

# Former FAO and Other UN Staff Association

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



**Newsbrief 105**  
**June 2018**

## 48th FFOA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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The 48<sup>th</sup> Session of the FFOA General Assembly was held on Wednesday, 30 May 2018, at FAO Headquarters, chaired by Mr Michael Fitzpatrick, a former Director of FAO. The meeting, also webcast, was well attended in Rome by 153 members and a number of special guests.

Statements on behalf of their respective Executive Heads were delivered by Mr Pierre Moreau-Peron, IFAD Director of Human Resources, Mr Amir Abdulla, WFP Deputy Executive Director and Mr Laurent Thomas, Deputy Director-General, Operations, FAO.

The status and performance of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF) was reported by Mr Paul Dooley, Deputy CEO of the UNJSPF; Mr Sudhir Rajkumar, Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund Asset Investments; and Mr Herman Bril, Director of Investment Management Division, UNJSPF. The speakers acknowledged the presence of several Pension Board Members, noting that the Rome-based agencies' retirees were well represented on the Board. They also expressed hope that pensions were arriving in a timely manner. The UNJSPF representatives confirmed that



Audience, General Assembly hosted by FAO

Photo credits:  
FFOA Executive Committee member  
Alex. Van Arkadie

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

Just before the General Assembly on 30 May, I was hospitalized, so a number of my colleagues on your Executive Committee pitched in to cover for me.

My thanks go to Vice-President Georgia Shaver for replacing me on the podium. She did a good job under trying circumstances at the last minute. Thanks also to our General Secretary, Marco Breschi, for chairing a preliminary organizational meeting in my stead and keeping track of the order of procedure to make sure the meeting could run smoothly. Thanks also to those others who pitched in to do last minute tasks, without which meetings such as the GA would not run efficiently.

We should also extend appreciation to Allianz, which this year co-sponsored the GA lunch, which, I gather, was a roaring success. (After all, who can resist a “free” lunch?)

A brief summary of the GA is found at the beginning of this Newsbrief. A full report by Miriam Ahmed on the substance of it will be sent with Newsbrief 106 in September.

This will continue to be a busy time of the year for us as, next up, we host the annual meeting of FAFICS (the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants) in FAO in July, just before FAO itself hosts in August the Pension Board annual meeting. Again, see further details later in this Newsbrief.

Finally: This is election time. Having had the honor of being your President for six years (and Vice-President for three), I do not intend to stand again, but I hereby urge others on the present Executive Committee, who wish to do so, to put their names forward. I would encourage other members also to do so. As I leave office, I would also touch upon one key theme. It is obvious to all that the largest number of our pensioned members are ex-FAO staff, since that great Organization was founded many years before WFP and IFAD, inter alia. Nevertheless, the latter two are growing and becoming ever more important to the good functioning of FFOA. So, when it comes time to cast your ballots, I urge you all to consider voting for at least one of the candidates from the “junior” Organizations, in order to have each represented on the new Executive Committee. Even if you don’t know, or have not heard of them personally, look at their CVs and cast a vote for the one you think looks strongest, or best prepared. I offer this thought for each member to consider.

Until the next time ... happy holidays in the north, and moderate weather in the southern hemisphere.

**Alan Prien**  
President

### Newsbrief 105 June 2018

Newsbrief, the FFOA official quarterly edition, 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](http://www.ffoa-web.org). Suggestions or contributions from members are welcome.

Editor: P. Nelson  
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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.

(continued from page 1)

the Fund is in a very good financial position. It had stabilized its benefit processing facility so that pensions are processed 80 percent of the time within the same month as application. New initiatives to improve client services included: the establishment of three call centres in New York, Spain and Geneva; a New Member Self-Service account (MSS) and dashboard; a liaison office in Nairobi; expanded outreach activities; increased processing rates; agile approaches; and a new Website.

Mr Rajkumar confirmed his personal commitment to nurture and maintain the returns on investments, an increasingly important factor in the long-term financial sustainability of the Fund.

Representatives from FAO Social Security Services informed that FAO had decided to change the premium formula for health insurance coverage for staff and retirees in 2018, while WFP and IFAD retained the past formula. Premiums for FAO staff and retirees during the first months of 2018 were calculated on the same basis as for 2017. The final formula for premium rate deduction in 2018 was still being calculated and information on that should be issued soon.

