

AAFI-AFICS – General Assembly of 21 April 2016

[There is a glossary of the acronyms used at the end of the report.]

This year's Assembly was rather different for several reasons:

- For the first time it was held in the Palais des Nations
- The delay in publishing the Committee's report, which once again underlines the importance of being able to contact our members by e-mail
- The subjects treated: ASHI and the Pension Fund, which, while they are regular features of our Assembly, this year emphasized the importance of the quality of follow-up to keep our members and act within the fora where FAFICS is able to express itself.

The General Assembly was attended by 84 members to whom we extend thanks for their interest in our Association.

The Assembly observed some minutes of silence in memory of retirees who had died during the past year, together with the victims of attacks perpetrated all over the world.

Mr Thomas Neufing, head of the UNOG Training Section, on behalf of the Director-General and the Director of Administration, spoke of the bonds of retirees with their former organizations. He thanked AAFI-AFICS for their participation in the pre-retirement seminars, and assured retirees that they could participate in training courses.

Mrs Sylvie Jacque presided the Assembly and succeeded in covering all the items on the agenda within the planned two-hour timetable.

Presentation of the Report (paragraphs 2-18)

The AAFI-AFICS Chairwoman, Odette Foudral, reminded the Assembly that the year had been sadly marked by the death of Christiane Kind. She also spoke of the absence of Elisabeth Belchamber, who does, however, continue to offer assistance by working at home. She thanked Roger Fontana who had resumed the Friday morning permanence, thus making it possible for members to contact the AFICS office each morning.

She reported that the Bureau continued to meet each week despite traffic problems and the difficulties of access to the Palais during Conference periods.

She stressed in particular the task of organizing the annual assembly and the importance of circulating information concerning membership of retiree associations to strengthen the position of FAFICS which at the moment has only 20,000 members out of a total of 72,000 retirees.

She also spoke of the weight throughout the last year of the problems of the Pension Fund and the discussions concerning ASHI.

She had pleasure in welcoming the presence of a representative of the Staff Coordinating Council, which confirmed the convergence of the interests of both serving staff and retirees, and recalled that cooperation with the staff associations was one of the objectives of the Committee.

Insurance (§ 19-24)

Pierre Vangeleyn explained the necessity of the increase in UNSMIS (UNOG, WMO, UNHCR) premiums to ensure the future of the insurance scheme.

He regretted that the documents on the Internet site were not available in French but nonetheless recommended the use of the site which contained the annual reports.

He also regretted that some benefits, notably for dental care, ophthalmology and hearing aids, did not correspond adequately with present-day tariffs.

He recalled the absence of representatives, other than observers (Pierre Vangeleyn and Mohammed Sebti), on the UNSMIS Committee, despite requests since 2000 for a revision of the statutes. Mrs Chaoui, on behalf of the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council, recommended that the UNOG Director-General be approached to obtain the modification of the statutes.

François Kientzler (SHIF-ILO) recalled that the Section of Former Officials is part of the ILO Staff Union. The management committee of the health insurance scheme is elected by its members. A referendum is being held concerning the increase in premiums. Changes have also been made to the coverage and preventive care. Since January 2016, AXA guarantees that members are fully covered. Reimbursement forms are available. However, Mr Kientzler stated that the ITU's request that the monies blocked after that organization had left the joint scheme should now be released was not within his competence.

Fabio Bigi (ITU): stated that there was a representative and an alternate on the committee of the new insurance scheme who were following developments.

For WHO, Jean-Paul Menu provided some supplementary information to that given in the AAFI-AFICS report.

Management of the WHO health insurance scheme is complex because of the wide geographic spread of its members. Concerning the USA, where the cost of medical treatment is extremely high, criteria have been established to ensure that members receive adequate reimbursement of their costs.

Mrs Aubert raised the problem of the increase in the premiums paid by WHO retirees to INTERFON, the complimentary insurance. She suggested that a

campaign should be launched to increase the number of active staff members in this society, but was informed that WHO was not prepared to do this.

Sébastien Martinek evoked the problem of a change in the representation of members following the merge of GPAFI with AMFI, stressing the necessity of adequate representation since 20% of its members are retirees. He urged AFICS to take action to ensure that retirees are represented on the management committees of this new body. There have already been discussions between AMFI and AFICS which will be followed up. Mrs Chaoui assured the Assembly that the representatives of the Staff Coordinating Council would look after the interests of all members, including retirees.

Van Breda is not recognized in certain Swiss cantons.

Wolfgang Milzow raised the problem that the UNSMIS insurance card is not valid, which creates difficulties for members outside of Geneva. At present, the only means of proving coverage is through an exchange of e-mails.

Gerald Walzer spoke of the very high fees charged by some doctors in Geneva and stressed that more moderate tariffs should be negotiated by the insurance schemes.

ASHI (§ 25)

Report of Katia Chestopalov on the ASHI Working Group set up by the Finance and Budget (FB) Network.

