

Former FAO and Other UN Staff Association

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



Newsbrief 101
March 2017

47th FFOA General Assembly

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The 47th session of the FFOA General Assembly will take place on Wednesday, 31 May at IFAD, one week later than originally planned due to room availability. The proposed agenda and Assembly documents are included with this issue of the Newsbrief.

All FFOA members are cordially invited to attend the General Assembly. Please mark the date in your agenda, tell your friends and plan to attend to hear the latest news on pensions, medical care and other issues, to approve FFOA's budget and, of course, to spend time with former colleagues.

We anticipate presentations by the Executive Heads (or their representatives) of the three Rome-based agencies, as well as by the staff representatives and FAO Social Security. FFOA has also invited the Chief Executive Officer of the Pension Fund, Mr Sergio Arvizú, and the Representative of the Secretary-General for Investments, Ms Carol Boykin, to address the Assembly and to answer questions.

Following the formal meeting and a lunch break, we plan an informal discussion and question-and-answer session, open to all, on fiscal developments such as Voluntary Disclosure.

Please bring all documents with you, as well as the Provisional Report you received together with Newsbrief 99 of July 2016. Don't forget your FFOA membership card and your pensioner's building pass for easy entrance. IFAD recognizes building passes issued by FAO and WFP, and will give an IFAD visitor's pass to those from other organisations.

A Word from the President on Behalf of Your Executive Committee

My words for this issue of the Newsbrief are devoted to two life members who recently passed away:

A long life lived: Gary Rahn (7 March 1913 - 30 January 2017)

Gary would have been 104 on 7 March. He was the eldest FFOA member residing in Rome. I first met Gary in 1982 when we worked together in the ICSC. Believe it or not, he had already “retired” as a regular staff member when I was “green behind the ears” and just starting out on my UN career. He was a consultant working on the Master Standard for the classification of posts. So, although you may not have known, *inter alia*, he was partly responsible for whether your job was classified as a G4 or G6, a P2 or a P5, according to careful criteria accepted eventually throughout the whole UN system.

Gary joined FAO in the early 1960s, heading the Establishments Group, Personnel Division. His career with FAO, in job classification, organizational management and salary administration, took him from the central Personnel Division to the newly created, Agricultural Services Division, where he remained until he retired. Gary was also at one time Acting Director of Personnel, as it was then called. A well-

known expert in his field, he was a familiar face throughout the Organization. He had been, for many years, the oldest retiree FFOA member. He passed away on 30 January 2017.

Our condolences go to his wife, Ulrike, and his son, Stephen.

Paula Kelly, ex-IFAD (28 April 1941 - 18 January 2017)

When I was Director of Personnel at IFAD, Paula worked for me from the time I arrived in 1984, and for 12 years thereafter. She was a most compassionate person, and the hardest worker in my division; oftentimes, when I would be leaving the office long after the close of working hours, I would walk down the hallway and pull her from her office to give her a ride home, except when she was doing the payroll for the whole Organization, when neither I nor a team of horses could drag her away. She was a friend of every staff member of IFAD and was remembered at the IFAD Alumni lunch, 2 February.

Alan Prien
President

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Newsbrief 101

March 2017

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.ffoa-web.org. Suggestions or contributions from members are welcome.

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The cost of printing Newsbrief, as well as other FFOA documents is borne by the World Food Programme, for which the Association is grateful. Costs associated with documentation for the General Assembly are borne by IFAD, for which the Association is grateful.

Pension Matters

(Responsible: M. Breschi, A. Prien, A. Fusco-Femiano)

Pension Fund Positive Trend Continues

We are pleased to report that, as of 10 February 2017, the UNJSPF was valued at an all-time high of 56.1 billion US dollars!

This reassuring level results from the Fund's ability to reverse a previous downward trend starting from 2011. The Fund's balance is made up of about 63% in public equity (Stock Exchange securities), about 7% real assets, 3% alternative investments and some 27% fixed income investments, such as bonds.

