

Former FAO and Other UN Staff Association



FFOA/GA/2017/03

PROVISIONAL REPORT

Forty-sixth Session of the General Assembly

Wednesday 25 May 2016, Auditorium, WFP Headquarters

1. Opening of the Forty-sixth Session of the General Assembly

The President of FFOA, Mr Alan Prien, opened the session at 09:45 hours, welcoming guests and participants and announcing that the interpretation would be in two languages: English and Italian. He also announced that the proceedings could be followed via Webcast for those not able to be present in Rome.

2. Establishment of a quorum and announcements

Mr Prien announced that a quorum was achieved and that 17 proxies had been received; thus all decisions would be binding, including on those members not present. He declared the meeting officially open and constituted in accordance with the Articles of the Association. He thanked the Executive Committee Members for their work throughout the year - particularly in meetings with senior management of the Rome-based agencies, for representing retirees at discussions on pension matters and on medical coverage at the JAC/MC, and in meetings about common interests with representatives of current staff.

3. Nomination of Rapporteurs, announcement of the Interpreters and the Photographer

Mr Prien announced that Ms Peggy Nelson and Mr Jamie Wickens would serve as Rapporteurs for the Provisional Report of the General Assembly; Ms Marta Bochicchio and Ms Maria Rosaria Buri would again provide Italian and English interpretation; and Mr Alex Van Arkadie would be responsible for photography.

4. Election of the Presiding Officer of the 46th Session

Mr Bernd Käss proposed that Ms Catherine Bertini, former Executive Director of the World Food Programme (1992-2002) and one of the honorary Presidents of FFOA, chair the Assembly. She was elected by acclamation and welcomed to the chair by Mr Prien. Ms Bertini said that it was a pleasure to be back and to remember the work that had been done and continues to be done on behalf of the poor and hungry worldwide.

5. Adoption of the Provisional Agenda (FFOA/GA/2016/02)

As no proposals for changes had been received before the deadline of 28 April 2016, the Provisional Agenda was adopted as presented.

6. Address on behalf of the Executive Director of the World Food Programme by Mr Manoj Juneja, Assistant Executive Director

Ms Bertini welcomed Mr Manoj Juneja, thanking him for agreeing to address the meeting.

On behalf of WFP's Executive Director, Ms Ertharin Cousin, who had travelled to Washington, D.C. after participating in the World Humanitarian Summit, Mr Juneja welcomed FFOA delegates to WFP, in particular Ms. Bertini, the chair and former WFP Executive Director.

He commended FFOA as a vibrant community addressing issues relevant to retirees of the Rome-based agencies, and for playing an important role in addressing the needs of pensioners during the shift to Allianz medical coverage. He stressed that WFP senior management continues work on issues relevant to current and former staff, including the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund and delays in payments to retirees due to the Fund's system being migrated. WFP will continue to scrutinize that issue and to ensure that information on new retirees is provided in a timely way to the UNJSPF, and will work with other UN agencies including FAO, and in the HLCM to ensure that payments are made as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

He drew attention to WFP's "Landmark HQs" with new and renovated meeting rooms, a Peace Garden, child care facilities and commissary, while noting that the Programme's work extended beyond Headquarters, and that 90 percent of the staff were outside of Rome. Mr Juneja highlighted WFP's continued evolution in order to address corporate "L3" multiple emergencies and an increased number of protracted emergencies resulting from man-made conflicts, with fewer emergencies arising from natural disasters. WFP is introducing an expanded tool set and digitizing assistance to provide cash rather than in-kind food transfers. The Programme is using technology to expand and change the way it works, not only to provide assistance but also to gain insights and information throughout the programme cycle. WFP's business model is changing to country strategic planning and budgeting in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and WFP and its Board are undertaking a Financial Framework Review to integrate programme and financial planning.

Ms Bertini thanked Mr Juneja for his statement and expressed FFOA's appreciation for close collaboration with WFP management, especially for timely printing of newsbriefs and other documents free of charge. She noted FFOA's commitment to advise serving staff as they prepare for retirement. Recalling discussions about WFP's move to the current HQs, accomplished during her term as WFP Executive Director, she described various options for WFP's move from the former FAO annex on the Cristoforo Colombo, and remarked that the shift to the Parco dei Medici site had been undertaken with great success and efficiency.

