

Newsbrief 80

July 2011



Former FAO and Other UN Staff Association

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

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A Word from the President

Dear friends,

Welcome to this issue of our Newsbrief before the summer will be with us (at least in the northern hemisphere) and, here in Rome, the streets and piazzas will be empty since the Romans will have left this great city to go to the beaches or the mountains enjoying their summer holidays. It will be a good time to drive to the FFOA offices in half the time it normally takes us.

However, those FFOA Offices will have moved to another location in FAO Headquarters, this time in Building “E” which, as some of our ‘oldies’ will remember, was originally built as a temporary structure . But in the eternal city, as Rome is called, saying that something is meant to be ‘temporary’ can be a bit risky since it often takes on an eternal meaning and Building “E” still stands as a reminder of earlier and ‘temporary’ times.

While writing these lines I can hear your voices asking: “Again”? and “Why”? It is true, of course, that our offices were moved in January to their present location. However, the answer to your “Why” reveals the reason, which is that FAO has decided to undertake a rather ambitious project to integrate its own financial administration with that of other UN bodies so that, when finished, the term “United” in their titles no longer refers only to their designation but also to their finances. However, this project requires some 100 staff members to be able to work together as closely as they can and space permits. The whole ground floor of Building B will be needed to give them enough rooms and proximity, requiring not only FFOA to move.

Since FAO’s projects are of a temporary nature, even if performed in an eternal city, I intend to remind FAO’s Administration that ‘someday’ its project will come to a successful end and that it would then be appropriate to allow FFOA’s offices to return to where they came from. Well, we shall see.

As you have already been informed, the biennial ‘Conference’ of FAO begins on Wednesday the 22nd of June and ends on Sunday the 3rd of July. During that period, as was the case in the past, Pensioners are not allowed to enter FAO Headquarters, not because they may have hostile intentions, but simply to reduce the crowd which is expected to be rather heavy. Imagine, the delegates, their staff, the FAO and Italian security people, the press, the TV reporters all together.

As those of you who attended the 2011 FFOA General Assembly in May already know, it was a successful meeting within the warm embrace of the hospitality of IFAD whom we cannot thank enough! Next year it will again take place in FAO. The report of that General Assembly will be distributed with the next Newsbrief, which will be published after the summer.

The good news, announced at the General Assembly, is that the pensions of UN pensioners living in Italy and receiving their pensions in Euro will be increased with 2.8 per cent retroactive as from 1 April 2011. As we all know, the steady erosion of our pensions’s purchasing power is never compensated, like the Post Adjustment system does for the salaries of the active staff.

On behalf of the Executive Committee it is a real pleasure for me to wish our members in all our hemispheres a really relaxing and pleasant holiday period with their loved-ones!

Anton Doeve
President

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Medical Insurance

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

Joint Advisory Committee on Medical Coverage (JAC/MC)

As you may recall, the Representatives of the Executive Committee (Messrs. Giorgio Eberle, Alain Prien, and since recently Ed Seidler) have been endeavouring to obtain changes in the premiums for the Director-General's approval by the end of the year. This time, approval was received late meaning that some retroactive adjustments needed to be made back to January 2011.

The JAC/MC has also actively looked for cost-saving measures, given that we all must pay increased shares when the costs go up. You should therefore, when possible, use the in-house pharmacy in FAO, which gives pensioners and serving staff a discount. Furthermore, it is recommended to check the lists on the Van Breda web site (www.vanbreda.com) first, when looking for hospitals and doctors. You can save yourself (on your deduction), and others the increased costs when otherwise higher charges are incurred.

Admin Circular 2011/10. Everyone should have received a copy of this circular giving the details of the new premium rates for 2011. Premiums have been increased by 1.5 per cent for both euro and dollar schemes. Backdating to 1st January will cause an extra amount, which will be deducted from your July benefit payments. If you have not received a copy you may ask for one at FAO Social Security, Building D-348, Viale delle terme di Caracalla, 00153 Rome.

