



Association of Former International Civil Servants (New York)

AFICS/NY: Serving UN Retirees since 1970 President's Newsletter

April 2024

Dear AFICS/NY Members,

I do hope this message finds you all well wherever you are!

Since my last Newsletter of 18 December 2023 to you, your AFICS/NY Governing Board has been working hard on your behalf.

AFICS/NY functions through several incredibly, and I mean incredibly, hard-working Committees, Working Groups and other entities that are supported by an extremely dedicated Bureau. I cannot thank them all enough for their extraordinary dedication and commitment to the collective well-being of us all.

As President, I am honored to convey in this Newsletter a report on the enormous amount of work that AFICS/NY has been doing.

You will see below a link to a list of new colleagues (since 1 January 2023) who we are delighted to welcome into AFICS/NY membership. [The list of AFICS/NY members who joined since January 2023](#)



Deborah Landey
President, AFICS/NY



You will also see below a link to the names of our dear friends and colleagues who have passed away since 1 January 2023, and whose lives we honor and remember with affection. It is an unusually long list, since we have not published such an “In Memoriam” for quite a while. Colleagues from UNJSPF-participating agencies, both HQ and Field Offices are included. May they rest in peace; may their memories be a blessing!

[death reports 2023 thru first quarter 2024 vw3.xlsx \(un.org\)](#)

Pension Matters

The **AFICS/NY Pension Committee, Co-Chairs Suzanne Bishopric and Jay Pozenel**, met on 18 January 2024 with the Representative of the Secretary-General (RSG) for the Investment of the Assets of the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF). Prior to the meeting, the Pension Committee submitted to the RSG 19 questions regarding four main areas of concern to the Committee's members:

- (i) transparency of investment decisions and operations;
- (ii) investment policy;
- (iii) performance measurement; and
- (iv) investment operations.

The RSG highlighted new information on and improvements to the website of the Office of Investment Management (OIM): <https://www.unjspf.org/the-fund/historical-fund-performance/>. The RSG added that information on the website showed the performance of UNJSPF investments vis-a-vis those of similar pension funds, information that had been requested by the General Assembly ([A/RES/76/246](#)).



Debbie (1, President) & Barbara (2, Chair of Social Events Committee) extend Happy 92nd Birthday to Richard Nottidge, former AFICS/NY President, at the well-attended AFICS/NY Spring Luncheon (4/2024)

The Committee had concerns about the exclusion from the IPS of a reference to the actuarial assumption of a 3.4 percent (formerly 3.5 percent) real rate of return over the long term. The RSG took the view that the IPS should not contain a target rate that is subject to change by the Board. Instead, the IPS would rely on a "Funding Policy," recently adopted by the Pension Board, that includes a funding target of maintaining the Fund's required contribution rate within a range of 21.7 to 25.7 percent of pensionable remuneration. The AFICS/NY Pension Committee did not agree with the exclusion of the actuarially assumed long-term real rate of return. Finally, with regard to the Committee's concerns about the Fund's use of socially



responsible investments and adoption of a socially responsible investment strategy, the RSG confirmed that such investing was used not to establish an investment strategy, but rather to evaluate how the Fund's existing investment strategies were consistent with the UN's own Sustainable Development Goals.

The RSG addressed the Committee's concerns that changes in investment performance benchmarks could not give a reliable accounting of the Fund's historical performance if comparisons to formerly used benchmarks were not also maintained. Because the Fund cannot invest in certain industries (e.g., tobacco products and armaments), the Fund has used tailored benchmarks to ensure that current performance can be monitored precisely. With respect to historical performance, however, the RSG noted that the Fund's investment performance over several different timespans was closely monitored and was reported consistently to the Board and the General Assembly. Moreover, by performing peer-review studies, the Fund would obtain a more precise portrait of how the Fund was faring in terms of returns, transactional costs, and investment risk management as compared with its global peers.



