

Former FAO and Other UN Staff Association

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



Newsbrief 102
June 2017

47th FFOA General Assembly

31 May 2017

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The 47th Session of the FFOA General Assembly was held on 31 May 2017 at IFAD Headquarters, chaired by Mr Sino Tesfamariam, former manager of the IFAD Credit Union. The meeting, well attended in Rome, was also webcast and recordings are available online (see the FFOA message of 6 June 2017, or contact the FFOA office). The Representative of the President of IFAD, Ms Lakshmi Menon, Associate Vice-President, Corporate Services Division, and Mr Amir Abdulla, WFP Deputy Executive Director, addressed Members. Both expressed appreciation for FFOA's activities and pledged their organizations' support to the Association's work.

The Assembly heard a statement by the Chairperson of ECSA/IFAD, Ms Daniela Cuneo, on behalf of the Staff Bodies of FAO, WFP and IFAD. Ms Cuneo referred to the solid partnership between FFOA and the Rome-based agencies. She expressed appreciation for FFOA's valuable advice and guidance, not only to retirees and prospective retirees of the Rome-based agencies, but also with respect to issues of concern to currently serving staff. Those include the increasing number of non-staff contracts offered to younger employees, which do not offer the stability and security of medical coverage, social security and pension, and that provide limited or no annual leave.



Lakshmi Menon, Associate Vice-President, Corporate Services Division, IFAD; FFOA GA Presiding Officer Sino Tesfamariam; FFOA President Alan Prien; Vice-President Giuliano Pucci and General Secretary Marco Breschi.

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A Word from the President on Behalf of Your Executive Committee

The highlight of each FFOA year is, of course, our General Assembly where all members can get together, bring themselves up-to-date on latest developments, and meet friends and former work colleagues. I was particularly pleased to see such a good turnout this year, including attendance at the lunch in IFAD's Executive Dining room (good food, at reasonable prices!!!), and for the afternoon session on fiscal issues in Italy.

This year we had the pleasure of being welcomed into IFAD's beautiful Headquarters building, to which many refer to as "new". Although it is not quite as new as it once was, it is nevertheless in excellent condition with great facilities. We were welcomed by our first speaker, IFAD's Associate Vice-President, Ms Lakshmi Menon, who is in charge of the Corporate Services Department. Regrettably, despite written invitations to several senior FAO managers, none of them attended.

The second guest speaker was Mr Amir Abdulla, WFP's Deputy Executive Director, who spoke for all of the Rome-based agencies. I took the opportunity to inform Mr Abdulla that FFOA had some quite serious concerns about the role of FAO in the current discussions on Health Insurance. The Joint Advisory Committee on Medical Care (JAC/MC) has not met for 15 months, despite FFOA's repeated written and oral requests for meetings. The

contract with Allianz (for which the pensioners pay half of the premiums) expires at the end of 2017. Despite requests to relevant authorities, FAO has declined to provide us with a copy of that contract. We are, however, aware that some action must be taken by 1 July: either to go to tender/procurement again, or to extend the existing contract. Mr. Abdulla could not (or perhaps was not allowed?) to say which course of action was likely. I stressed that we need to be involved in relevant discussions and decision-making, and that the JAC/MC is the legitimate forum established specifically to discuss these most important matters. Mr Abdulla assured us that he would convey our concerns, and that he plans "to be engaged". Let us hope that will be the case.

Elsewhere in this Newsbrief you will find details of the presentation by the CEO of the Pension Fund and by the Head of its Geneva Office.

Meanwhile, I have pleasure in wishing those of you in the northern hemisphere a pleasant summer, and for those of you south of the equator, a mild winter.

Alan Prien
President

Newsbrief 102 June 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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FFOA GA Presiding Officer, Sino Tesfamariam with FFOA President Alan Prien and Alex Van Arkadie, Executive Committee member and photographer

Mr Sergio Arvizú, CEO of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF), accompanied by Mr Alan Blythe, head of the UNJSPF's Geneva Office, informed the Assembly of recent developments and trends affecting the Fund. Mr Arvizú reported that the Fund is in good financial shape and was projected to continue its solid position many years into the future. The transition from the vulnerable and risky information technology (IT) platform to the launch by the Fund in August 2015 of the new "Integrated Pension Administration System" (IPAS) was successful and seamless in paying all 72,000 existing retirees and beneficiaries, but its implementation had regrettably caused some delays in the processing of new retiree benefits. Those delays had been significantly reduced, with average processing times now between two and four weeks. Regarding survivors' spousal benefits, Mr Arvizú requested information so that any outstanding cases could be dealt with expeditiously. Members were reminded that Certificates of Entitlement (CEs) were now mailed in May, not November, and for 2017, the CEs were sent by normal post at the end of May.

