



FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS

FÉDÉRATION DES ASSOCIATIONS DES ANCIENS FONCTIONNAIRES INTERNATIONAUX

FEDERACION DE ASOCIACIONES DE EX-FUNCIONARIOS INTERNACIONALES

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Fifty-third Session of the FAFICS Council
17-20 July 2023
Hybrid Meeting held in Vienna, Austria

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Fifth-third session of the FAFICS Council Vienna, 17-20 July 2023

Summary of Significant Decisions of the Council

1. The Association of Portugal (APAFI) joined FAFICS making it the 64th member association. (para. 14)
2. The Association of Tanzania (UNAPATA) rejoined FAFICS due to an absence caused by natural disasters. (para. 16)
3. Former FAFICS President, Mr. Marco Breschi, was honored with the title of Emeritus President for his work as President of FAFICS from 2019-2022. (para 38)
4. The UNJSPF will consider along with FAFICS, possibilities to promote FAFICS and Member Associations in their correspondence and pre-retirement seminars to ensure better awareness of local associations and the Federation. (para. 75)
5. The Council charged the Standing Committee on Pension Issues, insofar as feasible, to prepare a paper on adjustments to Small Pensions for the April 2024 Pension Board session. (para 54).
6. Mr. Jayantilal Karia (AFICS-NY) was appointed Chair of the Standing Committee on After-Service Health Insurance and Long-term care (SC-ASHIL). (para. 119)
7. All six administrative and financial reports were accepted by the Council including the write-off of outstanding receivables owed by Member Associations up to 31 December 2021 against the Reserve for Bad Debts. The objective going forward will be to explore with these Member Associations, to the extent possible, a fresh start in their engagement with FAFICS, and in meeting their annual membership dues obligation on a timely basis. (par. 140)
8. The proposed Strategy on Communications was adopted along with an enlarged Council Communications Committee. Bureau members as well as those from the Member Associations with expertise in various relevant areas to be included. These members will be chosen from the Expertise Pool. (para. 164)
- 9.. The Council elected by acclamation Ms. Delia Barcelona (AFICS-Philippines) as Secretary and Mr. Pierre Sayour (AAFI-AFICS-Geneva) and Mr. Abdou Khadre Diakhate (ASAFI-Senegal) as Vice-Presidents. (paras. 165 and 166)
10. The possibility of holding the next Council session for 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand was discussed and would be looked into for confirmation in the near future.

APPENDICES

1. List of Participants
2. Agenda
3. List of documents

ABBREVIATIONS

ACABQ	Administrative Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
ASHIL	After-service health insurance and long-term care
CE/DCE	Certificate of entitlement and digital Certificate of entitlement
CEB	UN System Chief Executives Board
CEPA	Chief Executive for Pension Administration
CET	Central European Time
FSALMC	Fund Solvency and Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee
HLCM	High-level Committee on Management
MINUSMA	Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
OIM	Office of Investment Management
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
PRG	Plan Review Group
RSG	Representative of the Secretary General for the investment of the assets of the UNJSPF
SPC	Staff Pension Committee
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCU	United Nations Federal Credit Union
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNJSPB	United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board
UNJSPF	United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

REPORT OF THE 53rd COUNCIL SESSION

Introduction

1. The Fifty-third session of the Council of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) took place from 17 to 20 July 2023 in-person and virtually, in Vienna, Austria.
2. The Council opened on 16 July 2023 at 4.30 pm Central European Time (CET) with a pre-Council meeting held by the Bureau.

Opening session

3. ARICSA President, Jerry Barton, welcomed participants to the 53rd FAFICS Council meeting and welcomed those participants attending in person, as well as those who joined remotely. He thanked those working behind the scenes from UNOV and ARICSA for helping out in support of the Council's session.
4. After Jay Sundaresan, the Secretary of the Federation, confirmed that a quorum had been reached and the requirements set out in Rule 3.10 of the Federation's Rules of Procedure had been met, FAFICS President Jerry Barton, declared open the Fifty-third hybrid FAFICS Council. The list of participants can be found in Appendix 1.
5. At the end of the first day, UNFCU's First Vice-President for Global Operations, Ms. Lindy Ramsdale, addressed the Council. She welcomed feedback from all delegations to enhance and improve the services UNFCU provides. She added that financial education is a key priority of UNFCU and referred to a recent webinar held with AFICS-NY which would soon also be held with other associations. Globally UNFCU was planning a new office in Senegal and in the pipeline, UNFCU was working on opening an office in Thailand. Despite the current financial crisis, UNFCU continues to be safe and secure, serving 210,000 members worldwide with a conservative approach thus ensuring UNFCU is a strong institution.
6. The President, in thanking UNFCU for their generous contribution to FAFICS, noted that this funding would be used to help associations more easily participate in the activities of FAFICS. In reiterating his thanks, he

said how much FAFICS members valued their partnership with UNFCU and hoped that this partnership would continue for many years to come.

Agenda item 1: Adoption of the agenda and workplan

- 7 The Council considered the provisional agenda (document Council 53/2023/D.1.and D.1a - see Appendix 2) which was submitted together with the provisional workplan. The list of documents submitted to the Council before and during its deliberations is reproduced in Appendix 3.
8. There were no additions or changes to the provisional agenda or workplan and as a result the agenda and workplan were adopted as proposed.

Agenda item 2: Election of the Presiding Officer and Rapporteur

- 9 FAFICS President, Jerry Barton, shared his proposals concerning the two positions of Presiding Officer and Rapporteur and expressed the hope that the Council would approve his proposals. For Presiding Officer, the President proposed that former Vice-President of FAFICS and current ARICSA vice-president, Werner Blenk, be elected as Presiding Officer and former Rapporteur and Vice-President of AFICS-NY, Nancy Hurtz-Soyka as Rapporteur. Both were elected by acclamation.
10. The newly elected Presiding Officer, Werner Blenk, thanked the participants for their vote of confidence in him in his role as Presiding Officer and elaborated on his role and how he saw the importance of strength in numbers, both individually and as a group, and cohesion in teamwork and how both of these related to FAFICS's common goals of support to UN retirees. Both assets would be extremely important during the course of this Council's session. He then explained the meeting procedures and requested all participants, considering the comprehensive agenda to keep their interventions short and that he would ensure inclusivity for all wishing to speak whether in person or remotely.
11. He then requested a moment of silence for those colleagues who passed away over the past year and expressed FAFICS solidarity with those that suffer in wars, conflicts, violence as well as from natural disasters all over the world

Agenda item 3: Report of the 52nd Council report

12. The report of the 52nd Council and its follow-up actions found in Council document 53/2023/D.3 were before the Council. The Presiding Officer stated that the report and its follow-up actions reflected what was accomplished at the Council's last session, was factually correct and was ready for approval.
13. **As a result, the report of the 52nd Council was adopted as presented.**

Agenda item 4: Status of membership and admission of new members

14. The Secretary welcomed the Association of Portugal (APAFI) as a new member to the Federation. Their interest in becoming a member of FAFICS had been ongoing for some years, but as they have now fulfilled the obligations of the Federation, they are formally considered eligible to be considered a sovereign association and a member of FAFICS. **The Council by acclamation approved APAFI as its 64th member.**
15. The representative of APAFI, which has 35 members to date, stated how pleased his association was about becoming a member of FAFICS and that his Association looked forward to working with the Federation as there was strength in its union with others. APAFI looked forward to working with everyone and thanked FAFICS for its warm and sincere welcome.
16. The Secretary then welcomed the President of the Association from Tanzania (UNAPATA). Due to unfortunate natural disasters, including flooding and fires, the Association had to regroup and be resuscitated as they had been dormant for several years. Their revival was helped by Vice-President Marashetty Seenappa (AFUNPI) who was tasked by the Bureau to do so under their workplan. The delegate from UNAPATA was given the floor and explained what had happened to the Association and said that now with 74 members they had been encouraged to rejoin and was very pleased to be here today as a revived member Association. She looked forward to again being part of FAFICS and learning from everyone.