Pensions

(Responsible: **A. Prien**, G. Eberle, A. Marcucci, M. Purnell, S. Salvi, E. Seidler, J. Smidt, B. Szynalski)

FAO Staff Pension Committee

There was a meeting of the FAO Staff Pension Committee to discuss policy for the next Pension Board meeting.

Cost-of-Living increases in 2011

There will be no increase in pensions on the dollar track as the CPI did not reach the threshold of 2 per cent. Pensioners on the dual track in Italy will have an increase of 2.8 per cent (over two years) with the July payment but retroactive to 1st April. A member has pointed out that pensioners thus lose the interest on the increase (for 2.8 per cent invested over 3, 2 and 1 month) but the amount involved is only about €5-10, so would not justify an appeal.

UN Joint Staff Pension Board

The next annual meeting of the UNJSPB will take place from 11 through 15 July 2011 in Geneva. It will be preceded in the previous week by the annual meeting of FAFICS, also in Geneva. FFOA will be represented by the Mr Anton Doeve and Mr Ed Seidler.

In view of the slight actuarial deficit (0.38 per cent) there are unlikely to be any increases in benefits until next year. The audited results for the past five years are used for assessing the surplus or deficit of the fund every second year; that will next be at end of December 2011. If the improvement in the value of the investments continues, we may hope that the slight deficit last time will be eliminated, although the total sum of investments refers to a much larger number of beneficiaries. An actuarial surplus of 1-2 per cent of pensionable remuneration is recommended to buffer the Fund's long-term solvency.

Update on the Pension Fund Investments

At the end of April 2011 the unaudited market value of the Fund's investments was US\$ 44,436 millions (US\$ 44.4 billion) compared to US\$ 41.4 billion in December 2010. Later figures are not yet available to us.

The Pension Fund by the CEO of the UNJSPF

Mr Bernard Cochemé updated and expanded his annual letter that all pensioners should have received, at the FFOA General Assembly on 25 April and some of the main points are described below under that heading. The general conclusion is that the Fund is doing well in difficult times and our pensions are safe. Another encouraging piece of information was that there is enough money to pay the pension benefits for us and our recognized beneficiaries, given that pensions are fully funded on an actuarial basis.

Social Activities

(Responsible: **J. Smidt**, G. Monciotti, I. Novelli, B. Szynalski, 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. 06-57055623). If anyone knows of a member who deserves help, please let the office know under strictly confidential conditions.

Cultural and leisure activities

Excursions. The main historical sites of Minturnae, Hormie (now Formia), and Sperlonga were visited on 16 April. Sperlonga is probably the city best known to our members. However, some of the sites seen (e.g. grotto of Tiberio and the natural grottos along the coast, have probably never been visited before. Hormie is much appreciated for its mild climate throughout the year. Participants had the opportunity to visit the Cicerone grave, the massive Nerva wall, and the medieval centre of Sant'Anna. In Minturnae, the Capitol, the Augustus Temple, the Terme and above all, parts of the Via Appia Antica attracted the attention of the visitors.

Visits to the Presidential domain at Castel Porziano on 8th April, 4th and 24th May were again greatly enjoyed by many of our members.

For the third consecutive year, a visit to Ninfa and Sermoneta with its magnificent gardens, the perfume and colours of its flowers, was organized on 28 May. The participants found themselves immersed in a truly exclusive and unique environment.

Exhibitions. Visits to the Galleria Nazionale di Arte Antica of Palazzo Barberini were undertaken in March and April and much enjoyed. One of the FFOA participants kindly sent us the following summary: "The Art Gallery of Palazzo Barberini, recently reopened to the public after many years of restoration, shows masterpieces from Caravaggio, such as "Narciso" and "Judith and Holofernes" as well as Raffaello's famous "La Fornarina". Much time was spent in the banquet room with the immense ceiling frescoes of Pietro da Cortona's "Providence" as well as those of Andrea Sacchi's, "Wisdom". Another room contained various sacred images and wooden crucifixes".

