A Word from the President

Dear friends,

Welcome to this summer (or winter, depending where you are) issue of our Newsbrief filled with news about some interesting initiatives and new ideas. First of all, I want to tell you that the General Assembly, held on 30 May, was considered by many to have been quite successful, not least because of the excellent presentations by the CEO of the UNJSPF, Mr. Bernard Cochemé, who was accompanied by the new Chief of the UNJSPF Geneva Office, Mrs. Renata De Leers, and, subsequently, by the Chief of the Social Security Service of FAO, Mr. Nabil Gangi and his colleagues. We will try to show their Power Point presentations on the FFOA Website. You could find out when that is achieved by regularly accessing the Website yourself and discovering what is new. The report of the General Assembly comes to you with this issue together with the preliminary list of participants. If your name is not on it and you did attend please let us know.

Talking of the Website, we are introducing a new feature called “Members’ Experiences” which will allow members, wishing to do so, to record the recollections and experiences of their service with one or more UN Organizations or to insert a link to their personal website. It can be found on the Main Menu; after clicking on “Links” you will see it at the bottom. Take a look and if you like it perhaps you may want to forward your own contribution to the FFOA Webmaster.

Recently Vanbreda presented some interesting proposals for new services to the JAC/MC which we explain under the section for Medical Coverage on the next page. That same JAC/MC is very much involved with the ongoing discussions about whether to change from a commercially insured to a self-insured medical cover. A joint decision, shared by the participating UN Organisations, the active staff and the pensioners, represented by your Association, should be taken before the end of 2008.

Plans are now being worked out to create the possibility for members in Rome to obtain legal advice by consulting a well-known lawyer in the FFOA Offices. Depending on the complexity of the advice needed further consultations may then take place in the offices of the Legal Firm in question. Details can be found inside this issue.

During the first week of July the annual meeting of the Council of FICSA (the Federation of UN pensioners’ associations) is taking place in the UN Headquarters in New York. Our Senior Vice-President, Aurelio Marcucci, will take part in his function as one of the Vice-Presidents of FICSA and as the representative of FFOA. The results will be published in the next issue of the Newsbrief.

It is said that wisdom comes with age. If so, pensioners must be among the wisest people on earth and we should be grateful for each day that passes because it increases our wisdom!

Enjoy your retirement because if you don’t do it now, when will you do it? On behalf of the Executive Committee I wish you happy, pleasant and invigorating holidays, together with your loved ones, whether it will be on sunny beaches or snow covered mountains...........................

With cordial greetings and my best wishes to you all,

Anton Doeve
President
Photographs of the General Assembly on 30 May 2007
kindly taken for FFOA by the WFP photographer

Ms. Renata De Leers and Mr. Bernard Cochemé

Mr. Khalid Mehboob and Mr. David Harcharik

Mr. Florin and Mr. Doeve showing the awards to the two Honorary Presidents of WFP

Mrs. Jessie Mabutas addressing the audience

Ms. Antonella Favia, Mrs. Jessie Mabutas and Mrs. Theresa Panuccio

Mr. Broniek Szynalski, Mr. Bernd Käss and Mrs. Rebecca Hansen
Medical Insurance


New proposals by Vanbreda

At the April meeting of the JAC/MC Vanbreda representatives proposed to broaden the application of the travel benefit, which is now limited to staff at Headquarters and some countries in Europe, to cover also field staff and make it worldwide. The travel benefit will then be calculated on basis of a 20% difference between expenses in Italy and the country selected topped of at a maximum benefit level of Euro 1,000 per admission. This measure would encourage more “medical tourism” as one of the participants at the meeting called it.

In addition, Vanbreda intends to provide a more detailed explanation of the way the Reasonable and Customary limitation, which is often a source of misunderstanding and irritation for participants in the BMIP and MMBP schemes, is calculated and to assist the insured to “shop around” and to evaluate the possible consequences of their decisions before they commit themselves. Moreover, they plan to upgrade and refine their communications with the insured and with FAO Social Security. It was stressed by members of the JAC/MC that more detailed and clearer information will always be welcome and that its importance for better relations and understanding between the parties cannot be over-estimated.

These proposals were well received and they will be further reviewed by the members of the JAC/MC and the FAO Social Security Service to verify their compatibility with the existing provisions of the medical insurance coverage. If the outcome is positive a recommendation will be submitted to accept and implement them.

Pensions

(Responsible: A. Marcucci, A. Prien, M. Purnell, S. Salvi, J. Smidt,)

FAO Staff Pension Committee

No meetings to report.

