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

Our big event of 2013, the annual General Assembly (GA) was held in WFP Headquarters on Wednesday 29th May, and by all accounts was a roaring success. A total of 113 members turned out as well as a plethora of excellent guests and speakers. A large number of our members around the world were also able to watch with live streaming on the world wide web.

Ms Ertharin Cousin, the Executive Director of WFP addressed us in a very interesting speech, including providing details on the new WFP Alumni Network. She brought us up to date on the key work being done by WFP, particularly in recent crisis zones such as in and around Syria.

We also had in our midst the new Director of Human Resources of FAO, Monika Altmaier, and Kamilla Guseynova, who both spent the whole morning with us, including our lunch. As described hereunder, in the Pensions section, we continued after lunch with a very useful question and answer presentation by the Pension Fund representatives.

The Human Resource Management Adviser, Peter Frobel of IFAD, and George Aelion, President of the WFP Professional Staff Association, also addressed our assembly, the latter on behalf of all staff representative bodies.

A particular note of thanks is due to our Vice President Annemarie Waeschle and the team at WFP, as well as our Office Assistants for organising this year’s event so well.

Two sets of very good news indeed about the total assets of our pension fund: firstly, despite all the recent turmoil in the markets (which obviously affects the equities), the total value of the Fund reached an historic high on 21st May 2013 of US$48.3 billion. So our investment management advisors continue to do well for us. (The day after the GA, officers of FFOA had a chance to take part in a briefing/presentation by Susan Bishopric, the Chief Investment Advisor of the Fund.) Secondly, all beneficiaries living in Italy and on the Euro track should by now have received in their pension payment the 2.3% increase in the cost-of-living adjustment.

With regard to medical insurance, it was announced at our General Assembly that there would be

No Increases in the Premiums during 2013

This marks the third year in a row, with no premium increases.

The contract for insurance expiring soon, the contracts will be put out to tender, with the new effectiveness being foreseen sometime in 2014. Our representatives on the JAC/MC Working Group overseeing these matters will be Ed Seidler, assisted by Giorgio Eberle and Marco Breschi (observer).

So, with these worthy items, and good news, I wish you all a decent and healthy summer.

Alan Prien
President
Medical Insurance

(Responsible: E. Seidler, G. Eberle, I. Novelli, M. Purnell, A. Prien J. Smidt, S. Salvi)

The JAC/MC finally met on 28th May after a period without meetings since October 2012.

The representative of the Director-General of FAO informed the FFOA General Assembly that the BMIP/ MMBP premiums for 2013 will remain at the same level as for 2011 and 2012 (that is no change).

A recent note to the Conference on staff costs stated that: “as regards social security and, in particular, health insurance, this matter will be taken up by the Finance Committee in the context of its comprehensive review of proposals to improve FAO’s financial health, liquidity and reserves at its regular session in the last quarter of 2013. Work is now underway to review all aspects of the current scheme and the related contracts. In particular, the Secretariat is currently leading efforts to rationalize the contracts with external providers of medical and other insurance schemes. However, due to statutory requirements, the Director-General may only obtain results in this area with the collaboration of other Rome-based agencies and staff representative bodies. Accordingly, intense dialogue is being undertaken in this regard”.

Vanbreda International web site. A more user-friendly version of www.vanbreda-international.com was launched in March 2013 which includes lists of out-patient and in-patient doctors having agreed rates, a list of reasonable and customary tariffs for common surgeries and doctor visits, and a list of frequently requested medicines that are not normally covered.

Pensions


The UN Joint Staff Pension Fund

As in past years, our GA on 29th May debated extensively several important matters regarding UN Pensions. Major topics included the overall health of the Fund, the current and future trends in the level of the Fund's investments, the assessment by the Board of Actuaries on the actuarial position of the Fund, as well as projections on its future financial stability and sustainability, and, last but not least, the Assembly was informed of the continuous improvements in the administration of the Fund, and of its security measures as well as strong procedures for the safeguarding of its assets. The keynote on pensions was the presentation by Mr Alan Blythe, Chief of the UNJSPF Geneva Office and by the Chief Finance, Client Services and Records Management, Mr Aliamane Bacar Said. The presentation was a great success with questions and answers on several key issues, marking a welcome change in approach, more practical and close to the expectations of members. The focus was initially on the financial performance of the Fund in 2012, the substantive balance between contributions and benefits, and a very welcome upturn in the overall value of the investments. The second part of the presentation focused on various administrative processes illustrated by a very clear, concise and effective PowerPoint presentation; the pages are already available on the FFOA web site for consultation by members. The overall recommendation to all beneficiaries was to ensure that they constantly keep the Fund current on their respective family status to ensure speedy processing, when needed in the future.

The UN Joint Staff Pension Board

The Annual Meeting of the Pension Board will be held this year in New York, the second week of July and as usual the Board will have a very busy agenda. Significant items for discussion will include the review of the Report of the Board of Actuaries available by the end of June, the increase in the mandatory age of separation (MAS) for new staff appointed after 1st January 2014 and it is 65 years, and for current staff also 65 years if the Organization agrees to extend the individual, he or she so wishes; and several
other important matters, including possible changes to the early retirement provisions. The increase in retirement ages will improve the actuarial situation of the Fund.