The NERONE exhibition was visited twice in May. It is spread over the Forum Romano, Colosseum, and the Palatino. The visits provided also a welcome opportunity to see monuments, generally closed for the public.

Theatre in English. Several performances of "The Women of Troy" were shown between 12 and 17 April and much liked by the participants.

Future visits. Members interested should contact the FFOA Office to pay in advance and also if required to provide personal details for security reasons. Members with email are informed as early as possible of our cultural and leisure activities. Members without an email, may call the FFOA Office (which has a copy of the programme) on 06-57055623 (office hours from 9.30 – 13.00 hours, normally from Monday through Friday) to find out about planned events.

FAO Staff Coop. As usual, we encourage our members to consult the FAO Staff Coop (Tel. 06-57053142) to obtain a copy of their programme, including local excursions and cruises. Note for example the summer programme for concerts at the Terme di Caracalla in the June 2011 FAO CASA Gazette.

News from the Executive Committee

Summer closure of the FFOA Offices

The FFOA Office will be closed as usual in August from 1st to 29th.

The Annual General Assembly

The 41st FFOA General Assembly, on 25th May 2011 in the Italian Conference Hall at IFAD Headquarters, attracted more than 100 members. In addition, 16 proxies were received.

Mr Anton Doeve opened the Assembly at 09:45. **Mr Abdou Ciss**, formerly a senior officer of IFAD and also a former member of the FFOA Executive Committee, chaired the meeting.



Mr M. Goon, Mr Abdou Ciss, Mr A. Doeve (Photographer: A. Van Arkadie)

The usual administrative matters included the draft report of the previous general assembly, the report of the Executive Committee and the report on the Association's financial affairs. Traditional speeches by representatives of the Director General of FAO, **Mr Tony Alonzi**; of the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, **Ms Nana Nikoi**; of the President of the International Fund for Agriculture, **Mr Michael Goon** and of the Staff Representative Bodies of FAO, **Mr Mauro Pace**. All emphasized the significant changes that are in progress, and the important cooperation with FFOA.

A Power Point presentation by **Mr Bernard Cochemé**, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund, focused on the main keys to the Pension Fund: operations, investments and the actuarial balance. Operations were now dealing with 121,138 participants, an increase of 63 per cent, and with 63,830 beneficiaries, a 33 per cent increase in the last ten years. Pension payments are 44 per cent in US dollars, 33 per cent in euros and 16 per cent in Swiss francs.

Investments have recovered strongly and in April 2011 reached US\$44.436 billion, surpassing the high previous US\$ 42.274 billion of 31 October 2007. In the past few years there has been a change from fixed interest to equities now at 65 per cent. By holding on and not selling equities when they were low, the value of investments have now recovered and surpassed what they were before, although it has taken some time. Results have outperformed their benchmarks in most years. The compounded amount shows an annual rate of return of 8.4 per cent over 50 years and 9.0 per cent over 25 years (or 4.1 and 6.0 per cent allowing for inflation). The return is better than the 3.5 per cent required except in the last few years.

The last actuarial review in December 2009 showed an actuarial deficit for the first time in 6 years of 0.38 per cent in December 2009. Participants average 22 years of work while pensioners average 30 years so this is a very long term relationship, referring to a balance over the next 60 years. In 2010 the Fund had contributions of \$2.03 billion compared to \$1.97 billion payments, and a dividend income of \$563

million. This is an exceptionally favorable position for a fully-funded mature fund. **Mr Cochemé** also mentioned the booklets available from the pension fund, including the latest one on divorce.

Mr Marco Breschi, Head of Social Security, Director of CSHS, gave a Power Point presentation mainly on medical insurance matters. The two insurance plans include some 16,000 staff and 8,000 dependents. A successful effort has been achieved to contain costs.

