

# Former FAO and Other UN Staff Association

Associazione dei Pensionati della FAO e di altre Organizzazioni delle Nazioni Unite



**Newsbrief 92**  
**June 2014**

## **44<sup>th</sup> FFOA General Assembly marked by strong virtual attendance and participation of UN top managers**

### **ALSO IN THIS ISSUE**

- A Word from the President
- Pensions
- Medical Insurance
- News from the UN Organizations
- News of the Staff Associations
- Social Activities
- News from the Executive Committee
- News from the Electronic World
- Your Good Health
- News from the Membership
  - New Members
  - In Memoriam

The 44th session of the FFOA General Assembly, held on 28 May at IFAD Headquarters, was attended by 95 members in the room and at least 235 people via live Internet streaming (plus ten proxies). Under the able guidance of Mr Dhia Azzu, formerly IFAD Chef de Cabinet, and Chief, Loan Implementation Unit, the Assembly reviewed progress over the second year of the current triennial mandate, and approved a budget of EUR 36,000, whilst maintaining annual dues invaried. The full report of the General Assembly will be dispatched with Newsbrief 93.

The Assembly was addressed by key members of top management from the three largest Rome-based agencies: IFAD Vice President, Mr Michel Mordasini; WFP Deputy Executive Director, Mr Amir M. Abdulla, and FAO Director Human Resources, Ms Monika Altmaier. In presenting key opportunities and challenges facing their respective organizations, the speakers all recognized staff (both current and former) as the most precious resource of the organizations.

Mr Fabio Bencivenga, IFAD Staff Representative, also addressed the Assembly on behalf of all the Staff Associations. While recognizing the need for cost efficiencies and budget stringency, he emphasized that this must not be done in a manner that might bring negative consequences to staff morale and, therefore, efficiency.

Mr Bencevigna reiterated the need for unity among the staff.

Reconfirming the respect and importance accorded FFOA by the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund, the General Assembly was attended by CEO Mr Sergio Arvizú; Mr Alan Blythe, Chief of the Geneva office, responsible for Europe-based beneficiaries; and Fund Legal Counsel Ms Jaana Sareva. Mr Arvizú confirmed the strong operational and financial position of the Fund (as reported in Newsbrief 91). His presentation is available for download from the members area of the FFOA website. Ms Sareva described as “unfounded” recent rumors of changes to UNJSPB investment policy.

The Assembly closed at 13:00 with a moment of silence for all serving and retired staff of the UN who passed away during the year, and in particular FFOA's Honorary President, Anton Doeve.

## A Word from the President on Behalf of Your Executive Committee

---

First of all, I want to renew a commitment (mine, and that of the Executive Committee) to strengthened FFOA collaboration with the Staff Representative Bodies of our former parent Organizations. These are difficult times and we have much to offer (both historical memory and cutting-edge analytical capacity on pension and medical insurance issues), as well as much to gain. Together we stand.

Your Executive Committee, during this quarter, was focused heavily on the preparations for, and arrangements of, three major items: the annual General Assembly (GA) in May; the JAC/MC call for bids from eight companies for our medical insurance; and last, but certainly not least, FFOA hosting the FAFICS Council in July.

With regard to the General Assembly, it is you, the members, who give the meeting the importance and vibrancy it merits. This time I think I can safely say we succeeded, so congratulations to us all! Special thanks to Annemarie Waeschle and Gianni Monciotti, and the FFOA office assistants Deborah Ryan and Annamaria Certelli for their invaluable support. Extra thanks, of course, to IFAD for hosting us and webcasting our proceedings this year.

I would add, pursuant to the medical insurance tender, that during the GA we, and the representatives of FAO Management, heard

loudly and clearly the message of satisfaction with Vanbreda and the service it has provided over the course of many years. So your representatives will forcefully enunciate that further in forthcoming JAC/MC meetings (if and when they are held as, for the past few months, FAO seems to have adopted a go-it-alone attitude). We are continually trying to mitigate that tendency, and to take our legitimate place in all relevant discussions.

FFOA is proud to be hosting the annual FAFICS Council in July. We will also provide tactical and logistics support for the FAFICS delegation to the Pension Board meeting, which will immediately follow the FAFICS session also in Rome.

**Alan Prien**  
**President**

### Newsbrief 92

June 2014

Newsbrief, the FFOA official quarterly newsletter, is produced in English and Italian and is distributed free to all members, electronically to those who have internet access, and in print to those who do not. Newsbrief (current and back issues) is also available on the FFOA website: [www.fao.org/FFOA](http://www.fao.org/FFOA). Suggestions or contributions from members are welcome.