The Fund serves more than 71,000 retirees/beneficiaries. More than 126,000 participants living in over 190 countries and territories pay into the Fund monthly. The 187 Secretariat staff serve retirees, beneficiaries and participants around the globe, meaning that there is less than one secretarial staff serving every 1,000 members.

Investments

At the request of the Pension Board, and bearing in mind the recently approved investment policy, the Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee (ALMC) of the Board launched a review of UNJSPF investments, with a kick-off meeting on 10 February 2017. Through a competitive bidding process, a major international firm of experts (Deloitte Touche) was awarded a contract for an independent third party review of UNJSPF investments, in coordination with other members of the project team including a representative of the Secretary-General, Mr Y. Sumitro, other representatives of the ALM and Mr Warren Sach, as the FAFICS representative.

As Warren explains in an information note: "The Pension Board, at its 63rd session in July 2016, agreed to have an in-depth review conducted by an independent expert considering the main practices, investment management and risk management of the Fund. This review would be conducted in relation to those of other global pension funds/financial institutions. This decision was taken despite the fact that the Fund had achieved a positive actuarial balance and was fully funded. The reason was that both these

excellent results were wholly dependent upon fulfilment of the assumption that the investments of the Fund would achieve a 3.5% real rate of return in the long run. The Board was also concerned with the recent under-performance of the investments of the Fund."

In his note, Warren further reminds that the ALMC is committed to present the result of the review to the Pension Board in time for consideration at its 2017 session. In preparation for the review, "... the ALMC has been providing oversight and terms of reference for the project team in consultation with the Department of Management of the UN. This was done with the full participation of FAFICS designated members, not only of the ALM Committee, but also of its Steering Committee and of the Steering Committee's Project Team. These elaborate governance arrangements have been constructed so as to ensure the independence of the third party review while at the same time providing the review with access to all necessary information and views".

Also, the "... selection of the third party to undertake the investment system consultancy which resulted in the appointment of Deloitte Touche was a procurement exercise undertaken for the UN by UNOPS so to ensure both timeliness and independence. The technical evaluation of bid proposals was undertaken with the participation of FAFICS and Executive Heads representatives."

Initial consultations among the various players took place in numerous meetings in the second part of February. FFOA will closely examine developments in this area, so crucial for securing a good state of health of our Pension Fund.

Delays in processing pension benefits

The trend in processing new pension benefits now appears to be positive. Thanks to the specific efforts by the Fund, and in general by the System (Staff Pension Committees, FAFICS, FFOA and Staff Representatives), delays are now confined to cases of incomplete documentation or other exceptional circumstances, and the timing of new processing is generally back to normal.

According to published data, as of 1 February 2017, the following are workflow statistics:

Number of actionable cases ready as of 1 January 2017	367
New initial separations (or benefits) cases received in January 2017	1,003
Cases processed in January 2017	1,072
Balance of outstanding cases	298

We were recently informed by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) that in January 2017 the Fund processed more than a 1,000 new entitlements (see above) and that the monthly processing rate since March 2016 exceeded 1,150 cases per month, surpassing by a significant margin the averages under the old system in 2014. The processing time for most cases (when all documents and information had been provided) is less than four weeks, despite the surge in the number of cases being sent to the Fund.

In October 2016, the Fund established a pilot call center in New York, now functioning extremely well, as the CEO informs us. The center services calls 12 hours a day (from 7:00 in the morning to 7:00 in the evening), with a short waiting time. In Geneva, the Fund continues with a high quality call service (responding to more than 90 percent of calls). Additional hub service centers to improve service quality are being opened, including in Nairobi. At the Pension Board meeting, the Fund will request establishment of several new hub service centers later this year. Finally, the Fund continues to enhance the Member Self-Service (MSS) portal with more than 60,000 registered users.

Later in 2017, new features of the MSS will include the ability to display and download the statement of benefits, as well as the ability to view if the employing organizations and separating staff have provided the required documentation to the Fund. FFOA will continuously monitor the successful implementation of these new features, which will no doubt constitute a significant improvement in the overall quality of service.