Mr Cochemé and his assistants, **Messrs Frank de Turrif** (Chief of Operations) and **Alan Blythe** (Chief of the Geneva Office), and **Mr Breschi** then answered questions from the audience. A full report will be sent with the September Newsbrief.



Some members of the FFOA Executive Committee

Mr Bernard Cochemé and his colleagues **Mr Frank de Turris**, Chief of Operations and **Mr Alan Blythe**, Chief of the Geneva Office took the opportunity of their presence in Rome to meet their new Staff Pension Committee Secretaries, **Mr Marco Breschi** (FAO) and **Ms Linda Orebi** (IFAD), as well as **Ms Nana Nkoi** (WFP).

Changes in the Executive Committee

The Sub-committees of the Executive Committee will be changed and Mr Ed Seidler will be the Convener of the Medical Insurance Sub-committee. The other conveners remain unchanged.

Healthy places for retirement

Our database shows that there are 33 active FFOA members aged more than 90 years old. They are distributed as follows: Italy 7, Germany 3, United Kingdom 3, USA 3, Canada 2, France 2, Philippines 2, and one each in Australia, Belgium, Chile, Cyprus, Hungary, Japan, Panama, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, and Sweden.

Can YOU help? A volunteer of our Rome-based members is needed to replace Ms Eileen Nolan for collecting at the FFOA General Assembly for the old people who reside next to FAO, just as she replaced Ms Sweeney 22 years ago, and will be given help and advice by Ms Nolan. Volunteers for various tasks, not very onerous, are needed, in particular, for translation of Newsbriefs or other documents from English to Italian just once a year. Arrange details with any member of the Executive Committee.

Paying your subscription. Please help our Treasurer by paying your annual subscriptions for 2011 (€25) as soon as possible.

News from the Electronic World

The FFOA Website – Improved Security

Due to need to raise the security layer that was imposed by the FAO IT security policy the FFOA website has been slightly modified to prevent possible hacker attacks to sensitive information. The changes are as follows: (i) the registration procedure has been modified for new users (only) to ensure that new usernames are defined by using e-mail addresses and no longer nicknames. For example, it was possible until now to use any nickname such as "pacepino"; from now on the username needs to be equal to the e-mail address the member has established with his/her e-mail provider (eg. pacepino@libero.it). The registration function that had been frozen back in mid May is now again active. **No change will apply to already active users**, those who have registered on the site prior to this change, and who will continue to use their established username (e.g. "pacepino"). This change has been introduced to adhere to standard best practices applied by almost all internet sites, which is driven by the need to avoid duplication of nicknames; (ii) active users and future users (new members) will no longer be required to identify themselves at log-on time by providing their member-ids. This piece of information will be derived automatically by the system and used as at present to allow access to functionalities and data reserved for members only. This change has been introduced to simplify the log-in process, thus from now on it is sufficient to enter the Username (nickname for active members and e-mail address for new members) and the Password. **No member-id number will be required both for active users and future new members**; (iii) the functionality to change personal data under the "Member Services" function has been redesigned to avoid direct access to the database storing members' data. This change does not affect you directly but has an impact on the FFOA office. The latter will be notified by a message about the changes you have requested and then takes manual action to update your record in the database. Therefore, the only impact on the member will be that the requested change to his or her personal data will immediately show up in the website, but it will not be reflected in the FAO internal system until such time the FFOA office takes the necessary action. Unfortunately, this is a change that is imposed by the need to prevent hacker attacks to the sensitive data stored in the Membership Database, which is used by the FFOA in support of analytical and reporting functions; (iv) the "Search Function" has been slightly modified to show the results about active members who have opted to publish their e-mail address, but no changes have been introduced to the "search" logic.

Most probably by the time this Newsbrief is published, the above changes will already be in place. So, we invite you to log-in and check directly. If you don't have a Username and Password already available, we would invite you to register to the www.fao.org/ffoa as soon as possible.

We hope that you will not encounter any difficulty in using the new version of the FFOA website. However, should you need clarifications, please contact us by e-mail at FFOA-Webmaster@fao.org.

