

Talking Points of H.E. Ambassador Dessima Williams, representing PGA

Distinguished members of this Panel, Distinguished former international civil servants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

What an honor it is for me to represent the President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Peter Thomson, today at this annual gathering of former international civil servants.

I bring you warm greetings from Ambassador Thomson who very much regrets he could not be present today.

Just two weeks ago Ambassador Thomson led the world community in a global conference here at the United Nations on the plight of the world's oceans, another extraordinary example of the convening power of this great institution. Governments and other key stakeholders including NGOs, scientists, academics, the business community and the media gathered to focus on the lamentable state of two thirds of our planet which poses an existential threat to us all. As we all worked day and night on this issue over many months, I was once again profoundly moved by the work of the United Nations on so many issues confronting our world and of the dedication and devotion of those who serve it.

And here today, I sit before a community of individuals who have served this great institution, and most of you for a lifetime. Let me take this opportunity to thank you all for your service over those many years and across all parts of the United Nations system. I also know that international service is a family affair and often requires moving the family from one location to another as United Nations staff serve across the world. I know this takes a toll on families. In today's world, we have many dual career couples and juggling global mobility, dual careers and family needs represents a challenge. I also know that many of you served in difficult and challenging situations. We really cannot thank you enough.

Many of you continue to serve on a voluntary basis or as consultants and continue to make that love of United Nations goals, principles and values available to the world.

I also know that former international civil servants are concerned to ensure that their pensions and health care support remain robust. The Association of Former International Civil Servants (AFICS), accredited to ECOSOC and created some 45 years ago, continues to serve former international civil servants. I know members of AFICS work hard to bring to the attention of senior officials in the United Nations responsible for these issues, the major concerns you may have regarding processing of pensions, investment of the Pension Fund's assets and any issues about after-service health care schemes and their administration. Another priority for AFICS I know is social interaction, ensuring opportunities for former colleagues and friends to continue to connect after they leave the United Nations. AFICS has also worked hard to ensure that the

United Nations continues to run pre-retirement seminars for staff approaching this next chapter of their lives.

As member states, we know that people are living much longer and that a range of policies need to be in place in our countries such as social safety nets and ways to ensure social inclusion and interaction. Indeed at the very heart of Agenda 2030, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is the fundamental principle that no one be left behind. Member states actively engage the full range of issues through the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA) and the International Day of Older Persons. We know that AFICS members attend both and follow our discussions carefully and we thank you for this interest and participation.

Let me thank you again for your dedicated service throughout your careers and wish you and your families the very best.

I wish you an interesting and productive Annual Assembly and social gathering afterwards.

Thank you.