 5 of the 1st Steering Committee meeting (“**The IADIZA, in cooperation with the BIDR, will prepare a full proposal of the teaching program, including a detailed curriculum and both will initiate fund-raising for the program, such that the course to take place first in Mendoza, Argentina, will constitute the test of an evolving GNDRI training program.**”) generated further interactions between these two members of the network. These resulted in two documents – a concept paper of GNDRI course series, and a program for the first course to be implemented under the program, namely a course on dryland ecology implemented by IADIZA and carried out in Mendoza and environs, in Argentina. Both documents were provided for the meeting’s participants, the Chair suggested discussing the concept paper, and once an agreement is reached on that, the proposal of the specific course will be discussed.

GNDRI Courses concept paper

This item generated a lively discussion in which all participants took active part. The positions expressed and the decisions taken were incorporated in a revised concept paper, presented as an appendix to this minutes’ document. In the following, the points raised in the discussion are reported.

Decisions on logistics

Hearing opinions of the Dr. Abraham, Prof. Berliner and the Chair it was decided -

Decision No. 1

(a) the duration of each course and the number of students in each course will be determined by the course hosting institute; (b) beside students from the country of the hosting institute, students from several countries of GNDRI members will be enrolled too; (c) the frequency of courses will be left open, and (d) that bids of members to host a course and decisions on bids can be reached via email communication.

Discussion on financial support

The Chair explained that the original view – hosting institute and institutes sending instructors would fund the course involved, unless the institute is in a developing country, in which case a number of financial mechanisms targeting the developing world can be approached for funding.

Dr. Abraham (IADIZA) suggested that unless GNDRI members raise funds, students or their institutes should bear the cost of the course; it is normal practice for courses to charge fees hence course fees would constitute the major income enabling GNDRI to carry out such courses. In addition, the hosting institute could offer a match to student fees, provided that the students paid part of the cost. The Chair added that a major cost may be that incurred on bringing instructors and students from other institutes to the course site. Dr. Berliner (BIDR) noted that different courses could be supported by different means, including private funders or student scholarships. He suggested to leave the funding issue open, to be elaborated on for each specific case; for example, carrying out a course in Argentina or Brazil would differ, in respect of finances, from one carried out in India. He therefore suggested a text in the concept paper such as “GNDRI members and the course hosting institute will search for a diversity of mechanisms for supporting the course”, and emphasized that sufficient funding needs to be secured before the course takes off. Dr. Schmiedel (DRCH) then proposed to add to the need to keep the students’ fee as low as possible, a proposal supported by Dr. Abraham (IADIZA), adding that fees may be charged only in case the course can not be implemented unless at least a part of its expenses are covered by student fees. Dr. Kumar (GUIDE) raised the issue of enrollment regarding students from developed vs student from developing countries, and Dr. Berliner (BIDR) suggested that the fees might be differential, such that students of developing countries will pay lower fees. Dr. Abraham (IADIZA) reminded that given the example of the course proposed by IADIZ, instructors and students from abroad are scheduled to be engaged, hence funding sources for that are required, and just fees may not suffice. Dr. Berliner (BIDR) responded that indeed it would be very complicated to move students around and to get scholarships for large number of students. He therefore suggested that instructors would come from different countries and present in the course the specific techniques and approaches they developed, and that it would be easier to bring researchers than to bring students, because it is easier for an institute to find funds for instructors’ travel. If this approach is successful, he suggested, the course would take a form of a “roving workshop” – which would give a very different perspective to this entire notion of GNDRI courses. This statement leads to a discussion of the general concept of GNDRI courses. The Chair then summarized by suggesting that the issue of funding is specific to each case and should be better left open.