The Assembly welcomed Ms Anissa Maaref-Wilson, Client Relationship Manager, and her team representing Allianz Worldwide Care (AWC). Ms Maaref-Wilson noted that

the current health insurance contract between Allianz and the three Rome-based agencies would expire on 31 December 2017. It was not yet known whether the contract would be extended. Members asked about reimbursements of supplements (not covered by the current contract), transfers of unspent balances (dental, physiotherapy, glasses), and evaluation of the efficiency of medical services. Ms Maaref-Wilson thanked members for their valuable feedback, and promised serious consideration of concerns.

Subsequently, the Assembly endorsed the Report of the Executive Committee and the Report of the Association's Financial Transactions. The usual collection after the Assembly (by Mrs Gyongyi Prien) for the old folks' home near FAO raised 426 Euros.

The Provisional Report of the General Assembly will be sent to all members, together with Newsbrief 103, in October 2017.

Pension Matters

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

Pension Fund Positive Trend Continues

We are pleased to report that as of 9 June 2017 the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund was valued at an all-time high of 57.695 billion

US dollars! On the same date, 203,040 active staff and non-active beneficiaries and retirees worldwide were served by the Fund.

Introducing the Member Self-Service tools

Members no longer need to wait for the Newsbrief to obtain UNJSPF information. Any beneficiary can now access the new Member Self-Service site (MSS) to view fund statistics and financial status on the front page, and to find information of specific interest to that individual.

If you have not yet done so, we encourage you to access the MSS by following the easy instructions provided by the Fund. You will discover a host of important personal information, now readily available without writing e-mails or using postal mail.

Certificates of Entitlement now available on line

By accessing the MSS, you would discover that the Fund mailed the Certificates of Entitlement (CEs) to all beneficiaries in late May. Those need to be signed and returned to the Fund on a timely basis to ensure continuation of benefit payments. Once this task is completed, you can check online to see if your CE has safely reached the Fund and has been processed, ensuring continued payment of benefits to you.

MSS Navigation Classes by FFOA available to members

Navigating the new UNJSPF site does not require a specialized degree in rocket science, but may prove a bit awkward for some of us. The Executive Committee has arranged for some sessions for FFOA members, in which some of our colleagues with expertise in this area will walk you through the MSS, and provide practical advice to make your life easier when using these modern tools.

Pension Fund Investments

The reassuring level of investments mentioned above is the result of the continued ability of the Fund to maintain an appropriate balance between low risk

investments and slightly more dynamic investments in order to secure a safe and adequate level of earnings. As in the recent past, the balance reported above was made up of about 63 percent in public equity (stock exchange securities), 7 percent real assets, 3 percent alternative investments and 27 percent fixed income investments (e.g., bonds).

At the upcoming session of the Pension Board in July, participants will review the preliminary results of the work by the Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee (ALMC), based on application of the recently approved investment policy. An important consideration is the third party in this exercise, an independent firm of actuaries and public accountants with expertise in ensuring quality results.

Delays in processing pension benefits

Members who attended FFOA's General Assembly on 31 May heard directly from the Chief Executive Officer of the Fund, Mr Sergio Arvizú, that processing new pension benefits is now back to normal, i.e. taking about one month from the retirement date, if all relevant documentation is been provided to the Fund on a timely basis. The only area where some difficulty persists is with regard to processing survivors' benefits. The Fund is making special efforts to address this remaining weakness. The institutional players in the system, i.e. the Staff Pension Committees, FAFICS, FFOA and Staff Representatives, will continue to exercise their oversight role to ensure that no stakeholder is left behind.