Finally, the RSG noted the Pension Committee's concerns as to whether OIM had sufficient resources to adequately manage the Fund's alternative investment and private equity investment activities. The RSG emphasized that the Pension Board and the General Assembly had been responsive to OIM's request for resources. As determined in a recent benchmarking analysis, OIM continued to be one of the most efficiently managed in-house investment operations among all its global peer funds. He reassured

the Committee that OIM had built up resources, particularly legal resources in collaboration with the UN Office of Legal Affairs, to manage and monitor the detailed private equity arrangements required for OIM's alternative investment activities. As a result, he noted OIM was not currently outsourcing, nor did OIM have any plans to outsource its investment management activities, including in alternative investments, beyond those that the Fund had traditionally outsourced, *i.e.*, primarily small cap funds where the numerosity and small size of transactions made it more efficient to invest with outside fund managers. Based on the foregoing the AFICS/NY Pension Committee took note of the RSG's responses to such concerns.

Apart from meeting with the RSG to address the Pension Committee's concerns, the Committee has met to discuss issues that arose in the Pension Board's February session, in particular the status of efforts to eliminate the still remaining 0.5% reduction in the first cost-of-living adjustment applied to periodic UNJSPF pension benefits in award. The

Committee is now preparing topics and information and suggestions, as regards these and other matters of concern for UNJSPF beneficiaries, to the AFICS/NY Governing Board for consideration and then possible submission to the FAFICS Council in July, as FAFICS prepares for its participation in the July 2024 Pension Board session.

We have also continued our partnership with the Chief Executive of Pension Administration (CEPA) and her team to organize help sessions for those retirees wishing to use the Digital Certificate of Entitlement. So far 15 help sessions have been held and over 150 retirees were supported to make the transition to the Digital Certificate of Entitlement.

Health Insurance

During the last few months, the **AFICS/NY Health Insurance Committee (HIC), Co-Chairs, Jay Karia and Sudershan Narula**, continued to work on various matters. During November and December, our HIC representatives on the UN Health and Life Insurance Committee (HLIC) actively participated in the performance reviews with the Third Party Administrators (TPAs) of the four health insurance plans, Aetna, Empire Blue Cross, Cigna Dental and Cigna World-Wide. They brought up a number of issues on client services such as on timely and accurate processing of claims, improvements in communications and more analytical reporting to HLIC.

HIC representatives on the HLIC are currently actively participating in the annual review of benefits and premiums of the UN Health Plans which will be effective from 1 July 2024.

The HIC initiated discussions in the HLIC, as well as with senior management in the UN Secretariat, on the Medical Insurance Plan



(MIP), which provides health Insurance to locally recruited staff and retirees, highlighting some of the difficulties faced by MIP participants especially retirees and the need for an appropriate governance mechanism for the MIP.



**Celebration of lasting friendship (4/2024):
Sissi Hillesdal-Marini & Nicholas Gouede**

The leadership of HIC had a comprehensive discussion with the senior staff of the Health and Life Insurance Section (HLIS) on various issues including difficulties faced by members in getting

timely responses and the need for improvements in client service. HLIS indicated that while some difficulties were encountered due to an unforeseen large number of vacancies in the Section, this is now being resolved and the situation should continue to improve. AFICS/NY will continue to monitor the situation. At its next meeting, the HIC will discuss highlights of the most recent JIU Report on the efficiency and effectiveness and sustainability of UN Health Insurance Schemes.

The HIC also completed a survey requested by the FAFICS Standing Committee on After Service Health Insurance and Long-Term Care (ASHIL) on issues and needs of the New York membership. The survey covered member satisfaction with benefits, Third Party Administrators and access to National Insurance schemes. It also asked whether FAFICS should pursue the question of Long-Term Care (LTC) benefits to be added to UN system health insurance plans as a matter of “*priority*”. It was communicated that while there is a growing need for LTC, taking into consideration prohibitive costs, the suspension of the US Federal program on LTC in December 2022 to allow for further assessment, and the likely adverse reaction from governing bodies, FAFICS should “not prioritize” inclusion of LTC in UN Plans. However, FAFICS could provide some guidance on how retirees can financially plan for LTC over the long run noting that the UN’s health insurance plans already provide coverage for “medically necessary treatment”. So the issue is more on having some sort of custodial care system when a person is not able to perform some activities on their own.

