



Report of the eighth meeting of the Near East and North African Soil Partnership

Muscat, Oman, 7–8 March 2023

NENA-VIII/23/Report

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African Soil Partnership**

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FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS, Rome, 2023

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Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. The Global Soil Partnership and the NENA Soil Partnership.....	1
3. The support of the FAO regional office for the Near East and North Africa to regional collaborations on soils	2
4. The importance of healthy soils for water scarcity and climate change in the Near East and North Africa	2
5. The Muscat Communiqué for Sustainable Soil Management in the Near East and North Africa region	3
6. Keynotes on sustainable soil management in the Near East and North Africa region.....	3
Data management and mapping in the Near East and North Africa region.....	3
The status of soil laboratories in the Near East and North Africa region	4
7. Online intervention by Abdulhakim R M Elwaer, Assistant Director General, FAO regional office for the Near East and North Africa	5
8. Panel discussion on how to enhance investment and partnership on sustainable soil management in the Near East and North Africa region.....	5
9. Eighth Near East and North Africa Soil Partnership Meeting	6
9.1 Opening.....	6
9.2 TCP RAB 3802: how to turn national action plans into concrete actions	6
9.3 Resource mobilization.....	8
9.3.1 Global Environment Facility	8
9.3.2 The Resilient Land and Resource Management Project	8
9.3.2 Morocco’s experience on project preparation and financial resource mobilization.....	8
9.4 The Near East and North African Soil Partnership work plan 2023 and governance	9
9.4.1 The Near East and North African Soil Partnership work plan 2023	9
9.4.2 The Near East and North African Soil Partnership governance	9
10. Conclusions and way forward	10
Annex I. Agenda	11
Annex II. Participants	12
Annex III. Communiqué.....	14
Annex IV. Pictures	21

1. Introduction

The eighth meeting of the Near East and North African (NENA) Soil Partnership took place on 7 and 8 March 2023 (Annex I) in Muscat, Oman. Twenty-eight participants including representatives from eleven Near East and North Africa (NENA) countries, representatives from FAO's Global Soil Partnership (GSP) Secretariat, FAO regional office for the Near East and North Africa, FAO's Global Environment Facility (GEF) Coordination Unit, the Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD), the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) attended the meeting (Annex II).

The meeting aimed to:

- present the main outputs from the NENA TCP 3802 project;
- adopt a communique reaffirming the importance of sustainable soil management as well as soil health for the NENA region;
- establish a new governance and way forward for the NENA Soil Partnership;
- explore financial opportunities to fund another project on soils for the NENA region; and
- identify priorities and define a new work plan for the NENA Soil Partnership and the year ahead.

The meeting was opened by Hamdan Al Wahaibi, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the Sultanate of Oman, Hasna Alharthy, FAOR Assistant and finally Mubarak Abdelrahman Abdalla Ali, Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, League of Arab States.

During the opening, Hamdan Al Wahaibi, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the Sultanate of Oman, underscored the urgent need for coordinated action on soils in light of the important conclusions drawn from the FAO NENA Technical Cooperation Project 3802. The regional NENA TCP 3802 project allowed for a data-driven assessment of the status of soil resources through soil mapping as well as the delineation of priorities through the launch of regional and national action plans on soils.

2. The Global Soil Partnership and the NENA Soil Partnership

Rachid Moussadek, NENA Soil Partnership Chair, introduced the participants to the main activities and past achievements of the GSP as well as the NENA Soil Partnership. He explained to the participants that the overall organizational structure of the GSP transitioned from a thematic pillar structure to a more indicator-based system. The GSP will organize its work and priorities following the [GSP Action Framework](#) endorsed during the tenth GSP Plenary Assembly, May 2022. For this purpose, during the second day of the event a new governance for the NENA Soil Partnership was established.

Moussadek provided a comprehensive overview of the various thematic technical networks on soils of the GSP:

- International Network of Soil Information Institutions (INSII);
- Global Soil Laboratory Network (GLOSOLAN) and the Near East and North African Laboratory Network (NENALAB);
- International Network of Soil Biodiversity (NETSOB);
- International Network on Fertilizer Analysis (INFA);
- International Network on Soil Pollution (INSOP); and
- International Network of Salt-Affected Soils (INSAS)

He encouraged the participants of the meeting to be actively involved with the network's activities and reach their respective GSP Secretariat focal points.