Annual Letter from the UNJSPF

Another important way for the Fund to inform its community of participants and beneficiaries is the Annual Letter, which contains a host of information on the financial situation of the Fund, any important changes in its governance, and any new operational instruments of specific interest to retirees and beneficiaries or to active participants. The survivors' benefit checklist is an example (albeit an important one) of the kind of information relevant to all of us that can be

found in the Annual Letter. We are pleased to inform members that the 2017 Annual Letter was sent to all members with email addresses, and it is available when accessing the MSS. We encourage all members to read that letter.

Pension Fund Governance

We are all aware of the persistent pressure on the Fund during the past two years from various sources who have tried to focus the attention of beneficiaries and other stakeholders on an array of alleged unprofessional or dishonest behavior, wrongdoings or, worse, fraudulent actions perpetrated by the Fund's Management and primarily the CEO. Usually, such pressure reaches its high point as the time of the Pension Board meeting approaches (each July). This year is no exception. Again we have witnessed the circulation of petitions and documents against the purported intention of the CEO to "privatize" the Fund's Investments.

We remind members that the CEO does not have control over the Fund's investments and has no power to undertake such action. Allegations of wrongdoing and petitions can only have the purpose of supporting agendas designed to undermine the reputation of the Fund and its ability to effectively operate in the markets within the framework of the United Nations policies, rules and regulations.

A recent example of the uncomfortable atmosphere relates to the election of two staff members of the Fund to the group of participants in the upcoming session of the Pension Board. According to existing rules, such election should not have taken place because it creates a conflict of interest (a situation in which those people would have a dual position - one reporting to their manager, the CEO, and the other questioning the actions of the Fund). The Fund's objection to that situation is interpreted by some as inappropriate and indicative of negative intentions.

This conflict is likely to create untoward difficulties in the smooth operations of the Board. The Chair of the 63rd Pension Board, Mr Vladimir Yossifov, recently published a letter to inform stakeholders of the above

circumstances. FFOA provided Members with an information copy of that letter in FFOA Flash 12 (6 June 2017). We encourage all members to read the letter and help us to address that issue at the Board, with your comments and contributions to the debate.

FAFICS Council and Pension Board sessions in July

At the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) Council and at the Pension Board in July, FFOA's voice will be our General Secretary, Marco Breschi. Governance matters, including those mentioned above, will be key subjects along with the good health of the investments (reviewing the work of the ALM), the smooth processing of benefits and the appropriate levels of resources available to the Fund to enable delivery of adequate services. Board documents are in the final stages of preparation, and meetings of the FAO/WFP Staff Pension Committee will take place in late June/early July. FFOA will, as usual, follow closely and report in the next Newsbrief on the tripartite debates, and on the FAFICS and Pension Board conclusions.

Medical Insurance

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

FFOA has continued to monitor the Allianz medical plans and, when appropriate, has taken up matters with FAO and Allianz Worldwide Care (AWC) in support of members' complaints and problems.

Unfortunately, the JAC/MC still has not called a meeting, due to reluctance by FAO and despite repeated requests from FFOA and other bodies. FAO's proposal to amend the membership of the JAC/MC, which would have excluded FFOA representation and that of the recognized staff representative bodies (including AP-in-FAO, UGSS, WFP-PSA and ECSA/IFAD), was strongly contested by FFOA and the staff bodies; the matter is now "up in the air". It is most disappointing that FAO has decided to withdraw from the protocol of the

past 35 years of involving and dialoguing with current and former staff representatives on matters directly affecting them.

As discussed at FFOA's recent General Assembly, the health plan contract with Allianz is due for re-tendering or extension. That normally would be discussed and evaluated in the JAC/MC, but FFOA has been informed that the decision will be made by the Rome-based agencies' management, after which we will be informed of the decision. That is indeed retrograde and a depressing state of affairs. Dialogue with staff and retirees now seems to have virtually ended with "dictates" being the order of the day!

Nevertheless, we are hopeful that may change, as both WFP and IFAD are reluctant to exclude staff and retiree views on this most important issue affecting all serving and retired staff of the Rome-based agencies.