7. Update by FAO Social Security regarding medical insurance plans with a presentation by Allianz Representative

Ms Bertini invited Mr Prien to take the floor. Welcoming the guests, he stressed the importance of medical insurance for retirees, and referred to some challenges when the services were shifted to Allianz. Ms Monica Altmaier, Director of FAO Human Resources, said that the cooperation between Allianz and FAO was excellent. While she had the floor, she mentioned that she would meet with the head of the UNJSPF to talk about further reducing the backlog in processing pension applications. She assured members that FAO is

processing necessary papers as quickly as possible. She then passed the floor to Ms Kamila Guseynova from FAO Social Security, who invited Ms Anissa Maaref-Wilson, Allianz Client Relationship Manager, and her team (Javier Conejero-Ramos, Medical Services Supervisor and David Dongiovanni, Helpline Team Leader) to make a presentation on medical insurance. (The presentation will be shared by FFOA with members.)

Ms Maaref-Wilson remarked that Allianz had been working with the Rome-based agencies for a short time. After four decades with the same service provider, the change to Allianz 17 months earlier had required major adjustments by both beneficiaries and providers. Concerns had been addressed by email, phone calls or on-site visits (over 5,000 such visits took place in 2015). She also highlighted a recent and substantial increase in the number of plan participants from WFP. During 2015, Allianz had processed nearly 100,000 claims. While the aim has always been a 48-hour turnaround, Allianz initially had to establish medical histories and details unavailable from the previous insurer; thus, it took six months to reach that goal.

She reminded participants that it is not necessary to bundle claims and wait until the end of the year to submit them, when there is a peak period for processing claims. Referring to the Helpline, she said that in 2015 Allianz had received over 52,000 emails and more than 15,000 phone calls. She also reminded members about Allianz's on-site representatives in Rome, and the very useful "My Health" mobile app, used by 25 to 30 percent of the participants.

Allianz's Medical Services team had received over 20,000 e-mail requests and had sent over 4,600 guarantees of payment for hospital admission worldwide. She stressed that even for listed health providers and hospitals, Allianz tries to negotiate further discounts. It would help if plan participants would indicate in advance when they need those services so that Allianz could send a guarantee of payment to ensure no delay, and could negotiate further cost containment. In 2015, Allianz added another 2.3 percent savings that goes back into the medical scheme. Now Allianz is focusing on smaller providers such as pharmacies. She mentioned the pharmacies near FAO and at WFP that provide additional discounts, as well as two in Ostia used by numerous participants and with which Allianz was negotiating agreements.

Ms Maaref-Wilson informed the meeting that Allianz recently added a travel provision that was not available in 2015, but that had been enjoyed by participants under the previous plan. Whereas previously there had been a cap of \$2,000, there is no longer such a cap if participants want to use the travel provision to obtain health care, for example, in their home countries or where they can be close to family members and where the recovery might be better and faster.

She acknowledged that the Statement of Accounts was not a very clear document. As part of their digitalization process Allianz is trying to condense the statement, and also to indicate the remaining deductible and dental balances. Until then, the Allianz help desk could provide the information upon request from individuals.

Regarding the "reasonable and customary" issue and coverage limits, she explained that Allianz has to ensure that the price levels for care from providers outside of the network of listed providers are in line with market practice. The key point in addressing this issue is communication. Participants should remember to submit the hospital estimate form so that Allianz can negotiate lower prices before medical care is performed, benefiting both the individual and the overall plan, as in 70 cases in 2015. Allianz is expanding their analysis with recently received medical data and has established a benchmark of places where participants often use medical services. Allianz has noticed a trend to use local national health systems, which contributes to cost containment. Participants can be reimbursed 80 percent of the difference plus MMBP if applicable; however, information about the total cost incurred must

be provided to Allianz so they can calculate the payment. For anyone in the UK using the NHS, the tickets are rerouted to an Allianz manager to contact the NHS for the information.

