

# Former FAO and Other UN Staff Association

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



**Newsbrief 113**  
**March 2021**

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

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We are living in frustrating and anxious times as all of us have to confront the continuing Covid-19 pandemic which has markedly impacted on what, where and how we do things. We are all hopeful that with the development of a number of safe and effective vaccines and their efficient rollout and implementation that we will be able to return to a 'new normal' and have the chance to mix and socialise with family and friends and be able to start travelling again.

Vaccination progress will depend on the supply of adequate amounts of vaccines, which is a concern in a number of countries and most countries are implementing vaccinations according to strict age and occupational criteria, starting with medical personnel and the over 80s. Retirees are by definition within a higher priority group because of their age. In Italy there is a concern that those retirees that are not enrolled in the national health system will have difficulty in being enrolled in the national vaccination programme and FFOA has taken up this issue with the three Rome-based Agencies to ensure that a procedure is in place that will ensure that they can get vaccinated. As I write, a voluntary registration of retirees' exercise is being put in place by the RBAs as a forward planning exercise and FFOA has been requested to participate in this exercise; FAO is designated by the Secretary-General of the UN as the Agency in Italy for Security for all UN bodies in the country. The Secretary-General has indicated that all UN personnel, including UN retirees in all countries, should be included in national Covid-19 vaccination programmes.

As you will read elsewhere in the Newsbrief, the Executive Committee and Secretariat have been regularly meeting (virtually) and the FFOA has been able to function effectively, albeit with some problems. Members are being kept informed by News Flashes and Information Notes on issues that concern them and the office has been able to address problems and issues raised by members.

Members are reminded that those with Annual membership are required to pay their annual subscription as soon possible by bank transfer.

Members are also reminded that they are advised to keep FFOA informed of any changes in their email addresses (own or someone who could convey messages to them) so that they can be promptly informed of developments and news concerning retirees.

We hope that we will see gradual improvements in the situation and that we can all meet again in person later this year.

In the meantime, I wish you and your families good health and a pleasant and peaceful spring and summer.

**Edward Seidler**  
President

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## Medical Insurance

E. Seidler

We are now in the second year with Cigna as the medical insurer and claims processor for FAO, IFAD and WFP. Each Agency has its own separate contract with Cigna. The Social Security units in the three Agencies are handling issues raised by their Agency members in terms of service and coverage and FFOA is taking up problems either with the Agency concerned or directly with Cigna. Things seem to be improving as Cigna gains more experience in handling and processing claims and as Cigna improves its communications with members and becomes less bureaucratic and demanding of supplementary information. Insurance premiums for the 3 Agencies in 2021 will be the same as those in 2020.

FFOA will continue to monitor performance and issues related to the medical insurance plans; however internal meetings to review Cigna performance issues are impacted by the fact that the Agencies are all mainly working virtually and advisory committees in WFP and IFAD still have to be formalised. The inter-Agency Joint Advisory Committee on Medical Coverage (JAC/MC) organised by FAO has however been able to meet, although not regularly.

An issue that has to be noted by members is that some 'medications' prescribed by doctors

are in fact 'food supplements' and not strictly medications and their acceptance by the insurer is often problematic. In order to contain medical costs, the 3 Agencies and Cigna are now much stricter in approving treatments which are not strictly medically necessary and also question 'medications' which are not clinically proven with pharmaceutical properties.

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## Pension Matters

A. Prien

The UN Pension Board held a virtual session from 2 to 5 February 2021. The main issue under discussion was the size of the Board.

Some parties believe the number of representatives/participants should be reduced. Others feel that what has worked for 70 years should be left well enough alone.

No final decisions have been taken, and the Staff Pension Committees of each Organization have been asked to contribute their views. The issue will be discussed again at the next regular session of the Board in July.

In the meantime, the assets continue to grow and the Fund is in very good financial shape.

With the recent volatility in foreign currencies and especially the \$US which has depreciated against major currencies, retirees will see changes in their local currency pension payments. The Pension Fund has taken up the issue of bank charges levied on pensions paid to Eurozone retirees following Brexit and has changed its banking arrangements moving from a UK bank to a European Bank so these charges can be avoided.