In April 2017, FFOA issued, to all members who have email addresses, Flash 11 regarding cancer screening tests eligible for reimbursement by Allianz Worldwide Care. Given its importance, here is the information again:

- Mammography once every two years for females from 40 to 74 years of age
- PAP smear tests once per year for females from 21 to 65 years of age
- Prostate cancer and colon-rectum tests for persons over 50 years of age, once every year.

This also applies for routine health checks, i.e. a person can undergo these tests without a diagnosis. If a doctor finds a symptom and requests the test, then it is considered diagnostic and is covered without age limits and, if necessary, can be undertaken at any time.

People above the age limits must request a prescription with the diagnosis to be included in the claim for reimbursement. Should the doctor refuse to indicate a diagnosis, the claimant can indicate the diagnosis when submitting the invoice.

News from the UN Organizations

IFAD

After a hotly-contested election with eight candidates (see Newsbrief 101 for details), the new President of IFAD, Gilbert Houngbo of Togo, took office on 1 April 2017 and chaired his first Executive Board from 10 to 11 April. Initial reports on the new President are quite positive. The organization is now gearing up for its next Replenishment. For those of us who were involved in IFAD's early years, when we had many worries over funding and whether IFAD could survive, it is hard to believe that the organization is going into its 11th Replenishment round, with increased funding each time.

As we go to press, the IFAD alumni summer lunch is scheduled for 27 June. Ex-IFAD employees may wish to contact John McGhie (jbmcmghie@hotmail.com) for further information.

WFP

WFP's new Executive Director, an American, is a former Governor of South Carolina (1995 to 1999). David Beasley assumed office on 4 April following the departure of Ertharin Cousin (WFP Executive Director from April 2012 to April 2017). A week later he held an all-Staff meeting to introduce himself, after which he embarked on several visits to advocate for funding to WFP. He visited complex emergency countries including Syria, South Sudan (together with the FAO Director-General) and Somalia, and also travelled to Jordan, Lebanon and Kenya. The Executive Director announced a new Twitter account @WFPChief where he posts highlights of his visits.

WFP has been alerting the world that Somalia, Yemen, Nigeria and South Sudan are all facing famine. WFP's Integrated Road Map will help WFP achieve its Zero Hunger vision, articulated in the current Strategic Plan. The Road Map consists of Country Strategic Plans (CSPs) to operationalize WFP's strategic plan, a new Corporate Results Framework that guides the cycle of implementing, reporting and

monitoring operations, and a new Financial Framework that includes a country portfolio budget structure. Governments will actively lead a strategic review process to inform the CSPs. Last February, the WFP's Executive Board approved the first round of five-year CSPs from eight countries. The previous "EMOP", "PRRO" and "SO" program categories will be retired in favour of the five-year CSP.

The WFP People Facebook page continues to grow in popularity, with nearly 2,000 followers. Membership in the group is open to anyone who worked or works for WFP; spouses are welcomed as well.

The WFP Alumni Annual General Meeting was held on 19 and 20 June at WFP Headquarters. At a side event during the WFP Executive Board Annual Session on 15 June, the Alumni also launched a booklet entitled "Southern African Drought Emergencies: Personal Experiences of WFP Alumni".

News from the Staff Associations

(Responsible: Alex Van Arkadie)

At the recent FFOA General Assembly, the Chairperson of ECSA/IFAD, Ms Daniela Cuneo, spoke on behalf of the FAO, WFP and IFAD Staff Associations. The Joint Statement praised the improvement of staff-management relations in IFAD and the robust consultation process in WFP, regretfully noting that the situation in FAO is sadly far from "ideal". Current major staff concerns pertain to the lack of consistency in extending the mandatory age of separation as from 1 January 2018 (to staff recruited after 1 January 2014 in FAO, IFAD and WFP), and results of the new compensation package for some staff in the Professional and higher categories who may have reductions in their total compensation (viz. salary, benefits, allowances).

"No doubt, you would all agree, we cannot tolerate rules being disrespected shamelessly under the UN Banner", Ms Cuneo declared. "UN Executives, in particular, should lead by

example rather than by taking advantage of their positions to impose decisions which by general consensus are regarded irrational. We are bound by a common pledge to respect the Rules and Principles of the Charter upon which the UN has been founded," she said. Furthermore, "Reforms and changes should be initiated in joint consultation with staff representative bodies - not without them. Although we often hear that staff are the most precious asset, why are their representatives ignored? They can bring experience, advice and contribute to the overall morale of the UN organizations."

