

John Dietz, President AFICS/NY:
Statement to AFICS/NY Annual Assembly, 27 June 2017

On behalf of the entire Governing Board, and personally as President of the Association, I would like to welcome all of you to this year's Annual Assembly.

With the help of the Governing Board, its Committees, and particularly the two Vice-Presidents, Debbie Landey and Jay Karia, we have continued to advocate and raise issues of concern to UN retirees with senior management across the UN system. Not surprisingly, in all our discussions the focus has been on issues falling within the areas of pension administration, Pension Fund investments and health insurance.

Together with my two Vice-Presidents, I met repeatedly with the CEO of the Pension Fund, Sergio Arvizu, and with the RSG for the Pension Fund's investments, Carol Boykin; shortly you will hear from both of them directly. We also met with the transition team for the Secretary-General after his election, the prior and current Chefs de Cabinet, the UN Controller and several senior officials in the UN Department of Management, OHRM and also UNDP. As stressed repeatedly in my past communications to you, I remain convinced that working constructively with Pension Fund and UN-system officials at all levels is the best way to advance, safeguard and protect the interests of UNJSPF retirees and beneficiaries whom AFICS/New York represents.

First, the good news: although we cannot claim credit for it, and as you have no doubt noticed, UNJSPF periodic benefits on the US-dollar track increased by 3.6%, as from the benefit for April 2017.

With respect to pension administration, the main topics we discussed included the time needed for processing new actionable benefits and dealing with any backlog; the handling of complex cases; follow-up for cases with incomplete documentation; and client services generally. We noted the significant progress that has been made: to eliminate the past backlog in the processing of new pension benefits, to improve the Pension Fund's website and the handling of telephone calls by the Fund's secretariat, and to work with organizations to expedite the transmission of documents to the Pension Fund. With regard to the investment of the Pension Fund's assets, on every occasion we stressed: the need for a conservative investment strategy; continued internal management of investments and no increase in so-called alternative investments; the need for an effective Investment Committee with full membership; concern with long-standing vacancies for key posts in the Investment Management Division; the need for investment performance to be measured objectively against the established benchmarks for the various investment classes and also against meeting the actuarial assumption for long-term investment returns of 3.5% net of inflation. I will not go into more of the details, but have asked Warren Sach to summarize the significant developments concerning the Pension Board and the Pension Fund's investments; he is a member of the Governing Board, Vice-President of FAFICS and member of the Pension Board's ALM (Assets and Liabilities Management) Committee; Warren was part of the FAFICS delegation at the Pension

Board last year and will be again this coming July. (A personal note: I was not yet President of AFICS/New York when the Pension Board met in July 2016 and was not designated by FAFICS this year to be one of the FAFICS representatives at the upcoming Pension Board session next month.)

With regard to health insurance matters, AFICS/New York is represented on the UN's HLIC (Health and Life Insurance Committee) by Jay Karia and Frank Eppert. I have asked Jay to report on developments concerning health insurance, including the work of the HLIC and our ongoing discussions with staff of the UN Insurance and Disbursement Section (IDB), on overall client services and on individual cases brought to our attention; shortly you will also hear directly from IDB staff. However, I feel that I need to at least mention one very significant development: due in large part to our persistent advocacy, the UN Controller has recently approved the establishment of two new posts in IDB, dedicated to assisting UN retirees with ASHI-related matters, including especially issues with Medicare Part B.

One other major success merits special mention: for some time AFICS/New York advocated strongly with the former Chef de Cabinet and ASG for OHRM that the UN Pre-Retirement Seminars, which used to be held regularly, be reinstated; staff members approaching retirement had always found them very helpful in preparing for the big change in their lives. I am delighted to inform you that those Seminars are now back, with active AFICS/New York participation, and the next one will be held on 14 July.

Now I would like to list briefly some things that we have started to work on, or have accomplished, since I assumed the AFICS/New York Presidency in August 2016:

- 1) We held two very successful complementary Open-House Wine and Cheese Receptions for AFICS members, on 7 December and 17 May, respectively;
- 2) We introduced an annual work plan for the Governing Board during 2016-2017 and will be preparing a second one for 2017-2018, based on the lessons learned during the work on the first work plan and collaboration from the Committee Chairs and the Governing Board itself;
- 3) With the pro bono assistance of UN/OICT, the IT Committee chaired by Joan MacDonald is working on revamping our website, to make it more informative and user-friendly;
- 4) We are making a strong effort to make our committees more active and to involve more members in their work;
- 5) We are interested in developing new programmes, both to serve the needs of our members better and to attract new members to join AFICS/New York - any ideas and suggestions in that regard would be welcomed by our Membership Committee;
- 6) We are working with the UNFCU leadership to assist them in improving the services they provide to UN retirees - in that connection, I would like to thank the UNFCU publicly for the generous financial assistance we have received from the Credit Union over the years, and particularly this year.

Following up an event on Estate Planning, the Ageing Smart Committee chaired by Barbara Burns and Christine Smith-Lemarchand arranged for a session on organizing financial documents that was held on 29 March. It was well attended and proved very informative as to what we need to do to ensure that "our affairs are in order".

Turning to the social side, led by the Social Committee chaired by Barbara Linardo, we had our very pleasant and successful Fall Luncheon on 15 November, followed by our similarly successful Spring Luncheon on 2 March.

We completed two issues of the Bulletin, thanks largely to the untiring efforts of the editor, Mary Lynn Hanley.

On a sad note, we lost a number of members since the last Assembly one year ago, including Raymond (Ray) Gieri who died in February 2017; he had been CEO of the Pension Fund for 13 years, 1987-2000, and I am sure many of you knew him.

At the beginning of the year there was a change in our Office staff. Veronique Whalen relocated to Vienna and was replaced by Velimir Kovacevic. I am sure that you join me in thanking Veronique for the wonderful job she did while at AFICS and welcoming Velimir, who is proving to be a great asset in running our Office together with Jamna.

Before closing I would like to thank all the Officers who worked with me closely over the past year: Vice-Presidents Debbie Landey and Jay Karia, Treasurer Angel Silva and Secretary Marianne Brzak-Metzler. I would also like to thank all the Committee Chairs and members, the entire Governing Board and all the volunteers (particularly Barbara Boyton, Irma Cerni, Monika Chambers and Mary Hussein) who made it possible for us to send out the various mailings throughout the year, including the election materials we sent to all of our members.

Membership applications to join AFICS/NY are on a table in this conference room. You do not have to be already retired to become a member of our Association.

In closing, I would like to wish all of you a happy, healthy and long retirement and hope that many of you will decide to join us as active members of AFICS/NY.

John P. Dietz, President
AFICS/NY