FFOA expressed its concern over the delay in setting premiums, and about the lack of meetings of the Joint Advisory Committee on Medical Coverage (JAC/MC) established 25 years ago. The JAC/MC includes Staff Representative Bodies to discuss the performance of the Medical Plan and Coverage, criteria for premium setting and the use of the accumulated profit sharing account. FAO hosts the JAC/MC but was unable to convene a meeting of the Committee since April 2016. This had created concern for FFOA, staff bodies and management of both WFP and IFAD. It was hoped that the JAC/MC would be reborn and resume its functions, putting forward the views of its members.

The Assembly also listened to a statement by Ms Eva Moller, Deputy Secretary-General, UGSS, on behalf of the Staff Representative Bodies of the three Rome-based Agencies: FAO, IFAD and WFP (details follow later in this Newsbrief).

The Assembly heard a presentation on Wellness by Dr Felicita Andreotti, cardiologist associated with the Gemelli Hospital, on Awareness of Heart Attack and Stroke. Subsequently, the Assembly was informed of the



FFOA GA Presiding Officer Michael Fitzpatrick; FFOA Vice-Presidents Georgia Shaver and Giuliano Pucci; General Secretary Marco Breschi.



FFOA Executive Committee members Jamie Wickens, Mariam Ahmed, Angelika Wolf and Joan Smidt; Laura Lo Cicero, WFP-PSA Legal Officer and WFP-PSA President Wagdi Othman; former FFOA Vice President Pino Pace.

establishment of a Membership Defence Fund (MDF) by the FFOA Executive Committee to obtain contributions from members worldwide to support FFOA in seeking legal opinions and taking up cases on behalf of Association members. The purpose and modalities for those voluntary contributions are reproduced in this Newsbrief on page 15.

The Assembly was reminded that 2018 is an election year, and that nominations for the Executive Committee are encouraged (page 9 refers) before 12:00 on Monday, 3 September 2018. The Association's "Before and After" document with useful information for UN pensioners and their survivor is posted on the FFOA website ([www.ffoa-web.org](http://www.ffoa-web.org)). Members were requested to update their e-mail addresses to take advantage of modern technology for better and faster communications, and to inform the FFOA office of any change of address.

A total of 724 euros was collected after the Assembly to support the old folks' home adjacent to FAO.

The Assembly was followed by a lunch jointly offered by FFOA and Allianz Worldwide Care.

## TRIBUTE TO ALAN PRIEN

At the end of the General Assembly, Mr Jamie Wickens took the floor on behalf of the Executive Committee to deliver the following tribute to outgoing FFOA President, Mr Alan Prien:

*"I think that it is only appropriate that we pay a special tribute to Alan Prien who has served as our President for the past six years and who is now stepping down. As FFOA President, Alan has demonstrated exceptional leadership skills by being dynamic, supportive and inclusive, in delegating responsibilities to his team and other FFOA members. He has also shown vision in seeking to expand FFOA's support and guidance to the entire membership. Alan has further been an active participant in the Staff Pension Committee (SPC) and at FAFICS meetings; he will be presiding Officer at this year's FAFICS session here in FAO. Most importantly, Alan is one of the finest persons that one could ever meet, always caring and considerate to all those with whom he interacts. If ever you have an emergency at 3:00 in the morning, Alan is that rare individual who will always be there for you. And now, we must be there for him. We wish Alan a speedy recovery."*



FFOA Treasurer Gianni Monciotti, RSG for Investment of UN Joint Staff Pension Fund Assets Sudhir Rajkumar; UNJSPF Director of Investment Management Herman Bril; UNJSPF Deputy CEO Paul Dooley; FFOA Presiding Office Michael Fitzpatrick

## Pension Matters

(Responsible: M. Breschi, A. Prien, A. FuscoFemiano)

### Pension Fund Positive Trend Continues

In February 2018, the last time we reported the Fund's value, it had reached the astonishing level of USD 63.4 billion. We are now pleased to report the even greater level reached at the end of March of USD 64.1 billion with 203,050 active staff and non-active beneficiaries and retirees!

As we explained in previous Newsbriefs, this excellent trend is certainly influenced by positive market performance, which can be expected to continue in the foreseeable future, but it needs to be kept under close control by the investment managers for possible downward movements. We are convinced that the prudent investment policies and solid procedures and practices adopted by the Fund and the excellent leadership and guidance by the Representative of the Secretary-General (RSG) for UNJSPF Asset Investments will continue to be key factors in the positive investment performance.

Notwithstanding the above, the Fund continues to be subject to false accusations of mismanagement from the usual participant sources, primarily from New York. Such

accusations were recently expanded to include the Pension Board itself, challenging its well-established tripartite and democratic governance structure and independence from other UN authorities (including the UN General Assembly). We wish to reassure our members that FFOA, in full consultation with FAFICS, will continue to monitor the situation and defend the integrity and independence of both the Fund and the Pension Board.