Recalling FAO's unilateral decision to amend the composition of JAC/MC, the Spokesperson warned that: "... such changes foresee the elimination of all SRBs (staff representative bodies) in FAO, IFAD and WFP, and even FFOA's senior experts on that Committee. Let us [instead] find a way to convince FAO's Administration to abide by the statutory requirements for consultation and negotiation as provided in Article VIII on Staff Relations. After all, FAO's administrative staff will themselves one day stand to gain from our joint contributions to the deliberations at the JAC/MC."

Ms Cuneo further observed: "FFOA and the RBAs have from recent years built a robust network to nurture a solid partnership by creating the space to discuss issues that are relevant to active staff as well as for retirees. Not only do we highly value FFOA's advice and guidance on issues that relate to our regular working life, but we also collaborate on areas of mutual interest aimed at our common welfare."

Ms Cuneo noted that there are still some inexplicable delays in pension payments, and expressed hope that Mr. Arvizú would help regenerate membership confidence and ensure transparent management of the Fund's resources. She thanked the Allianz Team and noted that although delays in reimbursements for medical expenses had declined, the criteria to reject claims remain unclear and give rise to staff discontent. She appealed for appropriately addressing those issues, even more specifically with regard to

aged, disabled and single retirees, when there is a retendering or extension of the contract with Allianz.

She added that FFOA's briefing, guidance and mentoring - also to colleagues approaching the retirement date - is noteworthy and priceless. In closing, she said that: "... we all look forward to join your happy ranks some day when our dedicated service in the UN has been done ... well done!!"

News from the Executive Committee

Summer closure of the FFOA office

The office will be closed from Monday, 31 July through Friday, 1 September for the usual summer holiday. It will reopen on Monday, 4 September. Please note that messages will not be read on a regular basis during that time and responses may be delayed.

Pre-retirement Seminar

The pre-retirement seminar in Italian for the four Rome-based agencies – ICCROM, IFAD, FAO and WFP took place on 24 May 2017 in the Iran Room at FAO. The Seminar was well attended, the atmosphere was lively, and there were many questions. FFOA Vice President Giuliano Pucci made a presentation, as did Joan Smidt, Maria Augusta Di Giacomo, Alex van Arkadie and Fusco Femiano.

News from the Membership Sub-Committee

(Responsible; M. de Gaay Fortman, M. Breschi, R. Fenix, G. Monciotti, M. Saleheen, G. Shaver)

A major objective of the Membership Sub-Committee is to promote FFOA membership among the retirees of the Rome-based agencies, as well as retirees from other United Nations agencies who have taken up residence in Italy, whether Italian or nationals of other countries.

A second Sub-Committee objective is to encourage retention of members, based on

the premise that Members will remain in the Association when they are aware that it is defending their pensions and after-service health insurance, and also because of social advantages, including interaction with other retirees. The Social support and recreational activities Sub-Committee plays a major role by organizing numerous excursions, and arranging coffee mornings at FAO on the first Wednesday of each month to socialize and discuss issues of common concern.

FFOA members may also interact through FFOA's website (www.ffoa-web.org), where there is an option to register and to authorize FFOA to post one's contact data, including phone numbers and email or postal mail addresses. In other countries, associations of former International Civil Servants keep membership lists that are accessible to all members, but Italy has stricter privacy laws and registration is not automatic. Each member must register personally at the website and authorize FFOA to publish password-protected contact data so that Members can use the search function to find out how to contact other members. It appears that not many of us are aware of the need to self-register in order to be known to former colleagues, and thus the possibilities to interact are very limited and restricted to chance social encounters. At the end of 2016, there were about 2,250 FFOA members, but only 340 (14 percent) had registered on the FFOA website. The opportunity to freely interact with one another is fundamental to feeling a part of the association, so we appeal to all members who have not yet registered to do it NOW. Please access www.ffoa-web.org and complete your registration so that your former colleagues can contact you!