**FAO/WFP Staff Pension Committee**

The FAO/WFP Staff Pension Committee (SPC) had not met for several months due to a number of vacant positions in the three component groups, the Member Nations, the Executive Officers, and the Staff Representatives. These nominations were recently finalized with the appointment of Ms Theresa Panuccio, Director Administrative Services, FAO, as Chairperson, and the two Vice Chairs Ms Gloria Denton, Staff Representative (WFP), and Ms Natalie Feistritzer, Member Nations Representative, Austrian Embassy, and the SPC has now resumed its meetings. The focus of the debate in June will be on matters in preparation for the Pension Board based on Board documents as they become available on the UNJSPB web site.

**The UNJSPF CEO's Annual Letter**

Ms Christine Höfer, Chief, Client Services and Records Management and Distribution, UNJSPF, informed us that the annual letter was sent out in March 2013 to those pensioners who have email addresses known to the Pension Fund. The usual paper copy will continue to be sent to those without an email address or whose email version was undeliverable (because of an out-of-date address). This should have happened by early May, or a little later for the French and Spanish versions. If you wish to get the annual letter, or any other communication, from the Pension Fund by email please provide your email address to pfwebmaster@un.org or unjspf@un.org.

**Update on the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund Investments**

At the end of May the preliminary total fund investment was $47.16 billion, distributed in percentages as: Equities 64.11, Bonds 24.87, Real estate 5.01, Cash and short term 2.34, and Alternative investments 1.13. An all-time high was recorded on May 21st of $48.371 billion, notably higher than the all-time high on 25th January of $45.953 billion. This information can be seen by anyone on the Internet by accessing the UNJSPF web site and opening the sections on investments.

**Social Activities**

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

**Social assistance**

As in the past, some personal assistance may be obtained by members in need by applying to the FFOA office (Tel. 06-570 55623/570 56016). If anyone knows of a member who needs help (in hospital, for translation, etc), please let the office know under strictly confidential conditions. Volunteers to provide assistance of various kinds occasionally would also be welcome.

**FFOA emergency fund.** It is with regret that we report that the emergency fund is without funds. We will continue to try to assist people in need to access the UNJSPF Emergency Fund, and would welcome any contributions or legacies to resuscitate the fund.

**Cultural and leisure activities**

In an effort to diversify the programme, the Sub-Committee on Social Activities has recently introduced a new component: the “Coffee Morning”. At relatively short notice, members with email were informed that the first such event would be organised for 8th May on the FAO terrace. The turnout was exceptionally good: as many as 12 of our members from WFP, IFAD and FAO came, some with the spouses, and the conversation was quite animated. In addition, seven members of the Executive Committee were present, answering questions. Given the success, another coffee morning took place on 12th June, 17 retirees, including spouses participated plus 8 members of the Executive Committee. All enjoyed this meeting with several old friends. Another coffee morning will be organized on 10th July and more after the summer break.

Another highlight during the reporting period was the day trip to Vesuvius and Herculaneum on 3rd May. More than a dozen UN retirees joined a busload of local senior citizens at 7 am with a guide. A forty minute walk took them to the lip of the crater (1277m), which provided a breathtaking view down to the sea, and also some souvenir scoriae rock fragments. After lunch, the group visited Herculaneum which was buried in 79 AD by pyroclastic flows with temperatures of 500º C degrees. This preserved many buildings and even furniture and food intact as well as casts of those killed instantly by the heat. Only a small part of the town has been excavated (the rest has modern buildings above it) but it provides a splendid example of the ancient way of life. The tour was well organized and a real pleasure to those who participated. Do sign up for the next visits!
Our traditional buffet-lunch at the Babette restaurant in the pretty Via Margutta in the center of Rome took place on 24th April. Sixteen FFOA members - of which half were former IFAD staff - enjoyed the good food (competitively priced), and – even better - company.

Two visits to the Presidential Estate at Castelporziano were undertaken and attracted, as usual, a good number of our members. The visit on 20th March included an extensive walk in the beautiful natural parks of the Estate while the visit of 19th April was exclusively devoted to the Archaeological Museum.

The Tiziano exhibition in the Scuderie of the Quirinale in Rome was very much liked by many of our members. Five visits were organized between March and May by our cultural guide Valentina di Lonardo.

News from the Executive Committee

The FFOA General Assembly 29th May 2013

The General Assembly was held on 29th May in the WFP Headquarters. A total of 113 members and spouses attended on the spot and an unknown number heard it broadcast on the Internet. Ms Dianne Spearman, formerly Director, Policy and Strategy in WFP, was elected Presiding Officer of the session.

Mr Anton Doeve was elected Honorary President of FFOA and was presented with a silver plaque recording the award and appreciation of his 12 years service as President. He spoke about his early career in FAO and thanked the Association for this honour. (He joins Mr André Molle, Mr Aurelio Marcucci, and Mr Lennard Bague (IFAD) who were previously honoured in that way. Former honorary presidents included the late Mr Edouard Saouma and Mr Carlo Buonaccorsi.)