Discussion on the course concept

Dr. Schmiedel (DRCH) dwelled on the notion of the Roving Workshop vis a vis accreditation. She observed that if the course moves from country to country, it would have to be accredited internationally, and each course would have to be accredited every year, what would be an enormous load and not viable. Dr. Berliner (BIDR) responded that in any case, GNDRI would need to accredit its course, and if accreditation is obtained once, it would mean the course is always of the same substance. The Chair then reiterated that GNDRI is not a network of universities, hence it is not likely to be engaged in teaching programs, which are habitually provided by universities, and GNDRI courses need not attempt to compete with university programs. He suggested that the goal is to create a teaching program that becomes renowned, and that allows students to receive credits in their home universities. This can happen provided the GNDRI courses become known as unusual, due to both the course substance as well as the researchers involved. Thus, the objective is to create and offer something unique. Dr. Abraham (IADIZA) supported this, saying that the notion of GNDRI course is to make use of the rich resources GNDRI has – people doing research in the field, whose job is not to teach, but they are eager to share their rich expertise. Dr. Schmiedel (DRCH) then suggested that making use of the expertise of the different institutes could enrich already existing university or institutional courses that already have accreditation, rather than investing lot of work and administration in trying to accredit a new international course. The Chair responded that GNDRI's strength is not only in the diversity of researchers, but in the diversity of research sites, given the variety of field research sites of all GNDRI members combined, such that having a GNDRI course each time at a different site, is likely to be an additional strength of the GNDRI course. He suggested that if GNDRI courses are of a uniform theme, accreditation by universities might not be too difficult.

The issue of working together with the UNCCD was brought up by Dr. Berliner (BIDR), following his discussions with Mr. Luc Gnacadja, the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD Secretariat, during his participation in the DDD conference. Dr. Berliner observed that for getting GNDRI off the ground, presenting GNDRI course and getting it going, an umbrella of the UNCCD to the course would be a very efficient and convenient way, as compared with dwelling on a course which is basic in nature, in terms of academic topics, hence one that does not offer anything new. He therefore suggested that if we want to create something special that will succeed and attract attention; we need an input to each course by more than just two countries, i.e., two institutes. He also proposed a uniform theme, for the courses, such as “addressing desertification” or something of the sort, rather than a title reminiscent of a conventional university course. Doing that, he suggested, could be a driving force for the CST – which is within the mandate of GNDRI, and thus could create something, which differ from anything, that is currently on the market. The Chair supported this approach, noting that the original title he had originally proposed (“GNDRI Joint Teaching Program”) need to be replaced, since the idea is not to provide a “teaching program”. Rather, the approach is to offer one course, to be delivered each time in one of the sites our institutes are located. Such a course, of one core theme, would be delivered for a certain period of time, several years, and its rotating location would determine the source of most instructors. To this Dr. Berliner (BIDR), in support of a suggestion by Dr. Schmiedel, suggested that instructors from other institutes too, would come to share their experiences in a course delivered by another institute. In this way indigenous techniques could be absorbed into other areas, and we will also then attain one of GNDRI's objectives, to learn from each other, something that so far has not been achieved.

The Chair then tried to summarize, stating that there seems to be an agreement for creating a “GNDRI course program,” not a teaching program. It will be thematic (a proposed theme is something around “combating” desertification), it will take place in various spatial backgrounds, depending on which country is hosting it. Prof. Takayuki (ALRC) then observed that since the location will change every year, the theme may be divided into two topics. One would be the core program, based on dryland research or an international movement, such as the UNCCD. Another topic would be very local, and would depend on the hosting institution. The Chair supported this notion - a uniform core program, and adjusted for the local region where the course is being held, and Dr. Abraham (IADIZA) observed that this is precisely the idea her team had in mind when they started designing their course in Mendoza - teaching a core program, with different "local" applications, since each institution has its own profile. Prof. Takayuki (ALRC) noting that this structure secures a “core” for the concept of the GNDRI course, supported the previous speakers.

