



**ASSOCIATION OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS
New York**

Honorary Members

Martti Ahtisaari
Kofi A. Annan
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Dear Members of AFICS/NY,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to this 46th Annual Assembly. We regret the last minute change of venue and any inconvenience it may have caused. As soon as Conference Services told us of the change in meeting room, we posted it on our website and informed as many of you as we could reach.

This year my report will be brief as I am leaving the more detailed accounts of the work carried out with respect to pensions and health insurance to the Governing Board members directly responsible for following and dealing with those matters. At the outset, let me stress that I and the entire AFICS/NY Governing Board know, because we too are retirees, that the two most important pillars of our post-UN lives are pensions and their safety, and health insurance and its continuing quality and cost. That is why the major effort of the Governing Board is aimed at maintaining and protecting these two indispensable earned entitlements. Although a vocal minority would have you believe otherwise, there is no credibility whatsoever to assertions that your elected representatives are not doing their utmost on behalf of retirees.

With regard to pensions, the Governing Board of AFICS has continued to strongly advocate for a conservative investment strategy for the Pension Fund, the separation of the investment and operational sides of the Fund, the clearance of the backlog of pension payments, the filling of vacancies in the Investment Management Division, as well as for senior managers accountable for these responsibilities to communicate with us regularly on the state of play on these issues. You will hear more from Board member and Pension Committee Chair Warren Sach shortly, as well as from senior officials of the Fund. With regard to health insurance, the Board has continued to urge modest increases in premiums and deductions and Board member and representative on the Health and Life Insurance Committee Jay Karia will tell you more about this, as will those responsible for ASHI matters.

Let me assure you that all of us on the Governing Board of AFICS/NY are and will continue to be passionate advocates for your concerns.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Since last year at this time, the Governing Board has met at least once a month. To our January meeting, we invited the CEO of the Pension Fund and his colleagues and the Chief of the Health and Life Insurance Section and his colleagues to address and reply to the Governing Board's queries and concerns about delays in payment of these two entitlements. In addition to Board meetings, numerous others were held by individual Board members and committee heads on particular subjects.

The Association has held two especially important events in recent months. The first one took place on 29 March to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the United Nations and was sponsored by our Membership Committee chaired by Gail Bindley-Taylor who was instrumental in its success. Former Under-Secretary-General, past President of Finland and Noble prize winner Martti Ahtisaari accepted our invitation to speak on the UN at 70, its past success and future challenges. He did so in an interview format conducted by James Bays, diplomatic correspondent for Al-Jazeera. We were fortunate not only in our invited speaker, Martti Ahtisaari, who had such a wealth of history and experience to recount, but also in our interviewer. James Bays, who was so adept in drawing him out by asking the right questions. The event was well-attended, not only by retirees, but also by serving staff and senior UN officials, including the Secretary-General's Chef de Cabinet. Because Mr. Ahtisaari had another engagement he was unable to join us for a toast, but he stayed on for a while afterwards to greet old friends and colleagues. For those who wished to say more AFICS/NY provided a guest book for written messages which was then presented to him. If someday that guest book finds itself in a library in Finland or elsewhere, more than a few of our members' names and messages will be recorded there for posterity. The Association hopes to make such events part of an ongoing series and is already working on another one.

On 12 April, more than 100 members turned up for a talk on Estate Planning organized by the Committee on Ageing as part of its series on "Ageing Smart". The speaker was prominent attorney Ronald Fatoullah, elder law specialist and AARP Executive Council member. Essential estate planning tools such as wills, trusts, powers of attorney, health care proxies and living wills were covered. In the extensive Q&A that followed, it was clear that there was great interest in tax and inheritance issues involving non-US citizens. A summary entitled "Plan your Estate, Plan your Future" has been posted on the AFICS/NY website. Future presentations are planned by able Committee Chairs, Barbara Burns and Christine Smith-Lemarchand.