Cost-of-Living Adjustment

With regard to the benefits defined under the US Dollar track, the UNJSPF has announced a 3.6% adjustment of the US dollar entitlements on 1 April 2017, based on the movement of the United States Consumer Price Index (CPI) over the three-year period December 2013 to December 2016. There was no increase in the two preceding years because the required minimum of two percent movement to trigger an adjustment was not reached.

For retirees and beneficiaries under the two-track pension adjustment system (based on the euro in many European countries and on other currencies around the world), the adjustment, if any, will vary according to the CPI movements in their respective country of residence provided that the two percent threshold has been met. When the threshold is not met, previous years' CPI movements will be carried over to the next year. With regard to Italy, based on information at the time we go to press, we expect that the threshold this year will again not be met. FFOA is closely monitoring the official Italian publications and will keep members informed.

Certificates of Entitlement and Statement of Benefits

Thanks to the recently introduced Member Self-Service portal (see above), pensioners should be able to monitor receipt of the signed Certificates of Entitlement by the Fund. FFOA will monitor the timing of this process and follow up with the Fund any reported delay. Statements of Benefits for 2016 are due in this quarter. Members not in receipt of their Statement are encouraged to contact the Fund directly. FFOA remains available to assist.

Emergency Fund

As members may recall, the Fund established an Emergency Fund to help retirees and other beneficiaries alleviate financial hardships due to illness, infirmities of old age or similar cases, as well as natural disasters.

In November 2016, we informed members via Flash no. 7 of a special initiative by the Fund

at the request of the FAO/WFP Staff Pension Committee's Secretary, Ms Kamila Guseynova, providing for a streamlined modality for the Emergency Fund for earthquake-stricken regions of Central Italy. Members should refer to Flash no. 7 for further information or contact the FFOA office in Rome.

In Flash no. 7, we also informed members of FFOA's own Emergency Fund operating under circumstances similar to those of the UNJSPF. Queries can be directed to the Chairperson, Ms Joan Smidt at joan_smidt@libero.it.

UNJSPF Annual Letter

The UNJSPF Annual Letter is usually published in March. As we go to press, the 2017 Annual Letter had not yet been released. We will inform members when the letter is published. In the meantime, we encourage all to visit the Fund's web page seeking the letter.

Medical Insurance

(Responsible: E. Seidler, A. Prien, M. Breschi)

Since Newsbrief 100, there are four noteworthy developments to highlight:

Gemelli and Fatebenefratelli Hospitals agree to direct billing with Allianz Worldwide Care (AWC)

There is a designated office in the Gemelli premises in Rome to deal with direct billing with insurance companies, i.e. ALPI (Attività Libera Professione Intramoenia), telephone +39.06.30155312. Fatebenefratelli Hospital also offers direct billing.

BMIP travel benefit

Allianz has (re)introduced a travel benefit under BMIP, which is more generous and has wider applicability than under Van Breda, as follows: i) the travel provision is applicable if costs in the country of travel are at least 20% cheaper than the Reasonable and Customary costs (R&C) in the country where the member is based. Travel provision was formerly only allowed

to participants from Italy but now extends to other countries; ii) pre-authorization by AWC is required for the travel provision. The travel provision will be granted up to 20% of the savings with no limit; iii) the travel provision only covers flights and expenses related to the member's travel and is payable on presentation of receipts; one accompanying family member is allowed, but the total reimbursement is still limited to 20% of the savings. Please check with AWC for details.

Joint Advisory Committee on Medical Coverage (JAC/MC)

FFOA, together with the staff bodies of FAO, WFP and IFAD, has written to the Director General of FAO to strongly oppose proposals to change the membership composition on the JAC/MC on which FFOA has been a full member since its inception some 25 years ago. The proposed changes would remove FFOA from the JAC/MC. This is in direct conflict with FFOA's Recognition Agreement with FAO and the two other Agencies. Maintaining FFOA membership on the JAC/MC is considered a priority of the Association and will be challenged further if FAO refuses to accept FFOA's membership.

