



**Summary of the Minutes of the 448th meeting of the Governing Board
(hybrid)
Thursday, 25 January 2024, at 11:00**

Adoption of the Agenda [1]

1. The President declared the meeting open at 11:00 AM. The Agenda was adopted as presented and as follows:

1. Adoption of the Agenda
2. Approval of the Minutes of the Governing Board meetings held on 12 December 2023
3. President's Report
4. Review and Decision on revised AFICS/NY By-Laws and Rules of Procedure: Committee Chairs to present
5. Visa retrogression on update-Chair, Working Group
6. FAFICS matters
7. AOB - AFICS/NY Budget

President's Report [3]

2. The President made the following points in her report:

- She welcomed and reintroduced Veronique Whalen to the Governing Board as the additional AFICS/NY Office Assistant.
- She recalled that the Governing Board had approved the 2024 AFICS/NY work plan in December and that the various Committees would be working on implementation of the stated deliverables. Committees have already started to meet. The Pension Committee met on 18 January 2024 with Pedro Guazo, the RSG for Investments.
- She informed that the President of FAFICS, Jerry Barton, had requested reports out of the meetings held by the AFICS/NY leadership with Senior UN system Officials. She informed that this had been done with respect to the meetings held late last year with Catherine Pollard, Martha Helena Lopez and various Funds and Program Directors of HR for which he was very appreciative. A report on the recent meeting held with Pedro Guazo will also be sent to him.
- The full Bureau held its monthly meeting on 23 January 2024 to ensure that everything was on track for the start of the year.



- She stated that on 1 February 2024, AFICS/NY to be represented by herself, Darshak Shah, Dr. Sudershan Narula and Nancy Hurtz-Soyka will be participating in the on-line UN Staff Union's Pre-Retirement Seminar.
- Regarding AFICS/NY's Annual Assembly, she informed that preparations are underway for the holding of the Assembly during the third week in May, specifically on Tuesday, 21 May 2024.
- Regarding the Digital Certificate of Entitlement (DCE) enrollment work, AFICS/NY and the Pension Fund would be setting up help sessions for retirees throughout the year.
- With respect to UNFCU, work is also being undertaken to schedule the next educational webinar.
- **Review and Decision on revised AFICS/NY By-Laws and Rules of Procedure Committee Chairs to present [4]**

3. The Co-Chair provided an up-date on the review of the revised AFICS/NY By-Laws and Rules of Procedure. It was then proposed that information would be placed on the AFICS/NY website together with a link to the documents and a link to vote on the matter. The Co-Chair would draft the message for an email blast to describe the proposed changes and the voting process. It was thus decided that an effort should be made to try to contact people by phone to get an update on their email status. It was also decided that at the Annual Assembly in May the results of the voting would be announced on the revisions to the By-Laws. This would be followed by a Governing Board meeting in June to adopt the Rules of Procedure.

Visa retrogression update - Chair, Working Group [5]

4. On the issue of visa retrogression, the Chair provided an update on the current status of the Working Group. He recalled that a decision was made at the last meeting that a letter should be sent to the Secretary-General stating AFICS/NY's position. It was hoped that this letter could be sent to the Secretary-General before his Virtual Global Town Hall meeting scheduled for 1 February 2024. Reference was also made to another letter prepared by a lawyer who specializes in UN staff members who apply for the green card suggesting options. The Working Group on Visa Retrogression would be following very closely any actions taken by the UN Secretariat.

FAFICS matters [6]

5. The President confirmed that the FAFICS Bureau would have a hybrid meeting in Geneva from 26-28 February 2024 and the FAFICS Council meeting in 2024 would be held in Bangkok, Thailand from 22 to 26 July 2024

6. The Co-Chair of the Pension Committee reported that the Plan Review Group had been going through all the Staff Pension Committee recommendations for enhancements or changes and the Group was now working on fifty-two additional changes proposed by the Pension Administration to streamline processes. The one thing that came out as a priority and that



everybody was comfortable with was the restoration of the still remaining 0.5 percentage point reduction in the first inflation adjustment to the periodic UNJSPF pension benefits in award. It was, however, contingent on the actuarial valuation of the Fund as of 31 December 2023. She was hoping that the year-end stock market rally would lead to a strong trend of actuarial surpluses which was what the General Assembly stipulated as a condition for restoration. The Co-Chair expressed his view that since there was a 3 per cent overall inflationary rate that an inflation adjustment to pensions would be forthcoming in April. It was also stated that there would be an inflation adjustment, however, the additional half percent would be helpful and was a potential enhancement that had to be approved by the Pension Board at its July 2024 meeting if all went well given the governance requirements. The FSALM Committee was also working on a new report on financial solvency which would be presented to the Board in February. There were some sensitivities at the Board this past summer about performance reporting and additional reporting on meeting deadlines for survivor benefits. A lot of those comments were deleted in the final report because reporting on benefits processing was deemed not relevant to the solvency question. Lastly, one thing which was important to FAFICS members was the importance of a review of an adjustment to the small pensions minimum which has not been adjusted since 2016. As changes in the cost of living worldwide have been noticed, it was time to have a one-time adjustment in fairness to small pensioners and there was a good chance for getting this issue discussed at the Board at its February meeting. A Board member reminded all that it was AFICS/NY that had first raised the issue of an increase to small pensions. In terms of the child's benefit, while it did not need to be increased, there was a need to place some focus on the disabled child benefit.