Social support and recreational activities

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

Previous activities

Since our last Newsbrief 101 of March 2017, the following activities were enjoyed by some of our members:

March 2017 Reggia di Carditello e di Caserta
San Martino al Cimino: Alla scoperta della Papessa segreta, Donna Olimpia, Abbazia di Montecassino

April 2017 Monteriggioni e San Gimignano
Tuscania: i luoghi di Pasolini, le Basiliche e l'Abbazia cistercense di San Giusto
Castel Gandolfo: Villa Barberini
Civita di Bagnoreggio - un panorama mozzafiato
Caserta: Intera giornata alla Reggia e nei magnifici giardini
Riserva Naturale Nazzano-Tevere, in battello
Farfa: la fioritura degli Iris
Visita al Quirinale

May 2017 Gradara e San Marino
Sicily – Catania, Siracusa, Luoghi di Montalbano, Ragusa
Montepulciano (gemma del Rinascimento e ottimo vino)
Parco della Maiella, Eremi e Santuari
Lago di Vico Massa Marittima e Castiglione della Pescaia
Oasi di Ninfa e Castello di Sermoneta
Capri e Sorrento

June 2017 Cracovia (Poland)
Isole Egadi in barca a vela
Fumone, Borgo Medievale e Lago di Canterno
Ventotene e S. Stefano
3-day trip - Ponza, Palmarola e Zannone

Three visits in Rome and Ostia were undertaken with our cultural guide Fulvia.
Several piano concerts were offered by Enrico Camerini.

Upcoming activities

July, August,
September 2017 3-day trips to Ponza, Palmarola e Zannone

July 2017 Castelluccio per ammirare la fioritura delle lenticchie
Scozia fra Castelli e giardini
Tivoli: i Giardini di Villa D'Este

di notte
Napoli: Teatro di San Carlo per la "Carmen" di George Bizet

September 2017 Trip to Armenia

Monthly Coffee Mornings

Monthly coffee mornings took place as usual every first Wednesday of the month. It is a pleasure to see that this informal event attracts more and more members to meet former colleagues and friends and to share points of view on matters of common interest.

FFOA Emergency Fund

As mentioned in the previous Newsbrief 101, FFOA reactivated its Emergency Fund at the end of last year. Recently, 800 Euros were granted to an elderly FFOA pensioner who fell and broke both wrists. Because of this small loan, the person was able to hire a housekeeper to help her with daily personal hygiene, dressing, and shopping until the casts were removed. The pensioner has already started reimbursing the money to FFOA.

Although the funds at FFOA's disposal are limited, please don't hesitate to contact Ms Joan Smidt (joan_smidt@libero.it), the Chairperson of the Fund, should you need temporary urgent help in view of difficult situations.

News from the Membership

FFOA organized a trip to Krakow (Poland) from 7 through 11 June, in which Janet Went participated. You will find below her positive feedback:

"The trip was very well organized with our staying in a very nice 4-star hotel in the city centre. The local guide, Piotr (whom we called Pietro!), was exceptional: fluent in Italian, extremely well-versed on all places we visited, history and local customs, and always providing excellent advice on important matters (e.g., exchange of money, taxi fares), in addition to being unfailingly kind and patient with everyone.

Laura, who organized this trip, took good care of the group, composed of some not-so-

young members. She was also very helpful in booking flights for those not familiar with online tools. She even went so far as to find a local dentist in Krakow for emergency treatment for one of the group members, and she accompanied him and his wife to the appointment. (The dentist, his office and the treatment provided were judged as excellent by our fellow travellers.)

Unfortunately, after all flights were booked, the airline cancelled the Sunday afternoon return flight thereby obliging us to curtail our stay by a half day and compress a very full programme. However, we thoroughly enjoyed our trip and I believe others did too. We would be happy, time permitting, to take part in other trips organized by Laura.”