Editors: **S. Dembner, M.F. Purnell**  
Designer: **O. Bolbol**

The cost of printing Newsbrief, as well as the FFOA General Assembly documents is borne by the World Food Programme, for which the Association is grateful.

## Pension Matters

(Responsible: **M. Breschi**, A. Prien, G. Eberle, A. Fusco Femiano, M. F. Purnell)

### UNJSPF CEO reconfirms healthy fund

At the FFOA General Assembly, held at IFAD headquarters on 28 May, UNJSPF CEO Mr Sergio Arvizú confirmed his position (reported amply in Newsbrief 91) that the UNJSPF is well funded, and remains strong. The full presentation with an array of tables and financial information on investment performance and actuarial outlook is available on the FFOA website.

An area of major interest at the General Assembly this year was the review and possible update or change of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Fund and the UN Office for Human Resources Management (OHRM) to ensure that the Fund's human resources are in line with its operational and investment needs. Concerns had been voiced at recent sessions of various UN fora regarding, in particular, the delegation of authority to the CEO and the Representative of the Secretary General (RSG) vis-à-vis human resources management.

Mr Arvizú reassured the audience that there are no plans to lower the Fund's recruitment standards or to outsource vital functions to external organizations or to centralize additional powers to the CEO or RSG. He further stressed that the Pension Board and the UNGA will remain the ultimate authority on the Fund's human resources policies and procedures as well as recruitment decisions. He also underlined his confidence in "an improved and streamlined HR framework, codified in a revised Memorandum of Understanding between the Fund and the OHRM as mandated by the Pension Board and the UNGA".

FFOA will remain vigilant on developments in this important area and is committed to ensuring that the current debate on human resources will be properly relayed to the Pension Board for its full consideration and decision at the upcoming July session.

### New all time high reached in June 2014!

In recent months, we reported all time levels of the Fund's investments with the highest level of US\$ 51,540 billion reported as of 25 February 2014. It is with renewed pleasure that we now report a new all time high level of US\$ 53,006 billion reached on 4 June 2014. As previously reported, the growth of the value of the Fund's investments continues to be attributable to positive trends in financial markets worldwide, to improved administration processes as well as to more effective ways of managing and monitoring investment performance.

According to the latest Fund evaluation available as at the end of May, investments were distributed as follows: Equities 62,11%, Bonds 24.08%, Real Estate 5.54%, Cash /short term 4.41%, Alternatives 1.49%, Risk Control 2.36%.

### The UNJSPF CEO's annual letter

The CEO's annual letter (available on the UNJSPF website) highlights important developments within the Fund, and puts particular priority on the implementation of the new Integrated Pension Administration System (IPAS). Of particular note this year is "the decision by the UNGA to amend the Fund's Regulations to increase the normal retirement age to 65 and change the early retirement provisions for new staff as of 1 January 2014". The letter also highlights ways in which beneficiaries can interact more effectively with the Fund, particularly via the Fund's website.

A further item covered in the letter is a resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on After Service Health Insurance (ASHI, or ASMC for FAO/WFP) "whereby it requests the Secretary General to examine the option of broadening the mandate of UNJSPF, based on input from the Pension Board, to include the cost-effective, efficient and sustainable administration of ASHI . . . and to report thereon at its 70th session". FFOA will closely monitor developments in this important area and report to members on a timely basis.

## **The UN Joint Staff Pension Board**

As previously reported, the Pension Board this year will take place in Rome the second week of July. Full reports on the discussions and decisions by the Board will be provided to members in Newsbrief 93 (September 2014).

## **FAO/WFP Staff Pension Committee (SPC)**

During the General Assembly, members received an update from Chief Legal Officer Ms Jaana Sareva on the status of the revised Terms of Reference for the Pension Committees as well as for the Committee's Secretaries. Ms Sareva assured the GA that all the observations and requests for change raised by the SPC's of the various participating organizations including FAO/WFP had been taken in due consideration and were reflected in the submission to the Board for its final review and approval. FFOA actively participated in the debate during 2013 and 2014 and it is now committed to closely following the final discussion within the Pension Board in the July session.

## **Cost of living increase.**

In Newsbrief 91, we reported that there would be no increase in the cost of living adjustment for pensions calculated on the local track for Italy (in Euro) in 2014. Since then the Fund has announced a cost-of-living adjustment of 3.2%, effective from 1 April 2014, for entitlements calculated on the US dollar track. The adjustment is based on the increase in the US Consumer price index between December 2011 and December 2013. Accordingly, for those who separated during this period the actual level of the adjustment will be prorated depending on the date of separation. Please access the UNJSPF website to see your individual statement.