17. The Secretary then mentioned the interest of the Universal Postal Union located in Berne, Switzerland, in joining FAFICS. Their application is in the pipeline and would be processed by the Bureau in the course of the year.
18. The Presiding Officer thanked the representatives of both Associations and congratulated UNAPATA on rejoining and welcomed APAFI on its new membership. As for UPU, he noted their progress in meeting FAFICS' obligations and thanked FAFICS Secretary, Jay Sundaresan and Vice-President Marashetty Seenappa for the work they did in promoting FAFICS with new or dormant associations and hoped that there would be continued progress in this important area of membership.
19. Marashetty Seenappa (AFUNPI) congratulated Tanzania on their return and informed the Council that the Bureau monitors the associations on whether they have paid their dues or not, but FAFICS needs to look beyond the monetary aspect and look at the reality. The more FAFICS neglects dormant organizations the worse it is for retirees as many do not even know that there is an association that they can join. He added that FAFICS must invest in reviving existing associations, not just look for new associations.
20. In reply to a question on whether or not there was a working group on dormant associations as had been brought up at last year's Council session, the President added that there would be a stronger group this year with Bureau members and possibly others from member associations. Widening the working group would allow for more attention to be paid to all dormant associations, especially to those from north Africa.
21. Many delegations welcomed APAFI and the revival of UNAPATA and agreed with the idea of expansion and helping dormant associations. The delegate of the Netherlands referred to the tremendous support received from the Pension Fund which alerted all retirees of the existence of their association and found that this enabled their association to grow by 25% in two years. He then wondered if the Pension Fund through its Client Services could systemically inform everyone who retires of the existence of FAFICS and their local association as many active staff members when transitioning to retirement were not aware of FAFICS and its local associations.

22. As regards this suggestion and others concerning assistance of UNJSPF including information on FAFICS in their annual letter as was previously done, the President pointed out that the UNJSPF did inform those about to retire of member associations until 2015. However, he was pleased to see that individual associations were trying again, and it would seem pertinent to bring this subject up when the CEPA was before the Council during this session.

Agenda item 5. Report of the President

23. The Report of the President (Council document 52/2023/D.5) can be found in the FAFICS website.
24. The President began by thanking everyone for the support that he had received over the course of this year. He stated that the past year had been a busy one, but not as stressful as previous years. He particularly welcomed working with the Bureau, which was a strong team. If he had to characterize this past year, he would say it was one concerned with both the outward facing work as well as the vital inward facing work of implementing the changes to working procedures to reflect the new Rules of Procedure in projects and deliberations.
25. He then raised the situation of the budget in terms of travel, for which expenditures had been much lower due to the pandemic and the more use of zoom meetings. He noted that some travel costs were envisaged to support Associations attending the annual Council sessions. Some selective travel by Bureau members was also undertaken on FAFICS business to either establish or reactivate Associations. Being ever mindful of our current climate crisis and maximizing the use of technology and being judicious about travel costs, he nevertheless felt some travel was essential as it facilitated discussions and improved the cohesion of members associations, making the Federation stronger. However, one issue which recently arose had to do with the Pension Fund's funding of travel for members of the FAFICS delegation to the Pension Board. Since 2013 the Fund had funded the travel of four FAFICS delegates to the Board session. As of this year, FAFICS was notified that, based on a 2006 decision of the General Assembly, only two delegates from FAFICS would be funded. He felt strongly that the delegation had to be fully present with four delegates, not just two. He

assured the Council that he would be discussing this issue with the Pension Fund.

26. He commended the Working Group on Communications for its production of a strong draft strategy report which will be discussed over the course of the Council's session. As for revising the website, several initiatives have been started but for various reasons had to be abandoned. It was hoped that with more time and additional expertise a new website could be achieved. As regards ensuring that important documents were available in English, French and Spanish, if not the whole document, then at least an executive summary should be available in these languages which, he was pleased to add, had been accomplished for most documents for this session. He noted that translation software tools were getting better but experience in the last year showed that human review and professional care was still needed.
27. As concerns the new Rules of Procedure, these have been implemented in word and spirit of their importance, which meant always undertaking decisions with the full meaning transparency, due process, including accountability, working as colleagues together, and communicating everything done while looking for new talent for those that had to leave. He hoped that in implementing the Rules, his actions had been clear and transparent, especially when it came to making nominations for positions that came from the Expert Pool. He noted that currently only nineteen names were included in the Expertise Pool and encouraged member associations to request members to make their expertise available
28. He noted that the Standing Committee on After-Service Health Insurance and Long-term Care (SC-ASHIL) had been very active over this last year especially since the issue of funding the after-service health insurance subsidies had not disappeared and was becoming more urgent for many associations. He assured the Council that FAFICS would remain vigilant and would need a strong and active Standing Committee to advocate for these issues.
29. In the area of pension matters there was good and not so good news. As for the good news, pension operations were improving with much faster answering times. The CEPA did a very good job in managing the expectations of retirees as well as the active participant. The not so

good news was that the investment world was very volatile with notable risks. Investments were currently back up beyond the 2020 level, but there was no guarantee that it would remain so.

30. The President referred to a separate document (Council document 53/2023/D.5d) which contained his ideas on succession planning for next year. He also appreciated the service of all elected and appointed officials especially that of Vice-President Odette Foudral, who was completing her term, and Secretary Jay Sundaresan who was stepping down. He noted that the elections would be formalized later in the session but informed the Council that there was one nomination for Secretary, and that was Delia Barcelona (AFICS-Philippines) who was presently a Vice-President. With her election, that would mean there were two openings for vice-president. Another person who was stepping down was Georges Kutukdjian (AAFU-AFUS-Paris) who has served FAFICS for close to twenty years. In his place, he would be nominating Jayantilal Karia (AFICS-NY) for the position of Chair of the Standing Committee-ASHIL, as discussed with the Bureau, to serve along with Giovanni Quaglia (AAFIB-Brazil) who would continue in his second year as Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee working close with the Core Group.
31. The President then referred to FAFICS Rules of Procedure (14.2) which states that “Upon completion of their terms of office, FAFICS Presidents may be granted the title of “President Emeritus” and may attend FAFICS Council meetings without any financial implication for the budget of the Federation”. He remarked that Marco Breschi, former President of FAFICS, had led the Federation through some turbulent times and formally proposed that the title of *President Emeritus* be granted to Marco Breschi in recognition of the time and effort that he spent leading the Federation from 2019- 2022.
32. In conclusion, the President said he was pleased to say that the year behind had been a positive one. The internal discussion about the Rules was all but over, and now the focus was on communications and ensuring full transparency in all the Federation’s work. FAFICS’ representatives on various Pension Board bodies were well respected and very active. Both Standing Committees were active, and the Federation was growing. He thanked all for their support and said how grateful he was for the opportunity to serve this important Federation,

representing people who have served the world in their careers and now continue in many ways to represent the principles of the United Nations in their daily lives.

33. In the discussion of the President's Report, members congratulated the President for his work over the past year and showed appreciation for his leadership which aligned with the overall goal of full transparency, due process, accountability and collegiality and were pleased that the President's first year in office along with the Bureau had been a good and positive year.
34. During the discussion, the following points were raised:
 - a. transition in implementing the Rules of Procedure should continue.
 - b. next steps in succession planning should be outlined
 - c. expertise pool management should be finalized
 - d. identification of qualified candidates should be further elaborated
 - e. concern about the communications strategy moving forward
 - f. use of languages for documents and interpretation
 - g. working with other regional organizations
35. **The Council took note of the President's report and thanked him for the comprehensive details provided therein**
36. The President thanked everyone for their comments and especially noted the increased co-operation within the Bureau. He also was pleased to have been able to produce some advocacy videos which have been well-received by associations, and he would continue to try to communicate in this way. As travel to all associations was just not possible, he would be very glad to provide a video for assemblies or other events. As for meetings in multiple languages, he was fully committed to having FAFICS documents issued in three languages, but interpretation was an entirely different matter as the cost of interpretation was just too prohibitive.
37. He then asked if there was consensus on acclamation as regards his proposal to honour Marco Breschi, former President of FAFICS, with the title of emeritus.

