

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE CHEF DE CABINET

--

**REMARKS TO THE ASSOCIATION OF FORMER
INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS (AFICS)**

New York, 27 June 2017

Dear Mr. John Dietz, President of AFICS,
Members of the AFICS Governing Board,
Honorable former staff members of the United Nations System,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to open the Annual General Assembly of the Association of Former International Civil Servants/New York on behalf of Secretary-General António Guterres.

The Secretary-General has asked me to convey his deepest gratitude to you for your service. You collectively represent decades of effort to build the United Nations into what it is today. We all owe you our thanks for your immense contributions to the United Nations. You may have worked in different types of jobs or different duty stations around the world, but we are all part of one UN family. We all feel proud to serve the Charter. You may retire from the United Nations system, but you never retire from your commitment to our goals of peace, sustainable development, human rights and human dignity.

In these times of heightened tensions and instability, the Secretary-General is strengthening the UN's ability to prevent crises. This effort advances the strong foundation you helped build.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Secretary-General also has a vision for a more responsible organization that can address the roots of crises by strengthening our core missions for peace and security, sustainable development and human rights.

We are already seeing results. Interdepartmental cooperation is improving. And we are repositioning development at the centre of our activities.

We are improving management to simplify procedures, decentralize decision-making, increase transparency and ensure accountability.

We have already improved protection for whistle-blowers – and we plan to strengthen them even more.

We are reinforcing actions against the horrific problem of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN personnel. The Secretary-General has instituted a new approach to prevent violations and help victims.

He is also giving top priority to a new strategy to finally achieve gender parity across the UN system.

AFICS/New York is helping international civil servants to navigate manage pension matters, after-service health care and much more.

We value this role – and we are committed to doing our part. I was pleased to have very productive meetings with Mr. Dietz, Ms. Landey and Mr. Karia last month. We discussed the issues that concern you.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Secretary-General is aware of your concerns.

The Pension Fund's backlog of actionable cases and management issues has caused hardships for thousands of employees.

There has been progress.

There are now fewer than 300 actionable cases related to initial separations that are still pending processing by the Pension Fund.

That said, there are still other pending cases related to deferred pensions, special and recalculation cases as well as non-actionable cases pending receipt of additional information.

We are doing what we can to encourage that these issues be resolved expeditiously. And we are encouraging a simplification of the processes.

When the Secretary-General met in March with the Chairman of the Pension Board and the CEO of the Pension Fund, he called for proactive follow-up on individual cases to expedite the receipt of missing information.

Meanwhile, the Department of Management introduced measures to expedite the separation process here at Headquarters to ensure we do our part quickly.

The Department of Field Services is addressing the large number of outstanding separation and pension cases for field personnel through an internal task force.

The UN Secretariat and the Pension Fund have established timely access to information on relevant separation personnel actions for the Fund.

The Secretary-General is looking forward to the results of an end-to-end review that was launched last October. It aims to streamline the process from separation to entitlements. The results will be presented to the Pension Board next month.

The Pension Fund remains strong, based on its long standing conservative investment strategy. Its governance is robust.

Next month's Board meeting will also discuss an independent review of the Fund's investment practices, risk management, and investment performance, conducted by an independent third party. The Secretary-General, having fiduciary responsibility, is looking forward to the Board's consideration.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me now to say a few words on the After-Service Health Insurance, which I know is very important to you.

I appreciate AFICS/New York addressing this issue.

Let me note that the Pension Board has taken a decision on the Pension Fund's inappropriateness to manage financial resources related to After-Service Health Care reserves.

That decision endorsed a recommendation of the Fund's Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee.

The Board noted that the investment objectives of the Fund differed from those of After-Service Health Insurance benefits.

The Secretary-General shares the concern expressed by both the Pension Fund's management and its Board about a possible loss of focus that could affect delivery in its core mandate, which is pensions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I thank you for your continued support for the United Nations.

Rest assured that we will always be open to a fruitful dialogue with AFICS/New York.

Thank you.