BMIP Premiums

As of January 2016, BMIP premiums for FAO retirees were to be calculated as a percentage of the full pension (actual pension received plus any lump sum taken). Details of the full pension were not immediately available to FAO and so initial premium deductions were based on the actual and not the full pension received. This was remedied in October 2016 when the full pension calculations were received from UNJSPF. Thus, members may see an increased premium being deducted as of October 2016 and into this year. Members should check their pension fund updates received in July 2016 with that received in January 2017 to see if there has been any increase in premiums. Retirees from WFP and IFAD pay a flat premium; there should be no change in their 2017 premium in relation to 2016.

News from the UN Organizations

IFAD

The following eight candidates stood for election for the Presidency of IFAD:

- Prof Mr Bambang P.S. Brodjonegoro
nominated by the Republic of Indonesia
- Ms María Eugenia Casar Pérez nominated
by the United Mexican States
- Prof Paolo De Castro nominated
by the Italian Republic
- Dr Ismahane Elouafi nominated
by the Kingdom of Morocco
- Mr Gilbert Fossoun Hounbo nominated
by the Togolese Republic
- Mr Rasit Pertev nominated
by the Republic of Turkey
- Ms Josefina Stubbs nominated
by the Dominican Republic
- Mr Pio Wennubst nominated
by the Swiss Confederation

And the winner was..... Mr Gilbert Fossoun Hounbo, currently Deputy Director-General of WHO in Geneva. Formerly, he was an Assistant Secretary-General in UNDP. Mr Gilbert F. Houngho will take up his new post on 1 April 2017. We have offered him FFOA's congratulations, and we look forward to working with him.

WFP

On 30 January 2017 the Executive Director, Ertharin Cousin, submitted her resignation to the Secretary-General. In her e-mail to all staff to which she attached a copy of her letter, she said: "I will diligently perform my role as Executive Director until the end of my contract term on April 6, 2017. I am hopeful that every member of the WFP will perform your duties without distraction during the transition period. Needless to say, I do write this email with a great deal of emotion but without an ounce of regret because during my tenure I am proud of the work performed by the WFP family."

Last November, WFP's Executive Board approved the new Strategic Plan 2017-2021. It

builds on the activities approved by the Executive Board in past strategic plans and policies, and presents them in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The plan seeks to leverage WFP's strengths to maximize the organization's contribution to achievement of the SDGs. The ultimate goal of this Strategic Plan is to support countries to end hunger.

While WFP's mandate clearly articulates humanitarian and development responsibilities, the organization's comparative advantage and long experience call for prioritization of emergency, life-saving and development-enabling work to benefit the poorest and most marginalized people. The SDGs require moving beyond saving lives to changing lives, focusing first on the people in greatest need, not just in least-developed countries but universally throughout the world.

This Strategic Plan, supported by revised financial and corporate results frameworks, guides the preparation and implementation of Country Strategic Plans to facilitate implementation of results-focused portfolios of context-specific activities that address humanitarian needs and enable longer-term development.

WFP announced in February that over 20 million people risk starvation in Yemen, north-eastern Nigeria, South Sudan and Somalia.

WFP has a new HR Director. John Aylieff, a career WFP staff member, will leave Ethiopia where he is currently the Country Director, to take up this post vacated by Prerana Issar in January 2017.

News from the Staff Associations

(Responsible: Alex Van Arkadie)

Since early December 2016 FFOA has been discussing with the Rome-Based Staff Associations the changes proposed by FAO management in the Terms of Reference of the Joint Advisory Committee on Medical Coverage (JAC/MC), altering representation of staff

bodies including FFOA, on the Committee. The situation is a cause of great concern to all and will be challenged by all staff bodies, both individually and collectively.

The WFP-PSA has confirmed that, together with the other Staff Representative Bodies of the Rome-Based Agencies, it is closely monitoring the development of the JAC/MC issue. In early March, AP-in-FAO organized two meetings with UGSS-FAO and UGSS-WFP, WFP-PSA and ECSA-IFAD to further discuss this important issue. FFOA attended both meetings.