Ms Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of WFP, gave an impassioned speech welcoming the FFOA and, in this changing world, eager to benefit from the expertise and passion of the pensioners. WFP is working closely with FAO and IFAD to improve the service in agriculture and provision of food for all. More co-operation with FFOA is intended for instance on the WFP Alumni web site.

Alan Prien updated the circulated the 2012 activity report; Giorgio Eberle reported on the three years just elapsed and Pino Pace on the structural approach to the next three years work.

Ms Monika Altmayer, Director Human Resources, spoke on behalf of the Director General of FAO and Mr Peter Frobel, Human Resources Management Adviser, Corporate Service Department, for the President of IFAD. Mr George Aelion, WFP, represented the Staff Associations and Mr Mauro Pace gave a brief speech as President of FICSA.

Mr Alan Blythe, the Chief of the Geneva UNJSPF Office, and Mr Aliamane Bacar Said, Finance Officer, gave brief talks. As an innovation for this General Assembly, after lunch they made a further illustrated presentation about the Pension Fund and answered questions.

The lunch in the WFP Gazebo (the price had to be raised to €20) was a pleasant and useful event. The GA was broadcast world-wide on the Internet (only during the meeting and not subsequently). A full account of the GA will be circulated with the next Newsbrief.

The usual collection for the old-age home next to FAO (made by Mrs Gyongyi Prien and Mr John McGhie) realised 751 euro on the spot, slightly less than last year but a credit to the generosity of our members.

Summer closure of the FFOA Offices

The FFOA Office will be closed from Monday 5th August till Friday 30th August. Messages by email will still be read though answers may be delayed.

Co-option of members to the Executive Committee

Mr Stephen Dembner, former Chief of publishing in FAO, and President of the Association of Professional Staff (twice), was co-opted to the Executive Committee on 19th June, primarily to work on the editing of the Newsbrief and other publications.

The 2013-15 FFOA Work Programme

As mentioned in other parts of this Newsbrief and as illustrated at our GA, the newly elected Executive Committee developed and approved a structured work plan to organize its activities over the period of its three years term towards better meeting the requirements of our Association.

As summarized in the abstract which was introduced at our AGM, the work plan has been compiled by assembling our activities in two groups, Ongoing Core Activities and Project Oriented Activities.
The first group focuses on day-to-day activities that are required in support of the management and the administration of FFOA. Seven lines of work have been identified, covering Institutional and External Relations Matters, Pension Benefits, Medical Insurance, Financial Matters, Technology Support, Publications and Social Support and Recreational Activities.

The second group is targeting issues that need to be approached and resolved by a project oriented effort to improve the overall functioning of the Association. Four areas have been identified, covering Policy and Governance, Membership Issues, Communications and Training and Programme Development and Follow-up.

Each of the above subjects will be managed by a Sub-committee which will take responsibility for organizing the work, motivating voluntary contributions and trying to achieve expected results. It is felt that this structured approach would facilitate the work of the Association as a whole and would allow to report achievements vis-à-vis agreed plans, both to the Executive Committee and through the GA to our entire membership. It is expected that plans would need to be re-phased at the end of each year, depending on how much would be accomplished, given the scarce resources available for the purpose.

Obviously, any assistance in implementing our Plan would be more than welcome. We are ready to accept volunteers as well as financial contributions. There are several areas in which we can improve our service and with your valuable help we hope to honor our commitment.

News from the e-world
(Pino Pace)

Visit our website (www.fao.org/ffoa)

Did you try recently? If not, you should since you would find a lot of surprises.

First of all, some explanation on how to get access to useful info on Pensions and Medical Insurance has been added under the label of “Navigation Tips” at the bottom of the relevant pages, close to the link to the respective web sites. In fact, by clicking on those two words, you will get access to explanatory note on 1) how to access our supplier websites (UNJSPF and Vanbreda Int.), 2) how to register on them, 3) how to login, 4) how to navigate them and 5) how to reach most useful info. In addition, as promised at the recent AGM, the extremely interesting Presentation, that has been delivered by our colleagues from the UNJSPF, has been loaded onto our site and can be accessed by clicking on the relevant link at the bottom of the Pensions page.

Second, a new version of the “Before and After” document is now available in English and Italian (the French version is under preparation) on the “Other Documents” page of our website. This version contains updated info vis-à-vis the previous report which had been developed in 2003.

Third, the names of the members of our newly elected Executive Committee have been updated in the section on the FFOA Structure. Similarly, the newly established Sub-committees composition can be accessed by clicking on the link at the bottom of the Executive Committee page.

Fourth, the Recreational Activities page has started accumulating reports prepared by some of our members on trips organized by our associations. It was felt that they would help in appreciating the nature and social atmosphere that can be enjoyed by participating in the relevant excursions. We would like to see this section expanding for the benefit of those who cannot enjoy in person these events.