### FFOA General Assembly meets new UNJSPF RSG for Asset Investments and UNJSPF Deputy CEO

We were pleased to host at our recent GA the Representative of the Secretary-General (RSG) for UNJSPF Asset Investments, Mr Sudhir Rajkumar and the Deputy Chief Executive Officer (DCEO), Mr Paul Dooley, who delivered an update on the current status of the Fund.

With his comprehensive presentation, the RSG illustrated the excellent status of the investments and their good performance with healthy returns. He reassured the audience on the ability of the investment team to reach the benchmark level of 3.5 percent return on investments which, as we all now know, is the level required to ensure the financial stability of

the Fund. Mr Rajkumar explained in layman's terms that the investments should be seen as a box where contributions from participating organizations and individual participants flow inside, while disbursements of pensions and other benefits flow outside. At this juncture, disbursements are higher than contributions, but thanks to the income generated by investments, the RSG is able to keep the Fund balanced, without recourse to using any share of its accumulated capital.

The DCEO gave an overview of the other side of the coin, on the administration of the Fund including stabilization of the new processing system IPAS, the timely and accurate disbursements of pensions and other benefits, and improvements in the information system including the Member Self-Service (MSS).

Mr Dooley also highlighted current efforts to improve client relations by reinforcing the Client Service department, made possible by increased resources from the Pension Board at its last session. The opening of new processing and client servicing offices in locations outside the US is part of the current strategy to better reach out to UNJSPF clients around the world. Mr Dooley also reassured the GA with regard to the published numbers regarding "arrears", confirming that such items are related to outstanding administrative actions or items pending due to incomplete documentation (for example, missing banking instructions or marriage certificates not provided by beneficiaries). The delays in processing new pensions or benefits, as in the recent past, are now clearly behind us.

### **FAFICS Council and Pension Board**

As previously reported, the Pension Board will meet in Rome this year at FAO from the end of July until early August, immediately preceded by the FAFICS Council. Preparatory work for both events is progressing well in terms of logistical arrangements and documents production. As usual, the substantive work for the Pension Board is dependent on issuance of documents by the Fund's Secretariat. Such documents are

reviewed by the Staff Pension Committees as soon as they are received, usually towards the end of June or in early July.

### **Selection of the Deputy Chief Executive Officer**

The Chair of the Pension Board has appointed a selection panel for the recruitment of the Deputy Chief Executive Officer to replace Mr Dooley upon his retirement at the end of August this year. The panel, including as representatives of retirees two FAFICS officers (one of whom is from FFOA), began work in February. It has now reached the stage of individual interviews of a first list of potential candidates in June in Vienna. The aim is to develop a list of three suitable candidates to be interviewed in person by the Board at its Rome session. The timely completion of this exercise is crucial to maintain a key leading position in the Fund's secretariat, during the absence on prolonged sick leave of its CEO.

### **Certificates of Entitlement**

Retirees should have received or should soon receive their Certificates of Entitlement to complete and return to the Pension Fund. FFOA was informed that these were sent at the end of May, so members should expect to receive them by mail by the end of June.

We wish to remind members of the importance of this key process by which each year we are requested to return the signed certificate to the Fund to ensure continuation of benefits. For any questions, please contact the FFOA office in Rome, the FAO Social Security office, or the Fund directly.

### **Annual Letter of the Fund**

We encourage members to read the 2018 UNJSPF Annual Letter as soon as published in the MSS account. This letter is another important means of communication for the Fund to inform its community of participants and beneficiaries on the financial situation of the Fund, any important change in its Governance, and other matters of specific interest to retirees and beneficiaries or to active participants.

## Medical Insurance

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

BMIP premiums for WFP and IFAD retirees and staff (flat premiums) were announced and implemented as of February 2018, but we are still to learn what the 2108 premiums (based on percentage of full pensions) will be for FAO retirees. To date, FAO retirees continue to pay the same premiums that were in force in 2017. This state of affairs is entirely unacceptable and FFOA deeply regrets the lack of finalization of BMIP premiums and caps by FAO. The issue of retroactive adjustments to cover the change in premiums in 2018 also awaits FAO's decision. If there are any retroactive adjustments, and as it is FAO that has failed to adjust premiums in a timely manner, they should shoulder any costs incurred by this delayed implementation. When FFOA is informed by FAO of its final decision, we shall issue a Newsflash to members.