3. The support of the FAO regional office for the Near East and North Africa to regional collaborations on soils

Theodora Fetsi (FAORNE) introduced the participants to the main activities of the FAO regional office for the Near East and North Africa. Fetsi highlighted the NENA Technical Cooperation Project (TCP) 3802 as well as the State of Land and Water Resources (SOLAW) report for the NENA region, launched in July 2022. She informed the participants that the regional office is available to support countries in implementing activities on soils, including writing and implementing projects.

4. The importance of healthy soils for water scarcity and climate change in the Near East and North Africa

Ronald Vargas (GSP Secretary, FAO) provided a presentation underscoring the role that soils play in managing water resources sustainably as well as increasing the adaptation and mitigating potential to climate change. Vargas highlighted the multiple ecosystem services that soils provide and how they play a crucial role for the achievement of most if not all of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He went on to provide an overview of the main soil threats that affect the region. Vargas highlighted potential solutions to counteract said soil threats as well as several relevant activities that the GSP is implementing. He highlighted how the GSP is tackling soil threats in a multidisciplinary way by focusing on a wide area of work ranging from soil governance to soil data and mapping. He encouraged the participants to get involved and to support the GSP in implementing these activities in the region.

During the discussion, the important role the region is playing in terms of climate change-related topics was underscored, in light of the fact that the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) took place in Egypt and that the COP28 will be held in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The participants of the meeting

highlighted the need to scale up the activities of the GSP related to climate change, specifically linked to soil organic carbon within the region.

5. The Muscat Communiqué for Sustainable Soil Management in the Near East and North Africa region

The first day of the event culminated with the adoption of the Muscat Communiqué for Sustainable Soil Management (Annex III) in the NENA region by 12 senior representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources representing 12 countries of the NENA region (the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Kingdom of Morocco, the Lebanese Republic, the Republic of Iraq, the Republic of the Sudan, the Republic of Tunisia, the Republic of Yemen, Palestine, the Sultanate of Oman and the Syrian Arab Republic). The communiqué reaffirms the importance of sustainable soil management to boost soil health and delineates a common view regarding the region's priorities when it comes to protecting soils to increase food security, halt land degradation and adapt and mitigate climate change.

6. Keynotes on sustainable soil management in the Near East and North Africa region

Data management and mapping in the Near East and North Africa region

Talal Darwish (Lebanon, formally FAORNE) presented the main finding of the advanced unpublished *Regional Action Plan to manage soil salinity, boost organic carbon stock and enhance carbon sequestration in NENA region*. Darwish highlighted the main components and findings of the regional action plan which was drafted under the FAO TCP/RAB/3802 project. The regional action plan identifies priorities in form of targets and the necessary actions to scale up the sustainable management of soils. As part of the regional action plan, several technical aspects justify the selection of the targets and necessary actions, including:

- the review of soil related policies and institutions;
- the regional mapping of salt-affected soils; and
- the regional mapping of soil organic carbon sequestration potential of agricultural soils

As part of the main conclusions of the draft regional action plan, Darwish highlighted the fact that although the soils in the NENA region are generally poor in soil organic carbon (SOC) the adoption of sustainable soil management practices shows a significant SOC sequestration potential. He further explained that the mapping of salt-affected soils underscored the urgent need to counteract this soil threat which extensively affects the region. Finally, Darwish stressed the need for the region to review, update and develop new policies, specifically on soils.

The status of soil laboratories in the Near East and North Africa region

Mohamed Dafalla provided a presentation on output 2 of the TCP/RAB/3802 project which focused on building the capacity of national reference laboratories in the Global Soil Laboratory Network (GLOSOLAN) through the delivery of training tailored to the specific needs of each laboratory. As part of output 2, a survey was conducted to assess the enabling environment, organization, infrastructure, and individuals of each national laboratory. Dafalla proceeded by providing a detailed overview of the main findings of the questionnaire.