Fifth, the detailed procedure to follow in order for a non EU national to obtain a Permesso di Soggiorno upon retirement is now available by clicking on the relevant link appearing on the Member Services - Administrative Services page.

Sixth, a new link to the recently created WFP Alumni site has been added under the Associations section of the “Web links” page of our site. The WFP Alumni network is an on- and off-line community supported by a web site to keep WFP retirees connected to one another and to WFP. It also includes a repository of interesting data on expertise available from colleagues who have spent at least five years working for the WFP all over the world. In addition, the Forum section provides a valuable area for dialogue between the retirees and WFP current staff (who have also access to the web site), thus facilitating knowledge and experience transfer to current WFP staff.

Seventh, a considerable number of pictures taken by the photographers who were present at our recent FFOA GA have been loaded onto our web and can be enjoyed as a slide show by clicking on the Media Library section of our website (2013 GA Pictures).
Eighth, a note has been added at the bottom of the “Eligibility for Membership” page which provides a link to guidelines for those willing to consider the use of a Standing Order instruction for the payment of annual fees.

Should you have any additional ideas to further improve our site, please let us know.

**News from the UN Organizations**

**FAO**

Communication is an essential tool in the fight against hunger. The FAO Conference (15-22 June 2013) is always an important event but this year is particularly important given the new strategic direction in which the Organization is moving. To ensure that the key issues are adequately covered and communicated to member states, the general public and FAO staff and pensioners, innovative communication tools will be used to disseminate information so that Conference proceedings are as understandable and accessible as possible to all audiences. Even during the Council in April, FAO-branded card-holders were given to delegates with innovative cards for some of FAO’s flagship publications: “The State of the World Agriculture” and others.

**WFP**

WFP recently published the actual number of staff who left the organization during the last 1½ years; they are considerably higher than those we had given in previous Newsbriefs. According to the World Food Programme Staff Magazine N. 55 (May 2013), a total of 483 colleagues retired or separated during 1st January 2012 through 31th March 2013. This includes all staff categories with contracts of one year or longer. Some of them have already become members of the FFOA, and we hope that many more will join the Association.

The WFP Alumni Network launched three months ago (Newsbrief 87 refers) has now more than 100 former WFP staff members. It does not substitute for FFOA but complements it for ex-WFP staff. If you have not registered yet (by accessing the site wfpalumni.wfp.org), sign up and learn more about it. You can also access it through the FFOA web site.

As has already been mentioned, the Network aims at maintaining connections between WFP Alumni members, and the organization. To date some 24 Alumni have registered to be called for support for emergencies, country programmes, coaching and monitoring of current staff, and to volunteer advice for countries which move from relief to development.

The Annual Session of the WFP Executive Board took place from 3rd through 6th June with a heavy agenda. It included the discussion and approval of the Annual Performance Report for 2012, the WFP Strategic Plan (2014-2017) and the WFP Private-Sector Partnerships and Fundraising Strategy (2013-2017), as well as up-dates (for information) on WFP’s role in the Humanitarian Assistance System, WFP’s response to HIV and AIDS, the Nutrition Policy and the Implementation of the WFP Gender Mainstreaming Accountability Framework. The Annual Evaluation Report for 2012 as well as three summary evaluation reports have also been considered.

In her opening remarks, the Executive Director Ms Ertharin Cousin provided an overview of the strategic issues facing WFP. Resource-wise, the Programme is confronted with a gap of some US$ 2 billion between needs and available resources, and the need for the private sector’s involvement is as important as ever. “A vision with no resources is a hallucination”.

Among the biggest challenges in recent years is the ever increasing demand for humanitarian services. At present, the Sahel and Syria are the largest operations. In the Sahel, WFP is currently feeding over 9 million people of which 564,000 in Mali as well as 280,000 Malian refugees in Mauritania, Niger and Burkina Faso. The Syria emergency operation includes some 2.5 million people inside Syria and 800,000 outside Syria.

**FFOA** is again most grateful to the WFP management for the kind hospitality for the General Assembly, as well as for printing this Newsbrief and the General Assembly documents in English and Italian.

**IFAD**

On 21th May, the President accompanied by the 2 Vice-Presidents and the General Secretary met at IFAD with Ms Lakshmi Menon, Associate Vice President, Corporate Service Department, the Director of Human Resources Michael Gehringer, and Linda Orebi, Human Resources Officer, who also represents IFAD on the JAC/MC.
We discussed in particular the recent decision of the UN General Assembly to raise the retirement age to 65 as of 1st January 2014, and we encouraged IFAD to be flexible in granting extensions to those staff still in service with lower retirement ages (presently either 60 or 62). The extension to new staff will help decrease the actuarial deficit of the fund by approximately 1%, and extending staff in service, we think, will help even more. IFAD responded to us by stating that their discretion to extend in the past had been exercised relatively liberally, and this practice will probably continue, especially when key skills are necessary to be retained. So this is good news.