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## News from UN Organizations

### FAO

E. Seidler

FFOA was requested by FAO in March 2021 to assist it in identifying UN retirees in Italy who were unable to join the National Health System (SSN) and had problems in accessing

the vaccination booking system. FFOA has emailed its members inviting them to register their interest in being included in the list to be discussed by FAO with the Italian Government to get these retirees access to vaccinations. Registration is by email to [FFAO-COVID@fao.org](mailto:FFAO-COVID@fao.org).

FAO Headquarters continues with a limited number of staff allowed into the buildings, presently a maximum of 300 on any one day. Retirees are not allowed into FAO and this situation is likely to continue to at least September.

## **IFAD**

A. Prien

On the 3rd of March IFAD sent a message to all ex-IFAD retirees (in Italy) with email addresses, asking if they wished to participate in a retiree headcount to see how many want to participate in a COVID-19 vaccination program. The deadline for submissions was 10 March.

Any member who has not received the message should contact:

[hqcovidvaxheadcount@ifad.org](mailto:hqcovidvaxheadcount@ifad.org)  
if they should be interested.

## **WFP**

G. Shaver

Regrettably a horrific attack on a WFP convoy visiting a school in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo resulted in the death of a WFP driver, the Italian Ambassador to the DRC and his security escort. The four other WFP employees who were involved in the incident are safe and accounted for, recovering in Goma. Three reviews are underway (UN Department of Safety and Security, the Italian and DRC authorities) to examine the facts surrounding the incident. The UN Secretary-General condemned the tragic attack and called on the DRC to investigate swiftly and bring the perpetrators to justice.

WFP senior management continues to exchange, on a regular basis, information with the Staff Associations, including FFOA, on the impact

of COVID-19 on the organisation's employees and programme of work. As part of duty of care, FFOA welcomed WFP's decision to include retirees in the COVID-19 testing organized at HQ in late 2020. Dialogue continues on vaccination accessibility both in Italy and globally.

A Lessons Learned review on WFP's COVID-19 L3 emergency response is underway, and a report will be issued to the Executive Board in June 2021. During this response WFP considerably expanded its service provision to both host governments and the UN system, in addition to adapting its programme of work to ensure it could sustain and scale-up food and cash delivery under restricted and diverse circumstances.

## **FAFICS**

M. Breschi

The first FAFICS virtual Council was held during three days in early December last year. The Rules of the Federation do not contemplate holding virtual sessions, nor election of officers from remote. No guidance was available to the President and the Bureau on the modalities for holding such events, nor was technical support available.

Considerable debate took place in the second part of 2020 as to the option of deferring elections to a time when in person events could be organized. Members of the Federation were consulted on the way forward. As the majority felt that elections could not be delayed, the decision was taken to hold a virtual Council; FAFICS will introduce new rules on its future virtual sessions.

The December event was a success and Council was able to deliberate on a number of important recurring matters such as financial performance for the year 2020 as well as the budget for 2021. It also elected four new officers of the Bureau, while the President, the Secretary and the Treasurer were re-elected and confirmed in office.

In February of this year the FAFICS delegation was involved in the work of a Special

Session of the UN Pension Board addressing key governance issues. Some progress was made on a number of issues, but the main topics concerning the size and composition of the Board need further consideration by the Governance Working Group and the Board itself in the July Session. It is anticipated that some reduction in the number of seats will be proposed to the UN General Assembly, while the level of representation for the UN vis-a-vis the Specialized Agencies should remain largely unchanged. FAFICS will continue its involvement in this important debate, participating on an ongoing basis in the work of the various working groups and meetings on this subject, whilst defending the interest of all UN retirees.

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## **News from the Executive Committee**

G. Shaver

Normally 2021 would be an election year for the 2022-2024 Executive Committee. However, because of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the elections will most likely be postponed and members will be informed soon when elections will take place.

The continuing COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions requires the Executive Committee to also hold the FFOA 51<sup>st</sup> General Assembly virtually on Wednesday 27 October 2021 in the afternoon. If the situation changes and we are allowed to revert to a physical meeting, it will be held at FAO. More information on the type of meeting (virtual or in person), as well as the agenda, time and relevant documents will be provided at a later date.

The Executive Committee has been in regular contact with the administrations of the Rome-based Agencies with respect to COVID-19 testing access and vaccinations. Information on how to get tested (rapid and molecular) at each of the three agencies has been provided through electronic updates. Vaccination discussions are on-going; in the meantime, eligible members have been given details on how

to sign-up for a vaccination through the National Health Service website. WFP and IFAD have also organized a registration process for their respective retirees by direct email contact.