7. The second Vice-President gave an update on the FAFICS Committee on New Membership for the Revitalization of Member Associations, and the two Vice Chairs who were focused on the Africa and Asia regions, and they have been in contact with Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia and also Laos. As such, they were hoping that there would be four new members joining FAFICS which would bring the total number of associations to sixty-eight, if they all meet the requirements. The Committee was also working with UPU, which had all its documents in place and what was needed to see was if they were eligible to join FAFICS. And lastly, she mentioned that the FAFICS Communications Committee was undertaking much work to update their website and working on producing a new brochure which would also be posted on their new website. With respect to the question of UPU joining FAFICS, a number of comments were made specifying that UPU's eligibility could be a problem as they are not part of the UN's Pension Fund.⁹

8. The Chair of the FAFICS Standing Committee on ASHIL reported that the Committee had completed two questionnaires; one was a general questionnaire which was to be sent to all Member Associations and the other was specifically to Associations in Africa. For AFICS/NY, the questionnaire would be completed by the AFICS Health Insurance Committee.

9. With respect to the FAFICS Communications Committee, it was reported that this Committee was working on two main objectives.- the revamping of the FAFICS website and the preparation of an informational brochure which would be produced in a digital version and easily downloadable for use by all Associations. The Committee was able find a consultant who would review the proposals received from several companies that had provided estimates for the work required by FAFICS. It was also reported that FAFICS was considering looking at



communications through social media (Facebook, LinkedIn). It was further noted that the FAFICS website would be very attractive and much more content driven, which could be a direction AFICS/NY could go in as well.

AOB [7]

10. The AFICS/NY Treasurer provided an update on the AFICS/NY budget and financial situation.

- In this regard, the President recollected that, for the first time ever, the 2024 work plan contained estimates of required resources for carrying out each Committee's objectives. As such it was the first time that AFICS/NY had aligned resources in such a systematic way showing all cost requirements which would mean thinking about how to appropriately budget for these costs.
- The Treasurer reported that as far as membership trends, it could be noted that over the past several years AFICS/NY had been adding about twenty-five new members a year but losing about one hundred. However, for 2023, AFICS/NY lost fewer than one hundred members and gained forty-nine new members which was finally a reverse trend which would hopefully continue. On the basis of one year's experience, efforts at expanding the membership were paying off, especially AFICS/NY's participation in the pre-retirement seminars which have proven to be the best manner to secure memberships as there was always a surge of activity after those seminars.
- The lifetime membership cost at \$400 contributed well to AFICS/NY's operations as every ten members adds \$4,000 to AFICS/NY's operating budget which was a big help so AFICS/NY should continue to encourage retirees to join as lifetime members.
- As for the budget, the tremendous amount of in-kind contributions from UN Headquarters was noted. This included office premises, electricity, heat, a limited number of internet access lines, copier facilities, telephone, etc. Support is also received from UNFCU, annual dues collected and from the lifetime members. In addition, the CD rates at the UNFCU have recently moved above 4 per cent as compared with the last several years where the interest rates were under 1 per cent. However, despite these positive points, AFICS/NY was showing for 2024 a deficit of between \$10,000 and \$15,000.
- It was noted thought that the \$10,000 to \$15,000 deficit has been consistent over the past several years and needed to be addressed because if left unaddressed, AFICS/NY would be in a difficult situation. Given this background, it might be time to look at the amount of annual dues as well as the lifetime membership rates which have not been increased in a long time.

11. A Board member stated that he has been concerned about the level of the membership dues rates for several years noting that the \$400 lifetime membership and the \$45 a year annual membership have not been changed for a very long time. It was also recalled that according to the By-Laws, the membership dues have to be approved by the Assembly and it was thought that



this year would be a good opportunity to go to the Annual Assembly and make a proposal to raise the membership rates. In addition to the proposed changes to the By-Laws, a proposal should also be made to increase the membership rates for annual members as well as lifetime members. It was suggested that the \$400 lifetime rate could be raised to \$500, and the annual rate would also need to be raised to \$50. It was also recalled that for every AFICS/NY member, the Association paid a \$2 per member fee to FAFICS per year.

12. One Board member asked whether the Governing Board should be receiving more regular financial reports because it would be best to have this information on a regular basis. She then proposed that the Board receive quarterly financial reports.

13. Another Board member stated that AFICS/NY had to review the level of the membership dues and expressed her agreement with the proposal to raise the lifetime membership dues from \$400 to \$500. It was suggested that AFICS/NY should look at this matter quickly and go to the Assembly in May for approval of new membership dues.

14. One Board member thought that the Board would benefit from having a copy of the tax form that is filed by AFICS/NY.

15. General agreement was expressed by members that AFICS/NY's membership rates needed to be increased. A general discussion ensued on other ways to increase the funding of AFICS/NY, such as focusing on collection from members, having annual memberships changed to lifetime memberships, and perhaps undertaking some fundraising or a raffle were suggested. The Governing Board was reminded that any outside fundraising needed to be avoided as it would cause problems with the New York Not-for-Profit Corporation Law under which AFICS/NY was formed. It was then suggested that income from other sources should be explored, even considering a legacy campaign.

16. The President summarized that the Board should focus on several objectives. First to focus on the collection of dues, undertake a revision to membership rates, provide financial reports to the Board on a six-month basis, consider a legacy campaign and finally approach UNDP once again for a financial contribution.