Furthermore, we expressed our concern about the possibility of FAO outsourcing the Social Security Service to Budapest, as a cost-saving measure, which would have an adverse impact also on services to IFAD staff and retirees. While stating that they could not involve themselves in the administrative procedures of another Organization, Ms Menon and her colleagues expressed understanding of our point of view. We also informed them of the formation of the IFAD Alumni Association, and it is expected that a further meeting will be held with the President to introduce the Alumni officers.

Finally, we thanked IFAD and its mail room for once again distributing the FFOA GA documents, together with the Newsbrief.

**News of the Staff Associations**

**Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS)**

The annual meeting of the FAFICS Council, in the UN building will be in New York on 8 to 11 July. Priorities for discussion and action include the policy for the UNJSPB meeting immediately afterwards. Mr Prien will be the FFOA Representative. He has also agreed to be the BAFUNCS Representative.

**Federation of International Civil Servants Associations (FICSA)**

The FICSA report on the 66th session of the FICSA Council at the Regional Office of WHO, in Brazzaville, Congo, in February 2013, is 106 well-written pages. Mr Louis Sambo, WHO Regional Director, welcomed FICSA and commented that it had played an important role in promoting the international civil service and equitable employment conditions, and that a constructive, transparent and open dialogue between staff and management was crucial. Mr Kingston Rhodes, Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), commended FICSA’s contributions to the various working groups, and stated that the members of the commission were fully committed to working with FICSA to achieve the recruitment, development and retention of the best possible staff within a unified common system.

Of special interest to pensioners is that the Pension Fund having agreed to change the mandatory age of retirement to 65 years from 1st January 2014, FICSA continues to work towards all the organizations also increasing their mandatory age of separation to 65 since they control that. Contractual arrangements and abusive use of non-staff contracts were an important focus for standing committees, and guidelines for fixed term contracts should be standardized among all agencies. After-service medical coverage was not much discussed presumably because it is assumed to be a fixture. Time did not allow deep discussion of some subjects, such as legal representation, so they were handed over to working groups. Another feature was the discussion on how FICSA and CCISUA could work jointly and possibly merge in future.

The next FICSA Council will be at IAEA in Vienna in March 2014. The FAO/WFP UGSS invited FICSA to hold its Council in May 2015 in Rome, subject to endorsement.

**Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations (CCISUA)**

Ms Paulina Analena, CCISUA President, explained that many issues for the ICSC are discussed previously at the UN Secretariat, especially by the Staff/Management Committee (SMC). CCISUA’s membership was largely composed of bodies with access to SMC. It has 17 associations or unions with nearly 60,000 members in most UN cities. New York is especially relevant because the ICSC is a subsidiary of the UN General Assembly and reports to the Fifth Committee.

From 30th April to 3rd May, the President of the WFP Professional Staff Association, Mr George Aelion participated to the Annual General Assembly of CCISUA that was held in Valencia, Spain. The General Assembly focused on different issues among which, the most relevant are: (a) the review of the Compensation Package that was discussed with the intervention of Kingston Rhodes, Chair of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), Mr Wolfgang Stoeckl, Vice-Chair of the ICSC; and Ms
The WFP Professional Staff Association (WFP-PSA)

The WFP-PSA implies that there is a dialogue on costs of medical services although in fact none have taken place.

The 2012 salary survey was a subject of protest and may lead to an appeal against the changes in method and aspects of the way it was conducted.

The WFP-PSA participated in the Staff Management Council meeting that took place on 19th April. The following items were discussed: (1) Rest and Recuperation (R&R) Policy: Outcomes of the Working group and next steps; (2) Promotion P1 to P4; (3) Indefinite Appointment Contract Conversion Exercise; and (4) HR Manual review.

The WFP-PSA conducted another Survey among staff members to gather their opinion on the new fuel cards project that will substitute the use of coupons with fuels cards in the three UN Rome based agencies. Staff expressed their welcome to the initiative and some concerns about the practical application of the project especially in relation to the third parties involved in the project (i.e. banks). The PSA participated at the FFOA Annual General Assembly that was held on May 29 at WFP-HQ. The President of the PSA, made a statement to the General Assembly on behalf of the Staff Associations of the three UN Rome based agencies, highlighting the successful collaboration among FFOA and the three Staff Associations for matters concerning both employed and retired staff.

The eleven-member WFP-PSA Staff Council will continue to focus its work on the needs of its membership and the priorities expressed by them. It can be reached by sending a message to wfp.psa@wfp.org or by calling the office at +39 (0)6 6513535.

The (FAO and WFP) Union of General Service Staff (UGSS)

The 37th Annual General Assembly of the UGSS took place on 27th March 2013 in the Green Room with a party afterwards in the CASA Bar D. Mr Purnell represented FFOA. There was some delay in reaching a quorum even though the Assembly was not broadcast on the Intranet or Internet as is usual for the AP-in-FAO and FFOA. The report deplored the deterioration in staff-management relations during the year, the lack of dialogue and the bypassing of the established staff-management negotiation procedure. The 2012 salary survey was a subject of protest and may lead to an appeal against the changes in method and aspects of the way it was conducted. The Redeployment Task Force after initial misperceptions did succeed in finding positions for most displaced GS staff members. The main subject of special interest to pensioners was the After Service Medical Coverage (ASMC). The replacement for the current contract, extended by three years to December 2014, has to be ready for tender by the third quarter of 2013. The ASMC liability is reported as US$ 1,062 million, of which 266 million is already funded. This implies that the retirees before 1997 are covered while the FAO obligation to fund the rest has not been met, pending a UN-wide solution. The debate on practicable solutions was conducted so far outside the Joint Advisory Committee on Medical Coverage (JAC/MC) where all the parties involved are represented.