Disappointed by the results of two appeals against the Organization - the Service Differential and 2012 Salary Survey (both of which were dismissed by the ILO/AT), UGSS said that as regards the appeal on the 2012 Salary Survey, they are in contact with colleagues in IFAD who had lodged a similar appeal, and they will now explore other joint recourses.

FFOA received the documentation for the 70th Session of the FICSA Council, held in Kuala Lumpur in early February. Representatives from Rome included the AP-in-FAO, IFAD-ECSA and UGSS.

News from the Executive Committee

(continued from page 1)

47th FFOA General Assembly

FFOA's General Assembly will take place on Wednesday, 31 May 2017, starting at 9:45 sharp at IFAD Headquarters, Via Paolo di Dono, 44.

IFAD is relatively close to the Laurentina Metro Station. From there, take bus 764 to Di Dono/Baldovinetti stop (six stops from the Laurentina Metro Station). Bus 716 from Teatro Marcello in the center of Rome stops nearby at via Tintoretto/Baldovinetti.

An IFAD-organised shuttle bus runs from Monday to Friday from Laurentina Metro Station to IFAD at 08:55, 09:10 and 09:25 hours (pick-up and drop-off point is on viale Luca Gaurico, the main road behind the station) and from IFAD Headquarters to the Metro Station

at 16:45 and 17:05 hours (pick-up and drop-off at IFAD is between Paolo di Dono 44 and 82, where there is also a city bus stop).

For those preferring to walk, it takes approximately 20 minutes from the Laurentina Metro Station.

News from the Membership Sub-Committee

(Responsible: M. De Gaay Fortman, M. Breschi, R. Fenix, G. Monciotti, M. Saleheen)

The Pre-Retirement Seminar, to which the FAO Human Resources Department regularly invites FFOA, is held three times a year. It is one of our important tools to promote the Association. In half an hour, we brief the participants about FFOA. Afterwards, we distribute FFOA's new brochure explaining in a nutshell the objectives and activities of our Association. We request the participants to provide their private email addresses, which gives us the opportunity to enlist them in the Pre-Retirement Service Programme (PRSP), launched about two years ago. Eighteen months prior to retirement, future pensioners can join this Programme, which gives them free access to all FFOA services such as the Daily Consultation Service, the Newsbrief and the Website. About 20 percent of the participants join the PRSP after the seminar. In the first 18 months of the PRSP about 60 percent of the "clients", as we call them, have joined FFOA after retirement. The objective of the PRSP is to assist the future pensioners to be better prepared for difficult decisions, such as whether or not to take the lump sum, which currency to choose for the pension, etc. Second, we familiarize them with the activities of the Association. The PRSP allows Executive Committee members more direct contact with a larger group of potential members. Only a very active policy directed to future pensioners helps us to keep our membership stable. People must be convinced of the benefits of an association of pensioners, and the need to stay together in order to defend our interests.

Members who wish to have counselling on fiscal matters in Italy (e.g., Voluntary Disclosure) are advised to contact the FFOA office to arrange a meeting with the duty officer or other members of the Executive Committee.

Social support and recreational activities

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

Previous activities

Since our last Newsbrief 100 (October 2016), the following activities were enjoyed by some of our Members:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| October 2016 | Parma: Mercanti in Fiera e visita della città di Napoli
Villa Imperiale di Pausyllipon e Teatro S. Carlo
Frosolone nel Molise: dal 1500 crea coltelli e capolavori
Tour Sorrento, Capri, Cava de Tirreni, Vietri
Praga
Castel Gandolfo Apostolico
Week-end a Pisa e Lucca |
| November 2016 | Week-end tra Pievi e Castelli
Abbazia di San Galgano e la Spada nella Roccia
L'Oasi di Ninfa in autunno e Sermoneta
Napoli: la via dei Presepi a San Gregorio Armeno e il Centro storico
Salerno e le sue luminarie
Assisi e Spoleto
Castello di Limatola e la Reggia di Caserta
Arezzo: I meravigliosi mercatini di Natale |
| December 2016 | Tarquini in un giorno
Pienza e Montepulciano
Arezzo: Fiera antiquaria con il mercatino di Natale
Firenze dei Medici
Scavi di Pompei, le Domus e le sculture di Igor Mitoraj |