38. **The Council approved by acclamation the granting of the emeritus title to Marco Breschi, former President of FAFICS during the years of 2019 to 2022**

39. Due to the fact that the distribution of the Succession Planning document (Council document 53/2023/D.5.d) had been delayed, the Presiding Officer informed that the Council would take up the report either on Tuesday afternoon or Thursday morning. The delegate from AFICS-NY in reply said that this item was extremely important, and that the succession planning item should be taken up as early as possible in the Council's session as it was of critical importance for due process and transparency noting that these representative appointments were very important.

President's proposal on succession planning (taken up by Council on Thursday morning, 20 July)

40 As explained by the President, the concepts and philosophy that helped develop the new Rules of Procedure was the emphasis on transparency in succession planning and elections. Document 53/2023/D5. d presented by the President to the Council captured his thinking on proposals and actions to be taken at the 54th Council in 2024.

Appointments to various Pension Board committees and the need to build new talent at the same time needed to be ensured so that the expertise in FAFICS was properly developed and used well. He noted that the document before the Council had not been approved by the Bureau and did not require a decision at this time. It was meant to gauge what Associations thought about his approach. His intent was to be transparent and provide a snapshot of his thoughts on succession planning over the next few years.

41. Many delegates commended the President on his paper which provided his thoughts on the way forward and made the following points:

- This is a transparent way forward with due process and is a fundamental item.
- At future Council meetings the President's succession plan report should be discussed right after the President presents his report, that is, on the first day of the session not on the last day.

- Must be careful that in 2025, when there will be a big turnover in representatives, proposals for succession are made in a timely way to the Council to ensure succession and handovers happen.
 - Must be judicious in making changes
 - The importance of building up the Expertise Pool
 - The importance of drawing down on the Expertise Pool for proposals for succession
 - Changes in the Pension Board and its subsidiary bodies and groups and representation should, if possible, be aligned for the duration of terms specified by the Pension Board as these are technical groups and continuity of expertise is important. Changeovers could if needed be staggered and transitioned so that not everyone is replaced in the same year
 - Is it more important to be well represented or to have a change in FAFICS representation every two years which usually means a learning curve of one year? It is important that FAFICS is well represented. This is a dilemma.
 - Only the best people are needed to support the various activities of FAFICS, and nominations should not be considered as a popularity contest but a serious role for those with knowledge and expertise in a particular area
42. In reply to the statement on the dilemma, one delegation pointed to the need for knowledge transfer and asked how FAFICS could be a better provider in this regard. It was hoped that in next year's report there would be some better indicators on how knowledge transfer could be planned among present members who have expertise and formalize it with those serving on committees or the Pension Board itself.
43. in response to a query on the Expertise Pool, the President informed that the Expertise Pool had had a good beginning with a good number of people submitting their names. He noted that all chairs and vice-chairs, representatives on the Pension board and its committees have been chosen from the Pool. However, since the first round of submissions, there have not been many additions. He would make another call for submissions in his next newsletter and noted that any Association could put forward a name at any time. He hoped that the form could be simplified and in his next newsletter he would announce that he would

be looking for new names to expand the core groups and for the elections in 2024.

44. in response to another concern about consultations with the Bureau, the President assured the Council that he always consulted with the Bureau on his nominations and would continue to do so for his next proposals.
45. Moving away from nominations, several delegates felt that a proper induction for new delegates would be important, and it would be a good way for the Council to inform these new members of the Council's objectives, activities, and roles. This could be carried out at the very beginning of the Council session and could be both in-person and virtual and could go a long way to having better, more mature and rapid Council decisions. Many emphasized the need for training, induction sessions and hand-over notes for a better transfer of knowledge.
46. Another delegate noted that in the past the Standing Committees on pension and health insurance met at the beginning of the Council session. Everyone was welcome to those meeting which turned out to be akin to a training session for those attending as during the discussion FAFICS members could explain the subject and terms used, and for newcomers it was a good training exercise - they learned and even became part of the decision-making process.
47. As regards the mention of training, one delegate reminded that behind the idea of standing committees was the notion of establishing core teams and noted that the health insurance team had done so and may even be expanded. This was a vital way for a team of people to meet throughout the year, become familiar with the issues and share and transfer knowledge and thereby provide possible candidates for succession. It was noted that for pension issues, the Pension Board representatives were considered as the core team, but that at last year's Council meeting it had been agreed that this core team would be expanded with one or two individuals from the Expertise Pool to allow for sharing and transfer of knowledge and succession.

Agenda item 6: Association matters

Situation of the former UNJSPF participants in the former USSR, Ukrainian SSR and Belorussian SSR

48. Vice-President Odette Foudral noted that the Bureau had decided to keep this item on the agenda even though the number of those deprived of their rights to receive their pensions had decreased, but it did not mean that FAFICS should remain quiet. FAFICS should continue to be in solidarity with retirees as this unfortunate situation could occur again anywhere in the world. She recognized the work that both Katia Chestopalov and Andres Castellanos had tried to do on their behalf, noting that it was important that FAFICS keeps those pensioners in mind and keep the small working group intact. She mentioned that this matter had been brought to the attention of the CEPA who gave assurances that the UNJSPF had taken all possible actions.
49. Emeritus President Andres Castellanos provided the background and history on this item and felt strongly that the group should continue as it was a question of solidarity with UN retirees. Others felt it might be an opportune time to enlarge the mandate of the group as this situation could occur again in other countries.
50. The Presiding Officer in summing up the discussion thanked the delegates for their deep interest and concern for those dealing with this difficult pension situation and noted the show of solidarity for those that might be enduring similar situations in other parts of the world.

Small Pensions

51. The Secretary introduced the Note on the Predicament of Small Pension Beneficiaries from AFICS- Addis Ababa (Council document 53/2023/D.11d). The delegate from AFICS-AA informed the Council that they had submitted a letter to the UNJSPF but had not received a response. He described the situation in Ethiopia where many retirees are paid \$100 or less per month and with Inflation of 85% for basic food commodities and housing means they are enduring extreme hardships.
52. Gerhard Schramek (ARICSA -Austria) explained that the issue of small pensions was not a new one for FAFICS and the Pension Fund has acted within its regulations and rules, meaning that it has certain limitations. He provided the history of this issue and stated that FAFICS was the only body in the Pension Board who raised the issue of small pensions in past years. FAFICS started in 2006 by submitting documents of request to review the provisions of the pension adjustment system for small pensions. FAFICS had been successful in its pursuit as the subject

was discussed in the Pension Fund in 2011, 2012 and 2013. In 2014, the Pension Board decided that the table of small pension threshold amounts be adjusted by 10%, on a one-time basis, effective 1 April 2016. However, In the end, because of a deficit in the Fund, they could not proceed.

53. So perhaps it was now time for FAFICS to raise this issue again. Another document would need to be prepared and carefully explained as this is a very complicated issue. He suggested that FAFICS start to consider what could be done and start preparing a document that would go to the Pension Board's April 2024 session for a first round of discussion.
54. The President thanked delegations for their concern on this important issue and thanked Gerhard Schramek for his historical overview and thought it would be important to work on this issue by:
 - Considering anew what should be done
 - Review again and reinvigorate the Pension Fund's decision of 2014 with a new document from FAFICS which must be carefully executed
 - Start investigating through the Bureau what other options FAFICS may consider for solidarity

Retirees and beneficiaries in Myanmar

55. The delegate from Myanmar outlined the difficult situation in his country as a result of a military coup that took place in Myanmar on 1 February 2021.
56. AFICS-Myanmar believed it was important to bring this situation to the attention of the FAFICS Council and requested that his remarks be noted in the Council report. He added that AFICS-Myanmar did not have the means to address the situation and sought the assistance of FAFICS in urgently consulting with the UNJSPF in finding ways and means to alleviate the dire situation of the retirees in Myanmar.
57. In response, the President said that it was indeed a very serious situation and FAFICS should remain seized of these issues for Myanmar and other areas and see what benefits or assistance could be provided. He noted that it seemed now that it was a time when people with small

incomes were being set upon and it behooved FAFICS to increase its solidarity efforts.