The United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF)

Pension Fund 2006

The Annual letter of the CEO of the Pension Fund contains good news. The market value of the assets of the Fund amount to US$ 33.118 million, i.e. an increase of 13.2 percent if compared to the previous period. The situation on 31 December 2005 shows an actuarial surplus for the fifth time running of 1.29 percent of the pensionable remuneration.

Meeting of Pension Board and of the FAFICS Council

UN meetings take place all year around and their succession is normally fixed in a calendar which takes into account location and timing. For reasons of economy the calendar also attempts to programme meetings that broadly require the same attendance by scheduling them to be convened at the same place and in close succession. This is the case this year when two very important meetings for the community of retirees will take place in New York in July.
The first meeting is that of the Fifty-fourth session of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board (UNJSPB) which will be held at the UN Headquarters in New York during the week 9 to 13 July 2007.

The issues on the agenda of this meeting include all aspects of Pension Fund governance. Of particular relevance are the items concerning the review of the Fund’s actuarial position, the management and the performance of the investments, the review of the benefit system (including the review of current provisions for special adjustments for small pensions and the impact of currency fluctuations on pension benefits, etc.).

The Pension Board is the governance organ of the Pension Fund: it has a tri-partite composition consisting of representatives of the governing bodies of member organizations, of representatives of the executive heads of member organizations and of representatives of participants in active service. The views and interests of retirees and other beneficiaries are watched over by representatives, currently designated by FAFICS, who, whilst not fully fledged “members” of the Pension Board, participate in the works of this body and are accorded all the rights of members, except the right to vote. (Voting is a very rare occurrence in the Pension Board and decisions are normally reached by consensus).

In preparation of this meeting, the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) will convene the thirty-sixth Session of the Council, which will be held from 2 to 6 July in the same place as that of the Pension Board.

The FAFICS Council will consider a number of specific issues concerning the Federation, including the admission of new member associations, administrative and financial questions, election of officers, etc. With the view to soliciting the adoption of positions in the best interest of retirees particular attention will be devoted to the review of the documentation relative to the items on the agenda of the Pension Board.

FAFICS will participate in the meeting of the FAFCS Council and Mr Aurelio Marcucci, Senior Vice-President of FFOA will also participate in the Pension Board as a member of the FAFICS delegation.

Our members will be informed of the outcome of both meetings.

New Client Service at UNJSPF in Geneva

Ms Renata De Leers, Chief, Geneva Office UNJSPF, has informed us that the Geneva Office deals with the pensions for all the countries of Europe, Africa and the Middle East, except those of FOA Turin and WFP. It is now quicker to contact the UNJSPF in Geneva rather than New York. A Client Service, in rooms D112/D114 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva receives enquiries on pension benefits and related issues. It is open 08:30-17:30 on the telephone (+41 (0)22 917 1824) and on email at jspfgva@unog.ch. Appointments with the four staff for personalized advice can also be made.

Social Activities

(Social assistance)

FAFICS has continued to give assistance to some members affected by health problems and by handicaps. The Executive Committee wishes to thank the members who have made themselves available to assist in this task and hopes that more names will be added to the existing list of volunteers.

Rest homes around Rome (Ms Iolanda Novelli)

Members who are interested in choosing a rest home (casa di riposo) in the vicinity of Rome can obtain assistance from FFOA. By contacting the FFOA Office it is possible to consult a list of rest homes in Rome and its neighbourhood and, furthermore, to be put in touch with a person qualified to provide solutions to satisfy individual requirements.

Leisure activities

Castel Porziano Presidential Estate. The guided visits to the Presidential Estate of Castel Porziano have been very much appreciated by our members. Members who have not yet visited the Estate, may find it of interest to read the description below.
Due to the strict security measures enforced by the authorities to enter the Estate (clearance by Carabinieri, etc.) members have had to wait several months before the visit could take place or, as happened for the last visit, they have been given one week’s notice.

The Presidential Estate of Castel Porziano is situated at approximately 30 km from the centre of Rome on Via Cristoforo Colombo, halfway between Rome and Ostia. The Estate comprises 6000 hectares of land and its perimeter is 80 km. Seventy percent of the estate is covered by forest with an incredible variety of plants such as oaks, cork-oaks, holm-oaks, pine trees. Eucalyptus and wild pears are also found in great abundance as they were useful to drain the swampy land of which the area was largely covered. Beneath the trees there is a very luxuriant Mediterranean bush made mainly of rosemary, heather, broom, myrtle, lentisk. With some luck one can also see quite a few animal species such as wild boar, deer, roe deer, and wild maresman horses. Among the small species there are hares, wild rabbits, foxes, badgers.