January 2017

Gubbio: l'albero di Natale più grande del mondo
Assisi e la spiritualità di Natale
Capodanno a Paestum
Capodanno in Romagna: Rimini, Cesenatico, San Leo, San Marino
Befana - pranzo su lago di Bolsena e presepe vivente di Civita Bagnoreggio
Week-end a San Leucio e la Solfatara
Salerno: Luci d'Artista
Napoli: Museo Archeologico, Cristo Velato, Centro storico
Domenica sulla neve con la Transiberiana d'Italia

February 2017

Oman
Vignanello: I Fantasmi di Palazzo Ruspoli e pranzo con la Principessa a Vignanello
Napoli: la collina di Pizzofalcone e il Museo di Capodimonte
Pompei in un giorno
March 2017 Gita alla Reggia di Carditello ed alla Reggia di Caserta
San Martino al Cimino
Abbazia di Montecassino
Tuscania e i luoghi di Pasolini, le Basiliche Romaniche e l'Abbazia Cistercense di S. Giusto
Napoli: Capodimonte e Catacombe di Rione Sanità
Civita di Bagnoreggio e Lago di Bolsena
Visita al Foro di Traiano e al Foro di Cesare
Visita al Quirinale

Charity Concert for Haiti organised by WFP. Several concerts by Enrico Camerini. A musical event "Un'Eredità Spettacolare" in which a FFOA member played. The Opera Cavalleria Rusticana "Norma" di Vincenzo Bellini in which a FFOA member played.

Upcoming activities

April 2017	Monteriggioni e San Gimignano Sant'Antimo e la Val d'Orcia
May 2017	La Sicilia Orientale
June 2017	Cracovia e Auschwitz

Monthly coffee mornings

The Social Activity Group's Monthly Coffee Mornings Chat held every first Wednesday of the month at FAO Cafeteria for Members, Spouses and prospective retirees from FAO, WFP, IFAD, ICCROM and other UN Organisations, attracts a goodly number of people. (For example, at the March get-together, 24 members participated.) This informal event gives our Members an opportunity to meet former colleagues and friends and to share points of view on common issues. At the same time, it gives the Association the opportunity to become aware of issues important to our Members. The Allianz representative at FAO is often available to answer members' queries.

FFOA Emergency Fund

In October 2016, FFOA reactivated its Emergency Fund. Applicants should address requests for assistance in writing to the Chairperson of the FFOA Emergency Fund, Ms Joan Smidt. Each request is considered on its merits and should be supported by documentation. It should clearly indicate the nature of the temporary emergency (illness, accident, catastrophe or other difficult situations requiring prompt financial assistance). The schedule of repayment should also be indicated.

Rome 1% For Development Fund

The 1% for Development Fund was created in 1976 by a small group of United Nations staff members in Geneva, who decided to give 1% of their salaries to finance small-scale development projects. The movement was inspired by a UN resolution calling upon Member States to dedicate 1% of their GNP to official development assistance. The Geneva group wanted to show that UN staff could do the same. Subsequently, a 1% Fund was established in Rome in 1983 to cover the Rome-based UN staff.

New York followed in 1985 and Vienna in 1986.

The Rome group presently has 85 members, including six retirees. The entire amount of their joint contributions is allocated directly to projects, without overhead costs as the Fund is managed by members themselves, all volunteers.

Projects are screened and selected by a project appraisal group, and approved by members through electronic votes and at the annual General Assembly.

Assistance is channelled to underprivileged communities directly involved in their own development process. The Fund provides money or equipment to enable the projects (wells or dams, small animal husbandry, school gardens, health care centres, etc.) to get off the ground, but leaves the project implementation to the communities. The average project costs between 2,000 and 5,000 dollars. Still, this rather modest amount is enough for a project to have a palpable effect on the lives of the people concerned.