7. Online intervention by Abdulhakim R M Elwaer, Assistant Director General, FAO regional office for the Near East and North Africa

Abdulhakim R M Elwaer (Assistant Director General, FAO regional office for the Near East and North Africa) provided an intervention on behalf of the regional office. Elwaer underscored how the regional offices are committed to pay special attention to soil related issues as well as the need to further engage stakeholders. He highlighted the importance of soils and how they relate to pressing issues such as climate change and biodiversity loss. He urged the need to map soils as part of the agenda of the next Conference of the Parties (COP) that will be organized in Dubai. Finally, he stressed that the regional office is available to support countries within the region to access the GEF as well as the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

8. Panel discussion on how to enhance investment and partnership on sustainable soil management in the Near East and North Africa region

Mubarak Abdelrahman Abdalla Ali (Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, League of Arab States), Ibrahim Daoud (Land and Water Uses Department, Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands) and Maude Veyret-Picot (GEF Coordination Unit, FAO) were invited to participate in a panel discussion on enhancing investment on sustainable soil management in the NENA region.

Ronald Vargas moderated the session and asked the panellists to explain what is currently being done in terms of investments by their respective organizations towards soil health in the NENA region.

The panellists showcased various activities that indirectly or directly tackle soils in the region. The need to further harmonize concurring activities while avoiding overlaps was highlighted.

Opportunities to tackle spiking fertilizer prices through the GEF should be further explored. Finally, the need to increase advocacy on soils to move decision-makers to invest was underscored.

9. Eighth Near East and North Africa Soil Partnership Meeting

9.1 Opening

During the second day of the event, Rachid Moussadek and Ronald Vargas opened the eighth NENA Soil Partnership meeting, which was held in a hybrid format for the first time since the pandemic.

Rachid Moussadek opened the meeting by informing the participants on the need to establish a new governance for the NENA Soil Partnership considering the GSP's recent structural changes as well as the need to devise a new yearly work plan for the region. Vargas anticipated that the main findings and conclusions highlighted during this two-day event would be considered in drafting a new yearly work plan (Section 9.4) for the region.

9.2 TCP RAB 3802: how to turn national action plans into concrete actions

Country representatives were invited to provide a five-minute presentation about a specific target on soils that represented a priority for the country. As part of the presentation, each country representative was invited to present the actions they deemed necessary to achieve a specific target of their choosing. The session was moderated by Isabel Luotto (GSP Secretariat). Before giving the floor to the country representatives, Luotto provided a presentation on the national action plans that were drafted under the NENA TCP project. She provided an overview of the recurring priorities and overlapping necessary actions shared within the region. The following priorities were shared and highlighted by numerous countries:

- the establishment of both a National Soil Information System (NSIS) and a Regional Soil Information System (RSIS) as well as a steering committee in each of the NENA countries;
- the restoration of salt-affected soils as well as halting soil-salinization;
- the revision, development and implementation of legislative tools specifically targeting soils; and
- the strengthening of soil laboratories.

During the discussion session, the need to establish a RSIS was further underscored. Mubarak Abdelrahman suggested that the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) may establish and host a subregional Arab soil information system. It was suggested that the proposal may be presented during the next NENA Soil Partnership meeting and that a dedicated steering committee decide on which country and entity may take lead in establishing and hosting a Regional Soil Information System for the NENA region.

The following priorities were presented by the participating countries:

- *Tunisia: Target 3 (T3): Realize the soil organic carbon sequestration potential of the country:*
 - Alongside the establishment of a NSIS, Rafla Attia highlighted the realization of the soil organic carbon potential of the country as a priority. She highlighted the soil health monitoring and information systems for sustainable soil management in the Mediterranean region (SOILS4MED) initiative. Tunisia is currently part of the initiative, which focuses on the

Mediterranean region and supports the establishment of national soil information systems. She further delineated actions that were already taken to achieve Target 3. She highlighted the establishment of a dedicated land use work team for greenhouse inventories.

