



FFOA

Fifty years of history

1971-2020

Date: March 2020

1971-2020 FFOA FIFTY YEARS OF HISTORY

The United Nations and the majority of its Specialized Agencies were established after World War II. By early 60s many organizations had grown significantly in number, with staff ready to take on careers within the UN System. Conditions of employment, including after-service benefits, were modelled on those of the “best paying” national civil services in the UN, i.e. United Kingdom and the United States, so as to attract and retain staff from all sources.

Recognizing the need to remain linked to the UN and to protect common interests of the increasing number of their retirees, a number of associations were established starting in the '70s. FFOA (The Former FAO and Other UN Staff Associations) was therefore created in 1971 after having received the blessing of the then Director General, Addekke Hendrik Boerma. The first member was enrolled in May 1971 (member card number 001 was assigned to Mrs Lyvia Bonan).

At the time of its creation, the only retirees in Rome came from FAO and WFP; subsequently retirees from IFAD and from other UN Organizations who had settled in Rome joined the Association. From the '70s FFOA was hosted by FAO (initially in the office of the Staff Council) which provided office accommodation and meeting facilities. Later on FFOA was officially incorporated in FAO through the Recognition Agreement signed by the then Director General, Edouard Saouma on 30 December 1994. Subsequently, Recognition Agreements were also signed on 15 May 2003 by Lennart Båge, President of IFAD and on 31 May 2004 by James Morris, Executive Director, WFP.

In Article 1 of the Statutes, approved in 1971, the aims and functions of the FFOA were:

To promote and support the purposes and activities of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system

To improve the retirement and other benefits of its members and to study, propose and take measures to protect their interests with all the means at its disposal

To foster friendly relations between its members and keep them informed of matters of interest to them

To promote the interests of its members vis-à-vis the FAO Staff Pension Committee, the Joint Advisory Committee on Medical Coverage (JAC/MC), the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) and other international bodies, including the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board (UNJSPF)

To maintain close contacts with the Rome-based Agencies (RBA) staff associations and seek their collaboration in matters of concern to retired staff members





Among those who worked hard to set up the Association and whom should be honored are Emmanuel Abensour (1971-75) and John Stordy (1976-80), respectively the first and second Presidents of FFOA. The same should be paid to subsequent presidents: Pasquale Montanaro (1981-84), Carlo Maria Buonaccorsi (1985-96), André Lucien Molle (1997-2000), Anton Doeve (2001-12), Alan Prien (2013-18) and Edward Seidler (2019-todate). Valuable support has always been provided by all the other Members of the Executive Committee and by the FFOA office front desk Assistants.

FFOA started with 140 members, mostly resident in Italy. After 15 years the Association had grown to approximately 1,000 members located in 71 countries. By year 2000 membership had more than doubled, and 20 years later FFOA is 2,300 members strong, representing 100 nationalities resident in 80 countries.

The present FFOA structure includes the General Assembly which is the apex of the Association, the Executive Committee with the President, two Vice Presidents, the General Secretary, the Treasurer and six other elected Members as well as the External Reviewers and the FFOA office front desk Assistants.

During its first 50 years of activity, FFOA contributed to the following key events:

- The creation in 1971 of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) with Headquarters in Geneva
- The establishment of sound policies for managing the UNJSPF and enhancing its operations
- The approval of methodologies for setting and adjusting conditions of employment of UN staff at all levels, with particular reference to pensionable remuneration and pension benefits
- The implementation of appropriate measures to eliminate the sizeable actuarial imbalance that had been accrued in the Pension Fund
- The establishment of a revised pension adjustment system based on single (US dollar) or double (US dollar and local currency) tracks
- The change from a free to a fee-paying after service medical coverage in FAO, WFP, IFAD and ICCROM, based on fair cost-sharing principles and procedures agreed to by the parties concerned, and
- The agreement with FAO, IFAD and WFP that building passes be issued to pensioners and recognized by the three Agencies.