The FFOA Database. You can easily update your record. Just click on FFOA web site: www.fao.org/ffoa and follow the instructions. Newsbriefs, General Assembly Reports and other important documents can be accessed on this web site.

News from the UN Organizations

FAO

FAO, with Italy, celebrated 60 years presence in Italy in June (with the Conference). On 14th October (World Food Day this year) the anniversary will again be remembered.

The Director General of FAO will be selected by vote from among the six candidates already nominated (Newsbrief 79 refers), at the FAO Conference at the end of June. This is too late for this Newsbrief but you will probably have seen the results in your newspaper or on television news. He (no ladies were nominated) will take office from 1st January 2012, initially for a period of four years. In future, election of the DG and approval of the next biennium budget will take place in June, to provide time for any adjustments before the biennium starts.

WFP

The WFP Executive Board met from 13 through 16 June in a climate of continuing threat of rising food prices and the stress of meeting emergency needs. Reporting to the Board, the Executive Director announced that the year 2010 was one of the most challenging in WFP history, with a record of 109.2 million hungry people assisted with food in 75 countries. Half of these were girls and 82 per cent were women and children. Contributions during the year to the Programme were \$ 3.810 billion.

Senior staff changes at HQ of interest to the WFP retirees are that Bishow Parajuli took over as Director of the Office of the Executive Director and Chief of Staff, and in Transport & Logistics Division where Wolfgang Herbinger will take up chief officer's duties in July.

Perhaps the most visible new initiative of WFP will have already been seen by some of us arriving at the airport of Fiumicino: at the Arrival Terminal 3 there is the **WFP Da VinciPoint**, a lounge staffed by WFP Italian Friends Committee volunteers, ready to welcome travellers and advise interested passers-by. The space is provided gratis by the Airport Authorities. The lounge is open every day from 10.00 to 18.00 hours and can be reached by phone on 06-659520969 or on cell phone at 346-2309803.

FFOA is again very grateful to the WFP management and printing staff for printing this Newsbrief and the General Assembly documents, in English and Italian, promptly and well.

IFAD

We hope that all those who joined us for the General Assembly in the Italian Conference Hall at the splendid new IFAD Headquarters had an interesting and enjoyable day.

Avid readers of this bulletin will recall from the last Newsbrief that IFAD Management had undertaken a review of results-based incentives systems, what began as a Council recommendation, and morphed it then into a full-fledged "external assessment of human resource management", sometimes referred to as the Birches report, but understood to be primarily the work of a "one-man-band". This report rather flimsily mentioned the possibility of IFAD exiting the UN common system. While little feedback seems to have been provided by Management directly to staff following a top secret "informal seminar" of the IFAD Executive Board, we are now pleased to report that Messrs Cochemé, De Turris and Blythe have informed an open house meeting of IFAD staff on 26 May that they were told by the President that he (the President) had no intention of withdrawing from the Pension Fund. This was reconfirmed in a subsequent meeting with staff, attended by Alan Prien on behalf of pensioners and beneficiaries. As membership in the Pension Fund (under Article 3 of its Regulations) permits participation of only those Organizations in the UN common system, IFAD cannot exit from it.

FFOA is most grateful to IFAD for mailing the Newsbrief 79 and General Assembly documents, as well as providing the hall for the FFOA General Assembly and the luncheon facilities afterwards.

News of the Staff Associations

Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS)

The report of the 41st FAFICS Council in June 2010 is long, 25 pages, and emphasizes some special aspects of the meeting. A copy can be consulted in the FFOA Office. Among other policy recommendations is support for the increase of normal retirement age to 65, elimination of the negative cost of living adjustments, and suspension of the special index for retirees after 2011.

The 42nd FAFICS Council is taking place in Geneva in July 2011. FAFICS intends to publish a brochure celebrating the 35th anniversary of the Federation, with contributions from many of the people who played an important role.

Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations (CCISUA)

The WFP Professional Staff Council is affiliated to CCISUA, based in New York. The 26th CCISUA General Assembly took place on 16-20th of May at the UN headquarters in Vienna. The PSA President and PSA Treasurer represented the WFP-PSA. Important topics discussed by the 17 member agencies included the GA Resolutions on the Special Operations Living Allowance (SOA/SOLA) and R&R, the UN joint staff pension fund, and the mandatory age of retirement.

The Association of Professionals in FAO (APF)

Mr Mauro Pace, the Chairperson of FICSA this year, spoke at the recent FFOA General Assembly, on behalf of Mr Christopher Pardy, President of APF, and Ms Margret Eldon of UGSS, and emphasized the indispensable coverage of pensions and medical coverage by FFOA, and the consequent valuable cooperation between participants, beneficiaries and staff representatives.

The Union of General Service Staff (UGSS)

The Annual General Assembly of the UGSS took place on Tuesday 19th April in the Red Room (FAO). About 100 members were present. The FICSA report on changes regarding the salary survey

methodology, approved by the 72nd session of the International Civil Service Commission, was discussed. The salary survey methodology is considered to be a further constraint for applying the Fleming Principle regarding the establishment of the conditions of services for GS staff and other locally recruited categories. Participants pointed out that the report contained questionable assumptions and unsubstantiated conclusions concerning the level of GS salaries in Rome. Potential negative effects may arise not only in relation to GS salaries but also with regard to working conditions, including pensionable components. Therefore, a Resolution for submission to the Chairman of the ICSC, Executive Heads of FAO, WFP and IFAD, to Chairpersons of the Italy-based UN staff associations and unions, and to FICSA was unanimously approved.

The WFP Professional Staff Association (PSA)

During the past two months, the WFP-PSA Staff Council has extensively discussed with management the changes in Rest and Recuperation (R&R policies that eliminate payment of DSA for R&R travel). Discussions with the PSA's Federation, CCISUA, are on-going regarding the application of the GA Resolution on the UN Common System. Members are regularly informed of new developments. A delegation of the PSA Staff Council attended the CCISUA annual General Assembly in Vienna (16 to 20 of May), which presented an opportunity to discuss common issues (see CCISUA). The 2011 WFP professional Promotion exercise took place from 13 to 17 of June. Two PSA representatives were members of the panel and endeavored to ensure transparency and fairness of the process.

The PSA Staff Council continues efforts for effective communication with members. A Survey on Staff Security was recently conducted among International Professional Staff; the results will be discussed with management in the forthcoming weeks. The PSA Staff Council also provided inputs to the UN-JIU (Joint Inspection Unit) review of three issues: the management of sick leave in the UN system organizations; accountability frameworks; and the inspection function in the UN. Members were surveyed to identify staff concerns and elicit suggestions for improvements. The 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 65133535.

The British Association of Former UN Staff (BAFUNCS)

The AGM of BAFUNCS in Cobham west of London attracted about 100 members of whom 73 stayed in the hotel while others commuted. The President **Sir Richard Jolly** retired after 5 years and his replacement will be **Mr Edward Mortimer**, a well-known journalist and author, and from 2001 to 2006 chief speechwriter to the UN Secretary General. **Mrs Alison Jolly** gave a fascinating illustrated account of the lemurs of Madagascar and the politics involved in their preservation and that of their spiny forest. Mr Alan Blythe, UNJSPF Geneva, gave a PowerPoint presentation of the main aspects of the UN Pension Fund and answered questions. Pleasant excursions to Ham House and to the Brooklands Car and Aviation Museum and the usual annual dinner completed a pleasant and useful weekend. We were also reminded of the second phase of the UN Careers Project and the need for more ex-staff and spouses to contribute accounts of their experiences in service and after (those interested please contact Michael Askwith, Romany, East Bracklesham Drive, Chichester, PO20 8JH, or at askwithmichael@yahoo.co.uk).