## News from the UN Organizations

### WFP

At the recent FAO Council in June 2018, WFP asked to raise the mandatory age of separation (MAS) for WFP staff to 65. The Executive

Director invited staff members turning 62 from 1 January 2018 to apply for waivers of the current mandatory age of separation, indicating that those applications would be considered favourably. Up to 4 May 2018, waivers to the current mandatory age of separation have been granted to 24 staff members. Between 2018 and 2020, 119 or 8 percent of WFP's 1,463 staff will be reaching the MAS of 62 or 65 (20 in 2018, 49 in 2019 and 50 in 2020).

WFP has asked FAO to request the Finance Committee and the Council to amend the FAO Staff Regulations and Rules applicable to WFP staff members to increase the age of separation to 65. However long that process takes, the WFP Executive Director will continue to favourably consider requests for waivers to WFP's current retirement age.

Below are some statistics of interest regarding WFP activities in 2017:

- WFP received a record level of contributions - a total of USD 7.1 billion against overall requirements of USD 9.8 billion - and provided direct food assistance to 91.4 million people around the world.
- There were a record number of emergencies - many stemming from conflict: eight level 3 emergencies and seven level 2 emergencies; therefore,



Amir Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director, WFP; FFOA Vice-President Georgia Shaver.

relief activities remained the core of WFP's work or 68 percent of the total programme of work.

- There were 17,000 employees comprising 1,463 international professional staff excluding JPOs; 42 percent were women (the target is 50 percent); 43.3 percent were from developing countries (the target is 40 percent), and their average age is 47.8 years.

You can now “share the meal” with a child in need with a tap on your smartphone. It costs only USD 0.50 to feed one child for a day. Download the application and learn more by going onto the [wfp.org](http://wfp.org) website.

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## News from the Staff Associations

(Responsible: A. Van Arkadie)

At the recent 48th FFOA General Assembly, Ms Eva Moller (Deputy General-Secretary, UGSS-FAO/WFP) delivered a joint statement on behalf of the Staff Representative Bodies (SRBs) of FAO, IFAD and WFP (AP-in-FAO, ECSA-IFAD, UGSS-FAO/WFP and WFP-PSA). Her statement is summarized below:

“It has not been an easy year for SRBs at FAO”, she admitted, but instantly added, “not because of the significant tasks we had to carry out, but also having to manage with a ‘smaller’ ExCom whose newly-elected members lacked exposure to staff representation. “Membership dropped in UGSS-FAO because of a “perceived loss of effectiveness of the Union in negotiations with FAO Management ... and the President of the AP-in-FAO Mr Roberto Bonafede being abruptly dismissed by FAO late February” (just after its’ GA-2018). Although Representatives in the Staff-Management Consultative Committee (SMCC) “were insistent that the dismissal was unrelated to his role in AP-in-FAO, it was nevertheless a crisis for the AP-in-FAO and impacted the way in which they were able to function. Despite this [drawback], SRBs were successful in helping to repeal Management’s decision to delete the provision for parental leave

in the case of adoption - a decision that seemed unfounded and senseless, as well as distinctly discriminatory.”

As regards IFAD, Ms Moller stated that: “Staff are given ample opportunity to provide input and there is sound communication.” The UGSS Executive Committee’s spread between two agencies in Rome also revealed some differences between the management of WFP and that of FAO, with relations at WFP being better than those at FAO. Another area of difference was the three RBAs’ stance in relation to the mandatory age of separation (MAS). At IFAD, the MAS will be raised to 65 for those who joined the agency before 2014, starting in 2020, with signs of flexibility for those whose MAS is close to 1 January 2020. Ms Moller also said that in WFP, while the MAS has not yet been officially changed, requests for extensions to work until the age of 65 will be automatically approved, whereas FAO Management is clearly holding off on the implementation for as long as possible.

Ms Moller observed that the SRBs have expressed concern both about the JAC/MC that had not met since April 2016 despite several requests, and the tender process that was not reviewed through the JAC/MC. Had the JAC/MC been allowed to function, things would have gone differently. She agreed to work closely with FFOA on this “as the topic affects us all!”

### AP-in-FAO

Upon an urgent request from AP-in-FAO, Ed Seidler and Alex. Van Arkadie from the FFOA Executive Committee met after the FFOA General Assembly with representatives from UGSS-FAO/WFP, IFAD-ECSA and the WFP-PSA on 4 June. AP-in-FAO explained: “After FAO-Management proposals for changes to the terms of reference regarding representation of staff and retirees were rejected by AP in FAO, FFOA and UGSS, FAO has basically decided to ignore the JAC/MC. Recent increases in premiums and related cost sharing in FAO, as well as the use of the Profit-sharing Account, was decided with no involvement of the JAC/MC. Discussions could also include how to ensure involvement of SRBs representing IFAD

and professional staff at WFP in the deliberations of the JAC/MC.”