58. In agreeing with the President, Gerhard Schramek (ARICSA-Austria) added that this was indeed a very difficult situation which has been going on and seemed to be even worse this time. He saw several possibilities for dealing with this situation.
 - a. Address the UNJSPF about the high transaction fees which in the past the Pension Fund always tried to find other venues for banking
 - b. Raise the issue with CEPA when she came to the Council session
 - c. Look into the use of the Emergency Fund

Agenda item 7: Pension issues

Meeting with Ms. Rosemarie McClean, Chief Executive of Pension Administration (CEPA)

59. The Presiding Officer welcomed Ms. McClean, CEPA, to this year's Council's session and noted that she had a presentation to share with the members (See FAFICS website). The President also welcomed her and noted the improvement in the service to retirees and beneficiaries and thanked her for being present during this session of the Council.
60. Ms. McClean began with some key facts about the size and magnitude of the Fund. At the end of 2022 the net assets totaled \$77.9 billion, and the Fund provided \$3.13 billion periodic benefits and took in US \$ 3.12 billion contributions from employers and participants. She added that retirees are living longer when compared to year 2000 where there were just over 500 retirees over the age of 90 while in 2022 there were almost 4,000 and this positive ageing is something that must be kept in mind by the Pension Fund in order to remain viable.
61. As for strong outreach efforts carried out by the Pension Fund, she noted that for the year 2022 there were 1,264 pension benefits suspended through the normal Certificate of Entitlement process. That number was originally over 4,000 but thanks to FAFICS and its member associations who had been helpful in working to find these retirees, as well as the Fund itself which had made over 1,000 phone calls, that number was reduced to 1,264. Best efforts were also made in Sudan and the Russian

Federation to ensure pension payments were made. While always challenging, the Fund's good relationship with the UN Treasury goes a long way with making payments.

62. As far as pension processing, the goal was to have new retirees put into the system within 15 business days. For the year 2022 the benchmark was outperformed at 93.3 % and at 92.2 % year to date. She added that response time for phone inquiries was a minute and there are toll free numbers for contacting the Pension fund in over 50 countries. Over 25,500 digital certificates of entitlement had been submitted, which led to a significant reduction in paper use. She also was pleased to add that there was a new portal for member organizations which helped both the Fund and the member organization in tracking the status of submissions.
63. Future work will involve the preparations for the closing of the MINUSMA mission in Mali where there may be as many as 1,600 separations. The Fund was lining up their communications and presentations to staff so they would understand the separation process, and depending on their length of service, their pension benefits.
64. The Fund's CARE strategy, for the period 2024-2030 consists of three pillars, namely, i) to improve clients' experience, ii) to modernize pension services and iii) to strengthen relationships with all stakeholders. These remain the Fund's primary focus, but now it is important that there is good investment in quality data which is key to upgrading aging systems. This all needs to be thoughtfully planned for and requires good data clean-up. Past experiences have pointed to the need to start with data clean-up and thorough testing before the actual cutover is done. Because of these plans for modernization, the budget proposal will be impacted in 2024 and future years.
65. Finally, as the Fund will be celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2024, the Fund's communication's team was looking at ways to celebrate the history of the Fund and she requested help from FAFICS in finding old photos or any stories to share. She felt that this important anniversary was worthy of a celebration.

Meeting with Mr. Karl-Ludwig Soll, Chief Financial Officer, UNJSPF

66. Mr. Karl-Ludwig Soll, CFO, provided an overview of three issues pertaining to the Fund including information on the financial statements

for 2022, retirement benefits and the two-track system. His power point presentation can be found on the FAFICS website.

67. Concerning the financial situation for 2022 he was pleased to say that the Pension Fund had expected to receive an unqualified audit, and, on that basis, he could say that the amount of resources paid into the Fund was \$3.1 billion while the outflow was also \$3.1 billion. This meant that contributions flowing in and benefits going out were balancing with each other and it was not expected that the Fund would need to use any principal for at least thirty years. The net assets at the end of 2022 stood at \$77.9 billion while benefit liabilities stood at \$70.6 billion. What drives these numbers is the underlying demographic development. Although many people think that the Fund is static and stale that is not the case. Despite the fact that Headquarters locations numbers are stable, other voluntary funded programmes, especially in the humanitarian system is growing substantially mainly from staff increases in UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration and the World Food Programme which are growing by more than 10 % in staff per year. He added that this meant that the Pension Fund was a rejuvenating system in that regard. In 2021 there were 137,261 participants while in 2023 the number grew by 4.6% to almost 143,612.
68. As for inflation and currency changes and their effect on benefits, pension benefits are protected from inflation through cost-of-living arrangements (COLAs) which are reviewed twice a year. In 2022, there were 97 countries with a significant COLA update. In 2023, there was another COLA adjustment, and 115 countries moved upwards showing just how global inflation was.
69. As for effects on the two-track system, he explained that all pensions are initially calculated in the dollar track which is based on the cost of living of the United States. Therefore, should a retiree decide not to switch to the two-track, the benefit would be based on the cost-of-living of the United States, regardless of where the retiree chose to live or whatever currency was chosen. The adjustments made to the amount of the benefit is based on the CPI (consumer price index) of the US and if the retiree chooses to receive his/her pension in currency other than the dollar, it would simply be converted based on the average UN conversion rate of the preceding quarter.

70. There are very few duty stations where people choose the two-track system, and the number is declining each year. While some 20% of beneficiaries choose the two-track system, only 5 % of all retirees in 2022 were paid on the two-track system, since the system has safeguards that pay a portion of the US Dollar amount if it is higher than the local benefit.
71. Currently, there are 73 countries where the local track has been suspended and six additional countries are under consideration for suspension.
72. In the follow-up discussions, questions surrounding pension administration were asked. There were a number of questions concerning payment disruptions due to imposed sanctions on countries which included Myanmar, Sudan and the Russian Federation. The CFO answered that the Pension Fund always tried their best to make payments and then even tried nontraditional payment models and added that payments were reaching Myanmar. The Pension Administration would always try to collaborate with the UN Treasury, UNDP or a peacekeeping mission to find ways to make payments. He added though that if ever there were a disruption it was good to contact the Pension Fund as they would work to find other payment methods. It was also not a question of pension suspensions, but it was banking procedures that caused difficulties and the Pension Fund tried and would always try to find a means to make pension payments.
73. Concerning the digital certificate of entitlement, which is based on facial recognition, it was suggested that while the number of retirees using the digital CE was increasing, it would be good if the Pension Fund demonstrated how the release of staff resources from the paper-based submission could be used to better client services. Ms. McClean said that the new DCE process was a much more secure channel, but the paper-based submission would always be accepted.
74. It was also suggested that the Pension Fund help promote FAFICS as it had done in the past. Suggestions included:
 - (a) develop a brochure and marketing campaign as CAFICS-ACAFI did in 2016 with the Pension Fund when letters were sent to all retirees in Canada through the Pension Fund and they were

able to increase their membership by around 300 additional members

- (b) as reported by the delegate from AFICS-Netherlands who had a positive experience with Client Services who allowed them to send to all beneficiaries in the Netherlands a letter through the Client Services and as a result their membership was enhanced by 25%
- (c) the Pension Fund, in their annual letter, could include all the names and contact information of all the Member Associations as they had in the past
- (d) when the UNJSPF conducts pre-retirement seminars information could be included on how to contact Member Associations
- (e) the Pension Fund could publish all names addresses of local associations as they had previously done. Would like to see. if this could be reactivated
- (f) information on where the pensioners are in each country would be helpful to ensure that member associations are knowledgeable of who they are and how they can be helped.