She stressed that because communication is key, Allianz sends a quarterly newsletter to participants with health information and news of changes. The latest change of interest to participants was at the beginning of 2016; the Coventry network in the US had been retired and responsibilities were assumed by Olympus, now representing Allianz in the US, but there is no change in the way participants access healthcare while in America. Insurance cards for those using healthcare in the US are still valid because there is a US address on the back, which is what is required by US providers to show that the bill will be paid. This summer, Allianz plans to launch a Client Satisfaction Survey to be sent to everyone with an email address. Respondents can select from various languages for their replies.

Ms Bertini opened the floor for questions/comments. Those included: requests for more easily available details about the Olympus provider (not mentioned on the insurance card); more detailed information about coverage and claims on the “My Health” app, including claim history with balances; and increased simplicity in presenting settlements. Statements of account should be simplified and indicate balances before reaching the MMBP payments, including for eyeglasses and physiotherapy. One participant asked if cost containment would provide better benefits for participants, and wondered how to balance quality with cost containment. Another requested a paper version of the newsletter “The Heartbeat”, while one asked about the “bollo” tax on Italian medical bills. A member asked about the boxes in FAO for mail to Allianz and to the former provider VanBreda. An opinion was expressed that some information should be made available in hard copy, not only electronically.

Ms Maaref-Wilson responded that a phase 2 would be launched over the summer for the mobile app in order to provide more detailed information about claims and claim history. For the next 3-year contract, Allianz will report on savings to provide a basis for discussion. Regarding the bollo, the health provider must attach it for bills over 75 Euros. Allianz wants to be client-friendly and will work hard to improve clarity of the statement of accounts including available balances. They will make available some printed copies of the newsletter, and would attend an FFOA coffee morning to dialog with participants. Ms Altmaier said that the claims in the FAO boxes are sent weekly to Allianz, and for this year also to Van Breda for claims that fall within the two-year period of validity. Next year there will be boxes only for Allianz.

8. Address by the Chief Executive Officer of the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund Board, and by the Chief of Pension Entitlements in the Geneva UNJSPF Office

Ms Bertini welcomed Mr Sergio Arvizú, CEO of the UN Joint Staff Pension Board, and Ms Elisabeth Chauveau-Bais, Chief of Pension Entitlements in the Geneva UNJSPF Office.

Mr Arvizú provided an overview of the Fund, reaffirming its good financial health. He said that the Fund’s work had intensified, with almost 72,000 beneficiaries, an increase of over 50 percent since 2000. There are close to 125,000 participants in the Fund – growth of more than 65 percent since 2000. The number of beneficiaries 90 years or older has grown by a multiple of 6, and there are also more geographical places where recipients reside, adding to the operational complexity. The number of documents received, reviewed, scanned and indexed has grown, with 1.3 million pages scanned annually, an increase of more than 100% since 2000.

To make the Fund’s annual benefit payments, 2.4 billion dollars are needed, and the Fund’s contributions are 2.3 billion dollars. The small gap has been covered by investment income since 1994. The Fund’s assets are over 52 billion dollars; the Fund’s principal will not be needed, in the next 50 years, to fund the gap of contributions and payments, assuming that the investment return objective of 3.5% in real terms is achieved.

Understaffing remains a concern. In the last three biennia the Fund had requested 46 new posts and received approval from the UN General Assembly for only 8. Recently the Board and the General Assembly approved 14 of the 24 new posts requested.

Based on an assessment from 2008 that found the Fund's IT and operational functions fragmented and based on old technology that translated into key vulnerabilities and risks, last year the Fund implemented a new Integrated Pension Administration System (IPAS). A detailed plan giving priority to an accurate and timely pension payroll went live in August 2015 with full efficacy of 650,000 payroll payments in 15 currencies to 72,000 retirees and beneficiaries residing in 190 countries.