---

## **Medical Insurance**

(Responsible: E. Seidler, G. Eberle, A. Prien)

### **FAO opens tender for medical insurance provider**

FAO Director of Human Resources Ms Monika

Altmaier confirmed that FAO had finalized the tender and invited eight world-leading insurance companies to bid and participate in negotiations for assignment of a global health insurance provider for the period 2015-2017. Review of bids, negotiations and the awarding of the contract are scheduled to be completed by early July in order to ensure uninterrupted service, even if the current provider were not to be reselected.

FFOA representatives on the JAC/MC were actively involved in the development and review of materials for the tender through 24 April, the date of the most recent JAC/MC session.

The current contract with Allianz (insurer) and Vanbreda International (claims processor) had already been extended several times and good management practice requires periodic verification against the market. Moreover, Vanbreda has recently been purchased by another insurance company (Cigna) which further alters the insurance "playing field".

The tender offers an "umbrella" contract to cover not only BMIP/MMBP but other medical insurance plans including MCS and other non-medical insurance in an attempt to gain overall efficiencies. It was confirmed that the current benefits structure and coverage of BMIP/MMBP and related reimbursements levels (including the concept of Reasonable and Customary reimbursement levels, adjusted for inflation) would not change under any new contract. It was also confirmed that, even in the event of a change of provider, claims for treatment started in 2014 and carried on into 2015 would be processed smoothly. FFOA will be vigilant in monitoring this on behalf of members.

An interesting observation was made at the General Assembly on the potential value of expanding preventive treatment, which so far is rather limited, the idea being that the costs of preventive analysis could be offset by reductions in eventual future treatment. In spite of the fact that we are dealing with an insurance, some preventive diagnostic analysis has been added to the list of reimbursable BMIP/MMBP expenses, and FFOA believes more can be done in this area. The FFOA Executive Committee would

be pleased to receive input, background material and specific proposals from members (especially those who are medical doctors, health specialists, nutritionists and related scientists) for further consideration and submission to the JAC/MC.

### **Other medical insurance issues**

An information note to BMIP/MMBP participants from Vanbreda International with the requirement to submit fiscal receipts was released recently. Obviously one has to follow the legislation of the country where expenses are incurred. The principal example is Italy where a large number of pensioners live but also where several pensioners come for treatment.

---

## **News from the UN Organizations**

### **WFP**

The Annual Session of the WFP Executive Board (EB) was held from 3-6 June 2014. Delegations commended WFP for the quality of its 2013 Annual Performance Report. During the year, a total of 80.9 million people – most of whom were women and children – received direct food assistance transfers (equivalent to US\$ 4.3 billion) in 75 countries. To this end, WFP worked with 1,300 NGOs. Policy documents included the Update on WFP's Role in the Humanitarian Assistance System, and WFP's Corporate Partnership Strategy (2014-2017) while the People Strategy announced for this session will now be submitted to the November Board.

Executive Director Ertharin Cousin said that WFP needs to “speak with one voice” to address the humanitarian challenges facing the world, and that WFP is “the partner the world needs” to achieve zero hunger. She also highlighted the organizational changes WFP has made since the start of her mandate and announced a new Global Change Team to make sure that every change brings benefits, most importantly at the country level. The ED noted that more than half of WFP's US\$ 2.3 billion funding gap is coming from underfunded

programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, WFP was responding to four major and complex (L3) emergencies: Syria, South Sudan, Central African Republic, and Cameroon.

On 10 June 20 WFP alumni met at a lunch organized by the WFP Alumni Team. WFP Management was represented by the Deputy Executive Director, Mr Amir Abdulla.

---

## **News of the Staff Associations**

### **Professional staff associations at FAO and IFAD**

Except for some hope expressed by members of WFP's Professional Staff Association at the end of the recent CCISUA General Assembly - with a visit from WFP's Executive Director who confirmed her support for Staff Associations - there is apprehension among both Professional and General Service Staff Associations in FAO and IFAD. In a recent Note from AP-in-FAO, the outgoing President, Mr. Wolfgang Prante, sadly noted, “... the Organization's attitude towards staff representation (and staff representatives) has changed so that AP-in-FAO has ended up in such a severe ‘constitutional’ crisis with positions of President, General Secretary, Vice President, Information Secretary and Legal Affairs Secretary vacant”. Put simply, (up to his retirement last May) no candidates had come forward to accept the responsibilities and challenges of these very important positions. Mr Prante underlined, “this is not a healthy situation for either FAO's Professional Staff or the Organization in general. A strong and well led AP-in-FAO is vital for ensuring that Professional Staff are well represented and for effective staff/management relations”. Mr Prante, we are glad to say, attended the FFOA General Assembly in May.