- *The Syrian Arab Republic: Target 2 (T2): Development of a National Soil Information System (NSIS) and Regional Soil Information System (RSIS):*
 - Manhal Alzoubi proposed the establishment of a RSIS for the NENA region. The ideas were well-received and the need to draft a proposal for where the system should be hosted to be presented during the next NENA Soil Partnership meeting was highlighted.
- *Palestine: Target 2 (T2): Development of a National Soil Information System (NSIS):*
 - Imad Ghanma highlighted the development of a Palestinian soil information system as a priority for his country.
- *Algeria: Target 4 (T4): Reclaim salt-affected soils and improve their productivity:*
 - Medjahed Saddek presented the reclaiming of salt-affected soils as a priority. The need to scale up the sustainable management of salt-affected soils was highlighted.
- *The Sudan: Target 4 (T4): Reclaim salt-affected soils and improve their productivity:*
 - Nuha Abdalla Mohamed presented the reclaiming of salt-affected soils as a priority. She presented a detailed action plan to tackle soil salinity in the country. The need to train farmers and extensionists on the sustainable management of salt-affected soils as well as the establishment of a monitoring, reporting and verifying system was underscored.
- *Yemen: Target 1 (T1): Strengthen soil policies and legislation:*
 - Mohammed Hezam Al-Mashreki highlighted the need to strengthen soil policies and develop national soil laws as a priority.
- *Islamic Republic of Iran: Target 4 (T4): Reclaim salt-affected soils and improve their productivity:*
 - Karim Ghorbani presented the reclaiming of salt-affected soils as a priority. Ghorbani presented the recently launched soil salinity map for the Islamic Republic of Iran as well as a detailed action plan for the country to achieve the target. The need to establish a monitoring system for salt-affected soils as well as the modernization and development of irrigation systems was highlighted.
- *Morocco: Target 2 (T2): Development of a National Soil Information System (NSIS) and Regional Soil Information System (RSIS):*
 - Tarik Benabdelouahab and Moussadek Rachid presented the establishment of a National Soil Information System as a prioritized target. They highlighted that Morocco has already established a platform to access a national soil fertility map for fertilizer recommendations. A plan for the establishment of a fully-fledged and national soil information system was presented. The need to devise a plan for effective stakeholder engagement was underscored.

- Lebanon: *Target 5 (T5): Support and invest in soil laboratories:*
 - Fatmeh Beydoun highlighted the need to further invest in laboratory equipment and human resources as a priority.

9.3 Resource mobilization

9.3.1 Global Environment Facility

Maude Veyret-Picot (Regional Lead, Africa and the Near East, GEF Coordination Unit, FAO) provided a presentation on the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) focusing on potential entry points regarding accessing funds to implement projects on soils within the NENA region. The GEF is an independent financial organization that provides grants to developing countries and countries in transition to support projects and programmes that promote environmental sustainability and address global environmental issues. The GEF could fund a variety of projects focusing on soils in the NENA region. Veyret-Picot introduced the participants to the main focus areas of the GEF and provided some possible examples of projects that could be funded through the GEF. Overall, the GEF could fund a range of projects that promote sustainable land management, restore degraded soils, and address soil-related challenges in the NENA region. A regional project could be financed through a pooled country allocation. Veyret-Picot highlighted capacity development, networking and knowledge exchange as eligible activities to obtain a potential grant. Finally, she encouraged the NENA Soil Partnership to further explore the specific funding requirements to implement a GEF funded project either for the region or for those countries that are eligible by reaching out to [FAO's GEF coordination unit](#) and by familiarizing itself with the [GEF programming directions](#).

9.3.2 The Resilient Land and Resource Management Project

Ammar Salahat, Director General of Agricultural Land, Palestine, gave a presentation titled The Resilient Land and Resource Management Project which aims to improve the resilience and income of rural households in the West Bank. The project has a total cost of USD 31 million, but started with a financing gap of USD 23 million. It was approved in April 2018 and started in July of the same year with a completion and financial closure scheduled for June and December 2024, respectively.

9.3.2 Morocco's experience on project preparation and financial resource mobilization

Rachid Moussadek (NENA Soil Partnership Chair) provided a presentation on Morocco's experience in resource mobilization. Moussadek highlighted potential donors to fund a regional project, including:

- European Union (PRIMA and H2020);
- Global Environmental Facility;
- Green Climate Fund;

- Arab Organization for Agricultural Development;
- African Development Bank;
- World Bank; and
- Arab funds.

Finally, he provided an overview of the various projects on soils implemented in Morocco. He underscored the importance of communicating effectively to stakeholders. Moussadek concluded his presentation with an anecdote on how an encounter with the Moroccan prime minister (during which the main conclusions from a 40-year study were presented), were pivotal to scale up conservation agriculture within the country.

