

77th AAFI-AFICS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 20 APRIL 2017 –

SALIENT POINTS

Thomas Neufing (Chief, Centre for learning and multilingualism) opened the 77th AFICS General Assembly on behalf of Administration. He thanked AAFI-AFICS for their work for retirees and the Organization, in particular the pre-retirement seminars.

A minute of silence was observed in memory of deceased staff members and, at the request of the AFICS President, all victims of terrorist attacks that had occurred during the year around the world. For some months death notices were missing from the Bulletin. The Pension Fund having been unable to send the information due to changes in their system. The preparation of these notices has now been resumed by Elisabeth Belchamber.

Contrary to the usual practice of thanking the volunteer interpreters at the end of the assembly, the AFICS President paid a special tribute to their invaluable assistance in ensuring a successful meeting: Andrew Brookes, Kathleen Ray Brookes, Françoise Méral and Norman Lusted.

Election of the President

Arthur Askew (WMO retiree) was elected to chair the meeting. His vast experience is very much appreciated. At the request of the Treasurer, in order to ensure a full discussion, **Items 6 and 7, Financial matters**, were examined first. The Treasurer explained different aspects of the statement of income and expenditure. The Auditor confirmed that the book-keeping was in order. Item 6 and 7 taken together were approved.

Payment of membership fees had declined and the Assembly was urged to make proposals. It is possible that the lack of new members could partly be due to the availability of much information on INTERNET. Retiree associations can only suggest to people asking for information, that they become members. There are also too few volunteers and an appeal was launched to prepare a membership campaign highlighting the action and activities of the Association and FAFICS, for instance. pensions, financial aid, health insurance.

It was pointed out that not only the Committee but all AFICS members should seek new members. The decline in membership is a serious problem. UN staff retiring within the next 5 years should be targeted with **the assistance of the Administration**. Retirement 'packages' should always include information on the retiree associations. Professional advice could perhaps be sought to prepare a promotional campaign.

The AFICS President proposed a round of applause for the Treasurer for his invaluable work.. The assembly adopted the financial report and warmly thanked the Auditors for their support and assistance.

Item 4 – Report of the Committee

The objectives have not always been met for a number of extraneous reasons but assistance is always available for members. Committee members deserve warm thanks as they meet and work on a voluntary basis; Elisabeth Belchamber has been working for AFICS for over 20 years; Jean-Jacques Chevron regularly works on the Bulletin. Elisabeth Belchamber, David Cohen and Yves Beigbeder were designated as honorary members by applause.

Mohammed Sebti presents the **UNSMIS** medical Insurance for active and retired staff of **UNOG, UNHCR and WMO**. ILO and WHO have their own medical insurance jointly administrated by active staff and retirees. For UNSMIS, however, retirees are still represented only as observers.. Retirees should be considered on the same basis as active members; they have a wealth of experience and knowledge which could, and should be used.

For **ITU** the new medical insurance **CIGNA/van Breda** requests the curriculum vitae of doctors, as well as asking for the reasons for the treatment. This lack of confidentiality is disturbing

WMO : The Secretary General is convinced that UNSMIS is good value for money. However, the Staff Association is seeking a cheaper alternative, while the Amicale hopes to remain with UNSMIS.

WHO : Jean-Paul Menu (AOMS) reported that reimbursement by internet is now also available for retirees. Originals no longer have to be forwarded for reimbursement. Staff/retirees are however requested to keep originals for five years.

Carlos Santos, member of the executive committee of the **ITU** insurance scheme reported that after a tender for a new insurance, **Van Breda**, had been chosen. Since 17 January 2017, **CIGNA** also offers a 'complementary' insurance. With 65% retirees the ITU scheme is in a delicate position. Retirees have a number of reservations but a satisfaction enquiry revealed that the level is generally acceptable.

François Keinzler, **ILO**, stressed the importance of working with active staff not just retirees. The Section des Anciens works closely with the Staff Union. Members of the health insurance are well covered. The Director-General has requested a study on outsourcing the Insurance scheme but there is no further information. The Section des Anciens appreciates its close relations with AFICS to defend a mutual insurance scheme.

Mohammed Sebti commented on the trend towards outsourcing, either for the whole procedure or for making reimbursements. There are still, however, fully mutual insurance schemes such as UNSMIS, ILO and WHO, and it is essential to remain vigilant by proving

that a mutual scheme is as efficient, and even better, than outside sources.

Katia Chestopalov reported on the working group created by the UN General Assembly to examine world-wide health insurance and reports regularly to the General Assembly. FAFICS is a member of this group since 2015 and has been able to ensure that it studies all aspects, not merely financial. The Chairman thanked FAFICS for their work.

Three recommendations:

It is essential, when outsourcing, to **negotiate for the best terms.**

When a commercial company, like CIGNA, insures a number of organizations **better conditions could be obtained as a group.**

The three Mutual Schemes in Geneva **must negotiate with local care providers.**

Paragraph 40 - The AFICS President stressed the importance of the AFICS 'Permanence and a number of Committee members participate in groups and meetings outside the United Nations system:

- Mr. S. Mbele-Mbong in the Geneva Ageing Committee.
- At the Cité Seniors, Rue de Lausanne, Geneva; Tuesday language conversation groups: meetings of Carrefour International the first Wednesday of the month
- Roger Fontana and Odette Foudral take part in the Geneva Platform for retirees.