75. The CEPA in response said all these requests would be brought back to New York and she would further discuss with the FAFICS President as far as timelines, costs and information as this would be for the greater good of all Member Associations.
76. Another request concerned a recent survey sent out by the Pension Fund concerning their own communications strategy and she was asked. to share any changes that might be coming about as a result of the responses to the survey.
77. She replied that while they were getting more timely feedback from beneficiaries, they were looking to engage with a professional firm to send out surveys as they did want to receive feedback. Through the survey and dealing with the pandemic they have learned that their outreach could be quite effective and now not be limited by travel budgets.
78. The President added his voice to the questions and asked the CEPA about the many complaints and concerns FAFICS was receiving from those retired staff with small pensions, despite cost-of-living increases, as they are just not receiving enough to survive. As the Pension Fund is a

rules-based institution was there anything FAFICS could do to work together perhaps with the Emergency Fund to alleviate these problems

79. The CEPA responded that pensions are based on a formulation of how long a staff member worked and at what level and perhaps these staff members did not have long careers. She added that the best avenue would be to go through the Pension Board's Plan Review Group as they are looking at the provisions of the pension plan. The Emergency Fund was there in cases of a sudden emergency, or a family crisis. The Plan Review Group is looking at all the provisions and what changes, if any, could be considered.

Meeting with Mr. Pedro Guazo, Representative of the Secretary for the Investments of the assets of the UNJSPF (RSG)

80. The Representative of the Secretary-General for the investments of the assets of the UNJSPF detailed how the global equity and bond markets performed on a yearly basis from 1998- 2023 as public equities and bonds are the two main asset classes and the drivers of the Fund's portfolio. In so doing he said that there were some extraordinary years along with some not so good years and that was exactly why the portfolio was so diversified. In 2022 there was a negative return of \$13 billion dollars or an overall decrease of 14.6 percent. While this was a shocking return, it also showed that the Fund was now facing a financial crisis that was much more complex and uncertain than originally believed. With the risks of pandemics, natural destruction and wars, there are now unprecedented risks which affect all financial markets, and the Fund must move ahead with caution.
81. In 2023, he noted, that so far there is positive performance in the financial markets and the market value of the UNJSPF assets was at \$81.7 billion as of 31 March 2023, 5% higher than the previous year. He added that the Fund not only meets its long-term real rate of return target but is also cost efficient and a leader in sustainable investment. With the Fund's funding ratio well above 130%, there are more assets to pay for liabilities and there are few pension funds that are in this strong and solid situation. The Fund is also very safe with strong business continuity and cyber security mechanisms, as remarked by the internal auditors and the Board of Auditors. The Fund has also taken new

measures to increase transparency with a new project requiring more and better information on the website. The Fund's goal is to be effective, efficient, safe, responsible and transparent.

82. The President opened the floor for questions. During the meeting the following issues were raised:
- (a) optional Pension Fund provisions for participants to purchase additional spousal benefits that are actuarially neutral
 - (b) improvements to small pensions and child benefits
 - (c) advocate for full voting rights in the Board, as FAFICS is the only group that is not at par with the rest of the members of the Pension Board despite representing thousands of beneficiaries
 - (d) restoration of the remaining 0.5% point of the reduction factor applied to the first COLA.
 - (e) additional transparency regarding Pension Board's agendas
 - (f) need information for legal care givers and family care givers
 - (g) difficulty in verifying signatures for the CE
 - (h) surviving spouse allocations should be reviewed
 - (i) double payment received by some retirees in 2015 which is recouped at the time of death of the retiree and then falls to the survivors to make the pay back.
83. The President asked the RSG if he felt he had all the tools and staff needed to feel confident in his investing procedures. The RSG replied that the OIM had been receiving resources every year and there were currently adequate tools, and their benchmarks are adequate as shown by the results which are effective, efficient safe, transparent and responsible. He said that OIM would always be needing more as the size and complexity of the Fund changes and more resources are being requested for next year and they have had support from the Budget Committee of the Board, and it was hoped that the Pension Board would endorse these requests at its meeting in July. In turn he added that OIM was giving back results as demonstrated through its results.
84. One other question dealt with the changing world with different events of various natures such as war, inflation, lower growth and its impact on the Fund and whether the asset allocation through public equities – as is the current architecture – continued to be the best or does the OIM plan to change the structure by mitigating risks and investing elsewhere. Also, it was asked if there would be changes in the asset allocations and

how this would impact on the 3.5% rate of return for the sustainability of the Fund.

85. In response, the RSG referred to the asset liability management study which was undertaken every four years and was done this year. Through this study, the Fund sees how the liabilities are developing and a consultant proposes an allocation of assets that could maximize the return in the long term of the Portfolio. This is reviewed in the first half of the year by the Investments Committee, the Committee of Actuaries and the Assets and Liability Management Committee which have all endorsed the study which will then be presented to the Pension Board. This report will be made public on the website when approved by the Board. Basically, changes are small percentage changes up or down so the strategic long-term perspective is very consistent. If the Fund allocates resources in that way, there is a likelihood - of more than 50% - that the Fund will achieve a 3.5% rate of return over the next ten years.
86. The President in summarizing the discussion thanked the CEPA, CFO and RSG for their time and effort to present to FAFICS. He noted that pensions are the primary issue that is discussed in FAFICS and was glad that they had had the opportunity to receive feedback from the Council and appreciated the information provided. He noted how the architecture of members' lives was changing and challenging with age, similarly the Pension Fund is facing challenges on the investments side – no longer continuous growth as the world faces so many new challenges. FAFICS is glad that the Fund is aware of these challenges and glad that the Fund is communicating and trying to get the messages out. FAFICS is more than willing to help in any way in this regard. As President, he would continue his personal contact with all three officials and should particular situations need direct contact, for instance as concerns the situation in Myanmar, he would seek their assistance. He appreciated the good job they are doing and looked forward to seeing everyone at the next Council session.

Pension matters

87. The Presiding Officer reported that the Council had before them six summary reports or notes which covered the reports to be taken up by the Pension Board at their meeting scheduled for the following week. The Chair of the Standing Committee, Suzanne Bishopric, was asked to

introduce the six reports that she, Jerry Barton and Gerhard Schramek had reviewed and summarized on behalf of FAFICS.

1. Risk management report (Council document 53/2023/D.11a/2)

88. This summary note describes the risk management of the assets of the Pension Fund as set forth in the report of the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Pedro Guazo, prepared for the Pension Board. Accomplishments in the area of risk management in 2022 were fairly extensive and the Fund had now achieved perfect compliance with the performance standards started in 2012. The RSG completed the fraud risk assessment for external managers among many other initiatives in this area. Ms. Bishopric added that more risk assessments needed to be completed but all in all the assets of the Fund were on the road to a better risk management system.

2. Plan review group (Council document 52/2023/D.11a/4)

89. On this report, Gerhard Schramek provided the background to the establishment of the Plan Review Group (PRG) set up in February 2022 as a group composed of eight members: two representatives from each constituent group- Governing Bodies, Executive Heads, participants - and two representatives of FAFICS. Suzanne Bishopric and Gerhard Schramek serve as the two FAFICS representatives. As part of its terms of reference, the Plan Review Group was tasked with considering proposals for simplification and/or clarification of the Regulations and Administrative Rules that would facilitate the administration of benefits without changing the nature of individual benefits under the plan.
90. The Pension Board agreed that the Plan Review Group would undertake the following tasks:
- (a) Review the proposals of the 2008-2010 Working Group on Plan Design to:
 - (i) Determine whether priority should still be given to those proposals approved by the General Assembly to be implemented” when the actuarial valuation of the UNJSPF shows a clear upward pattern of surpluses, namely positive trend of actuarial surpluses”.
 - (ii) Determine whether the proposals not yet approved by the The General Assembly should still be adopted.
 - (b) Review the proposals submitted by the Staff Pension Committees