Participants agreed on joint action to push management of the Rome-based agencies to ensure that decisions on medical coverage are made after proper consultation with the SRBs and FFOA, specifically within the framework of the JAC/MC.

### **AP-in-FAO elections**

The FFOA Executive Committee wishes to congratulate the new AP-in-FAO team elected on 31 May: President, Mr Jakob Skoet; Vice-President, Mr AbdoulKarim Bah; General Secretary, Mr Juan Coy; Field Secretary, Mr Jean Risopoulos; Deputy Field Secretary; Mr Mario Castejon; Treasurer, Ms Wadzanai Katsande; General Member without Portfolio, Ms Katinka DeBalogh; Information Secretary, Ms Line Kaspersen; and Legal Affairs Secretary, Ms Francesca Felicani Robles.

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## **News from the Executive Committee**

### **Executive Committee 2019-21 Elections, November 2018**

Given the importance of the FFOA election exercise at the end of this year, we again enclose two documents that you already received with the last Newsbrief in March 2018, namely Description of the election process and Nomination form for candidates. We strongly encourage our members living in the Rome area to complete the nomination form if they wish to stand for election, and to send it to the FFOA office well before 3 September (12:00 hours). Please remember that our Association can only provide good and proper services if there are enough qualified people prepared to do the work that needs to be done. In practice, the load is well distributed among the sub-committees and does not require too much work. Even if you are unable to stand as a candidate yourself, you should encourage others whom you believe can do a good job. Some members of the current Committee will stand again but others will not,

and we need committed volunteers to fill the vacant seats. We emphasize, in particular, that the Committee would benefit from the presence of more pensioned members who worked in the past for WFP and IFAD. *Come forward and help us to identify good candidates from the Rome-based Agencies.*

The Articles of the Association stipulate that any FFOA member may be a candidate for membership of the Executive Committee provided he or she: (i) lives in the Rome area; (ii) affirms his or her determination to dedicate sufficient time to attending meetings and to accomplish assigned tasks; (iii) is supported by at least five members who have paid all membership fees; and (iv) has paid all of his or her own membership fees.

When we voted for the FFOA Executive Committee in 2015, members with an e-mail address could cast their ballots via the internet. Now, three years later and with a considerable number of new members with internet access, we hope that the e-voting system will be used by the majority of our members.

The software will be easy to use:

- Those having an e-mail address on the FFOA database will receive an e-mail message (subject: FFOA 2018 Elections) that will invite them to cast their votes by clicking on the link provided. The e-voting process is self-explanatory and the reduction in manual effort required to count votes will greatly assist the FFOA.
- Those members NOT having an e-mail address on the FFOA database will continue to receive the ballot papers via snail-mail and will need to submit their sealed envelopes via post or in person to the FFOA office. The traditional ballot papers will be accepted by FFOA until 17:00 on 30 November 2018.

You are kindly urged to submit your new or updated e-mail addresses to the FFOA office as soon as possible (in any case not later than 30 September 2018). As you are aware, this can be done by using our website (Member Services- Updating your personal details), by sending an

e-mail directly to [ffoa@fao.org](mailto:ffoa@fao.org) or by telephone (+39 0657055623).

### **Summer closure of the FFOA office**

The office will be closed from Monday, 6 August through Friday, 31 August for the usual summer holidays. It will reopen on 3 September. Please note that messages will not be read on a regular basis during this time and responses may be delayed.

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## **News from the FFOA Sub-Committees**

### **Finance**

(G. Monciotti, B. Pisani, G. Pucci, A. Prien, A. Fusco Femiano, M. De Gaay Fortman, P. Pace)

In previous Newsbriefs, we informed you that while keeping FFOA savings stable, we were also looking for alternative investment sources, particularly social investments. It had been suggested to invest a part of the savings in the Cooperative Oikocredit ([www.oikocredit.org](http://www.oikocredit.org)). This Cooperative was founded in the seventies, has a capital of 1.2 billion euros and has yielded over the past 40 years an annual dividend of 1 to 1.5 percent. Each investor who wanted his money back received it with accumulated dividends. Regrettably, we have not received much feedback from our Membership regarding our proposal. Therefore, we shall again discuss it in the Finance Advisory Committee and will eventually prepare a proper project proposal to be submitted to the Executive Committee for decision. We will keep you informed.