MITACUYE OYASIN

We have received the following note from Stefano Gavotti, former FAO staff member, describing his activities after retirement and announcing the publication of his book *Mitacuye Oyasin*:

“In 35 years with FAO and the UN, I worked in 65 different countries, boarded thousands of flights, and wrote hundreds of reports. Interacting with thousands of farmers, agriculture experts, researchers, bureaucrats and politicians, who always had interesting stories to share, was tremendously rewarding. However, when I left three years ago, I felt that I needed to give a drastic turn to my life. I stopped boarding flights and dealing with worldwide problems of poverty and food security. I felt a rather strong push to refocus my interest and time over a small piece of land close to the sea with the objective to develop my original equilibrium with nature (www.ripartenza.com). My activities nowadays include beachcombing in Santa Marinella, 60 km north of Rome, spotting and gathering driftwood and pieces of rusted iron, balancing stones, and harvesting water and solar energy in a tiny farm just a few kilometers from the sea. On what was a barren piece of land, I now help nature develop a diverse ecosystem, letting indigenous herbaceous and arborous Mediterranean species recolonize the space

with flowers, horticultural crops, fruit trees and olives. A small artificial lake hosts beautiful fish, turtles and frogs. Working with nature is a continuous discovery of hidden treasures to which we pay insufficient attention. But then, I fell once more into the old “report writing” habit, although this time both content and style (photographic and poetic) fully reflect my personality. I self-published a small book, *Mitacuye Oyasin*, the title reflecting my admiration for the relationship between American Indians and Mother Nature. The book is available at the FFOA office for 12.50 Euros, or can be ordered online at <http://edizioni.photocity.it/Vetrina/DettaglioOpera.aspx?versione=23422>, where your feedback - highly appreciated - can also be posted.

The earnings from the book go to the association SOUK (Space of Universal Knowledge), which was founded by a group of FAO colleagues to promote events in Rome for artist migrants (<https://www.facebook.com/pg/SpaceOfUniversalKnowledge/about/>).

I welcome visits to Santa Marinella, but they need to be arranged in advance by contacting me at stefano.gavotti@gmail.com.”

New Members

A hearty welcome to all new FFOA Members.

Alaman, Ms Lubna
Ashton, Ms Rita
Battista, Ms Laura
Biondi, Ms Giuliana
Booth, Mr Svend
Bordignon, Mr Gianpietro
Bruni, Mr Luigi
Castellucci, Ms Theresa
Cavazza, Ms Simonetta
Cerquiglini, Mr Claudio
Consiglio, Ms Lucia
Cooper, Ms Sacha
Cope, Ms Anna
Cudini, Ms Stefania
Dennington, Ms Diana
Desideri, Ms Elvira
Evers, Mr Guy
Farinelli, Mr Maurizio

About FFOA

Since 1971, FFOA works to advance the interests of pensioners from UN organizations based in Italy, regardless of where they spend their retirement. With a growing global membership number of more than 2,300 pensioners from FAO, IFAD, WFP, ICROM, etc. from all staff categories, FFOA is based at FAO Headquarters in Rome.

Representation

FFOA officially represents retiree interests in formal relations with management of FAO, IFAD and WFP. We have a place at the table in all retiree-relevant discussions. FFOA is also active in the Federation of Former International Civil Servants, which joins 53 associations like ours to represent pensioners at the UN system level.

Support

FFOA works to improve retirement benefits – particularly pensions and medical insurance – and to protect the interests of the membership as a whole. We also respond to individual requests from members for assistance, guidance or referral on issues associated with retirement and ageing in general (all services are provided by members on a voluntary basis). Members are informed on developments in areas of concern by our quarterly Newsbrief, a website and direct contact via mail (including e-mail).

Camaraderie

FFOA promotes contact and social and intellectual exchange among its members, through a web-based discussion forum, and a wide range of cultural and social activities. Colleagues and friends in Rome area gather at FAO on the first Wednesday of each month for “Coffee Morning” – drop in if you’re in the neighbourhood!

Helping those in need

Being a pensioner can be difficult and lonely. Volunteers from FFOA are available to support members in distress over the phone, or to organize home visits. FFOA also offers small no-interest loans (maximum 1,500 Euro) to meet short-term emergency requirements.

Service

Even after a career of service, UN pensioners remain interested in and committed to development issues, and continue to support the objectives of their former employer. FFOA attends key meetings and events at Rome headquarters, shares updates with members on key activities and achievement in the UN system, and provides direct support as well.

Keep up with FFOA and retiree colleagues

Stay informed on the latest developments on important issues for retirees via the FFOA website: www.ffoa-web.org. Register on the website to ensure you always receive the latest information, and stay in touch with distant friends and former colleagues.

Join FFOA!

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