In WFP, there was an active programme relating particularly to the new arrangements, and to the Redeployment Task Force, which could claim that no staff were separated.

The UGSS budget for 2013 is €178,000 and the total assets were €399,399, or €234,078 minus liabilities (such as legal and contingency funds, and accounts payable).

BAFUNCS - The British Association of Former United Nations Civil Servants

The Annual Reunion of BAFUNCS was held on 10-12 May in the Docklands area of eastern London. The administrative aspects were quickly covered as the various reports had been circulated with the Newsletter, and there were few questions. The emergency fund, with very large resources thanks to a
legacy, is branching out into providing specific information and assistance to provide respite for carers, advice for Alzheimer’s disease, etc. Fascinating talks were given by two senior UN staff members. Sir Kieran Prendergast on Humanitarian Intervention, told of his activities in the contentious field of conflict resolution, including military intervention, nowadays more happily termed “the responsibility to protect”. Dame Rosalynda Higgins, the President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), gave a sparkling account of the work of the ICJ, which has since 1946 produced 104 judgments in legal disputes between governments and 26 advisory responses for the UN. She emphasized that compliance with the judgments had been exemplary, though follow-up was sometimes difficult on a small budget. As with the successful conflict interventions sometimes they did not hold for many years. Excursions in the neighbourhood, and a cruise up the River Thames, were enhanced by an historical account of the region by Mr Peter Kent illustrated by his own paintings. The next Reunion will be on 9-11 May 2014 in Edinburgh. To join, the email is membership@bafuncs.org.

NEW FFOA MEMBERS

A hearty welcome to our 42 new members listed below. It is a pleasure to see so many staff deciding to join their colleagues in FFOA.

| ARMISHAW, Ms R. Ann | MATHIEU, Mr Paul |
| BERRY, Ms Sharon | MONTES, Ms Maria Antonieta |
| BORELLI, Mr Roberto | MORALEDA, Ms Susana |
| BRADLEY, Ms Marian | MOSCA, Ms Concetta |
| BROGNA, Ms Anna | |
| CHAAR, Mr Abdelmajid | OBECCE PORPORATI, Ms Eleonora |
| DE FENDI, Ms Anne Marie | OSBORN, Mr Thomas |
| DOS SANTOS, Mr Eduardo Julio | PERDAN COSCIANI, Ms Marisa |
| DOSE, Ms Elena | PESUT, Ms Ljubica |
| EGAL, Ms Florence | PETRASSI, Ms Fulvia |
| EL-HUSSEINI, Ms Inaam | PETTENER, Ms Maria Luigia |
| FASAMELLA, Ms Maria | POSADAS, Ms Imelda |
| FENIX, Ms Roberta | POSORULAS, Mr Andreas |
| GATTA, Ms Giordana Delia | ROUGHI, Mr Mohammed |
| GENTILI, Mr Pierino | SAIN, Mr Pietro |
| GIOMBI, Ms Daniela | SALLOUM, Ms Nadia |
| HORSFALL, Ms Gail | SODNIK-BURANELLO, Deisa |
| IMBLEAU, Mr Louis | SOLA, Pasqua Pietrina |
| INGINO, Ms Rossella | STASI, Mr Valdo |
| LOBOVIKOV, Mr Maxim | STERITI, Ms Lina Ada |
| MARTARELLI, Mr Fabrizio | VITI, Ms Eleonora |
| MASETTE, Ms Laura | |

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

FIORINO, Ms Photini 28/07/2012
MAGUIRE CHICCA, Ms Mary 29/11/2012
FABBRIZZI, Mr Adelmo 24/03/2013
WILLIAMS, Mr John G. 26/05/2013
LEGA, Mr Carlo 26/03/2013
TEUNISSEN, Mr Henry J. 01/04/2013
ROCKWELL, MS Cynthia Ide 28/04/2013
HANEK, Mr George 30/04/2013
VERCKEN, Mr Arnold 30/05/2013
PETTERNELLA, Mr Sergio 31/05/2013

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

Arnold Vercken (1947-2013)

Arnold Vercken, a 1980 recruit to WFP, passed away on 31 May 2013 at the age of 65, in Kinshasa, DRC. Arnold, retired only three years before, was acting Deputy Country Director (DCD) helping the WFP Country Director run a country programme which, by its size is one of the biggest on WFP agenda.