### **Membership**

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

One initiative of the Membership Matters Advisory Committee (MMAC) this year was the preparation of a letter, sent on 5 March to all 3,504 pensioners in Italy, including FFOA members (because UNJSPF does not have a record of the FFOA members). That caused

confusion among some members, but eventually everyone understood why it had to be done that way.

The objective of the letter was to encourage the pensioners-non-members in Italy to join FFOA, as we work in the interest of all pensioners in Italy. In the letter we mentioned how we are bringing matters of general concern to the management of UNJSPF and to the Pension Board, where FAFICS, the Federation of all of the UN Associations of Retirees, is represented by three members. We elaborate on the actions we have taken with regard to the After-Service Health Insurance, working on a new relationship with Allianz Worldwide Care. We mention that FFOA's office is open every morning from 9:30 through 13:00, with a Duty Officer who is there to advise members on issues related to their pensions, health care and residence in Italy. This service is also available to staff members 18 months prior to their retirement through the Pre-retirement Service Programme, either on location or by mail: [FFOAPRSP@gmail.com](mailto:FFOAPRSP@gmail.com).

The effect of this promotional letter could be multiplied, if FFOA members would refer to it and the issues therein, in their contacts with colleagues. You could also use some of the information in the report from the General Assembly, including the current status of the Pension Fund, and the work of our representatives on the Pension Board. You will read about other achievements resulting from the work of FAFICS, that acts on behalf of all pensioners. If every FFOA member would approach one pensioner-non-member, we could cover all the UN pensioners in Italy. Thank you for helping us in this endeavour.

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## **Social Support and Recreational Activities**

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

### **Previous activities**

Since Newsbrief 104 (March 2018), the following activities were enjoyed by some of our members:

April	Theater in English: "Snake in the Grass"
May	Weekend in Pieve L'Aquila: Abbazia di Collemaggio - lo Stupore del Mondo: CelestinoV ed i Templari Caserta: la Reggia Proceno: tra castelli e nobili casate Ninfa e Sermonetta Concert by Enrico Camerini
June	Molise: i luoghi della "transumanza" Elba: MaxiCrociera del Sole Udienza papale, visita guidata Musei Vaticani Ischia Ponza, Palmarola e Zannone Albania Theater in English: "Living Together"

## Upcoming Activities

July	Ventotene and Ponza
August	Ponza
September	Prague Uzbekistan

## Monthly FFOA Coffee Mornings

(Responsible: A. Van Arkadie)

The coffee mornings in FAO's Aventino Room in April, May and June attracted an average of 25 Members, spouses, prospective retirees and Rome-based agencies' ex-staff visiting Rome. Special invitees or Executive Committee members made presentations as follows: Mr Sabatino Salvi on FFOA's "Before and After" Paper; Ms Enrica Romanazzo on "Future collaboration between FFOA/FAO Staff Coop" and Mr Ed Seidler on possible increases in FAO's premium calculations on medical coverage, and on "Reasons necessitating the establishment of FFOA's Voluntary Legal Defence Fund". Participants freely comment on related issues and continue to wholeheartedly contribute to discussions arising from discussions, offering positive, practical proposals based on personal knowledge and first-hand experiences. Those are summarized at subsequent FFOA Executive Committee meetings for follow-up as appropriate.

Subsequent to the FAO Staff Cooperative's presentation at the coffee morning last May, Ms Enrica Romanazzo wrote: 'Both our associations operate in the interest of active and former staff who are part of FAO's big family. As volunteers, we will be very pleased to continue working in close cooperation and are making efforts to expand our initiatives providing new high-value services and benefits to our members to improve communication, by expanding the information throughout the Organization in a synergistic way, which could be beneficial in attracting new members in the common interest of our associations.'

Elsje Osselaer from Allianz Worldwide Care has confirmed her presence at the FFOA coffee morning on 5 September. She will introduce the new application (app) for mobile devices from the Aventino Pharmacy and will provide an update of new providers in Italy, including "Medilab". Details will be available in the next Newsbrief 106. Meanwhile, please consult updates on the FFOA website.

## FFOA Emergency Fund

Should you be in urgent need of temporary help, please contact the Chairperson of the Fund, Ms Joan Smidt ([joan\\_smidt@libero.it](mailto:joan_smidt@libero.it)).

## Your Good Health

### Best Brain Exercises to Prevent Alzheimer's and Dementia

Nobody wants to see their beloved ones forget who they are. While we can't stop all cases of Alzheimer's or dementia, there are certain steps we can take to avoid going down that road.