The issue was echoed by IFAD staff association President Fabio Bencivenga in a statement delivered at the FFOA General Assembly: “... A great problem of the staff representatives of all agencies is that we act as volunteers, and with the growing workloads



that all of us are facing these days in spite of other disappointments, it is very difficult to be effective if we can't dedicate the needed time to staff matters. Therefore I want to take the opportunity given by your General Assembly to formally ask FFOA to collaborate with us as well as with the [staff associations of the] other Rome based agencies. As your time and expertise can be very useful to the Staff Representative Bodies and to the Organizations, we look forward to strengthen our collaboration with FFOA and work together for a better future”.

Even against this rather bleak backdrop, FFOA continues to pursue dialogue and constructive collaboration for mutual benefit with the staff associations of the Rome-based organizations. Increased collaboration would be beneficial not only to the staff but to the Organizations themselves and the achievement of their broad objectives. A second meeting with representatives of all staff associations (following a first meeting held in January 2014) is under preparation.

### **The WFP Professional Staff Association (PSA)**

The following main events have marked the activities of the WFP-PSA since March (in addition to the CCISUA assembly - see below): **Staff Council Elections**. In May, 13 staff put forward their candidature for the 6 available slots. There was an almost equal representation between headquarters and the field, and between women and men. Election turnout was the highest in PSA history, with 62% of the membership casting votes and 54 non-members joining in order to participate in the elections. The new President is Ms Marianne Ward, and the Vice-President Mr. Abdoulaye Balde.

**Annual PSA presentation to the WFP Executive Board**. On 4 June, Ms Angelline Rudakubana, PSA Staff Council Member, gave the yearly PSA presentation to the EB. The presentation discussed the achievements together with management and in large part facilitated by strong support from the Executive Director, anticipated work to reform some core human

resource management challenges, and expressed concerns about UN Common System issues that the PSA anticipates addressing in collaboration with WFP management and external partners. The **Diversity & Inclusion Working Group** developed a survey sent to all staff, the results of which fed into a Diversity training, which took place from 3-5 June for current and future Staff Council members and other interested PSA members.

### **Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations (CCISUA)**

From 7-11 April, the WFP Professional Staff Association hosted the General Assembly (GA) for the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations (CCISUA). The focus of the GA was on the impacts of the review of the Common System Compensation Package by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) and the three Working Groups (Remuneration structures including post adjustment; Competitiveness and sustainability; and Performance incentives and related HR issues). The Chairman of the ICSC and the Chief of Salaries and Allowances attended the sessions. A video conference call with the USG Kevin Kennedy, Acting Head of the UN Department of Safety and Security, addressed concerns related to the hazards faced by UN staff on many types of assignments.

---

### **Social Activities**

(Responsible: **J. Smidt**, G. Monciotti, I. Novelli, A. Van Arkadie, **A. Fusco Femiano**)

#### **Previous activities**

Since our last Newsbrief 91, the following activities were enjoyed by some of our members:

The visit, announced in our previous Newsbrief 91, to the exhibition organized by our cultural guide Valentina di Leonardo to the Vittoriano Museum in Rome to admire paintings from the French Musee d'Orsay was enjoyed by seven of our members.

The following day-tours were offered to our members during April, May and June:

April 2014	Vesuvio & Scavi di Oplontis – Patrimonio dell’Umanita di UNESCO
May 2014	Castiglione della Pescaia & Gita in Barca nella Riserva Naturale & Museo Multimediale Casa Ximenes Napoli da Cima a Fondo Ninfa & Abbazia di Valvisciolo
June 2014	Motonave sul Lago di Bracciano & pranzo con falchi, gufi e civette Napoli vista dal mare a bordo del Bateau Mouche Scavi di Pompei

### Upcoming activities

5 July	In battello sul Lago Trasimeno e le sue Isole
15, 16, 17 July	Boat Trip to Ponza, Palmarola and Zannone
22 & 23 July	Ventotene e S. Stefano

### Coffee mornings

The monthly coffee mornings continued to attract prospective and active members from WFP, IFAD and FAO. Join us at the FAO Cafeteria at 10 AM on the first Wednesday of each month, except August.