- on aspects of the plan;
 - (c) Consider proposals for simplification and clarification of the Regulations, Rules and Pension Adjustment System that facilitate administration of benefits, but do not change the nature of any benefits;
 - (d) Formulate and prioritize proposals to meet the future long-term needs of the Fund;
 - (e) Include quantitative analysis on the administrative and actuarial costs/savings associated with individual recommendations and overall impact, and;
 - (f) Prepare and present a report including its recommendations to the Board Session in July 2024 or earlier. In any event provide interim updates to the Board as appropriate, and not less frequently than once a year.
91. In June 2023, the Plan Review Group received from the Pension Administration a list of approximately 50 proposals for consideration, which included the removal of obsolete provisions and clarification of language in various areas of the Regulations and Rules, as well as proposals intended to streamline the administration of the existing provisions.
92. The Group finalized its consideration of the numerous proposals submitted by the Staff Pension Committees including the additional information provided by several SPCs recently requested by the Group to obtain clarity on what was being requested.
93. In resolution 57/286, the GA approved certain changes to the Fund's Regulations and Rules and the Pension Adjustment System subject to sufficient surpluses from the Fund's actual valuations. The outstanding measures to reverse economy measure that have been approved in principle but have not yet been fully implemented are below and are FAFICS priorities
- (a) elimination of the 0.5 per cent reduction factor in the first cost-of-living adjustment due after retirement
 - (b) commencement of cost-of-living for deferred benefits as from age 50
94. A long and intensive discussion followed with many comments referring to the significant number of issues that the Group needed to review.

One delegate thought the PRG should whittle down the list to the top five or ten issues but be sure to include the hardship issues caused by small pensions and child benefits to name just two.

95. The President asked if these issues, as well as small pensions, would need a request from the CEPA to the Board to refer them to the Plan Review Group and thought it would be a logical move. Gerhard Schramek agreed and replied that FAFICS had a chance now to do something constructive on these issues, especially as regards small pensions.

3. Management of investments (Council document 23/D.11a)

96. This report reviewed the Management of Investments as presented in the report of the RSG to the Pension Board for information not a decision. A review of the Fund's returns for 2022 in comparison to 2021 was provided. Suzanne Bishopric noted that the Fund was on the way to recovery, but the three-year nominal rate of return was not at the 3.5% objective which was one note of caution.
97. She also noted that the RSG's report was extensively about environmental, social and governance developments and integration of the elements in the investment process with a particular emphasis on climate change. She noted that the Fund became a signatory to the UN. Biodiversity Conference (COP 15).
98. References were often made to the key watchwords which are safety, profitability, liquidity and convertibility. In this regard, FAFICS notes the improvement of the performance of the Fixed-Income Portfolio during 2022, which was partially outsourced late in the year. After a year of experience, FAFICS would welcome further information on the performance and results of this approach.
99. In the long discussion that followed remarks were made concerning the Pension Fund's leadership in environmental and social integration. Many remarks were made concerning the question of profits and ethical considerations which presents a dilemma as funds need to be profitable on one hand and have ethical considerations on the other. Therefore, one suggestion would be to trust the Pension Fund in their judicious decision-making. However, Member States do watch as does the public

and the Fund does not want to have any negative feedback on its investment choices.

4. Report of the Fund's Solvency and Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee (Council document 52/2023/D.11a/7)

100. The FSALM Committee is an essential part of the governance structure of the Fund, supporting the Board in the monitoring of the Fund's solvency and security. Both Marashetty Seenappa and Suzanne Bishopric serve on the Committee. It is the Committee of the Pension Board and as such prepares information for the Board, one of which would be a Funding Policy, to be presented to the Board next week. She felt that the FSALM had done a good job and if the funding definition were approved, some of the plan design changes could possibly go into effect, once approved by the Board and recommended to the Plan Review Group and the General Assembly at the end of 2024.
101. One question was raised relating to a comment in the report that there had been a lack of training of Board members in industry standards, which was based on a previous recommendation and represented a fiduciary risk. In this connection, one delegate suggested that with the succession planning nominations for FAFICS, retirees serving on FAFICS working groups could be also allowed such training which would facilitate understanding both the theoretical and practical Fund issues. Another delegate felt what was needed was both skills and training.

5. Application of paragraph 26 of the Pension Adjustment System (Council document 53/2023/D.11a/5)

102. Gerhard Schramek introduced this summary report. He began by saying that under the provisions of paragraph 26 of the Pension Adjustment System (PAS), the Chief Executive of Pension Administration can discontinue the establishment of a local currency base amount for countries where the application of the local currency track leads to aberrant results. In the report to the Board, it is stated that the CEPA had developed a more systematic method to identify countries that may need to be considered for suspension under paragraph 26 (a) of the Pension Adjustment System.

103. To support the application and administration of paragraph 26, the CEPA has established an internal Two-Track Working Group as a cross-functional forum to monitor and review the application of the Two-Track system, with a view to supporting relevant decision-making undertaken by the CEPA. Page 4 of the document contains the listed general principles of the new method. He added that he thought FAFICS should support these measures, as they were more transparent than in the past.
104. Most member associations in their interventions did not want to disadvantage any retirees from the Two-Track system but wondered if this was a first step to removing the Two-Track system and how could FAFICS work on the issue. Gerhard Schramek said that there was no discussion of that kind ongoing.
105. The President and others were concerned about acquired rights and thought that there should be more of an explanation on what basis decisions were taken. One delegate would have liked to see a bit more of how the information was going to be managed. He thought it should be clearer as terms like fair and transparent become somewhat subjective and thought it was important to be able to explain new procedures to their constituents.
106. Suzanne Bishopric said the Two-Track system was designed to be a protection. Currently there was an unusually strong US dollar, but the trend was surely to change. When asked why a retiree could not go back to the dollar track, Suzanne Bishopric responded that they did not want pensioners gaming the system, that is, they did not want retirees to be speculative in their pension choices.
107. The Presiding Officer in summarizing the discussion declared it a very rich one with many different opinions and what came out clearly was that these pension issues were extremely difficult and technical and noted that they are dealt with in an institutional and political backdrop and if one tinkers around with one element it may have implications on another and FAFICS must be aware of these different problems. not only be aware of the direct effects on our lives around the 29th and 30th of each month, but how careful FAFICS must be in approaching these issues. It was good to know that there were specialists around our Federation who can deal professionally with these issues as FAFICS

needs to approach these issues carefully. He also thanked Suzanne Bishopric and Gerhard Schramek who had translated these technical and complicated issues so they could be understood. He was also pleased to note that FAFICS was developing a succession policy because there was a real need to have volunteers who were willing to invest their time and effort to help in this important cause.

6. Information and Communications Technology Strategy in the OIM

108. The final of the six reports (Council document 53/2023/D.11a/5) Information and Communications Technology Strategy in the Office of Investment Management was not discussed by the Council.

Agenda item 8: After-service health insurance and long-term care (ASHIL) and Report from the Standing Committee on ASHIL

109. A member of the Standing Committee, Mr. Lucien Back, provided an overview of this agenda item as found in document (53/2023/D.6) which provided summaries of the discussion in the Standing Committee. He noted the Core Group, which was geographically well balanced, and the approach of the Group had been working quite well. He also noted that the document set out, under sections A to E, the status of implementation of recommendations which the committee was mandated with from the 52nd FAFICS Council in 2022. Section F of the report set out priority issues for the work plan of the Standing Committee in 2023-2024 and provided the current activities and plans of the Standing Committee while Section G contained all recommendations by the SC-ASHIL for consideration by the 53rd Council.
110. One of the main activities of the core group was a questionnaire which was circulated among the health insurance Focal Points of FAFICS member associations as well as a separate survey to African retiree associations. However, this survey was not reached by all Associations and may have to be redone. The survey was intended to get feedback on the three following crucial issues which would then provide input for the committee's ongoing workplan:
- Proposed or adopted policies on the funding by Member States of ASHI liabilities (pay as you go or pay as you accrue).
 - Existing or anticipated long-term care provisions.