Logistics and transport specialist, Arnold started his professional career in Africa (Lagos) in 1970, and it seems prophetic that he should leave his life in Africa which he loved. Ten years of professional experience with French transport and forwarding agents prepared him for what was still a budding expertise in the World Food Programme. Joining in 1980 as shipping officer, subsequently helping to develop the logistics arm of the Programme as logistics officer, he was nominated as DCD in Angola at a time when delivery and distribution of food in that country was a top priority. Returning to Rome in 1995, Arnold was tasked with the coordination and execution of the move of WFP headquarters from its site on Cristoforo Colombo to Parco de Medici in 1998. The move was an example of efficiency with not one day of work lost as a result. Moving on as Director of Management Services Division in Rome HQ to Regional Manager in Abidjan, then Deputy Regional Director in Dakar, Arnold completed his career with WFP in Jerusalem taking care of the Palestinian refugees and displaced people. Life full of work, but he had many interests outside with outdoor life, and his family. Separated from his wife, Arnold has had a happy union with Nicole Jacquet, WFP DCD in Burundi, with whom he had a 12 year old son. There is also a 24-year old son from his earlier marriage. (Broniek Szynalski)

Your Good Health

(FFOA prints some health suggestions for pensioners but does not guarantee their accuracy or efficacy.)

Fast and easy ways to stay healthy

Grab your toes. Now pull. This boosts circulation after your feet have been cramped all day. Without good circulation the muscles and nerves in the toes don’t work properly and that may cause pain in the knees, hips and back.

Move your body even briefly to stop stress and change your mood, and to prevent stiffness of the joints. Even better is a brisk walk, activity boosts endorphins and energy.

Banish nerves. When my mind starts racing in bed thinking about the next day’s challenges, I take long breaths, thinking,”Breathe in, breathe out”. It takes practice but if you do it regularly your body learns how to relax. Rebecca Soni, Olympic swimmer.
**Munch carrots** a nutritionist favourite thanks to high vitamin A content, good for healthy eyes.

**Put a card in your wallet or handbag** that lists any allergies you have, medicines you take, and blood group. It could save your life.

**Exercise.** In the 2012 London Marathon a Sikh gentleman ran and finished in under eight hours at the age of 101 years. We can’t all run marathons. Be sure however that exercise is the best medicine, even if it is only a short walk as briskly as possible.

---

**Members’ Corner**

**How to End Hunger in Times of Crisis** by I. Trueba and A. MacMillan

This is the second edition of the book by Professor Ignacio Trueba, former Permanent Representative of Spain to FAO, IFAD and WFP, and Andrew MacMillan, former Director of FAO’s Field Operations Division. It includes a foreword by José Graziano Da Silva, DG of FAO, several updates and a summary of the main recommendations. It is well-written and easy reading, and deliberately simplifies the issues in contrast to many experts who stress their complexity or insolubility; it insists that this is the simplest thing we can do to make the world a better home for all its people. This is an important message especially for people who have spent much of their lives in the efforts to eliminate hunger and who now can help influence public and political action.

Step by step recommendations are made. A basic theme is that undernourished people cannot work to help themselves without more food and should be assisted by small money grants from government to buy it. At the same time, so as to maximize benefits, steps can be taken to enable small-scale farmers to respond to the extra demand. Proposals for tackling the malnutrition which causes obesity is an unexpected feature. Suggestions are made for curbing excessive consumption and reducing food waste and for accelerating the necessary shift to more sustainable production systems. Boxes give examples of successes.

The book can be obtained from the publisher’s on-line bookshop ([www.fast-print.net/bookshop](http://www.fast-print.net/bookshop)) for £5.50, €6.50 or US$8.35, or from Amazon, or UK bookshops, as well as from the Food for Thought Bookshop in FAO. If you buy the book you will be supporting education in a deprived rural community in Kenya to which the authors are donating all royalties ([www.gotmatar.org](http://www.gotmatar.org)).

**Volunteers for a visitors’ service for FAO** (Gianni Monciotti)

Our Association has been requested to collaborate with the Information Division of FAO, to develop a “visitors’ service” in order to improve the knowledge and understanding of FAO’s work by civil society including schools, universities, municipalities and regional groups.

The “visitors’ service” would rely on a restricted number of professional and multilingual retirees who would act as guides for comprehensive tours, to show the premises and inform about the work and mission of FAO.

I have been entrusted to represent FFOA and to coordinate a group of volunteers that would help me in this task. Said group has already been identified and immediately after the summer period it will meet in order to establish some guidelines, to be briefed accordingly and to prepare a sort of attendance list of the those who from time to time will help in the visits.

It is obvious and strongly desirable that new entries are very welcome and expected. The Information Division hopes that the approach outlined above would allow FAO to have a professional Visitors Service comparable to those of the U.N. in New York and Geneva, without extra costs to the Organization and to this effect the retirees are the ideal resources.

**Procedure for the Permesso di Soggiorno** (Paul Arès)

As has already been mentioned, steps regarding the (new) procedure for the Permesso di Soggiorno for our non EU nationals (kindly prepared by Paul Arès), are now on the FFOA web site. A summary is given below for members who have not yet access to this Web site.