Regarding the core theme, Dr. Schmiedel (DRCH) pointed at an option for the core - "dryland monitoring," which is very critical for practitioners and decision-makers at various levels, something that has been brought up during the course of the DDD conference. She envisaged that a significant benefit of the GNDRI courses could be the promotion of training in the field of monitoring. Prof. Takayuki (ALRC) responded that indeed, one of the "core" issues can be monitoring, but he warned that it would be impossible to go into much detail in a course that is short. The Chair then noted that indeed, the core themes needs to be selected while considering the short duration of each course, and the diverse background of students. Dr. Berliner (BIDR) agreed that monitoring is important, yet he suggested that what would give this type of course the special flavor would be teaching techniques for combating desertification that are indigenous to each location. The Chair then observed that indeed monitoring is a broad discipline, but if the issue at stake is not just monitoring, but addressing a specific technique for combating desertification and then engaging in monitoring the results of its implementation on the ground, then monitoring indeed can supplement the core theme. Dr. Kumar (GUIDE) then supported the notion that the core should be common, yet he suggested that for each course the theme should be changed, such that for example, one course will be dedicated to grasslands and the next one can address deserts. The Chair then reiterated that the proposal is to have a uniform core, but adjusted to local needs, interests and circumstances. Dr. Berliner (BIDR) suggested that the core theme should not be spelled out explicitly, because that would be boring and wouldn't attract anyone. Instead he suggested that the theme will be inserted within the name of the course, i.e., for example - “Indigenous techniques for... fill in the blank...”. This would create a strong selling point. The Chair then added that “GNDRI” needs also to be associated with the name of the course so that it is called “GNDRI course”, thus making it a brand. Dr. Mauricio Schiortino (ENEA, observer) suggested considering the opportunity provided by this course of making the course material available through electronic recording of a number of lessons and record field trips. This was supported by both the Chair, who suggested placing the material on the GNDRI website, and by Dr. Schmiedel (DRCH), suggesting that various types of training material should actually be put online.

The Chair then summarized the decision taken –

Decision No. 2

- a) **GNDRI will provide a “GNDRI Graduate Course”, not a GNDRI teaching program.**
- b) **GNDRI Graduate Course will have a core theme and peripherals of this theme will depend on where the course is located, and will change depending on the location and the hosting institution.**
- c) **Most of the students will be local, from the area/country of the host, but GNDRI would attempt to engage as many relevant GNDRI institutes as possible for instructors of each course.**
- d) **The major component of the cost may be bringing GNDRI instructors from other institutions as required and according to available expertise. Sources of funding are specific to circumstances of each course, and may include support of GNDRI members, student fees and other sources raised by GNDRI from sources relevant to each course.**
- e) **It would make an impact if at least three institutes take part in designing the course.**
- f) **Course material will be placed on GNDRI website and other means of outreach will be employed.**

The first GNDRI Graduate Course – the Mendoza course

Dr. Abraham (IADIZA) requested a decision regarding the Mendoza course program proposal, since several people worked very hard on the proposal and were awaiting such a decision. Given the short time available, only suggestions for providing a more attractive name to the course and having “GNDRI Graduate Course” in the title, were voiced. But the main charge is to streamline the new concept just agreed (and presented in the attached document of the GNDRI Graduate Course – Concept Document) into the program of the first GNDRI Graduate Course, i.e. the IADIZA course to be carried out in Mendoza. This is of great importance since it is likely that this first course in Mendoza will give the tone for all the courses to come. In the resulting discussion the following decision was reached:

Decision No. 3

1. **The 2nd Steering Committee meeting gives a go ahead to IADIZA, in (a) revising the last version of the program provided to the meeting, such that it is compatible with the concept elaborated in Decision No. 2 above, and the concept paper appended to this minutes paper, and in (b) implementing the revised program. For facilitating this process.**
2. **The course program document provided to the meeting will be circulated to all GNDRI members, requesting their comments to arrive at the BIDR office (bidr@bgu.ac.il) by 20 Decemebr 2010.**
3. **A Course Committee is appointed for revising and later assist in implementing the 1st GNDRI Graduate Course in Mendoza. The Chair is IADIZA, and the members are BIDR, ALRC and GUIDE. All comments received at the GNDRI office will be forwarded to the Chair and members of this Committee.**

GNDRI Rotating Chairmanship – appointing the 2nd GNDRI Chair

The Chair provided a short overview of this item. The 1st Organizing Committee of GNDRI (in 2006) decided on a two year term, elected BIDR (Israel) as first Chair and DRC (Egypt) as Co-Chair and second Chair. The latter communicated to the 1st biennial meeting of GNDRI Steering Committee that DRC is not ready to assume the task. The meeting then decided to extend the term of BIDR, and to make the term of GNDRI Chair a 3 years term. He also announced that there has been no communication with the DRC, and hence it is now necessary to appoint a new Chair.