In addition, throughout its life FFOA has provided information and carried out social activities for its Members as follows:

FFOA CONTRIBUTION ON PENSION ISSUES

- In 1971, the FFOA President, Emmanuel Abensour, was the first person designated to represent the UN pensioners at a meeting of the UNJSPF, where he fought to obtain the payment of arrears to compensate for the loss that had been suffered due to the US dollar devaluation
- In 1971, FFOA worked to get approval of two seats without voting rights, plus two alternates, to Pensioners' representatives from FAFICS on the Pension Board
- FFOA continued to use its voice to get other benefits for pensioners, such as securing that economy measures recommended by the Pension Board be shared with pensioners
- In 1999, changes to the regulations were successfully made to allow pension entitlements for divorced spouses. The long-sought possibility of obtaining a survivors' benefit for spouses married after retirement (by voluntary payment) was also achieved
- Campaigning continued for full representation of pensioners on the Pension Board, better management of the investment fund, elimination of the 1.5% special reduction, cost of living adjustment each year, reform of the appeal system and greater participation of pensioners in the operation of the UNJSPF Emergency Fund
- FFOA became a member of the FAO/WFP Staff Pensions Committee to represent and support retiree interests.



Alan Blythe and Aliamane Bacar-Said from UNJSPF with Kamila Guseynova, ex-FAO and now WFP Social Security



Alan Prien, Anton Doeve and Aurelio Marcucci at the 2012 GA held at FAO HQs



FFOA members attending 2015 GA held at the WFP Auditorium



The FFOA Executive Committee group at the 2013 GA held at WFP HQs



Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director WFP addressing the 2013 GA held at WFP Auditorium



The Podium of the 2015 GA held at FAO HQs



Catherine Bertini, emeritus Executive Director WFP addressing the 2016 GA held at WFP



The Podium of the 2017 GA held at IFAD HQs



The FFOA Executive Committee and Basharat Ali, Director HR a.i. with Qu Dongyu, FAO DG elected in 2019

FFOA CONTRIBUTION TO MEDICAL INSURANCE

- Medical insurance has been high among FFOA's interests since the beginning. To this end FFOA supported the establishment of a Joint Advisory Committee on Medical Coverage (JAC/MC) for the Rome-based Agencies to review issues dealing with medical coverage. As of 2020 when FAO, WFP and IFAD signed individual medical insurance contracts, FFOA will also be a member of the WFP and IFAD Medical Insurance Committees to safeguard retiree benefits for its members in these Agencies
- Medical coverage for retirees developed gradually. First they could join the plan for active staff but with an unsubsidized premium. Then coverage became available through an Italian medical plan called ENPDEP. Later on, after service coverage was incorporated free of charge into the Rome-based Agencies BMIP/ MMBP plans
- As years passed the number of pensioners grew and their free coverage became unsustainable for the Agencies. To maintain benefits, FAO/WFP/IFAD asked pensioners for a financial contribution. After extensive consultations and after a transition period, FFOA agreed to the arrangements for fee-paying after-service coverage at the same level as serving staff, but with the application of caps to protect those with low pensions
- An appeal against the elimination of free after service medical coverage for retirees submitted by a number of pensioners to the FAO Director General and to the ILO Administrative Tribunal was rejected by the latter tribunal
- Improvements to the medical plans and methods to support cost containment (as proposed by FAO/FFOA) were successfully introduced, and improved client management (by the service provider) was promoted
- FFOA's proposal to FAO in 2019 to realign the premium methodology and benefits was positively endorsed, ensuring FAO to be in line with the UN common system, and notably with IFAD and WFP
- The question of long-term care to impaired pensioners remains an important issue on FFOA's agenda and its financial impact on premium levels is regularly monitored.

FFOA CONTRIBUTION TO SPECIAL EVENTS

- On the occasion of FAO's 40th anniversary celebration in 1985, FFOA organized a special Party on the FAO terrace which brought together a large number of pensioners, staff and others
- For the 50th anniversary of FAO and of the UN in 1995 FFOA hosted a photographic exhibition of FAO's history that was held in association with the World Food Day
- For the 1996 World Food Summit, FFOA helped to publicize the event and selected pensioners volunteered to work on Summit events
- FFOA also participated in preparations for the UN Conference on Aging in 2002
- In 2015, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of FAO, FFOA prepared a booklet entitled "Commemorating 60 Years of the work of the Staff of FAO" and thanks to the support of IFAD 3,000 copies were printed. Beginning with the creation of the "International Institute of Agriculture", FAO's predecessor, until 2015, this booklet recounts stories by selected men and women who believed in its ideals

- FFOA supports the FAO Information Division's Visitors Programme by briefing students from schools and universities visiting Headquarters
- Since its inception FFOA speaks several times a year at the Retirement Seminar where in 2016 it launched the "Pre-retirement Service Programme", a special initiative to attract potential new members, at no cost for one year before retirement.