Thanks to ongoing efforts on the part of the Association over these several past years, OHRM finally reinstated the pre-retirement seminars that had been abandoned about five years ago in favour of on-line modules. AFICS/NY was played a key role in their reestablishment. Vice-President Debbie Landey, Governing Board member Warren Sach and I met several times with the ASG for OHRM and the Chef de Cabinet to stress how important it was for staff about to retire to have the face-to-face interaction with those responsible for their most important retirement benefits, pensions and ASHI. On 3 May, more than 100 staff members and number of AFICS/NY Board members participated in a standing room only, one-day workshop which included presentations from members of the Pension Fund, staff from the health insurance section, AFICS/NY and others on US taxation, G-4 visas, etc. By all accounts the seminar was a resounding success and filled an important void. It was webcast so that staff away from New York could also benefit. More such programmes are planned for the future.

As some of you may know, last year a Working Group on ASHI was established composed of representatives of the Chief Executives Board (CEB). In addition to three members from other AFICS associations, a member of AFICS/NY was a member of the Working Group's Steering Committee. In March, retirees through FAFICS were for the first time granted access to the General Assembly's Fifth Committee to deliver views on the report to the Fifth Committee. The Working Group on ASHI will continue its deliberations during the coming year and intend to continue to participate in the process through FAFICS representation, including an AFICS/NY representative.

Late last year it was reported that retirees were experiencing difficulties in accessing the DC buildings. It seemed that if they had not been visiting those buildings regularly, their passes were deactivated. I together with several other Governing Board members met with the Acting Chief of the Security and Safety Service Michael Browne and his colleagues to ensure that retirees would continue to be treated no differently from serving staff and have unfettered access to UN buildings. We were

very pleased to receive the assurances and cooperation of the Safety and Security Department in this matter and trust that no one is experiencing difficulty.

AFICS/NY representatives also attended a number of meetings on behalf of FAFICS namely, the Sixth Working Session of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Ageing from 14-16 July 2015 and the International Day of Older Persons on 15 October 2015. Comprehensive reports on these meetings were prepared by Governing Board members Deborah Landey, Joan McDonald and Gordon Tapper and Dimitri Argyriades, respectively, and were published in the most recent AFICS/NY *Bulletin* (Fall/Winter, Vol. 47). The Seventh Session of the OEWG will meet from 12-15 December 2016. Association members also participated as part of the FAFICS delegation in Pension Board committee meetings, namely the Budget Committee, the Audit Committee, the Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee, the Contact Group dealing with the guidelines on spousal benefits under Articles 43 and 35 of the UNSPF regulations, and with reference to health insurance, the Working Group on ASHI all of which you will hear about shortly in more detail.

Because of the events scheduled in March and April, the Social Committee headed by Barbara Linardo postponed its spring luncheon to June this year. On 8 June, AFICS/NY members will be able to cruise around Manhattan while lunching on a beautiful glass walled boat, Bateau, an experience which members have enjoyed in the past and asked us to repeat. Don't forget to sign up as soon as possible. We know that many of our members look forward to our luncheons and we look forward to providing you with some new venues next year.

I would also like to call attention to the financial statements of both the Association and its Charities Foundation which we have made available to you.

CLOSING REMARKS

We have left maximum time in the programme for our colleagues from the Pension Fund and the Insurance Section. We asked them to make their reports very brief this year so there is ample time for you to ask questions.

This is the time when we are pleased to have an opportunity to thank those who enable the Association to function, our capable office staff Jamna Israni and Veronique Whalen, the dedicated volunteers who are available, often at a moment's notice, to help us with our mailings, in particular Barbara Boyton, Irma Cerne, Mary Hussein, Monica Chambers and Minnie Boland, our treasurer Angel Silva, librarian Dawne Gautier and *Bulletin* editor Mary Lynn Hanley and her capable assistants Laura Frischeisen and Herminia Roque. Once again, we thank the CEO of the United Nations Credit Union William Predmore for his generous financial backing. Last, but certainly not least, I am most grateful to my fellow Governing Board colleagues without help and support facilitates my work. They are a remarkable group of dedicated volunteers who bring a wealth of substantive expertise, managerial, administrative and financial experience and their time to ensuring that AFICS/NY members continue to be well-served by the Association.

The Assembly will be followed from a reception at the Piccolo Fiore restaurant beginning at 6:00 PM.

Thank you for your attention.