When going to your appointment at the Questura di Roma (ufficio immigrazione, via Patini), bring with you all of the following:

- the formal convocation letter given to you by the post office;
- the receipts given to you by the post office showing, in particular, the 127.50 euros paid;
- four color photographs (on white background);
- all originals, plus a photocopy, of all documents listed on the formal convocation page, including your passport, permesso di soggiorno, etc., you will be requested to hand over a photocopy of
these documents at the appointment. For your passport, a photocopy of the main pages showing photo and details will suffice (no need to bring copies of all the pages in the passport);
- the letter from FAO Social Security showing that you are receiving a life-long UN Pension; you will need to show the original and provide a copy;
- original and a copy of title to properties in Italy and balances in bank accounts to show that you are economically independent of the Italian system.

**The benefits, and the costs, of longer life** (summarized from an ILO report by Sabatino Salvi)

Population ageing, defined as a process which increases the proportion of old people in the total population, is one of the main problems of the century. It affects or will affect both developed and developing countries. It appears on the agendas of meetings of all kinds, from the G8 conferences to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summits. According to a report for a recent meeting of the International Social Security Association (ISSA), this does not mean, however, that all the necessary action has been taken yet.

The population of developed countries is ageing fast, and the developing world is only a few decades behind. The proportion of population aged 65 and over is expected to triple in less developed countries over the next 40 years, rising from 5.8 to 15 per cent of the total population, while in the more developed countries this figure is expected to rise from 16 to 26 per cent (an increase of more than 60 per cent), the ISSA report says. In the developed countries one person in three will be a pensioner.

Japan has the oldest population, with more than 22 per cent of its population aged 65 and over. This figure is 20 per cent in Italy and Germany. In the Southern Cone of America, Uruguay has the oldest population with 14 per cent of its population aged over 64. This tendency will increase everywhere by the year 2050; in Japan, there may be only one child under 15 for 3 adults over 64. The figures clearly show that the ageing process is accelerating, with the number of old people expected to double at the world level.

The challenge for the future is “to ensure that people everywhere can grow old with security and dignity and that they can continue to participate in social life as citizens with full rights”. At the same time “the rights of old people should not be incompatible with those of other groups, and reciprocal intergenerational relations should be encouraged.”

(United Nations, World Population Ageing 1950-2050, Population Division)

**Laughter is the best medicine**

A caller rang Samsung Electronics.
Can you give me the telephone number for Jack?
I’m sorry, sir, but Jack who?
On page one of the User Guide it states: 'Unplug the fax from the AC wall socket and telephone jack before cleaning it'.
Sir, I think it means the plug on the wall.

**Thoughts for the Day**

We can try to control our destiny but we can do nothing about our fate. *Henry Miller*

Being happy does not mean that everything is perfect. It means that you have decided to look beyond imperfections. *Anon*
FFOA and its Services

Membership and Subscriptions: Membership is open to former UN Staff who receive a benefit from the UNJSPF or have served a UN Organization for at least five years, and to their spouses. The Annual membership subscription is €25.00 and Life membership is €375.00 at present. Payments can also be made in US dollars; for the equivalent amount the FFOA Office should be contacted.

FFOA has three main functions, and performs them as conscientiously and as well as it can.

Representation: FFOA represents the pensioners in negotiations, with FAO, WFP, and IFAD, (for example, medical insurance, entry passes) and the UN, via FAFICS when necessary (notably pensions). In Italy, also with banks and government agencies.

Information: On matters of importance or interest to UN pensioners, by newsletter, annual General Assembly, and on its web site, and by mail, telephone or email, or by informal discussion in person.

Social Activities: Voluntary assistance is offered in emergencies, whether medical, small financial or other problems; details from the FFOA office. Volunteers willing to be available occasionally for such assistance should give their names to the FFOA office. Social visits are organized to interesting sites near Rome; details in the Newsbrief or from the FFOA office.

The FFOA web site (www.fao.org/ffoa) contains a wealth of information, and it is hoped in future to make it more closely in touch with our distant members.

Retirement homes, Case di Riposo, around Rome. The FFOA office can advise regarding the various possibilities.

Vanbreda. For urgent questions the Vanbreda office in FAO can be accessed on 06-570 56593, and appointments made, from 08:30 h to 12:30 h. For people away from Rome the Vanbreda International Office can be contacted on the Toll-free line 00 800 03 21 76 82, by FAX on 0039 3 217 66 20, or by e-mail on mcc010.italy@vanbreda.com. All BMIP/MMBP information is available on the dedicated website: www.vanbreda-international.com. Click ‘Plan Members’; key in your Personal reference number – shown on your insurance card (010/xxxxxx); click ‘continue’; key in your date of birth (dd/mm/yyyy) or your password if you are already subscribed to settlement notes on line; click ‘login’. In the section ‘Benefits’ is a detailed plan description in PDF format that you can download.

FFOA, c/o FAO, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00153 Roma, Italy - Room E-005 – Tel. (+39) 06-570-55623/570-56016
email: ffoa@fao.org – internet: www.fao.org/ffoa