The process for new benefits had a slow start. The objective to reach stability at the same processing rate as under the legacy system (within 12 months) was quickly achieved, surpassing those processing rates and currently operates at significantly higher rates than longer term averages under the old system. The Fund regretted the inconvenience and hardship that delays in the payment of new benefits had caused to beneficiaries. It has been devoting all of its resources to speeding up the processing of new pensions and to addressing the backlog. When the Fund met with the UN Department of Management, it agreed to process in the next 3 months the Fund's entire caseload consisting of all actionable cases received by the Fund as of 1 March, while at the same time addressing incoming new cases. By the end of April two thirds of that caseload was processed, with the remaining third to be completed by the end of May.

Currently there is a "surge" of new cases from the downsizing of peace-keeping missions and from member organizations' efforts to clear pending cases residing in HR and payroll areas. While the system is working well and at significantly higher processing rates, additional actions are needed to deal with the 60 percent higher volume. The Fund has established a Task Force to assign UNJSPF staff from back office functions to core case management activities and will be reinforced with additional temporary resources.

The Fund has also introduced a case tracking database to interface with participating organizations and follow up on pending cases. The Fund met with representatives of the HR Network in March and agreed to create pension focal points, reintroduce pre-retirement training, introduce improved training for HR officers, and carry out monthly meetings with the UNJSPF. The Fund, together with member organizations, will review the end-to-end process (from separation to payment) in order to understand bottlenecks and/or inefficiencies and introduce harmonized measures to sustainably accelerate and better coordinate the shared end-to-end process.

Mr Arvizú concluded by reiterating that the Fund is in a very good financial situation with long-term projections showing considerable financial strength and assurance for continued payment of pension obligations in the short, medium and long term.

Ms Chauveau-Bais reviewed measures to expedite case processing where slow-downs were due to implementation of the new system. Task Forces were being established to expedite payments and to deal with communications, payment of withdrawals and speeding up payments, including to survivors. The Geneva office was supplementing staff to eliminate backlog. In parallel, training on the new system was being provided, as was an interface with member organizations. Priorities were survivorship and disability cases. The Fund aims to pay benefits within 60 days after receipt of all documents. For FAO and WFP, 79% of the pending cases have been paid, while for IFAD it is 83%. The Fund's efficiency depends also on partners to provide required documents. Pre-retirement seminars are an important part of preparation, as are improvements such as training.

FFOA President Prien referred to the investment side of the Fund that is handled by a designated Representative of the Secretary-General. He thanked Ms Bertini for her role as the

RSG when the investments had good returns. He reiterated that our pension fund is extremely well funded and secure. He asked confirmation that we are due this year for another actuarial revision, enquiring how it might come out, and he noted that in Rome a joint pre-retirement seminar is offered where FFOA makes presentations. The question is how staff can plan, given the delays, and how long they need to wait after all documents are submitted.

Ms Bertini asked about the scope of the Geneva office and whether it handles all of Europe. She also asked if separate figures are available for WFP and FAO. How are the changes in the system affecting staff who retired some time ago and how are new retirees affected? Should investments be part of the UNJSPF offices?

A member asked when the new IPAS will be implemented and when the new UID code would be used, as well as where and how the two-track benefit statement would be available. She queried when she should start worrying about receipt of the CE certificate. Another asked about payment of survivor benefits, as there were delays of six months in some cases. After death, payments are suspended and survivors may experience an undue hardship if waiting for a long period of time. One more queried the structural delays, asking if there could be advances on pensions. One member mentioned a case of a delay of two years that was causing an extreme hardship for the survivor.

Mr Arvizú stated that for 15 years there was a negative trend, but it had been reversed. It was now positive for 2 consecutive biennia, with the previous negative trend being corrected through a series of governance and financial impact measures, despite volatile markets. The Fund has two offices – NY and Geneva; the latter has been strengthened although not to the extent requested. WFP and FAO have a joint SPC, but are looked at separately. Regarding the “backlog”, the system started slowly so there was an accumulation of the caseload, but with a prudent approach the slowdown has more than been recovered. There is a case by case actionable list. If the Fund had had the same volume as last year, there would be no backlog, but two things happened in the last few months. First, there was a significant increase of 60 percent in the volume of new cases, only some of which was being addressed by new capacity. In some instances, it took organizations 3 to 6 months to send the cases to the UNJSPF. The Fund has established a system interface for electronic communication and to help organizations with the cases. On average, if there are no problems with documentation, it takes no more than a month and a half to process applications. The caseload is up to date so delays may be due to lack of documents; in the case of some survivors there is a problem with documentation and the Fund cannot pay without due diligence. The Fund has set up a task force to address cases of surviving spouses. Regarding advances, there was a draft proposal that required more examination. Some member organizations are considering providing advances.