In the Estate there is also a splendid garden with various flowers and plenty of lemon trees where Princess Iolanda di Savoia used to have her tea, and the remains of a villa built by Emperor Marco Aurelio Commodo. The water running from the ancient fountains is now drunk by the wild animals. A castle, built in the year 1000, is nowadays being used by the staff outposted from the Quirinale.

A fourth visit to Castel Porziano will take place in September. Members who have already submitted their names will be contacted by telephone when the date of the visit is received from the Italian Authorities.

Cost of the visit is Euro 10. Interested members should leave their name, address, date and place of birth and telephone number at the FFOA Office (Telephone 06 57054862).

Future activities. Members wishing to join the tours in Italy proposed by the FAO Staff Coop as announced in Newsbrief 65 should be Coop Members in order to join the tours. It was erroneously stated in Newsbrief 65 that these tours, organized by the FAO Staff Coop, were open to non-members of the Coop. This Staff Coop has explained that membership is necessary in order to comply with their regulations regarding insurance coverage for trips organized by them. FFOA members wishing to receive information are encouraged to consult the FAO Staff Coop Gazette, if possible, or contact the Coop Office at Ext. 53142.

The next tours in Italy, conducted in Italian, as proposed for 2007 by the FAO Staff Coop, are the following:

- 27-30 September LE CINQUE TERRE – PORTOVENERE, SAN FRUTTOSO, PORTOFINO, LUCCA
- 13-14 October ERCOLANO and POMPEI

News from the Executive Committee

The General Assembly 30th May 2007

The 37th FFOA General Assembly took place on Wednesday 30th May 2007. Some 150 members enjoyed listening to the invited speakers and meeting with old friends.

Our keynote speaker, Mr Bernard Cochemé, CEO of the UNJSPF, introduced Ms Renata De Leers, Chief, Geneva Office, UNJSPF. His Powerpoint presentation and talk covered several aspects of the Fund. He then answered questions together with Mr Nabil Gangi, Chief, FAO. A full report is in the Report of the General Assembly attached.

Mr David Harcharik spoke on behalf of the Director General of FAO, Mr Jacques Diouf. Ms Rebecca Hansen, Director, Human Resources Division WFP, on behalf of Ms Josette Sheeran, Executive Director WFP, and Ms Jessie Mabutas, Assistant President, representing Mr Lennart Båge, President of IFAD. You will find Ms Mabutas’ discourse in the Report of the General Assembly attached hereto.

Closing of the FFOA Offices

The FFOA Offices will be closed from the 6th to the 24th August 2007 inclusive for the usual summer break.

Changes in email Addresses

Members are kindly requested to inform the FFOA Office whenever their email address changes. Since messages are sometimes communicated by email it is of vital importance that the email addresses in the address book of FFOA are always correct and up-to-date. Thank you for your collaboration.
The annual date of payment of membership subscriptions

From 1st January 2007 annual subscriptions cover a calendar year. Subscriptions should be paid during the calendar year. Members who have not paid by December will be sent a reminder. This new arrangement is meant to make it easier for members to pay. We ask all members to pay as soon as possible and so help our cash flow and avoid forgetting.

Permesso di soggiorno, the new system

Yet another change for citizens of the countries of the European Union, but this time it is good news. From 11th April 2007 they no longer need a “permesso/carta di soggiorno”. For visits of less than three months no special document is needed. For longer periods they must be inscribed with the local “anagrafe” and show documents to prove that they are students or workers, or otherwise have both means of livelihood and enrolment in a medical insurance scheme. They will be issued with a “Carta d’Identità”.

Family members of citizens of EU countries but who are not themselves citizens of EU countries must request a “carta di soggiorno”, using the yellow kit (“Kit Giallo”) obtainable from the Post Office – “Sportello AMICO” as described in the last Newsbrief. They must show identity documents or passport, documents proving the family relationship, and the document showing that the family member with citizenship in an EU country is registered with the “anagrafe”. The FFOA Office can assist members to complete the process smoothly.

People who are not citizens of a country in the EU must obtain a “carta di soggiorno” using the yellow kit obtainable from the Post Offices as described in Newsbrief 65. The FFOA can advise and assist in this process. In any case it seems advisable to start the process well before the residence permit is required.

Regarding the renewal of “permesso/carta di soggiorno” for non-EU nationals, requests for renewal may be submitted using the yellow kit within 90 days of expiry of the old “permesso di soggiorno”.

News from the UN Organisations

FAO

New FAO Deputy Director-General

The Director-General, Mr Jacques Diouf, announced on 19 June 2007 the appointment of Mr James G. Butler as Deputy Director-General.