The HIC finalized criteria for membership in the Committee, so as to ensure that it would continue to be comprised of retirees who gained expertise in UN health insurance matters during active service. The new criteria would also allow members of AFICS/NY to make a 5-minute presentation to the Committee to voice concerns in an open section of certain virtual meetings of the Committee. Further details on such sessions will be provided in due course.



Deborah Landey, President (center, 2nd row); Darshak Shah, 1st VP (sitting); Edward Omotoso (in pink shirt) & former UNDP colleagues

Visa Retrogression

On this issue, which is of concern to so many staff wishing to remain in the United States upon retirement, the **AFICS/NY Working Group on Visa Retrogression**, Chair **Darshak Shah**, has followed this issue carefully. We have written to the Secretary-General and kept this matter under close review. We have continued to raise the matter with UN senior management.

AFICS/NY By-Laws

AFICS/NY is a New York chartered not-for-profit corporation and therefore is subject to New York law. Under New York law, AFICS/NY must have a set of By-Laws, approved by its members. The AFICS/NY Assembly of members has amended its By-Laws several times since AFICS/NY was founded in 1970, most recently in May 2002.

However, several changes to New York law since 2002 have not been reflected in the AFICS/NY By-Laws. The **AFICS/NY Working Group to review the By-Laws and Rules of Procedure, Co-Chairs John Dietz and Jay Pozenel**, have worked throughout the past year to come up with a set of proposed amendments to the AFICS/NY By-Laws. These address changes required by New York law and changes to the frequency of elections of Governing Board members and the length of their terms of office. Please look for the notice about such changes and be sure to cast your vote on whether you accept the proposed amendments to the AFICS/NY By-Laws.

Below: **Dr. Narula, Chair of several Committees, Geoffrey Baldwin & John Dietz, former AFICS/NY President at AFICS/NY Spring Luncheon (4/2024)**



If approved by the membership, these changes would go into effect on the date when the **AFICS/NY Annual Assembly is held on 21 May 2024.**

Membership

We continue to make an enormous effort to both increase and maintain our membership. **The AFICS/NY President, Vice-Presidents and Chair of the AFICS/NY Membership Committee, Sudershan Narula**, made a presentation at the Pre-Retirement Seminar organized by the UN Staff Union (31 January – 1 February 2024) to talk about the value of



Andres Castellanos del Corral, left, standing (former AFICS/NY & FAFICS President); Marianne Brzak-Metzler, far right, Secretary

joining AFICS/NY as staff prepare to retire, provide staff with support, guidance and our experience of making this transition. The seminar was delivered on-line and was attended by some 300 UN attendees. Following the seminar, we distributed the membership application form along with relevant information material to all the attendees. Thirty (30) new members have so far joined in 2024 and most of those since this

pre-retirement seminar. Two of these new members expressed an interest in joining the Governing Board and having met the established criteria, they have been nominated to run for the 2024 Governing Board elections.

AFICS/NY also met with the Directors/Deputy Directors of UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA to talk about AFICS/NY and to seek their help in increasing their staff members' awareness of AFICS/NY. They agreed to have a link to our website on their intranet and to share AFICS/NY information material with their soon to retire staff. We



hope many more colleagues from the Programmes and Funds will join AFICS/NY.

There is now enhanced visibility of membership information on the landing page of the AFICS/NY website with easy access to the membership application form and other related information material. On **iSeek**, a United Nations staff member can click on **Quicklinks**, and find AFICS/NY as the very first listing on its dropdown menu, taking the staff member directly to the AFICS/NY website. The list of members who have joined AFICS/NY since January 2023 is now posted on our website. [240412_members_who_join_since_1-1-2023_81.pdf \(un.org\)](#)



We are now working to update the AFICS/NY Directory of Members last updated in April 2019. It should be published later this year, to be available mostly in an electronic version.