## News from the Executive Committee

### FFOA summer office closure

The FFOA office will close for summer holidays on Friday 1 August, and reopen on Monday 1 September.

The Executive Committee has been busy preparing for just-completed General Assembly; the July meeting of FAFICS which FFOA is hosting, and the needs of FAFICS representatives at the Pension Board, also to be held in Rome in July.

## News from the Electronic World

Due to space restrictions, our regular column News from the Electronic World by Pino Pace has been postponed until Newsbrief 93 - September. Look out for a super article on smartphone apps to make your golden years brighter and easier too.

## Your Good Health

(FFOA publishes health suggestions for pensioners but does not guarantee their accuracy or efficacy.)

### How old is old age?

How old do you feel? And how old will you be when you reach old age? The public’s views on age and aging are explored in a new national survey on aging from the Pew Research Center.

Most adults over age 50 say they feel at least 10 years younger than their actual age, the survey found. One-third of those between 65 and 74 said they felt 10 to 19 years younger, and one-sixth of people 75 and older said they felt 20 years younger.

And at what age does old age begin? Most people in the survey said old age starts at age 68. Are they kidding? Not surprisingly, most people over 65 have a different idea about old age. Among those getting the senior citizen discount most say old age begins at 75.

Now consider the answer given by people under 30. Most of them think you’re old by the time you hit 60.

Members of FFOA are invited to join the discussion by replying, via e-mail. How old do you feel? And at what age do you think old age begins?

We look forward to your replies, and in the meantime enjoy your actual golden age.

Adapted by Sabatino Salvi from an article originally published in the NY Times.

## News from the Membership

### New members

A hearty welcome to all our new members.

Abramo, Ms Anna Laura  
 Aphane, Ms Juliet  
 Boari, Ms Gisela  
 Braslavsky, Ms Ariella  
 Carpitella, Ms Iris  
 Cerrai, Mr Maurizio  
 Chaudhary, Mr Mohammad Anwar  
 Cleveringa, Mr Rudolph Pabos  
 Diallo, Mr Amadou Oury  
 D'Ricco, Mr Carlos Alberto  
 Eldon, Ms Margaret  
 Garau, Mr Pietro  
 Giarratano, Ms Luisa  
 Godeassi, Ms Licia  
 Haralambous, Ms Sappho  
 Humburg, Mr Jurgen  
 Ivey, Ms Diana  
 Kestenbaum, Ms Evelynne  
 Mabengano, Mr Marang

Majkowski, Mr Jacek  
 Manzur-Medina, Ms Elizabeth  
 Mariani, Ms Silvia  
 Olivan, Ms Sara  
 Ortiz, Mr Luis Miguel  
 Pasqualone, Ms Rossella  
 Rahman, Mr Atiqur  
 Raswant, Ms Suzanne  
 Ronova, Ms Mariana  
 Rossi, Ms Maria  
 Saraceni, Ms Marina  
 Spagnolo, Mr Aldo Mario  
 Sterling, Ms Betty  
 Tronchon, Ms Sylvie  
 Valentini, Ms Daniela  
 Vertucci, Mr Kurt  
 Vizioli De Meo, Mr Francesco  
 Zobenì-Rodela, Ms Alida

All retirees ought to join the Association to support its work representing the pensioners, and for their own interest, and should encourage their ex-colleagues to join!

### IN MEMORIAM

Houston, Ms Patricia B.  
 15 January 2014  
 Artari, Ms Name Igea  
 30 January 2014  
 Wurdack, Mr Gunther  
 14 February 2014  
 Badalucco, Mr Carlo  
 02 March 2014  
 Sabet, Mr Souad  
 02 March 2014  
 Shah, Mr Madkukar K.  
 07 March 2014  
 Pavillon, Ms Suzanne  
 15 March 2014  
 Demiruren, Mr Adnan  
 18 March 2014  
 Alva-Balderrama, Mr Alejandro  
 22 March 2014

Diodovich, Ms Anna  
 25 March 2014  
 Hartmans, Mr Ermond  
 02 April 2014  
 Turbang, Mr Joseph  
 21 April 2014  
 Nuccetelli-Mezzo, Ms Gianna  
 28 April 2014  
 Birch, Ms Helen  
 07 May 2014  
 Loftas, Mr Tony  
 07 May 2014  
 Basile, Mr Giorgio  
 11 May 2014  
 Guarini-Zeni, Ms Maria  
 29 May 2014  
 Buyckx, Mr Etienne  
 09 June 2014

On behalf of all the members of FFOA, we express heartfelt sympathy to the families and friends of the above-mentioned members.