A beneficiary’s UID can be obtained by logging onto the website. If members don’t have an account, the UID has been mailed, and the system should be fully operational during this summer. The Fund changed the cycle for CEs to May. They have been printed and should be received within the next few weeks. In future, beneficiaries on the dollar system can print their own CEs, but the two-track CEs will continue to be mailed in order to be submitted to controls.

During a second round of questions, one member asked whether the Fund could advise beneficiaries how much of their payments were composed by the contributions from the individual, the contributions by the organization, and the contributions from earnings on the investments of the individuals’ contributions. Another asked, in reference to delays in payments and the onus on organizations, why there previously were not so many delays. For survivors’ benefits, a suggestion was made to continue to pay the full pension to the spouse until the application is processed, then retroactively recover any difference rather than leave the survivor with no income.

Mr Arvizú replied that in the UN system pension contributions are pooled and current staff pay for those who are retired; there is no relationship between contribution and benefit, but rather between the benefit and the last three years of contribution before retirement. For survivor benefits, it must be ascertained that there is a spouse at the time of death of the staff member, and that the spouse is eligible for benefits. It's not automatic to continue to pay the benefits because there are legal implications; however, the Fund would be happy to consider any proposals. A question was tabled about whether it is possible to get details on the website about the monies paid over time and on a monthly basis, using the new UID.

A member asked for clarification about potentially risky investments by the UNJSPF in hedge funds. She also asked about two ADGs who were not replaced and the relationship of their posts with the recently approved additional posts. Another asked if the UNJSPF could, to assist retirees for tax purposes, identify those portions of pensions paid into the Fund by staff, or could identify the portion based on interest on those monies. Other members asked about the status of the MOU for changes to the Fund and if the UNJSPF could comment on the recent petitions to the Secretary-General on the overall Fund management.

Ms Bertini observed that investments are handled by a different entity, but she asked for comment from the guests on the status of that discussion and whether those responsible would merge with the other parts of the UNJSPF.

Mr Arvizú said that there was zero tolerance for error in the payroll for 190 countries and 15 currencies, in both the dollar track and the two-track system. The Fund started with a parallel testing of the old and the new systems, which slowed it down and created an inventory of cases. The system came in at the same processing speed as the old legacy system, but three months later it is now operating 25 percent above the legacy system, despite the surge in the caseload. In terms of investments, there are two separate processes – one reporting to the Board and one to the Secretary-General – but there is good communication and coordination. The Investment Committee does a good job although it is pro bono.

Regarding changes to governance, there continues to be a good process of checks and balances. The Fund is operating under the 2000 MOU and steps are being implemented for a proper HR process. The MOU asks for some staffing flexibilities. An MOU cannot change the regulations; that is up to the General Assembly.

One member said that changes in relationships among the UNJSPF staff could be important, and asked to see the MOU. President Prien acknowledged that FFOA does have the MOU.

Another member asked about the SPC elections being delayed for five months, and for an explanation of the cause. The FAO representative replied that it took some time for clearance of the necessary document and of the way the elections should be held. The manual section had not been published because of questions raised by the various constituencies, but all meetings were planned around the two staff representatives still serving, so that participants were represented.

Regarding monthly payment information, the UNJSPF representative said that it was not currently available on the website, but could be provided if requested from the Fund. The Fund would like to continue improving the way survivors' benefits are handled. When death occurs, it is difficult to contact the families for administrative documents, so participants should send everything required in advance (marriage certificates, divorce papers as appropriate, identification documents of the spouse, contact information for children). If those documents are on file in advance, it will help, and only banking instructions will be needed.