AFICS/NY Nominating Committee

This Committee is once again doing a quite herculean task of organizing elections to the AFICS/NY Governing Board. AFICS/NY conducts the Governing Board elections through its Nominating Committee in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Association's By-Laws and Rules of Procedure with the help of an outside company.



President, Deborah Landey welcomes members at the AFICS/NY Spring Luncheon (4/2024)

The Nominating Committee is designated by the AFICS/NY President in accordance with the Association's By-Laws and Rules of Procedure. It works independently of both the AFICS/NY Governing Board and Bureau, to ensure the integrity of the election process. **The Co-Chairs for this cycle are Sudershan Narula and Jay Karia.**

The election process for the 2024 cycle is well underway for the six (6) open positions to be completed as required prior to the Annual Assembly.

An electronic notice was sent on 2 February to worldwide members about the process with a **Call for Candidates**, with a deadline of three weeks. Nominating Committee members also reached out and spoke to a wide number of possible candidates from the UN and the Funds and Programmes, especially those who retired recently, living in the tri-state area and meeting the established criteria for nominations.



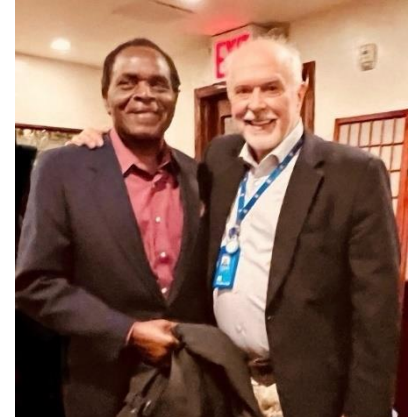
Joan McDonalds (2nd from left), former Governing Board Member & friends

A package, including the list of ten (10) candidates for the six (6) open positions, three incumbents and seven new candidates from the UN Secretariat, UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA, candidates' biographies, ballot, instructions for voting and the notice for the 54th AFICS/NY Annual Assembly, has already been shared with the vendor along with the contact information of the worldwide members.

As per the timeline established with the vendor, the voting started on 12 April, closes on 15 May and the results will be announced at the 54th Annual Assembly. ***Please look for your election package in your email and for those without email in your regular mail and be sure to vote!***

Communication Strategy

On the all-important issue of communication, the **AFICS/NY Communications Committee, Chair Gail Bindley-Taylor**, continues to make efforts to improve our communications. This President's Newsletter which we hope to distribute at least three times during our programme year, is part of that effort. The Committee will shortly be presenting a strategy for the enhancement of AFICS/NY communications based on your feedback, a plan to resume the much-missed **AFICS/NY Bulletin** and give the website a much-needed face-lift. We are also seeking among other things to fill critical volunteer vacant positions such as that of the **Editor of the Bulletin** and to find a technically skilled web developer to assist us with the more technical aspects of maintaining our website. We hope that members with the requisite background will come forward to serve our Association. We are also in need of members with videographer experience to help with producing videos which will publicize the work of the Association aimed at prospective members. We also hope to improve our communication with our older members some of whom do not have internet facility in the near future with telephone check-ins.



Edward Omotoso (former AFICS/NY President) & Velimir Kovacevc

Finance and Administration

A huge amount of work continues to be done to maintain our finances and good practices in administration by our **Treasurer, Mac Chiulli, Office Assistants Velimir Kovacevic and Veronique Whalen, Deputy Secretary Marianne Brzak-Metzler and Librarian, Dawne Gautier**. In the first quarter of this year, this work has included preparation of the required financial statements; developing a budget based on prior actuals and anticipated activities planned for in the 2024 Work Plan; successfully synching our two main databases and processing all necessary updates (deceased lists, notices from members, unidentified payments); issuing the 2024 invoices for annual members; filing the Charities tax filing with New York State; on-boarding the new second Office Assistant and setting her up with the necessary access and support; preparing minutes and summaries; maintaining the AFICS/NY Library; and, providing various updates to the AFICS/NY website.