A hearty welcome to our new FFOA members listed below :

Ms Lucilla ANDREOLLI-SORACCO	Mr David MARSHALL
Mr Annibale FUSCO FEMIANO	
Mr Alessandro BOLZONI	Mr Giuseppina MAZZA
Mr Geraldo CALLEGARO	Ms Maria Antonietta MICELI
Ms Daniela CAPITANI	Mr Thomas MUENZEL
Ms Adrian DE ANGELIS	Ms Susana PALACIOS
Ms Giuliana DE CARLI	Ms Mahazosoa RATSIMBA
	RAJOHN
Ms Pasqua FLORIDO SPECCHIO	Ms Giuliana ROMAGNOLI
Ms Jeanette FUSARO	Mr Giorgio SAYOUR
Mr Edward GILLIN	Ms Berthe SCHIRLE KELLER
Ms Jennifer KITCHING PARISE	Ms Viviana STRONGOLI DI Majo
Ms Fynvola LE HUNTE WARD	Ms Lesley YOUNG

IN MEMORIAM

Ms Hildegard SCHULTE-KLEMP	30 January 2011
Mr Demetrius CHRISTODOULOU	03 February 2011
Ms Luciana BALVETTI	09 February 2011
Mr Munzer EL MIDANI	31 March 2011
Ms Milja KERANTO	18 April 2011
Mr Robert Edgar FANFANI	19 April 2011
Mr Leonard BALDACCHINO	25 April 2011
Mr Nabil Hussein ABD-EL-HADI	09 May 2011
Ms Agnes (Nancy) BURT- DE FABRITIS	24 May 2011
Mr Walter GIACICH	26 May 2011
Ms Elisa ROSSINI	14 June 2011

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

Mr Akram Al Jaff (died 21 November 2010)

Mr Akram Al Jaff retired from FAO, as Special Adviser, Development Department, in 1991 and joined FFOA at once. For many years Akram Al Jaff, for a short time Minister for Agriculture in his home country Iraq, was not only a professional colleague in FAO but a very good, close, and reliable, often concerned personal friend. His relations with the staff in HQ, but especially in the field, covering professional duties, but also personal matters, were examples for all of us. For him the situation, and all the different issues related to the rural people in the Near East Countries came always first. Many people in the Near East Region and also in FAO HQ, will remember a good professional colleague – and a very concerned friend. *Christian Bonte-Friedheim*

Your Good Health

FFOA publishes items concerning health of interest to pensioners but does not guarantee their accuracy or efficacy.

What to do during an earthquake

Mr Doug Copp the rescue chief and disaster manager of the International American Rescue Team (ARTI) provides the following advice. During an earthquake do not hide under a table or desk or stand in a doorway – you will not be safe if the building collapses because they will be crushed. It is better to lie flat close to a couch or bedstead or desk which will be compressed but leave a void close to them. There commonly remains a “triangle of safety” bordering them, from which you can be rescued. Curl up in the foetal position and you can survive in a smaller void.

Members' Corner

Award for Prof. Raoul Dudal

Dr Raoul (Rudi) Dudal has been awarded the prestigious Guy Smith Award by the Commission on Soil Classification of the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSSS).

Dr Dudal joined FAO in 1955 in Indonesia; in 1960 he became general correlator of the Soil Map of the World and in 1970 chief of the Soil Resource Development and Conservation Services. From 1976 to 1984 he was Director of the Land and Water Development Division at its best period. In 1984 he became Professor in Soil Geography, Soils of the Tropics and Land Evaluation at the K.U. Leuven. He has fulfilled many international scientific assignments, most notably as Chairman of the Commission on Soil Classification and Survey (1968-74), Secretary General of the International Soil Science Society (1974-78), chairman, FAO Inter-Departmental Working Group on Environment and Energy, and as an active member of transdisciplinary scientific committees such as CGIAR and ICARDA. He has been awarded degrees at several Universities and made an honorary member of many national soil science societies (Germany, USA, France, Norway, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy, ISRIC and the IUSS). By developing the Legend of the FAO/Unesco Soil Map of the World he helped harmonize existing soil classifications, and also by contributing to the World Reference for Soil Resources. He keeps in touch with the Geo-Institute of the K.U. Leuven, and its scientific debates on major world issues such as carbon cycles and soil evolution under global change.