The General Secretary of AP-in-FAO clarified that the delay for the SPC was not due to the staff associations, but to the need to first revise a manual section.

Ms Bertini referred to her two years as Representative of the Secretary-General, saying that while the role of the RSG office is critical, it is only advisory. It is the judgment of the RSG as to whether to colleagues' advice. Previous to Ms Bertini being RSG, the UNJSPF had invested in a building that made them subject to non-UN laws. The people watching the Fund are critical as to how the job is done, and whether the money is properly managed. She asked that next year the Fund representatives come back with no backlog.

Mr Arvizú stressed that it is indeed important to have a survivor's documents in a timely manner. The relevant checklist of documents is published every year in the Fund's annual letter. Regarding investments, the SRG is indeed the most important person; only the SRG makes those decisions and if investments go well it is because of the SRG. The Fund plans to introduce all of the measures presented, and aims to eliminate the backlog in the next 6 to 8 weeks. One member asked that the Fund send the checklist for survivors' benefits to all participants because they and their organizations assume that the Fund already has the necessary documents on file. The Chair agreed that this was a good suggestion.

9. Provisional Report of the 45th Session of the General Assembly held on 27 May 2015 (FFOA/GA/2016/03)

The Provisional Report of the 45th Session of the General Assembly was adopted as presented, as per Resolution FFOA/GA/2016/06/A.

10. Address by the President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) or his Representative

Ms Bertini welcomed and thanked Mr Rui Benfica, Lead Economist, Research and Impact Assessment Division, IFAD, representing Mr Mwanze, the President of IFAD. Mr Benfica said he was pleased to participate on behalf of the President to talk about IFAD's flagship rural development report, "Fostering Rural Transformation" that will be released in August/September and replaces the IFAD Rural Poverty Report released in 2011. The report refers to structural transformation in developing countries in three key areas: 1) the various pathways of structural and rural transformation across the developing world; 2) the consequences of transformation for rural poverty reduction and inclusion; and 3) what can be done to stimulate and support inclusive rural transformation. The novelty of the report is that it examines rural development through the prism of the transformation in rural areas and the wider economy. It uses regional analysis and the main thematic areas related to the broader topic.

The report's five main messages are: 1) Rural transformation doesn't happen in isolation; it is interlinked with financial, manufacturing and other areas. That will stimulate demand for food and agricultural production. 2) While rural transformation may generate both positive and negative effects for rural people, inclusive rural transformation must be made to happen; it will not happen automatically. 3) Rapid rural or structural transformation, while necessary, does not automatically lead to rapid rural poverty reduction and inclusion. 4) Inclusive rural transformation centers on agriculture, which retains its importance as the transformation unfolds, but requires that distinct agricultural policies be adopted at different stages of rural transformation. 5) Rural development strategies for inclusive rural transformation are context-specific but the direction is clear, with high-priority policy reforms, institutional innovations, and investments dependent on the speed and inclusiveness of transformation pathways. IFAD and its country partners have long recognized the importance of including the poor and rural for fast transformation.

Ms Bertini thanked Mr Benfica for bringing the message from IFAD's President to the FFOA General Assembly, and expressed FFOA's appreciation for IFAD's leadership in rural development. She also thanked IFAD for its support in mailing the FFOA GA documents and also, this year, for mailing the FFOA election documents.

11. Statement by the Representative of the Staff Representative Bodies of FAO, WFP and IFAD

Ms Bertini welcomed Ms Marianne Ward, President of WFP-PSA, speaking on behalf of the RBAs' Staff Associations. Ms Ward noted that, as per a longstanding tradition, FFOA and the staff associations had worked very closely over the past year on issues relevant to current staff and retirees.

Regarding pension matters, she expressed frustration on behalf of many recently retired colleagues who had been waiting for more than six months for their first pension payments. Active staff and organizations dutifully and regularly pay into the pension fund, never being late and never missing a payment. The same is expected from retirees' pension fund management. The current delays are neither acceptable nor appropriate for people who have dedicated their lives to helping others. She asked how the Fund, whose main job was to pay pensions, would prevent these delays from ever happening again. She also asked Organizations about their continued and increasing use of non-staff personnel who do not pay into the pension fund, thus damaging its sustainability as well as the future of colleagues with non-staff contracts who do staff work for years. Further, the implementation of the General Assembly decision to extend the mandatory age of separation to 65 for all staff from 1 January 2018 is still not clear for the Rome-based agencies, although it would be healthy for the pension fund with colleagues continuing to make their contributions.