Access to the three agencies is still restricted; FFOA has not been back to the office since March 2020. But this has not stopped us from continuing to hold our monthly EC meetings virtually, participating virtually in the FAO organized retirement seminar and launching our annual membership renewal drive. We are, however, restricted in up-dating our data bases and carrying-out other functions that require our presence. And of course, we truly miss seeing our membership, face-to-face. It is so hard to imagine one year has already passed!

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## **News from the FFOA Advisory Committees**

### **Membership Advisory Committee (MAC)**

M. de Gaay Fortman, convenor, A. Bertini, R. Fenix, G. Monciotti, G. Pace, G. Shaver, A. Wolf

The number of queries addressed to the Association has increased considerably in view of the fact that we are not able to meet, our offices are closed and the duty officer is not physically on duty. Naturally there are a large number of queries related to COVID-19, in particular regarding how to be vaccinated for those members without a 'Tessera Sanitaria'; many of us do not have this card, as we are covered by After Service Health Insurance (ASHI) from Cigna. It is not possible to deal with most of these questions on an individual basis as there is uncertainty regarding many aspects of the vaccination campaign in Italy, particularly for people who are not registered under the National Health System. Whenever there is a new development an Information Note, which serves as a message to our members, is issued. Unfortunately, we are not able to reach by post those members who are not connected with us through email. Regular mail originating

in Italy often takes an entire month to reach the destination, as we have experienced lately. It is therefore not worth the cost and work involved, as in this uncertain period arrangements made for the vaccination change rapidly. If you have questions about the arrangements you can call our office 06-57056016, where Gabriella Sborchia is available every day from 09.30 -1300 hrs or call members of the Executive Committee.

Besides the COVID-19 related questions, we receive a considerable number of queries from participants to the Pre-Retirement Service Programme (PRSP). You may know that we organized this programme some time ago for UN staff members, who could join 18 months prior to their retirement; the PRSP gives access to all the services of FFOA, such as consultation on pension related matters with members of the Executive Committee, access to our website and a free subscription to our Newsbrief. After the last Retirement Seminar, a considerable number of the participants joined the PRSP and call us frequently to get guidance on the selection of residence country, lump sum, dual track and the other issues that one has to decide on upon retirement. More than half of the participants join FFOA eventually.

The number of retirees who joined us last year is less than that in normal years (65 versus 110). Fortunately, the situation this year is a little bit better as 25 members have already joined us, which is about the normal average. We will definitely need the cooperation of all members to

promote our Association and to urge friends and colleagues to join FFOA in order to have enough strength to continue to defend the interest of all pensioners.

## New Members

The Secretariat

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

Ms Jolanda ALBERICO  
 Ms Patrizia BEVILACQUA-COCOZZA  
 Ms Margarita BRATTLOF  
 Ms Veronica BROOKE  
 Ms Annabella CAPITELLI  
 Ms Tiziana CASSOTTA  
 Mr Stephen COFIELD  
 Mr Luigi CRISCUOLO  
 Mr Giuliano DEGRASSI  
 Ms Giulia DEVESCOVI  
 Ms Jacqueline DUHART  
 Mr Diego ECHAUZ BRIGALDI  
 Mr Ahmed EL IDRISI  
 Mr Gunther FEILER  
 Ms Gloria FELLI  
 Ms Angela FERREA  
 Mr Dominique J. FRANKEFORT  
 Ms Margaret HASTIE  
 Ms Linda J. HILMI  
 Mr Stephen KATZ  
 Ms Renée C. M. KEULERS  
 Ms Helen KRUZIC  
 Ms Brigitta LEUTHOLD PERISSE  
 Mr Sandro LUZZIETTI  
 Ms Gaby MCPHERSON  
 Ms Ellen MUEHLHOFF  
 Ms Danièle NAPOLITANO  
 Ms Suzanne NAYROLLES  
 Mr Franco PAGANI  
 Ms Anna Maria ROSSI FILINESI  
 Mr Harjit SANDHU  
 Mr Alessandro SCALETTI  
 Mr Kostas STAMOULIS  
 Mr Raniero TREVISAN  
 Ms Chiara VENTURA  
 Ms Nancy WALTERS

### Renew Your Annual Membership

Renew your Annual Membership by paying €25 in the following ways:

- By bank transfer to the account of FFOA with Banca Intesa San Paolo at the FAO headquarters, IBAN: IT50 T030 6903 3560 0732 637 0137 (BIC: BCITITMM700)
- By bank transfer from your UNFCU account to the UNFCU account of FFOA N0. 10-17710700001  
Routing Number 226078609



All retirees ought to join the Association to support its work representing pensioners, and for their own interest, and should encourage their ex-colleagues to join!