FFOA AND MEMBERSHIP COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

- FFOA thanks the Rome-based Agencies for providing free of charge the following support: computers, printers and basic software from FAO, the printing of Newsbrief and General Assembly documents from WFP and mailing services from IFAD, once a year on the occasion of the General Assembly
- WFP and IFAD also hosted and presided at FFOA General Assemblies on a rotational basis with FAO. FFOA represents a successful example of the three Rome-based Agencies "working together". Presidents and Vice Presidents have come from each of the Rome-based Agencies
- WFP and IFAD retirees share together with their FAO colleagues various meaningful functions in FFOA, such as Account Reviewers and Chair of Advisory Committees on Membership, Communication, Governance, Pension, Health Insurance, Cultural and Social Activities. In addition, with the recent separation of health insurance contracts, each of the three Rome-based Agencies rely on FFOA as a single coordinating interface with their retirees



A recent FFOA Year End Party held in the FAO Indonesia Room

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- With the support of the FAO IT Division, FFOA developed over the last 20 years computer applications as well as the website, which have allowed for improved management of the Association. More improvements are envisaged as the use of social media grows
 - The FFOA website, created in 2003 and upgraded in 2010, includes information on Pensions and Medical Plans, all the Newsbriefs issued since 2003 both in English and Italian, as well as General Assembly documentation
 - The first FFOA Newsbrief was produced in February 1986 and subsequently issued 3-4 times a year, thus becoming the main repository of the institutional memory of the association. In 2014, a much improved restyling of the Newsbrief editorial version was introduced. The Newsbriefs and Newsflashes to members are of primary importance in keeping FFOA members informed of changes and developments that materially affect them
 - The gradual but progressive increase in the use of e-mail has facilitated greatly the Association's communication; for example, the use of News Flashes allows members to receive up-dated and urgent information. Email has also been used in support of special events, such as the elections of the Executive Committee. In fact, the introduction of the e-voting system in 2012 almost doubled the number of voters and by 2018 the number of manual ballots was only 5% of the total voters
 - The FFOA office plays a major role in providing assistance and advice on many personal matters, ranging from requests for a "Permesso di soggiorno" to access to retirement homes and support to surviving spouses. The introduction of the Duty Officer scheme in 2013 has also extended that support and assistance to visiting members
 - FFOA organizes leisure activities in cooperation with external providers such as guided visits to exhibitions, excursions and tours to sites of interest and organized trips. A lunch is always held in connection with the General Assembly, and a Year-end Party is held annually in December. Coffee Mornings are held every first Wednesday of the month in the FAO Cafeteria (Aventino Room), where issues of common interest or updates on ongoing matters are discussed.



Fifty years is a huge accomplishment! The IFAD Staff Association expresses its congratulations to FFOA and its members; your dedication and perseverance is an inspiration to many of us! We look forward to our continued partnership that has proven to be mutually beneficial and has been bringing tangible results to our members.

The WFP Professional Staff Association (PSA) is pleased of its constructive collaboration with FFOA ... we were able to inform and keep informed fellow retired staff on developments concerning pension rights. Indeed, collaboration among the Staff Associations of the three Rome-based Agencies is at its best. We wish you all a happy 50th Anniversary and many years of active involvement in the protection of our rights.

AP-in-FAO joins FFOA in celebrating its Fiftieth Birthday with huge appreciation for all work done and success achieved - BRAVI e BRAVE ! Looking forward to continued collaboration! Keep up the good work !

UGSS of FAO wishes our dear colleagues, the best for the years to come, hopeful to always stand united on those issues that concern us all, now and in the future. Congratulations on FFOA's 50 years of dedication and commitment to improving the rights of retired staff, as well as providing a platform for continued engagement and knowledge sharing amongst us.

This document has been assembled by members of FFOA, on the occasion of its 50th anniversary, to pay tribute to the enthusiasm, effort and dedication that our past and current colleagues have invested over such a long period in assisting and preserving the interests of our membership in various stages of their retirement life.

Its main purpose has been to provide an inventory of the main developments that took place during these fifty years, by contributing to the maintenance of the institutional memory of the Association that would otherwise be lost as time goes by. The hope for the future is to build on the above to ensure even better and improved services over the years to come.

Location of FFOA Office

FAO Headquarters, Room E-005

Office hours:

Monday to Friday from 09:30 to 13:00 hours

Duty Officers:

Monday to Friday 10:00 to 12:00 hours

(assistance to members with information and emergencies)

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Membership is open to all former United Nations staff, who are entitled to receive a pension from the UNJSPF or have worked at least five years within the UN System.