One of the biggest steps you can take is to take care of your whole body now.

We are going to be talking about keeping your brain in high gear in this article so you know what to do to keep sharp.

Scientists have long thought that keeping your brain healthy with brain training exercises is one of the best ways to know your state of mind. It keeps your mind working well, forming new neuro-connections, and preserving older connections.

The following are some of the signals of Alzheimer's and dementia that you might encounter:

- finding it difficult to make decisions
- having trouble finding your way around familiar environments
- forgetting important events
- becoming easily distracted
- neglecting personal hygiene and nutrition
- taking a long time to find the right word for something, etc.

It's not so much that you exercise your brain, but that you do the right types of brain enhancements. There isn't a brain gym to go to, so you need to be proactive in your fight against dementia.

Then, you need to work on memory and building strong connections. Memory brain exercises are one of the best tools.

The following are a few of them:

- Crossword puzzles
- Rubik's Cube
- Sudoku
- Read books
- Attend lectures and classes
- Play with children
- Physical exercises
- Gardening
- Play music

and etc., etc., etc. - and have fun!!!

Extracted from an article from Developing Human Brain Org. and arranged by Sabatino Salvi (FFOA)

## News from the Membership

### ***Feedback from FFOA member Danielle Corvest regarding her trip to Friuli-Venezia Giulia (26-31 May 2018).***

This was a full immersion trip and as the name of the organizing agency, "Curiosando" ("snooping" in English), suggests, that's exactly what this trip was all about!

The trip was perfectly and professionally organized by our unique Laura, attentive as



Trieste

Picture taken by Daniella Corvest.

always to details and to every request from the participants.

Positive: beautiful and striking places; a competent and nice tour guide, Anna Sairu; very nice travel companions; centrally located, comfortable hotels in Udine and Trieste, facilitating moving around/within the city: the lunch in San Daniele, and the visit to a winery for wine tasting was particularly appreciated; and ... to top it all off, we had fantastic weather.

Negative: nothing, really nothing!

In sum: magnificent five days, travelling is for sure the universal cure-all and with "Curiosando nel Mondo", it's magic.

### ***Musings - Exquisite Gastronomy***

Dealing with food issues occupied most of Executive Committee member Mohamed Saleheen's adult life. This gave him exposure to some unforgettable gastronomic experiences. Here is the first of two such episodes.

### ***The Pastor's Special White Meat***

At a missionary center, where I went to provide training on conscientization and group dynamics, it was time for dinner. Six of us were evenly seated at the neatly laid mahogany dining table. At the corner, on a high mantel shelf, stood a wooden statue of Lord Buddha in a meditation posture. The stomach of the statue was finely carved inwards giving a convincing image of having achieved Nirvana. The Pastor

first chanted some thankful prayers and then pointed to the statue and remarked: “That’s the role model, we must aspire to be like him.” Food was served immediately thereafter. In the middle of the table was placed a big stack of barbecued ribs (huge in size), on my right was a golden crispy roasted chicken, on the right of Father Pastor was a squarish chunk of a white dish which looked to me like steamed fish. Other dishes included roasted potatoes, beans and carrot salad, freshly baked bread, cottage cheese and some juicy fruits. After-meal servings included a choice of herbal tea or spicy Turkish like coffee and a bottle of locally made schnapps, all of which were nicely placed on a side trolley. My eyes were set on the ribs but Father said: “For you is the chicken; the pork ribs are for us.” Upon gently enquiring about the white chunk near him, Sister Mary whispered into my ear: “That’s Father’s specialty. He found a big python in the forest today. He loves that white meat; he hunts one once a month”. I happily settled with my chicken and the veggies. What a sumptuous meal it was - all the food was grown in the parish property including the poor python! Nobody in the surrounding communities suffered from food insecurity. When retiring for the evening, I prayed that Father Pastor does not pass on his predatory “white meat” habit to his merciful companions and devout followers. My own awareness lesson was that, with such regular feasting, Nirvana will surely remain miles apart! My environmental knowledge hadn’t matured by then, yet a silent thought flashed through as to who will halt the ecological imbalance that Father began by ignorantly ridding the forest of snakes and snails to his culinary delight!