Mr Michel M.J. VINCKE	08/05/2019
Ms Doris VON WERNER	19/11/2020
Mr Omar WAHBY	28/02/2020
Mr Kenneth C. WRIGHT	29/08/2020

## In Memoriam

The Secretariat

On behalf of all the members of the FFOA, we express heartfelt sympathy to the families and friends of all those members who have left us.

Mr Ibrahim ABU SHARR	27/03/2020
Mr Paul J. AURIOL	11/06/2020
Mr Arie Jan BRONSEMA	13/01/2021
Ms Janet BURGESS	11/03/2021
Mr J.P. BUTTERWORTH	21/11/2019
Mr Francesco DI PANCRAZIO	14/12/2020
Mr. Michael DOEFF	01/12/2020
Ms Margaret HIRST-VANNI	09/02/2021
Mr Tseng Jao HUNG	24/05/2019
Mr Siman Y. KASBARI	27/02/2020
Dr Eric KRYSTALL	29/01/2020
Mr Paul LUNVEN	12/01/2019
Dr Antonie MULDER	22/12/2020
Ms Nora ORTIZ	16/08/2020
Ms Randi OSTBY LUBERTI	26/09/2019
Mr Theodore M. PASCA	25/11/2018
Mr Julien PERISSÉ	14/12/2020
Mr François PIRAUD	08/12/2019
Mr Georges POPOV	22/06/2019
Ms Barbara M. PURVIS	17/07/2019
Ms Diana REYNOL FALCONIERI	29/12/2018
Mr Domenico ROCCHETTI	14/02/2020
Ms Anna Maria RODARO	29/01/2020
Ms Franca RONCHI-MEDOSI	22/05/2019
Mr Emanuel SAROUCOS	24/08/2018
Mr Gerald G.M. SCHULTEN	03/08/2018
Ms Maria SERRAGLI AZZOLINI	19/04/2019
Ms Moyra SNELSON	12/11/2018
Ms Deisa SODNIK-BURANELLO	15/10/2018
Ms Rehana TANWIR	18/08/2019
Ms Glory TORACCHI	10/05/2019
Ms Clelia VALENTINI-MAZELL	24/12/2019
Ms Carla VIANI PASTACCI	06/07/2020
Mr Onno VAN TEUTEM	12/02/2019

## OBITUARY - Arie Jan Bronsema

1921-2021

Arie Jan Bronsema, Aat for his friends was the first UN Relief Officer when he joined the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in 1945. Aat was born in Den Haag on November 12, 1921 into a family with 6 children. After middle school he started to work at the age of 15 as he had to contribute to the family income since all resources would go to the education of his elder brother, who was to become a teacher. In the evening he went to a Community College, where he further broadened his knowledge of Accounting, Commerce, English, French and German.

After the Second World War when he saved himself from deportation by the Germans by hiding in a secret space behind his office at Slavenburgs Bank, he worked for the UNRRA, first in London, then in Oslo and Paris. After marrying his wife Maaïke in 1949 they moved to Geneva, first to the International Refugee Organisation and later the UN, where he undertook various missions, i.a. to Gaza, Congo and eventually to New Guinea where his knowledge of Dutch was a big plus among Indonesians and UN representatives. The family arrived in Rome in 1963, where Aat worked as Director of Finance until he took up early retirement in 1979 after having worked for 43 years. The end of a splendid career, as he was known for his solid knowledge of finance and his language skills, apart from his pleasant personality. With Maaïke they moved to Sierre in Switzerland, where they enjoyed the attractions of Switzerland for 36 more years. In 2015 they came to live in a retirement home in Rocca di Papa, near their daughter Maria. Maaïke passed away in 2018. Aat stayed behind still in very

good health, to the extent that at the age of 98 he delivered an address about his life at the United Nations to the Netherlands Community in Rome. Aat passed away on 13 January, after a few rough weeks during this period of COVID-19. Like for all of us, his life was a journey, as stated by Pastor Jonas at his farewell service at the Lutheran Church in Rome on 25 January. "Aat has travelled far and wide to many countries, met people of many nationalities and everywhere he brought his skills, his languages, his culture, his affability, his sympathy - and his faith".  
Marius de Gaay Fortman

## Social Support and Recreational Activities

J. Smidt, M. de Gaay Fortman, B. Pisani,  
M. Saleheen, S. Salvi, A. Van Arkadie

We hope to shortly be able to announce some outings for our members. The agencies with whom we collaborate now seem to be able to resume their usual work and we will soon will be able to announce more trips and outings.