Former staff members can contribute to the Fund in two ways: i) by setting up a monthly standing order with their bank; ii) helping to review project requests for activities in their field(s) of competence. Interested FFOA members are invited to contact the Fund for more details by e-mail at: Onepercent@fao.org.

Words from the President

(continued from page 2)

Paula was born in England, but wanting to see the world, she crossed the ocean and took a job at the British Embassy in Washington, D.C., as a secretary in the Polaris nuclear programme. Despite the high security nature of the work, Paula did get involved in some activities that might have landed her (and her flatmates) in hot water, if discovered. The Vietnam War was in full swing, and Paula, among others, was an active part of the so-called "Underground Railroad", sheltering young men evading the draft who made their way to Canada.

Eventually, Paula became Personal Assistant to Dr Abbas Ordoobadi, the Agricultural attaché at the Iranian Embassy.

She established herself as a hard-working, intelligent, organised and efficient; when Dr Ordoobadi moved in 1978 to become Assistant President of IFAD, Paula came with him as his Assistant. She was to spend the next 22 years in Rome.

She was one of the founders of the Samaritans in Rome in 1980. Young seminarians at various Catholic seminaries were encouraged to volunteer as part of their pastoral activities, and Paula took them under her wing. She not only provided them with training and support, but also provided a sympathetic ear for their concerns and problems. Her flat became something of a haven for these soon-to-be priests, where they could just be “normal” for a change. Many became lifelong friends.

In 2001 Paula retired and returned to the UK. She was an accomplished amateur artist, particularly in watercolour painting.

In a nutshell, Paula was funny, compassionate, loving, hard-working, intelligent, sharp-witted – and, when occasion demanded it – sharp-tongued! The word “feisty” could have been coined for her. She led an independent life for over 50 years; an independence she maintained right to the end.

One of my colleagues once said: “I remember that when I first went to work at IFAD, Paula was the only person who made any sense when she explained personnel issues, and managed to cut through all the complex UN bureaucracy. I can still recall the presentation she gave to all staff on pension issues. She was renowned as a humane person, with high standards and a straight-talking, no-nonsense approach, with humour and a quick wit.”

May she rest in peace.

Alan Prien
President

News from the Membership

FFOA member Barbara Apostol describes the impressions from her trip to the Sultanate of Oman (5-12 February 2017)

Our Group of twelve adventurers, including our organizer Laura, set out at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, 5 February via Qatar Airlines, an extremely comfortable and peaceful flight, for Muscat, the capital of the Sultanate of Oman. We traveled via Doha (the capital of Qatar) arriving at evening time in Muscat with its beautifully illuminated buildings and mosques – a veritable fairyland.

Our tour began early the next morning with our extremely informative Italian guide, Luciano. The city is built of square, flat roofed, dazzlingly white-painted constructions (except the domed and colored mosques). All names, streets, directions, shops and public buildings are indicated in both Arabic and English, and everyone speaks perfect English.

All men wear full-length white sur clothing and head covering wound differently to denote their various adherences to the Muslim religion. The women are all dressed in black from head to foot, with faces uncovered or, going towards the interior of the country, their faces being partially covered by cage-like strips passing from the forehead and over the nose leaving only the eyes and cheeks visible.

Our tour of Oman was a whirlwind of museums, castles, fortresses, the main mosque in Muscat with its gold dome, the Royal Palace (a magnificent complex, all white- a multinational work of art) and the Royal Opera House, all illuminated at night.

Each day was a departure for a different region where we saw ancient villages (some still inhabited) built into the mountain sides, wadis (riverbeds either dry or running with water), souks (markets) and a dhow (traditional sailing boat) building-yard. We had an exciting trip into the desert with a crazy driver down and up steep dunes and watched the sunset.