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## New Members

A hearty welcome to our Members who have recently joined the FFOA:

Anderson-Pompei, Ms Anne-Marie  
 Ali, Mr Abu Md Basharat  
 Bah, Mr Abdoulaye  
 Braca, Ms Maria  
 Beltramme, Mr Mauro  
 Brilli, Mr Andrea

Cardebat, Ms Veronique  
 Cassisi, Ms Francesca Rita  
 Cureño Mendez, Ms Juana  
 Da Dalt, Ms Nadia  
 Datu, Ms Maria Irene  
 Delaney, Ms Bernadette  
 De Simone, Ms Maddalena  
 Deve, Mr Frederic  
 El-Hage, Ms Nadia  
 Franco, Mr Vincenzo Nicola  
 Gudmundsson, Mr Ari  
 Guerrieri, Ms Fernanda  
 Hatalak, Ms Oksanna  
 Hoad, Mr Richard  
 Houston, Mr Thomas Findlay  
 Klompenhouwer, Mr Yves  
 Kruzic, Ms Lucia  
 Lavizzari, Mr Luciano  
 Leopardi, Mr Pompeo  
 Limongelli, Mr Giuseppe  
 Marangoni, Mr Ettore  
 Marra, Mr Vincenzo  
 Merino Ortiz, Mr Jesús Manuel  
 Mezzabotta, Mr Giampaolo  
 Montavan, Mr Matthew  
 Morando, Ms Gabriella  
 Mosco, Ms Simona  
 Moussaid, Ms Fatiha  
 Murzi, Mr Ezio Gianni  
 Nunzi, Mr Romualdo  
 Palmieri-Cipriani, Ms Eugenia  
 Saurini, Mr Sandro  
 Schinchi, Mr Pietro  
 Scheerlinck, Ms Eliane  
 Small, Ms Alison  
 Spadaro, Ms Corinne  
 Stoppani, Mr Giancarlo  
 Strebelle, Mr Jacques  
 Timpanaro, Mr Francesco  
 Torre, Ms Rossana  
 Valenti, Mr Carlo  
 Vani, Ms Fernanda  
 Winter, Ms Christiana

**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!**



## **Establishment of a Membership Defence Fund (MDF-FFOA)**

### **1. Purpose**

The FFOA Executive Committee has decided to create a fund to be established through voluntary contributions from its membership. As UN agencies endeavour to reduce costs, the possibilities of their infringing on the acquired rights of staff and former staff members is a real possibility. Retired staff could especially be targeted in cost cutting exercises. Potential issues that might affect members in the future could be the adequacy of Social Security provisions (health, life insurance) by their former employing Agencies.

In order for FFOA to be in a position to obtain professional legal advice on matters materially affecting its membership, the FFOA seeks to establish a Membership Defence Fund (MDF) to provide the necessary resources to access specialist professional services when required. The Funds would be used:

- To obtain legal opinions and advice on specific issues and
- To advise on appropriate courses of action such as legal appeals through various bodies e.g. ILO Administrative Tribunal (ILOAT) and possibly the FAO Appeals Committee.

The FFOA would also consider joining cases with FICSA or the FAO/WFP/IFAD staff bodies which seek to challenge adverse developments/administrative decisions that affect or might affect FFOA members.

The MDF would not be used to finance individual, personal cases per se but only those cases/issues that have a direct bearing on the FFOA membership as a whole (Class actions).

### **2. Funding**

It is proposed that funding of the MDF would be on a voluntary basis with variable contributions (suggested to be from Euro/USD 50 -200) depending on what members are able to contribute. The Funds would be accounted for separately within the FFOA accounts.

### **3. Fund utilization**

The FFOA Executive Committee would agree by majority vote on what cases/issues would receive funding under the MDF and agree on the amounts to be provided and for what purpose, taking account of the funds available.

### **4. Payment possibilities – Indicate Purpose (MDF – FFOA)**

- Bank transfer to the account of the FFOA with the Banca Intesa at FAO HQ No. 732637/01/37 (Euro): CAB: 03356, ABI: 03069, BIC: BCITITMM700 IBAN: IT50T0306903356007326370137.
- Transfer from UNFCU account to the FFOA UNFCU USD account No. 10-17710700001.
- In cash or by cheque in the name of “FFOA” at the FFOA office.

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## 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, ICCROM, 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](http://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!

Adding your voice helps make the Association stronger and more impactful. Annual FFOA membership is 25 Euro, and a life membership is 375 Euro. There is a one-time registration fee of 10 Euro. Follow the link to download a membership application: [www.ffoa-web.org/eligibility-for-membership](http://www.ffoa-web.org/eligibility-for-membership), write to [ffoa.fao.org](mailto:ffoa.fao.org), or phone the FFOA offices at (+39) 06-5705 5623/5705 6016.