9.4 The Near East and North African Soil Partnership work plan 2023 and governance

9.4.1 The Near East and North African Soil Partnership work plan 2023

During the final agenda item of the event, Ronald Vargas and Rachid Moussadek anticipated that based on the priorities raised during the event a work plan for the NENA Soil Partnership for the time period 2023-2024 would be developed. Considering the financial limitations of the regional NENA TCP project, it was underscored that in order to fund a second regional project, potential financing mechanisms other than the TCP should be explored. The following priorities and activities have been identified for the NENA Soil Partnership in 2023 and 2024:

- Develop a proposal to be presented for endorsement during the next NENA Soil Partnership meeting for the establishment of a Regional Soil Information System.
- Develop a project proposal in close collaboration with the GSP Secretariat and the NENA regional office to be funded either by the GEF or any other relevant entity, focusing on the following priorities:
 - The establishment of both a National Soil Information System and a Regional Soil Information System;
 - Build capacities on soil data management and mapping specifically focusing on salt-affected soils and soil organic carbon;
 - Support and invest in soil laboratories; and
 - Strengthen coordination and collaboration among various stakeholders within the region.

9.4.2 The Near East and North African Soil Partnership governance

Because of the disappearance of the Pillars of Action and the introduction of Action Areas, the new GSP Action Framework 2022–2030 imposes some changes to the governance of the NENA Soil Partnership. A new governance for the NENA Soil Partnership was established.

As per the decision of the national focal points, between 2023 and 2025 the NENA Soil Partnership will be represented by:

- NENA Soil Partnership Chair: Rachid Moussadek, Morocco;
- NENA Soil Partnership Vice-Chair: Imad Ghanma, Palestine; and
- a dedicated steering committee comprised of one member for each of the following three subregions:
 - North Africa: Rafla Attia (Tunisia);
 - Gulf countries: Hamad Al-Thuhli (Oman); and
 - Near East: Muhammad Manhal Alzoubi (the Syrian Arab Republic).

10. Conclusions and way forward

Ronald Vargas and Rachid Moussadek thanked the Government of Oman and FAO Oman who hosted the event as well as all participants for their contribution to the meeting. The ninth meeting of the NENA Soil Partnership will be organized online or in person in November or December 2023. If necessary, the meeting date will be brought forward.

Annex I. Agenda

https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/GSP/Oman_nena_event/Agenda_Oman_1.pdf

Annex II. Participants

First name	Last name	Affiliation	Country
Medjahed	Saddek	National Institute of Irrigation and Drainage	Algeria
Mubarak	Abdelrahman Abdalla Ali	Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD)	
Habiba	Khlar	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)	
Hassan Mohamed	Dergham	Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD)	
Ibrahim	Daoud	Arab Center for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD)	
Karim	Ghorbani	Soil and Water Research Institute	Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Iman Sahib	Salman	Soil and Water Research Institute	Iraq
Waleed	Al-shafie	Ministry of Agriculture	Iraq
Emad	Qudah	Ministry of Agriculture/Land and Irrigation Department	Jordan
Ayman	AlOran	Ministry of Agriculture/Land and Irrigation Department	Jordan
Fatme	Beydoun Ep Ridha Tarkhani	Ministry of Agriculture	Lebanon
Talal	Darwish		Lebanon
Rachid	Moussadek	Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique/ International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas	Morocco
Tarek	Benabdelouahab	Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique/ International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas	Morocco

Imad	Ghanameh	Agricultural Land at Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture, of soil and land surveys and classification	Palestine
Ammar G.M.	Salahat	Agricultural Land at Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture	Palestine
Nuha Abdalla	Mohamed Khamis	Land and Water Research Center, Agricultural Research Corporation	Sudan
Mohamed	Dafalla		Sudan
Mahasin	Mohamed	Land and Water Research Center, Agricultural Research Corporation	Sudan
Aboubakr Omar	Elbashry	Ministry of Agriculture and Forests	Sudan
Mhd Manhal	Alhusin Alzoubi	Natural Resources Research Administration	Syrian Arab Republic
Majeda	Mofleh	Commission for Scientific Agriculture Research	Syrian Arab Republic
Rafla	Sahli Ep Attia	Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries (Tunisia)	Tunisia
Mohammed	Hezam	Renewable Natural Resources Research Center (RNRRC)	Yemen
Emad Saleh	Saomal Ata	Kuad Research Station	Yemen
Isabel	Luotto	GSP-Secretariat, FAO HQ	
Ronald	Vargas	GSP-Secretariat, FAO HQ	
Theodora	Fetsi	FAORNE	
Maude	Veyret-Picot	GEF (Global Environment Facility) Coordination Unit, FAO HQ	