At a night stopover along the coast, we were rewarded to be able to witness an enormous

turtle soundlessly heaving herself out of the sea, onto the beach, to dig a big hole in the sand in which she deposited her eggs and returned, again soundlessly, back into the sea where she would travel thousands of miles before returning once more to the same beach - always only when ready to again lay her eggs.

Our last morning was colored by another visit to a souk, this time in Nizwa, ancient capital of Oman, to witness the weekly market of goats and their offspring, paraded for inspection by prospective farmer-buyers, round and round a narrow circular passage.

During all of our travels, we were always closely surrounded by low, dark gray rock mountains, entirely grassless and tree-less, but with roadsides covered with beautiful flowers and bordering date orchards.

Our last night in Muscat concluded with a wonderful “Muscat- by-night” tour where the whole city was illuminated and can only be described as a “Thousand-and-One-Nights”!

I can only conclude by saying: “Go there and see it all for yourself!”

New Members

A hearty welcome to all new FFOA members.

Allara Carlin, Ms Manuela
 Alonzi, Mr Tony
 Baldoni, Mr Marco
 Borghese, Mr Guido
 Brennan, Ms Patricia
 Camilleri, Mr Giovanni
 Carbone, Ms Maria
 Conti, Ms Arcangela
 Cozzutto, Ms Loredana
 Danforth, Ms Katrina
 De Angelis, Ms Mariagrazia
 De Donato, Ms Carla
 Decraene, Mr Jean-Philippe
 Di Lorenzo, Ms Patrizia
 Dowd, Mr Stephen
 Farinelli, Ms Daniela
 Fazelbhoy, Ms Semina
 Ferrari, Mr Giancarlo
 Fiorelli, Ms Paola
 Fregoli, Mr Giuliano

Frenken, Ms Catharina
 Freypons, Mr Yves
 Gabriele, Mr Alberto
 Giovannetti, Ms Emanuela
 Gonnella, Mr Luciano
 Griffin, Mr Michael
 Heuze, Ms Marie
 Howe, Mr Gary
 Iafrate, Mr Massimo
 Jia, Mr Jiansan
 Keith-Kirk, Ms Janina
 Laureti, Mr Edmondo
 Letenneur, Ms Nadine
 Lindemann, Mr Tomás Pablo
 Lombardi, Ms Diane Marie
 Longhi, Ms Gabriella
 Mascianà, Ms Patrizia
 Minniti, Ms Margaret
 Mitchell, Ms Julie
 Pace, Mr Mauro
 Pelliccia, Mr Gianpaolo
 Rubini, Ms Teresa
 Rugabira, Mr Dan
 Sabogal, Mr Cesar
 Salvati, Ms Daniela
 Silvestri, Mr Gianpiero
 Silvestrini, Ms Fiorella
 Snijders, Mr Fred
 Van der Wulp, Mr Harry
 Wykes, Ms Jennifer
 Zaffarano, Ms Vittoria

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

Leeks, Mr Antony	⋮	Zottola, Mr Georges
16 August 2015	⋮	6 January 2017
Bronzi, Mr Piero	⋮	Kelly, Ms Pauline
5 October 2016	⋮	18 January 2017
Forbes-Watt, Mr David	⋮	Rivetta, Mr Tito Guido
25 October 2016	⋮	28 January 2017
Mazaud, Mr Francois	⋮	Rahn, Mr Gerhard
4 November 2016	⋮	30 January 2017
MacEachen, Mr Roberto	⋮	Madiman, Mr Shivram Ganapatra
7 December 2016	⋮	2 February 2017
Holt, Ms Christine	⋮	McNally, Mr Henry James
23 November 2016	⋮	19 February 2017
Vivekananthan, Mr Thambimuttu	⋮	Gilmore, Mr James Andrew
14 December 2016	⋮	23 February 2017
Nonveiller, Mr Guido	⋮	Von Roehl, Ms Claudia
15 December 2016	⋮	07 March 2017
Salaris, Ms Giovanna Luisa	⋮	Soave, Ms Gloria Andreana
24 December 2016	⋮	10 March 2017

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