A few facts:

1. The General Assembly resolutions on managing the cost and improving efficiency
2. The creation of the Working Group which started its work in 2015
3. The inclusion of FAFICS representatives together with those of the FB network, the administrations and, since December 2015, FICSA to represent the staff
4. A great many video-conferences
5. Two workshops that allowed progress to be made.

The mandate: 23 UN system self-administered plans for 400,000 members.

A questionnaire was addressed to all the organizations to determine the type of coverage and insurance.

Only three schemes, all in Geneva, are independent. The others are either partially or entirely

administered externally.

The report was finalized at the end of November.

- 1 A recommendation that the self-administered schemes should form a group to negotiate and obtain better tariffs.
2. A recommendation to the other schemes that the conditions of contract should continue to be better negotiated collectively by all the administrations
3. The decisions concerning the limitation of costs should not be to the detriment of the quality of the treatment nor to limit the coverage of retirees who, having contributed during their period of service, have acquired rights.
4. The use of national health insurance schemes where they exist, thus converting the organizational scheme into a complimentary insurance.
5. The recommendation that the UNJSPF should administer a global scheme was rejected by the Standing Committee but a system-wide approach merits further study.

The reports of the Working Group and the ACABQ are available on our INTERNET website.

In March 2016, the UN General Assembly extended the mandate of the Working Group to optimize insurance coverage and explore the possibilities offered by national insurance schemes.

Welfare assistant (§ 35)

Mohammed Sebti outlined the details concerning the setting up of a working group to examine the employment of a paid welfare assistant one day per week. The conclusions are contained in the Committee's report.

The Committee is now preparing a hard copy version of the information on social services already available on the website for the Greater Geneva region.

CLIC (§ 46)

Samuel Mbele-Mbong recommended to use the information available on the CLIC Pays-de-Gex.

Pension Fund (§ 49-54)

The representative of the Staff Coordinating Council referred to the delays in payment to new retirees and urged retirees to sign the petition in support of those who have been waiting for over 6 months for their first payment.

Jean-Paul Menu (AFSM-WHO) thanked AFICS for having sent to the sister associations the list of those who had not returned their Certificate of entitlement, which had enabled them to trace a number of people.

Samuel Mbele-Mbong presented the resolution prepared by the AAFI-AFICS Committee (which is shown in Annex 2). The resolution concerns the different

problems which have ensued the installation of the new IT system and also the delays in recruitment to a number of important posts in the investment sector.

The resolution, which was adopted unanimously, is addressed to FAFICS, the organ which represents retirees on the Standing Committee of the Pension Fund, which will meet in Vienna in July.

It follows on the exchange of correspondence with the CEO of the Pension Fund to take interim action to minimize the impact of the considerable delays in payment of pensions to new retirees and survivors.

The Bureau had expressly decided not to implicate the representatives of the Pension Fund in Geneva, who have unfailingly helped to solve those cases that have been brought to their attention, by dividing the meeting into two parts: the General Assembly and an information session on the Pension Fund.

FAFICS (§ 55-57)

Jay Sundaresan, Secretary of the Federation, announced that new associations had joined FAFICS. The FAFICS Council will take place in Vienna from 8 to 13 July, followed by the meeting of the UNJSPF Standing Committee where FAFICS is an active participant.

Katia Chestopalov stated that FAFICS had made several interventions with the Pension Fund concerning the delays in payments and the vacant posts in the investment sector. She indicated that more information is to be found on the website.

Conclusion (§ 59-71)

The Chairwoman thanked the AFICS Committee and all the volunteers for their work to ensure the proper functioning of the Association. She also thanked the UNOG Administration for the facilities it provided, including especially the allocation of offices at E-2078.

As for the objectives attained in 2015, the Presiding Officer stressed that there should be no criticism of action that had not been entirely successful but rather an immense recognition for the work of the volunteers who are active in the Committee.

Financial matters

The accounts were approved and Mohammad Rharha, one of the auditors, warmly commended the work of the Treasurer and the Committee's desire to maintain a financial balance.

M. Rharha thanked the Treasurer for his receptiveness and availability. Expenditures had amounted to only 53% of those budgeted but there had been a decrease in the membership fees received. The overall situation was however healthy.

The accounts were adopted by the Assembly.

The auditors, Ventura Garcia Garnateo and Mohammad Rharha, accepted to prolong their mandate.

The Assembly rose at 11.30 precisely.

After the close of the Assembly, representatives of the Pension Fund, Alan Blythe and Aliamane Bacar Said, made a presentation of the new IT system, IPAS. Mohammed Sebti acted as moderator of this part of the meeting. The presentation is available on the AFICS website and a translation into French will be added as soon as possible.

Translation Elisabeth BELCHAMBER

List of acronyms:

FAFICS: Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants which comprises 52 associations located in a number of towns around the world

GPAFI: Provident and Insurance Group of International Officials which offers complimentary insurance to the different organizational insurance schemes

AMFI (MEC): International Civil Servants Mutual Association

INTERFON: CERN complimentary health insurance

UNSMIS: United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society (UNOG, WHO and HCR)