Treasurer, Mac Chiulli (far right); Michelle Rockcliffe (in red top); Librarian, Dawne Gautier (in light blue)

We continue to have an excellent partnership with the UNFCU and thank them for their ongoing support of the work of AFICS/NY. We continue to meet with them on a regular basis, to review their and our ongoing efforts to serve our members, make suggestions to them regarding services, products and seminars we can jointly run to support our members.

Social Events



Debbie (President) & Barbara (Social Committee Chair) greet the members & guests at the AFICS/NY Spring Luncheon (4/2024)

We are resuming more in-person social events. The **AFICS/NY Social and Other Events Committee, Chair Barbara Linardo**, organized a wonderful Members luncheon on 11 April. The Committee is organizing a reception after the Annual Assembly. We will resume Mix and Mingles in our new premises. The **Governing Board Ageing Smart Committee, Co-Chairs Nicholas Alipui, Mac Chiulli, Sandra Haji-Ahmed** is discussing plans for a hybrid event later in the year.



AFICS/NY Charities Foundation

Foundation President **Anthony Fouracre** reports that in year 2023, upon consideration by, and recommendation of its Assistance Review



Kristen Timothy-Lankester (left) & friends

Committee, the Foundation awarded two grants totaling \$4,500 to qualified former international civil servants. The Foundation also received a request for assistance from a former staff member, however, that staff member was not in receipt of a pension and was thus not qualified under the terms of the Foundation. As is the practice in such situations, the application was referred to the **Emergency Fund of the UNJSPF**.

The Board of Directors of the Foundation continues to try to solicit applications for assistance by alerting the membership of AFICS/NY to the availability of grants. The Board is also aware of the fact that under the terms of its establishment, it can support humanitarian causes where this is consistent with the United Nations Charter. The Board has, however, reaffirmed that its primary focus is on assistance to members of AFICS/NY and other qualified international civil servants and their dependents and that the financial support of such humanitarian causes should be undertaken only in the absence of applications from civil servants so as to ensure the continuation of the Foundation's tax-exempt status under the relevant regulations.

Annual Assembly



Finally, mark your calendars for the 54th AFICS/NY Annual Assembly on **21 May** from **3.00-6.00 pm** in **Conference Room 1**. Preparations are well underway for this event and the reception afterwards. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible.



Top left: President's remarks at AFICS/NY General Assembly (May 2023)
Bottom L & R: Reception at the new AFICS/NY premises following the Assembly



Suggestions Welcome

If you have suggestions on how we can serve you better please do not hesitate to let any of us know.

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Deputy Secretary:	Marianne Brzak-Metzler
Treasurer:	Mac Chiulli
Office Assistants:	Velimir Kovacevic and Veronique Whalen
Librarian:	Dawne Gautier
Newsletter Contributing Editors:	Soknan Han Jung & Edward Omotoso

	AFICS/NY Committees and Working Groups
Pension Committee:	Co-Chairs Suzanne Bishopric and Jay Pozenel
Health Insurance Committee:	Co-Chairs: Jay Karia and Sudershan Narula
Communications Committee:	Chair Gail Bindley-Taylor
Membership Committee:	Chair Sudershan Narula
Nominating Committee:	Chair Sudershan Narula and Jay Karia
IT Committee:	Chair Mac Chiulli
Social and Other Events Committee:	Chair Barbara Linardo
Ageing Smart Committee:	Co-Chairs Nicholas Alipui, Mac Chiulli, Sandra Haji-Ahmed
Working Group on AFICS/NY By-Laws & Rules of Procedure:	Co-Chairs John Dietz and Jay Pozenel
Working Group on Visa Retrogression:	Chair, Darshak Shah
	AFICS/NY Charities Foundation
President:	Anthony Fouracre

With warmest regards to all,

*Deborah Landey
President, AFICS/NY*