Annex III. Communiqué ([LINK](#))

Towards healthy soils in the Near East and North Africa region

Muscat, Sultanate of Oman

March 7, 2023

Muscat communique on sustainable soil management in the NENA region

We, the senior representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources of 12 countries in the Near East and North Africa (People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kingdom of Morocco, Lebanese Republic, Republic of Iraq, Republic of Sudan, Republic of Tunisia, Republic of Yemen, State of Palestine, Sultanate of Oman and Syrian Arab Republic), participated to the event "Towards healthy soils in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region", held in Muscat, Oman from 7 to 8 March 2023. The meeting was organized and supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Global Soil Partnership (GSP), and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources of the Sultanate of Oman. We recognize the importance of soil and land resources management in the NENA region. In light of this, we have duly developed this communiqué to be shared with national authorities and institutions in our countries, and with key implementing, political, and financial stakeholders involved in the management of soil and land resources in the region. Our participation in this event signifies our commitment to promoting healthy soils in the NENA region. By working collaboratively, we are confident that we can make meaningful progress towards achieving this goal.

Acknowledging that soils are the basis for farmers to produce 95 percent of food we eat and to provide key ecosystem services that we all depend upon, contributing directly to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) particularly those on eradicating hunger (SDG2), providing clean water (SDG6), fighting, mitigating and adapting to the negative impacts of climate change (SDG13), and preserving life on land (SDG15).

Recognizing that soil is a non-renewable resource and that it can take more than 400 years to produce one centimeter of soil.

Recognizing that soil degradation poses a serious threat to food security and exacerbates water scarcity in all countries of the NENA region.

Acknowledging that the main threats to the soil's capacity to provide ecosystem services in most of the NENA countries are salinization, water and wind erosion, loss of soil organic carbon, soil pollution, soil physical degradation (including compaction and surface crusting), and soil sealing and land use change due to urbanization.

Recognizing that sustainable soil management can contribute to addressing the challenge of water scarcity and food insecurity in the region by increasing soil fertility and the capacity of soils to store water, and to enhancing the resilience of ecosystems to climate change.

Recognizing that sustainable soil management can also boost food production on salt-affected soils, reduce soil erosion, sandstorms, soil contamination and improve the biodiversity and the resilience of the agro-ecosystems in the region.

Conscious:

- That soils have been greatly overlooked for many years in the development agenda. Leading them to become increasingly susceptible to degradation due to several factors such as population growth, competition over limited resources, unsustainable management practices, urban expansion, and impacts of climate change;
- That the area that is reaching the bottom limits of its productive capacity is fast increasing limiting our ability to meet growing demands on this precious resource;
- That costs of restoring degraded soils are prohibitive compared to the costs of ensuring sustainable soil conservation and use;
- Conscious also of the need for enhancing awareness, education, training, extension, research, knowledge sharing, and information, as well as policy and institutional support for prioritizing soil protection, sustainable soil management, and restoration in the development agenda.

Recalling that:

- In 2012, the Global Soil Partnership (GSP) of FAO recognized the need to preserve soil resources in NENA and established the NENA Soil Partnership.
- In 2013, the 21st summit of African leaders urged Member States to place land degradation at the center of the debate on the post-2015 development agenda.

- In 2019, the first Joint Meeting of Arab Ministers of Agriculture and Water organized in Cairo, Egypt, called for "Establishing a sustainable regional mechanism to build individual and institutional capacities necessary to plan, design, and implement water and land management programmes efficiently/".
- In 2020, FAORNE financially supported the implementation of the first ever regional Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) project on soil to support capacity development for the sustainable management of soil resources in the region (TCP RAB 3802).

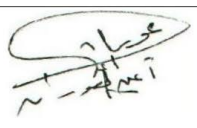
Appreciating the contribution of governments, policy and decision makers, academic and research organizations, non-governmental and civil society organizations, financial partners, and regional initiatives in supporting soil protection, sustainable management, and restoration and calling upon them to join, collaborate in, and actively support the NENA Soil Partnership and FAO in their mission to achieve sustainable soil management and to help implementing agricultural policies statements.