- Access to ASHI in African countries
111. He then outlined the possible Issues to be addressed by the SC - ASHIL in 2023-2024 based on the survey:
- Harmonization of health insurance schemes within the UN to implement best practices and reduce costs.
 - Inadequacy of MIP especially for hospitalization. In addition, vitamins and nutrients which are not reimbursable under MIP rules although medical practitioners prescribe them in the framework of a treatment.
 - Avoid administrative misunderstanding between health care institutions and Third-Party Administrators (TPAs) who should consider that most patients in a given country, where it exists, are covered by a national health insurance scheme and are not familiar with international health insurance schemes.
 - Minimize processing time of reimbursement claims by TPA.
 - More hospitals in major cities should be brought into the network of TPAs to provide health care facilities upon receipt of a guarantee of payment.
112. He noted the ongoing work of the JIU which is undertaking a major evaluation of the insurance schemes across the system. As a result of their work, it is hoped that in 2024, there would be a better understanding of all the health care schemes.
113. In the discussions that followed there was a lively exchange about the different UN and national insurance schemes in countries such as Brazil, Austria, Canada, Italy, USA, Philippines, and France along with some historical background.
114. It was noted that there is a long history regarding how ASHIL is funded by different agencies, and this was linked to Member States often raising the issue of having retirees covered under their national health schemes of the countries they are nationals of or residing in. While this is already going on in the US (Medicare part B for the US residents) and on an ad hoc practice in some other countries, it is of course a slippery slope with regard to also pension issues and the UN pension scheme viz a viz national pension scheme. One suggestion was to provide additional information to

retirees on their benefits, as many of them are not fully aware of the full package of their benefits.

115. There was a general consensus that long term care could be a desired add on to ASHIL, but large increases to the cost of the insurance should be avoided. It was understood that long term care, especially in the US, had a very high-cost implication for premiums.
116. Finally, there was a consensus on highlighting and recognising the long and deep contribution of the Chairperson of the Standing Committee, Georges Kutukdjian.
117. The President thanked the Standing Committee for their important work and noted that there were additional actions which were underway (such as letters to the Staff Councils) in furthering the work on this important matter. He referred to the importance of recommendation three and how involved those in New York would be in dealing with these insurance matters. He reiterated that the insurance schemes of the United Nations were the second most important benefit to retirees after the pension and FAFICS needed to actively defend and improve upon it. He urged the Council to adopt the following twelve recommendations.

Recommendation 1: The Core Group with committed and knowledgeable colleagues emanating from FAFICS member associations should pursue its activities in 2023 – 2024 based on current terms of reference. Its membership may be expanded with at least one colleague from another headquarter location.

Recommendation 2: Efforts to appoint Focal Points on health insurance matters in FAFICS member associations should be pursued in 2023-2024.

Recommendation 3: The proposal to write to the Secretary-General and / or the Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance on issues of concern to the SC should be maintained in a general sense, albeit no longer as a reaction to the report of the SG to the 76th session of the GA (document A/7/373) but as felt appropriate at a given time in the future by the SC and the President of FAFICS.

Recommendation 4: Contacts on health insurance matters with CCISCUA, FICSA and UNISERV, and local staff associations as well as the UN Staff Council, as appropriate, should be maintained to explore and develop areas of common interest.

Recommendation 5: In view of the low response rate to the survey to Focal Points and inconclusive evidence concerning the views of FAFICS Focal Points, Long-Term Care should provisionally be maintained as a priority area for FAFICS and be reconsidered at the time when more information is available on actual and potential impacts on funding of Long-Term Care under ASHI of different UN organizations and any findings/recommendations from the current JIU study on health insurance matters in the UN system.

Recommendation 6: The Council should request the SC to follow closely any discussions within the UN common system to gradually switch from the pay-as-you-go to a pay-as-you-accrue financing system (refer to SC-ASHIL/2022/Doc.2 dated 1 July 2022). It should also follow closely the funding of ASHI liabilities, which is a fiduciary responsibility of Member States.

Recommendation 7: Council should agree that steps are taken to recommend to the UN Organizations that use the MIP, to negotiate the possibility of a supplementary Health Insurance Scheme, designed to meet the needs highlighted in the present paper and in the attached annex II. This would offer an alternative and peace of mind to the retirees who now often must contract expensive private local insurance plans. If negotiations with CIGNA (the TPA for the MIP) are undertaken on behalf of a group a better alternative may be offered, not only for retirees but also for active staff.

Recommendation 8: The ASHIL SC recommends that Council agrees that it should continue to pursue the matter of improving the MIP provisions such as advocating for higher ceiling, since local staff of many Organizations using the MIP, are on the front line of the work of the UN System in difficult and often dangerous field situations and deserve better treatment.

Recommendation 9: It is recommended to the Council that FAFICS foster the creation of an inter-agency working group similar to that of Health and Life Insurance Committee (HLIC) to ensure that MIP provisions continue to be appropriate for all ASHI and active staff participation, along the proposed actions articulated in the paragraphs 19-23 above. The membership of such group should include management representatives, staff representatives for active MIP participants and

representatives of either the local AFICS association or FAFICS for MIP retirees.

Recommendation 10: The ASHIL SC recommends that Council decides that this work should be pursued in order to obtain more contributions, particularly from English-speaking countries, and to arrive at more definitive conclusions to be presented at the next Council session.

Recommendation 11: The present analysis of six replies to the general questionnaire to Focal Points is not sufficient to grasp a comprehensive picture of topics to be examined by SC-ASHIL for future action to be proposed to FAFICS. This work in progress should be pursued by the SC with support of the Core Group in 2023-2024.

Recommendation 12: It is recommended that the ASHIL SC with support of the Core Group focuses on the implementation of the above-mentioned recommendations for 2023-2024 to the extent that they have been approved by the Council.

118. **The Council approved the recommendations and there was a general consensus on the report which was adopted.**
119. **The Council approved the nomination of the President to appoint Mr. Jayantilal Karia as Chair of the SC- ASHIL.**
120. The new Chair of the Standing Committee, Mr. Jayantilal Karia, (AFICS-NY) thanked FAFICS for the confidence in him to carry out the work of the Standing Committee and thanked the President and the Bureau for their nomination. He also expressed his best wishes to Georges Kutukdjian for all the work he had done for ASHIL and wished him a speedy recovery. He noted that a strong team had been put together as the Core Group and looked forward to working with them on the recommendations just adopted. He also wished to pursue expanding the core group with more subject matter experts which would help to ensure future succession planning.
121. In speaking of the issuance of a new report on ASHI liabilities, he did not think at this stage that the Secretariat was planning anything on this subject and was most likely waiting for the new JIU study on this issue to be produced next year. He added that the JIU inspectors were interviewing several stakeholders, and that AFICS-NY had a good

meeting with them and impressed on them to be very careful on any recommendations for using national health insurance schemes. Hopefully, they will heed this recommendation.

122. On the issue of Medicare Part B, which is the plan of the US, concern was raised about possible reductions in benefits from comments made by certain parties. AFICS/NY wrote to the United Nations administration, indicating its concerns, noting that if this were to happen, then it would mean that retirees would want to go back to non-Medicare related insurance. Fortunately, no changes were made to Medicare, but it is always pointed out that if some changes regarding national programmes were to be considered, then the retirees would demand that a return be made to the previous insurance programme.
123. The Vice Chair of the Standing Committee, Giovanni Quaglia (AAFB-Brazil), gave special thanks to the new Chair of the Standing Committee as well as to the other members of the Committee, including the former Chair. He was appreciative of the history brought forward in this session and noted its complex environment. A proposal was made by the Vice-Chair to award Georges Kutukdjian with an honorary title.

Agenda item 9: Quadrennial report to ECOSOC for the period 2018-2022 submitted for information

124. The Secretary introduced the item concerning the quadrennial report to ECOSOC that is required to be submitted every four years by all those that have NGO status with ECOSOC. Based on the inputs from member associations Vice-President Juan Casas and Secretary Jay Sundaresan collected information on the various activities undertaken in support of UN principles and activities and summarized all the information received into a 700-word submission. The Secretary noted that FAFICS had received NGO status some sixteen years ago and in the past a representative of FAFICS attended the ECOSOC meeting held at varying UN Headquarters. FAFICS representation could be reconsidered the next time this report is taken up by ECOSOC.
125. Several delegations spoke on the importance of including the activities of FAFICS in such a report and it was noted that the pre-Council survey had brought forward responses from twenty-nine associations providing a great deal of information on all activities carried out by member

associations which could be used as a good basis for the next submission to ECOSOC. One delegate requested information on the possibility of promoting a day for international civil servants at the General Assembly's 80th session.