Regarding staff-management relations, she stressed that real consultation with staff representative bodies helps an organization make better informed and better quality decisions. The consultation process is currently robust in WFP, but elsewhere could be improved. People, organizations and Governments look up to the UN as an ideal, and while the ILO conventions should "come alive" in UN organizations, that is currently not the case in Rome.

The change of claims processor from Van Breda to Allianz had been difficult. While there have been improvements since the initial period, the levels of service and user satisfaction remain too low. This is particularly pronounced for staff farther away from Rome in field duty stations. To make that worse, FAO staff and retirees are now paying a higher portion of the premium. WFP and IFAD did not increase premiums paid by staff, but it is not a good precedent for staff to pay more for substandard services. She reminded that it will soon be time to consider the contract for our health insurance claims processor, and it will be important that the differing needs of various staff in the Rome based agencies are taken into consideration. The tender requirements should have a better focus on where staff work in the field and where health risks are greater and services are lacking. Going for the lowest common denominator is not serving the diverse needs of our organizations or all of our staff.

Ms Ward asked for support from retired colleagues in the review of the compensation package for nationally recruited staff. The process that was just completed for internationally recruited staff was difficult, with further decreases in support to staff in hardship duty stations, and an erosion of salaries and entitlements. As opposed to being an exercise in streamlining and preparing the international civil service for the next generation, it was a cost-cutting exercise focused on assessed contributions in New York. She closed by thanking FFOA for sharing common issues, saying that retirees are an inspiration to current staff.

Ms Bertini opened the floor. One member asked if the staff representatives addressed the Executive Boards of the organizations. A member of the FFOA Executive Committee noted that the staff representatives had a tough job, but were the future of FFOA; an open free space for discussion was very important. Another member suggested that at next year's FFOA GA, the statement by the representative of the Staff Bodies of the Rome-based agencies should come before the interventions of the representatives of Allianz and the UNJSPF so that they could hear staff concerns.

The Chair asked if staff have a voice in selecting the medical provider, or if there is some way the organizations can help with that choice. She also asked if the staff are involved in the process to choose members of the ICSC, and whether staff had ideas for reform regarding how potential new staff could find positions in the organizations without being hired as non-staff.

Ms Ward said that on an annual basis FAO and WFP staff representatives can present to the Executive Boards. Regarding choice of medical provider, both staff and management representatives are members of the Joint Advisory Committee on Medical Coverage (JAC/MC) and have a voice on those issues, although the choice is becoming more limited. There is fusion in the market that limits the number of providers who could support world-wide organizations. That having been said, there is an important process through the HLCM to look at larger operations in cooperation with other parts of the UN in order to get better packages. There was also the option for self-insurance, but it would be necessary to ensure that the needs of the staff are adequately represented.

Staff federations are the voices that influence the ICSC. Regarding the next generation, WFP will always need consultants, but has swung the pendulum too far. It had been agreed that there will be a study and some work on this issue. While some colleagues have chosen not to become fixed term staff, there needs to be a way to work with people to develop their careers and experiences.

12. Report of the Executive Committee on the work achieved during 2015 (FFOA/GA/2016/04)

The Chair invited President Prien to present the work of FFOA during 2015 and the first five months of 2016. The President referred to FFOA's work in 2016 on medical issues and the issuance of flash notices to members, for example on pharmacies offering discounts. The Committee had met with management of FAO and IFAD, and would soon meet with management of WFP. FFOA also had strengthened the pre-retirement program that generated new members. The General Assembly congratulated the Executive Committee and approved the report with the adoption of resolution B of document FFOA/GA/2016/06.