Dr Dudal has been a member of FFOA since his retirement from FAO and served as a memorable Chairman of the FFOA General Assembly in 1998 and 1999. He still takes an interest in soils of the world and in FAO affairs.

***“Sweet Offerings: a family saga set in Malaysia”* by Chan Ling Yap** (Pen Press, Brighton, UK, Asian edition: Marshall Cavendish ISBN 9 789814328449; Kindle edition on Amazon.com)

Ms Chan Ling Yap Loftas worked in FAO in 1978-1997; her last post was as Senior Rice Commodity Specialist and Secretary of the Intergovernmental on Rice. She is the wife of Tony Loftas formerly of FAO and since retirement, long-time editor of the BAFUNCS Newsletter. Her first novel recently published was nominated for the Readers Choice Award. It is an ambitious one, populated by intriguing characters, brought vividly to life. She captures the mix of traditions that exists even now in Malaysia. You get a good sense of the gap between rich and poor as well as the diversity of religions in the country. Set in the period from the late 1930s to 1960s, “Sweet Offerings” is a Chinese family saga across three generations and covering a formative period in the history of Malaysia. It tells the story of Mei Yin, a young Chinese girl from an impoverished rural family, sent to Kuala Lumpur to become the ward and companion of a tyrannical and bitter woman, and her life as she grows up and has a family of her own. The story is not told as a continuous narrative presented from a single perspective but as seen by each of the main characters. Those who do not know this part of the world will certainly learn a lot about life there while those who do know it are sure to enjoy the memories that the book will evoke.

Our neighbours in Building B

Visitors to the FFOA Office will have passed by the offices of the **Global Crop Diversity Trust**, and may like to know a little more about it. The Trust implements vital areas of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA) and the FAO Global Plan of Action. Since 2004 the Treaty has gathered worldwide support with 127 countries as Contracting Parties.

The Trust is a separate organisation aimed at the conservation and availability of crop diversity. Two types of grant are made – long-term grants to conserve crop diversity forever, and fixed-term grants to support essential rescue work or to promote access and use of the diverse crops. So far the Trust has agreements for long-term funding with 8 gene banks for 16 food crops. It has fixed-term grants with 128 institutes in 86 countries, for 22 key food crops. There are 19 Trust Staff based in Rome (they are not UN Staff members).

Research has shown that climate change, and resulting food shortages have been constantly associated with increased wars, so investment helping to cope with climatic change makes good military sense as well as being extremely inexpensive compared to other military expenditure.

The Trust Fund had an endowment of US\$114.6 million in January 2011, contributed by developing and developed country governments, civil society, and the private sector. With an annual rate of return averaging 4 per cent it should be able to provide financial security for ever to the selected projects.

Thoughts for the day

Older people know that it is a great mistake to expect happiness in life. If it's not unmitigated horror then you are living a pretty good life. *Virginia Ironside.*

If you want to make other people happy practice compassion; if you want to be happy practice compassion. *The Dalai Lama.*

Most people are just about as happy as they make up their minds to be. *Abraham Lincoln*

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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. 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 best 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 where necessary (notably pensions). Also in Italy 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 Emergency Fund May provide a loan of up to €1500 to anyone suffering temporary financial hardship, strictly confidentially. (At present the Emergency funds are exhausted). Assistance can also be provided in the preparation of requests to the Emergency Fund of the UNJSPF in New York.

The New FFOA Website (Responsible P. Pace) To enjoy the FFOA website get access through www.fao.org/ffoa. Your comments are welcome. Please send your contributions, or any request for clarification, to ffoa-webmaster@fao.org by clicking on the icon at the bottom of the left-hand bar of the home-page.

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

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