For the representatives present in the meeting, the Chair elaborated on the commitments made by a Chair institute for coordinating the network. The issue came up in the 1st Organization Meeting, where a proposal for each member to pay membership fees was rejected, because those who were there weren't willing to commit to payment. Instead, it was decided to see how much the coordination cost over the first term. The BIDR then announced it commits \$50,000 for the coordination. It turned out that the direct expenses have been much lower, but the in-kind expenses were much higher, including the time allocated by the Chair, the secretarial services of the BIDR, and the support of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs in organizing the side event in COP9.

In the following discussion –

(a) the BIDR thanked the members for their cooperation, and especially thanked IADIZA for its assistance in the issue of GNDRI course;

(b) Dr. Abraham said IADIZA could not accept the coordination now because it is too busy preparing for the second International Conference on Dryland Development in Latin America, which will take place in Mendoza next September;

(c) Dr. Kumar (GUIDE) said the coordination would be too difficult for his institute at this time;

(d) Prof. Takayuki (ALRC) said that short of staff and budgetary limitation make the coordination by his institute impossible at this time;

(e) Following requests from Dr. Abraham (IADIZA) and Prof. Berliner (BIDR), Dr. Schmiedel (DRCH) noted that DRCH and the Hamburg University appreciate the network, and that she came with a mandate to accept the coordinating position as a safety net, until another member comes forward. She then stressed that while taking over the coordination is not a priority for Hamburg, the DRCH might be willing to do it for two years, and then, depending on alternative suggestions for chairmanship that are put forward in the meantime, maybe they'd take it for another two years. The Chair responded that indeed, in the previous Steering Committee meeting two years were found not to be effective. He therefore suggested that the DRCH takes it for three years, but that the next Steering Committee meeting, to convene at the end of 2012, would select a new Chair, which will take over after a year, thus establishing the procedure already decided by the 1st Steering Committee meeting, of three years term, where by the next chair is elected after

the first two years. The appointment of DRCH, for a three year term was then approved by consensus.

Decision No. 4

As of 1st January 2011 the Chair of GNDRI is the Dryland Research Center Hamburg (DRCH). The 3rd Steering Committee Meeting to take place at the end of 2012 will elect the 3rd Chair, which will assume the Chairmanship as of 1st January 2014.

Revising GNDRI committees

The Chair reported that the structure of an Executive Group and Committees designed at the 1st Organization Meeting and further elaborated by the 1st Steering Committee meeting, did not really work. Following a brief discussion of the probable reasons for that, the following decisions were reached:

Decision No. 5

- 1. The DRCH will continue to provide the website development and maintenance to GNDRI. Given the DRCH is to chair the network, the title “Co-Chair for communication” is redundant.**
- 2. IADIZA is elected to function a Co-Chair of GNDRI Graduate Course**
- 3. Co-Chair for membership is redundant, and the function will be assumed by the GNDRI Chair.**

Closing the session

- The Meeting participants expressed thanks to BIDR for chairing the network since its inception.
- Dr. Abraham (IADIZA) commented that it would be nice to have the 3rd Steering Committee meeting again in the BIDR’s Deserts, Drylands Desertification Conference, since it’s become like a tradition.
- Dr. Schmiedel (DRCH) presented BIDR with a gift – Hamburg University’s new three-volume book: **Biodiversity in Southern Africa**. The book is a result of the international BIOTA project that has been coordinated by University of Hamburg. Volume 1 is about the long-term biodiversity monitoring sites, including sound data on each site. Volume 2 is about the analyses of patterns at regional scale, including aspects of cooperation and integration of land uses. Volume 3 is a more integrated analysis and consequences for analysis and implementation. On behalf of BIDR, the Chair thanked the DRCH for the invaluable gift and expressed appreciation for this gesture.

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