13. Reports of the Association's Financial Transactions (FFOA/GA/2016/0/A and B)

Mr Monciotti, the Treasurer, was unable to attend the General Assembly, so the President asked Mr Pace from the Finance Committee to update the Assembly and present the Financial Reports for 2015. The FFOA income and expenditure report showed a stable situation with a surplus of approximately 16,000 Euro, mostly due to an increase in members arising from an increased number of retirements and to reinstated members who had paid arrears in their membership dues. The second report on assets and liabilities was also stable with a surplus of over 38,000 Euro. He thanked the reviewers, Mr McGhie and Mr Käss. He also indicated that a budget forecast for 2017 had been prepared. The surplus might be used to re-establish an emergency fund to assist members in need. He announced that Mr Käss would not continue as a reviewer in 2016, and that Mr David Baugh would replace him.

The Assembly approved the reports and the proposed reviewers for 2016 through adoption of Resolutions “C”, “D”, “E” and “F” of document FFOA/GA/2016/06. They thanked the reviewers and expressed appreciation to Mr Käss for many years of service as reviewer.

14. Other Business

As no proposals for other business were received from the members, Ms Bertini handed the meeting over to the President of FFOA. Mr Prien reminded participants that they could contribute to the Old Folk's Home. (A total of 773 Euro was collected.) He also asked members to update their email addresses so that FFOA could use electronic communication and continue to cut costs. He informed that there was an updated “before and after” document so survivors know what they have to do to continue to receive benefits. That is available on the FFOA website or can be requested in hard copy from the FFOA office assistants.

Mr Prien thanked Ms Bertini for chairing the assembly and all others who helped prepare and carry out a successful meeting. He reminded members that Ms Bertini would conduct an information session that afternoon to report on the World Humanitarian Summit that she had just attended in Istanbul Turkey, on 23 and 24 May.

He asked members to observe a moment of silence to honour serving and retired UN staff who had passed away during the year, and in particular a member of the FFOA Executive Committee for ten years and the editor of the news bulletin, Maurice Purnell.

15. Closure of the Forty-sixth Session of the General Assembly

Mr Prien, President of FFOA, closed the Assembly at 13:15 hours.

The Forty-seventh Session of the General Assembly
will take place on
Wednesday 24 May 2017 at 9:45 hours
at IFAD Headquarters

So plan ahead, mark it in your calendars, and
please come along and bring this report with you.

APPENDIX:

Address to FFOA Members by Ms Catherine Bertini, on the World Humanitarian Summit, Istanbul, 23 and 24 May 2016

In the afternoon following the FFOA General Assembly on 25 May 2016, the former WFP Executive Director (1992-2002), Catherine Bertini, gave a brief presentation, followed by discussion, on the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul on 23-24 May 2016. The main highlights of her presentation were:

1. The Secretary-General's report to the UN General Assembly in January 2016, "One Humanity, Shared Responsibility", served as the background document for Summit discussions.
2. The Summit was poorly attended by Heads of State, and press reports were extremely critical, citing this as simply another example of the UN's ineffectiveness. Angela Merkel was the one leader from the G7 who attended the Summit.
3. It was unfortunate that, while the local grassroots NGOs were so active in the preparatory work of the Summit, the session was in the end hijacked by a few donors and UN agencies, e.g. UK/DFID, OCHA and UNDP.
4. Cash is being aggressively pushed, particularly by DFID/ODI and UNDP, as the major vehicle of humanitarian assistance, progressively replacing food and other in-kind forms of aid.
5. The protracted conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and South Sudan still constitute the world's major humanitarian crises, absorbing two thirds of all aid.
6. The major overriding issue at the Summit - how to make humanitarian assistance more effective - was never really addressed, as most of the bold commitments and recommendations were dropped. Even the former OCHA coordinator, Valerie Amos, had previously declared that the humanitarian system is broken.
7. In the corridors of the Summit, there was much speculation as to the designation of the new UN Secretary-General in January 2017. There are at least 4 candidates from the UN System itself, e.g. the UNDP Administrator, the former High Commissioner of UNHCR, the former Chief of Staff of the Office of the Secretary-General, and the Director General of UNESCO.