Mr Butler, a citizen of the United States of America, comes to FAO from the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture, where he has served as Deputy Director-General since December 2005. Previously he served as Deputy Undersecretary of the Farm and Foreign Agriculture Service of the US Department of Agriculture from November 2002 to December 2005. He is expected to assume his duties at FAO in January 2008.

Mr Butler holds a Ph.D. in Animal Physiology from the University of Arizona, an MS in Animal Science from New Mexico University, and a BS in Animal Science from Texas A&M University. He succeeds Mr David Harcharik who occupies the post of Deputy Director-General since 1998.

Restructuring of FAO

The restructuring of FAO Headquarters in implementation of the decisions on reforms at the last FAO Conference has been outlined in a Director General’s Bulletin implemented on 1st January 2007. The theme of World Food Day this year is “The Right to Food” and various competitions are being organized in many countries to bring home the importance of the subject particularly to school children. The Year of the Potato 2008 will enable FAO to publicise its work on this important and versatile crop.

World Food Programme (WFP) (Mr Broniek Szynalski)

Ms Josette Sheeran, the new Executive Director, took up her duties in Rome on 10th April 2007. The Programme is facing some difficult decisions (see the report on the General Assembly). The new Staff Association is now functioning and FFOA has contacted their committee to ensure that the interests of WFP pensioners are fully recognized.

Once again the FFOA expresses its thanks for the WFP assistance in printing Newsbriefs and other documents, and for providing the professional photographer for the FFOA General Assembly (see page 2).

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) (Mr Alan Prien)

The President of IFAD, Mr Lennart Båge, has announced a new senior management team. The IFAD pensioners are increasing in number. Once again we thank the IFAD management and designated contact point for the assistance provided to FFOA during the year.
News of the Staff Associations

FAFICS

The 36th FAFICS Council from 3rd to 7th July 2007 will be hosted by AFICS UN New York Mr Aurelio Marcucci will represent FFOA at the meeting. Major items on the agenda will be discussion of the UN Pension Fund management prior to the meeting of the Pension Board on 9-13 July, updating the information on the post retirement medical coverage and long term care in the UN system, changes to the administration of FAFICS, and election of the President and other officials.

The new WFP Staff Union (Mr Broniek Szynalski)

The staff of WFP have set up a union to represent them and most, though not all, of the WFP members of APS, FSA and UGSS have transferred their membership, while a good number of new members have joined. The separation was amicable as it is evident that the different conditions of service and the distance between the offices make it impossible for the FAO representative bodies to represent WFP staff adequately.

APS and FSA amalgamated

The Association of Professional Staff, APS, is situated in (fine) new offices in the FAO Building, Room A012. Amalgamation with the Field Staff Association, FSA, is not yet completed as a new Recognition Agreement is still being negotiated.

The Staff Cooperative, CASA

The Staff Cooperative as part of its usual collaboration for WORLD FOOD DAY is organizing an art exhibition on this year’s theme: the Right to Food. Entries should be submitted by 31st August.

The British Association of Former UN Civil Servants (BAFUNCS)

The Annual General Meeting of BAFUNCs took place during 11-13th May in Eastbourne. Interesting talks were given on “The Kofi Annan Years” and on “The reform of the United Nations”, both of which aroused intense discussions and questions. Excursions to interesting sites were made including one to the battlefield and monastery commemorating the Battle of Hastings 1066. The administrative business was accomplished speedily. Sir Eric Jensen stood down after six years as Chairman of the Association and Sir Richard Jolly was elected to the position.

A reminder was made at the meeting that the Project for putting the CV’s and career recollections of UN pensioners into the archives is now in its second phase. More participants are required. Anyone with the right background who is willing to contribute should contact Mr Maurice Purnell at the FFOA Office. Examples of CV’s and career accounts already contributed by former FAO and WFP staff members of British origin or connection, and of their wives, can be accessed as a source of inspiration.

News of the FFOA Membership

Recently joined members

A hearty welcome to all our new members listed below! Please encourage other retirees to join our Association. Your support will be needed more than ever in 2007 and beyond.