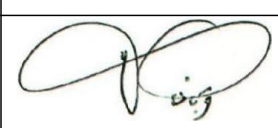
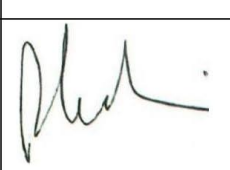
We, the senior representatives of 12 countries from the region participating in this regional workshop hereby:

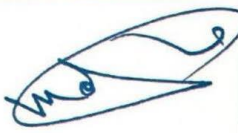
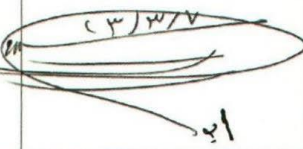

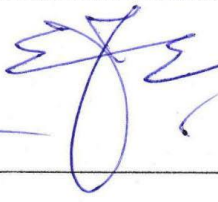
- Agree on the urgent need to implement the national and regional action plans developed under the FAO funded project to increase the availability of accurate, precise and harmonized soil data at the national and regional level, to promote data sharing, and to support decision-making, including the development and implementation of soil legislation and legal frameworks.
- Also agree on the need to technically and financially support soil laboratories, which often may have inadequate health and safety measures in place and struggle to meet national demands on soil analysis because of the lack of personnel, training, equipment, internet, consumables and electrical power supply.
- Further agree on the need to improve or implement existing legal frameworks and regulations on the laboratories waste management and drainage system, and to define minimum data quality standards for decision making aligned to the implementation of internationally recognized methods
- Agree on the need to recognize and support farmers for the protection of soil and water resources, and to increase their capacity to manage soil fertility, building their resilience to fertilizers' market shocks.


- Further call the attention on the need to advocate for sustainable soil management as a mean to address humanitarian crisis and to promote peace and development. Thus, awareness should be raised on the positive impact that sustainable soil management has on local productions, food security, and farmers' resilience to market restrictions on agricultural inputs and goods.
- Further call attention on the need to mobilize investments to implement sustainable soil management programs and to monitor soil health and its impact on water resources and food security throughout the region since national soil assessment and monitoring systems may still be weak.
- Finally, we hereby support the implementation of the FAO's Strategic Framework 2022-2031, the GSP action framework 2022-2030, and the national and regional action plans developed under the FAO funded project through the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of national and regional projects, including those under the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and the establishment, implementation, and monitoring of legislative frameworks at national and regional level. Projects should include o the planning and organization of training courses on sustainable soil management in the
 - o the development and implementation of comprehensive regional and national action plans on sustainable soil management;
 - o the organization of regular meetings, forums, seminars, ...etc for better collaboration between countries in the NENA region;
 - o the planning and implementation of regional and national TCP projects;
 - o the establishment of a network for regional and international exchange programmes to support experience and knowledge exchange and boost training.

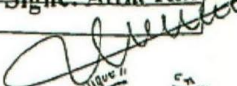
Muscat Communiqué (Muscat, 7 March 2023)

Country	Full name	Position and affiliation	Signature
Jordan	ayman al-bran	assistant general director	

Palestine	Ammar Salih	Director General of Agricultural Land	
Yemen	Mohammed Hezam AL-Mashreki	Director General of RNRRC	
	Karim C.S.O	Head of equipping and modernizing department	
LEBANON	Mohamad Zc,'D	Director of plant RxC Ceo	

syria	Majeda Mohamed Mofleh	Dg of GCSAA	
Sudan	ABUBAKR OMER ALBUSHRA	Minister of Agriculture & Forests	
Sultanate of Oman	Hamed Al-Dhuhli	Director of Soil & Water Research Center	
Algeria	Saddik MEDJANED	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	

MOROCCO	Faouzi Bekkaoui	Director of the national institute for agronomic research	
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Country	Full name	Position and affiliation	Signature
Tunisia	Attia Rafla	Soil Director	Directeur des Ressources en Sol
			Signé: Attia Rafla
			



Annex IV. Pictures



Figure A 1 Sustainable Soil Management in the Near East and North Africa region 7 - 8 March 2023, Muscat, Oman



Figure A 2 Sustainable Soil Management in the Near East and North Africa region 7 - 8 March 2023, Muscat, Oman



Figure A 3 Sustainable Soil Management in the Near East and North Africa region 7 - 8 March 2023, Muscat, Oman