The outing on 7 March organized by "Noi Girandolando" to visit the Ghetto Ebraico and tour in Battello sul Tevere was attended by some of our members.

As mentioned earlier in Newsbrief 111, we have continued to assist those members needing help with various medical and domestic problems during the past few months.

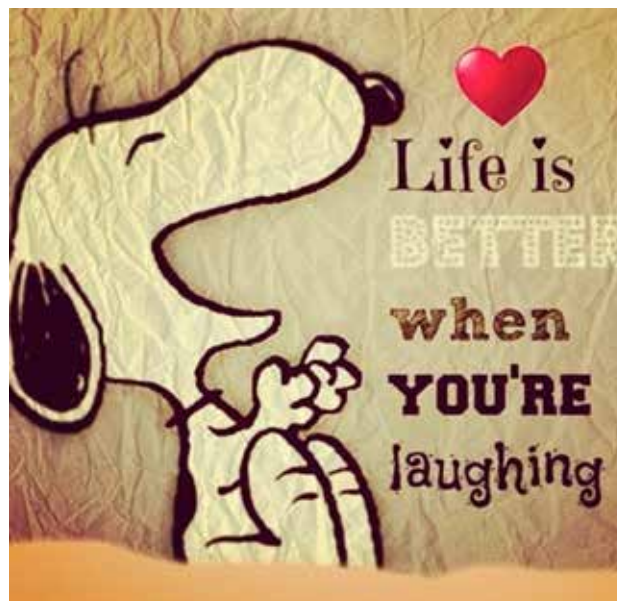
## Your Good Health

S. Salvi

This is to inform you that there will soon be the possibility to download a new updated version, in English and in Italian, of the FFOA publication "Before and After" from the site: [www.ffoa-web.org](http://www.ffoa-web.org).

As you know due to the impossibility of entering the FAO premises, it is not possible to obtain a printed version of the above document.

## News from the Membership



## Laughter Is the Best Medicine (Collected)

M. Saleheen

Teacher: What is the opposite of Valentine?

Student: Quarantine.

Teacher: How?

Student: Because in Valentine, two people sit very close to each other and in Quarantine very far from each other.

## Exchange of WhatsApp messages:

Husband: You are negative

Wife: and you are stubborn, arrogant, a low life, care about no one but yourself and your friends, all you are interested in is your own self, all your life not fulfilled even one of your promises. It is only I who is putting up with such a miser and insensitive man. You good for nothing, fat, ugly man. Even your hair transplant failed.

Husband: I was just informing you that your Covid test is negative.

Wife: oh.....sorry!

## Intelligent answers

Wife, 😞 "Tell me who is STUPID? You or Me?"

Husband (Calmly), "Everyone knows that, you are so intelligent, you will never marry a STUPID person."

Jim: What have you been doing over the weekend?

Roe: I discovered the Philosophy of marriage: I think at the beginning every wife treats her husband as \*GOD\*...

Later, somehow don't know why...alphabets get \*reversed\*...

### **Secret formula for married couples...**

"Love One Another"

And if it doesn't work, bring the last word in the middle.!!!

### **Some say the three common stages of life are:**

- i) In student life: there is time, there are friends but no...money!
- ii) In work life: there are friends, there is money but no time!
- iii) In retired life: have time and money but no friends

Past midnight the husband's mobile messaging tone rings. The husband is snoring!  
The wife quietly looks at it and angrily wakes up the husband and asks: "Who is the women sending you a message at this hour saying 'beautiful'!"

Husband says: where let me see. Oh, look at it properly, it says Battery Full! Always suspicious!



**Please share your personal experience or advice on retirement.** Everyone would love it. You may write in English or Italian, addressed to FFOA, attention: Newsbrief Coordinator, Gianna Paganelli.

## **Newsbrief 113**

**March 2021**

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