Mr Reinhard BREITBART  Mr John McGHIE
Mr Walter BURGOS LEON  Mrs Daphne MELLORS-PUCCINELLI
Mrs Beatrice DELABROISE  Mrs Stella MINNI-DI LORENZO
Ms Annette DENNY  Mrs Helen PHILLIPS-GRANT
Mrs Jennifer DEY DE PRICK  Mrs Maria Grazia QUIETI
Mr Serge Michel GARCIA  Mr Douglas SMITH
Mrs Giulia GENOVESE  Mr Martin SMITH
Mrs Olwen GOTTS  Mr Francesco STRIPOLI
Mr Khailad Chadra GOVIL  Mrs Ines THOMPSON
Mr LeDit Bokary GUIIDO  Mrs Celina TIMOSSI
Mr John Joseph HOURIHAN  Mr Ricardo UBERTI
Mr Mory Niomby KETIA  Mr Rudolf ZIESLER
Mrs M. Mary JOHNSON
IN MEMORIAM

JEANNIN Andrée 9 November 2006
KERMODE Graham O. 21 June 2007
MARCHIONNESCHI Virgilio 6 April 2007
NAVAESPARZA Alicia 16 May 2007
SEGERSTROM Gunnar 16 January 2007

On behalf of the members of FFOA we express heartfelt sympathy to the family and friends
of all those mentioned above

Members’ Corner

Contributions from our members

A good bet

The BBC recently reported that a centenarian had just won 25,000 pounds sterling on a 100 pound bet made 10
years ago that he would live to be 100. He is not a UN pensioner, but some of our members might be interested in
the possibilities. He ascribed his longevity to porridge for breakfast and remembering to keep breathing. Also
important is not to worry about anything, do as little work as possible, go on lots of holidays, and play chess every
day. Before you rush off to place your bets, the bad news is that the bookmakers have changed the target. When
they started taking these age bets, 100 years seemed mythically old and they offered massive odds. Now such bets
are beginning to cost a fortune so they have raised the target age to 110 years. Who wants to live to be 110?
Answer: someone who is 109.

Problems

If in one's nineties one says "I am too old to attempt that," it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Everyone thinks
their own problems are greater than those of other people. For example Einstein's mother asked him what he did all
day when he was working on the theory of relativity. He explained the difficulties, … and his mother commented,
"Ach Albert! If only I had your problems."

Anonymous

Be nice to your kids, one day they will choose your nursing home ........................................
Membership and Subscriptions
Membership is open to former UN Staff who receive or are entitled to receive a benefit from the UNJSPF or have served a minimum of five years and to their spouses. Details of conditions for eligibility and membership application forms are available on request from the FFOA Office. The Annual membership subscription is € 25,00 and the Life membership subscription is € 375,00.

Payment of the amount due can be made in one the following ways:
1. in cash at the FFOA Office;
2. by cheque in the name of the "FFOA";
3. by bank transfer to the account of the FFOA with the “Banca Intesa” at FAO Headquarters No.: 732637/01/37. The CAB of the Bank is 03356, the ABI code is 03069, the IBAN code is IT 03069/03356/007326370137 and the SWIFT code is BCI TIT MM 700. For payments in US Dollars the Account No. is IT 03069/03356/007326370238;
4. by bank transfer in US Dollars only to the FFOA Savings Account No. 771070-1 with the “United Nations Federal Credit Union” (UNFCU) in New York or by “Member to Member Transfer” through the UNFCU Website: www.unfcu.org. On this Website click on “Internet Account Access”, enter your UNFCU Member number and PIN, then click on “Online Forms” and select “Member to Member Transfer Request Form”. In the first section of this form, enter personal and account details and the US$ amount to be paid to FFOA. In the “beneficiary” section complete as follows: Last Name: FFOA; First Name: FFOA; Member No.: 771070-1 (Savings); Special Instructions: Annual Dues from Mr./Mrs/Ms …………. Then click “Submit”. The transfer will take place within one business day. ¹

¹ Links to the Websites of the BancaIntesa and the UNFCU are available on the Main Menu, Links, of the Website of FFOA

Social Assistance
The members of the Sub-Committee for Social Activities are available to assist in medical and other emergencies, and can be contacted through the FFOA Office.

The FFOA Emergency Fund (Responsible: Joan Smidt)
The Emergency Fund may provide financial assistance for any member suffering temporary financial hardship, who meets the criteria of the Fund. The maximum loan is € 1.500,00. The Social Activities Sub-committee receives, considers and decides on all requests for loans or grants to be paid out of the Emergency Fund. The Financial Management Sub-committee shall make the funds available for all approved requests.

The FFOA Website (Responsible: Giuseppe Pace)
To enjoy the FFOA Website with an Internet browser (recommended version is Internet Explorer 5.5. or higher) obtain access through www.fao.org/ffoa. For any request for assistance or clarification, send a message to ffoa-wemaster@fao.org by clicking on the icon at the bottom of the left-hand column of the Website’s home-page.