Paragraph 41 – The 'Groupe Ferney Voltaire' is very active. The Shakespeare group meet regularly. More AFICS activities would be welcome.

Paragraphs 42-45: Several individual points were raised such as the issuance of a retiree card to cheaper bus fares; a complaint concerning the lack of response from the Pension Fund; and a query on when the French version of UNJSPF website available and whether the dual track could be calculated again

Item 5 . The AFICS President requested the Assembly to accept the 3 proposed new committee members: **Jean-Marino Axarlis, Ravindra Chopra and Monika Spyzak-von-Brzezinska. The proposal was adopted unanimously and thanks were expressed to Sébastien Martinek, polling officer, for his work.**

Other business

It was suggested that the administrator of the EMS be invited to the next AFICS Assembly to give information on residential and care home. Information on La Maison de Tara, Chêne-Bougeries, Geneva, can be found at: Info@lamaisondetara.ch.

Pension presentation

Mr. Aliamane Bacar Said, Chief, Client Servicing and Records Management Section took the floor in the absence of Mr. Alan Blythe, Chief of Office and Ms. Elizabeth Chauveau-Bais, Chief, Participation and Entitlements Section.

The good news was given that the dollar CPI has risen 3.6% as reflected on April 2017 pensions.

The local track has no adjustment neither in France nor in Switzerland, only Germany 3.6% and 3.4% Austria.

The new system has now gone live. Records for retirees have been kept as before. Last year the system was on-line. Members were asked to enrol. Details of payments can now be seen, as well as insurances, etc.

The Pension Permanence in UNOG was formerly two lunch-times a week. Due to resource constraints the Permanence is temporarily reduced to only once a week, Tuesdays mornings from 9h00 to 12h00.

New pensions are being processed with an average of within 4-6 weeks if all documents have been received. Delays are due to recalculations when there is a delay as regards confirmation of the details of country of residence.

Survivor's benefits are complicated and the Task Force aims to finalize payments within 4-6 weeks. Document collection is the most complicated for various reasons, i.e. where additional spouses sometimes exist.

Mr. J.-P. Menu, OMS, gave heartfelt thanks to Mr. Said for his assistance to retirees when they have problems and certificates are not received and have to be found.

The 7.5% pay reduction in Geneva (post adjustment) for active staff members was discussed. It was queried whether retirees would be affected. Mr. Said confirmed that retirees would not be affected and negotiations were currently taking place. For the time being only international staff are targeted. Local staff will probably be affected later.

Mr. Said appreciated the public appreciation as did his colleagues, and the Financial Services who dealt with banking instructions. For the Geneva Office of UNJSPF, the payment of retirees total 33,800 people! with only 15 staff responsible for ensuring payment.

Payees have to have a certificate to have the right to receive. It is imperative to have proof that the beneficiary is alive and warrants payment.

The AFICS President asked when the French version of the Pension site would be available. A very bad version of the website (google translation) is available, however it needs to be completely redone which has delayed its availability. At the moment the Pension fund has other priorities. They support the need for a French version being made available and the necessity of having all information in both English and French. Should any French retirees be willing to help with the translation, their assistance would be greatly appreciated.

A new much more user-friendly website is expected to be working in approximately one month. This new website will make it less necessary to contact the Pension fund. The dial track' is also on the 'to do' list. The highest priority at the moment is the deadline for the entitlement certificates. Ms. S Bloch, OMS asked that New York extend the deadline for certificates as not all 'missing' staff could be contacted and some were not capable of replying due to ill health. This deadline cannot be changed as it is linked to payroll closure, where 2 weeks are needed. Suspension is planned for May so that new CE certificates can be sent out. Three months after suspension the banks of the 'missing' retirees will be contacted.

Mr. Said advised that no retirement card exists. The only card for retirees is the card which enables them to enter the Palais des Nations. The requested retiree card as requested would be too expensive and not practical.

It was asked whether the name of the survivor could be placed on the certificate. This would be very challenging. Formerly this was the case. However, the transfer to the new system made this very complicated and it was removed. There were also disputes due to new marriages, divorces, etc., and constant updates, delays in removals and adjustments. The database has to first be updated as much data was missing. The information is being added step-by-step, as well as dependants. When the information has been audited it will be made available on-line. However, this has to be restricted for the time being. Translation has been carried out internally and the information now needs to be inputted. Offers of assistance will be considered and a request will be made to senior staff.

The residual payment is a unique payment provided that all monthly payments were already made. The amount already paid to the retiree is first verified. The beneficiaries will receive the balance. When a lump sum has been taken the remaining percentage is included. There is usually no beneficiary as no money is left, such as when the retiree

received a regular pension over a long period and the children are no longer dependant. In such cases no payment is made. The first letter received after retirement from the Pension Fund provides all of the above details.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 12h30