Agenda item 10: Administrative and Financial Matters

(a) Report of the Auditors for the accounts ending in 2022 (document 53/2023/D.8a) submitted for information

126. The Auditor, Mr. Ambi Sundaram, one of the two auditors, the other being Mr. Mohammed Bachiri, who reviewed the accounts for FAFICS stated that they were pleased to submit the audited reports confirming that the balance sheet and the statement of expenditures gave a true and fair view of the affairs of the Federation's accounts as of 31 December 2022. He highlighted two issues that were brought up with the Treasurer, Mr. Romesh Muttukumar. The first one was the need for clarity to update the rules governing FAFICS subsidies for those attending FAFICS' Council sessions and the second was the need for a robust and sustainable way forward in dealing with outstanding membership dues. He was pleased to see that both issues were before the Council for discussion and decision. He thanked the Treasurer for his cooperation and facilitation with the audit.
127. **The Presiding Officer thanked Auditor Sundaram and noted that this document was submitted for information.**

(b) Interim report on the management of the budget for 2023 (document 53/2023/D.8b) for information

128. The Treasurer reported that the bottom line remained the same as what the Council had approved last year. He reported on the additional good news, as the President informed the Council yesterday, that an amount of \$10,000 had been received from UNFCU on 23 June 2023 which would assure a surplus at the end of 2023. Resources for communications were maximized under the regular budget and additional monies would also be available under the reserves for communications and the website to be discussed under that agenda item.

129. Several congratulatory comments were made by delegations. However, one delegation asked to know if FAFICS was taking advantage of growing interest rates and it would be useful to have a multi-year spreadsheet of assets, liabilities, income and expenditures to see the trends and compare next year's budget to past ones.
130. The Treasurer thanked the delegations for their positive comments and added that he had been very conservative in investing and as a result there were additional available resources. Of course, during the pandemic with little travel resources used there was an increase in the reserves. He added that he would address other safe investing possibilities with UNFCU to see if more investment income could be earned. As for a spreadsheet presentation, there was a table in the report on the proposed budget for 2024 as well as showing projected expenditures for 2023 along with past expenditures from 2013 to 2022 which provided a bird's eye view over the period of ten years.
131. **The Presiding Officer thanked the Treasurer for the good management of the 2023 budget and noted that this document was submitted for information.**

(c) Budget for 2024 (Council 53/2023/D.8c)

132. The Treasurer, in introducing the proposed budget for 2024, said that his estimates were made in early June based on membership estimates at that time from associations. He had used the number of 19,000 as the total membership number while the actual number was 18,600, amounting to a difference of 400. As this figure is constantly changing there will always be some discrepancy. He agreed with the delegate of AAFU/AFUS that membership seemed to be going down and attention needed to be paid to this situation. He also noted that according to the Rules of FAFICS, collections are due to be paid by the end of March, however only 50% of associations had paid by March of this year making calculations difficult and his estimates were always based on the best available numbers.
133. He added that the budget for 2024, agreed to by the Bureau, was developed in a conservative manner with no increases in budget items even with the expected contribution from UNFCU in 2024 which was not attributed to any item until it was received. He noted that FAFICS now

had to pay for conference services while in the past UN Offices never charged, but now they do, and the charge was around \$5,000.

134. The Treasurer in response to a query on why in Annex 1 which lists membership numbers, the association of AFUNPI was listed without any members, said that this was purely an oversight, and 365 members would be added to the AFUNPI's line in the annex. Other points raised by delegates included the following:

- a. travel line was lower in 2024 than 2023 while fares continue to increase
- b. further use of technology and virtual meetings should be encouraged in recognition of higher travel costs and of the impact of travel on climate change
- c. sixteens associations have not paid for this year and earlier years, and thus more discipline is needed in this area
- d. income may need to be reduced from \$38,000 to \$36,000 due to lower membership numbers and arrears
- e. costs for software licenses would better support questionnaires to associations
- f. more interest-bearing products should be considered
- g. agrees with helping Associations to send a delegate to the Council

135. The President in noting the positive comments on the budget presentation thanked the Treasurer for his hard work and added that it was a joy to work with the Treasurer, and a pleasure knowing that he was diligent in his reviews, always reacting in a timely manner and was very glad that he was the one in charge of handling the accounts.

136 **The Council approved the budget for 2024 by acclamation.**

(d) Write-off of outstanding receivables (Council 53/2023/D.8d)

137. In introducing this report, the Treasurer provided the background for the proposal to write-off outstanding payments from twenty member associations which for the period 2013 through 2022 amounted to \$10,538.72. He noted that since 2013 the FAFICS Secretariat had, besides their regular calls to associations, tried to find out what the issues were behind the non-payments. It was found that some were inactive or dormant associations because of war or strife, some because

of overbearing bank challenges, and some were just unable to be reached and others were dormant due to natural disasters or other local reasons. The Bureau felt that after ten years it was time to take some action to write off outstanding dues deemed uncollectible. It was therefore now proposed to write off all arrears prior to 2021 and then to work with each of these member associations to try to bring them back to the fold as no one was keen to just disband twenty associations as they needed support, not disregard. Therefore, the Council was requested to approve the write-offs of all outstanding amounts due as of 31 December 2021 amounting to \$7,728.72 against the Reserve for Bad Debts ensuring that the Bureau would continue to explore different approaches in reaching out to these associations, recognizing their different challenges. He then requested the assistance of Council delegates as to how their respective associations could assist in reaching out to these associations.

138. A number of delegates spoke on this issue with varying thoughts on whether write-offs should go ahead, or other actions should be imposed. Some of the points raised included:

- a. need to ensure that this situation did not revert to non-payment once write-offs were completed,
- b. it would be important to send an explanatory letter to these associations to secure a way forward
- c. this was not only a question of dollars, but of wider issues
- d. interest in numbers and need of these many organizations
- e. set up a working group to look into this matter
- f. symptom is more than finance; it means that the associations are not delivering
- g. social audit is needed or a questionnaire to support dormant associations
- h. need a clean slate but those not delivering will still need FAFICS' support, should not abandon them

139. At the conclusion of the discussion, the President summarized four decision points as follows:

- a). Accountancy: Write-off debts that were not collectible from 2021 and before as outlined in the report.
- b). Bureau activity: Place this activity in Bureau's workplan with simplification of payment methods

- c). Social investigation: find out what is going on in dormant associations, where possible figure out some way to help. This may require work/travel/assistance and getting closer to these local associations
- d). Communication: Provide information on what FAFICS is, what it does especially for those associations outside of Headquarters locations

140. **The Council approved the report along with the write-off requested in line with the four points the President outlined above.**

(e) Policy on travel subsidies for Council attendance (Council document 53/2023/D.8e)

141. The Treasurer introduced the report on a policy for travel subsidies and explained the Bureau's approach to work with a selected group of Member Associations based on particular criteria, as to their potential to attend a Council session in-person and their ability to fully finance their participation. The Bureau would first look at those small to medium-sized Member Associations with less than 100 members encompassing all regions and assess against the set-out criteria. It was then proposed that such delegate travel subsidies be limited to five Member Association delegates. He added that current and future budgets would have a specific budget line and related allocation for this travel subsidy and reported in FAFICS' financial statement.

142. The Presiding Officer said that this policy was tied to previous discussions as to the need to support Member Associations. One delegation said that this policy might face challenges in practice but found no other reason why the policy should not go forward. Others stressed how important it was to attend in person Council sessions if and when possible and endorsed this policy.

143. **The Council approved the policy (points 8 and 9) for 2024 onwards.**

(f) Use of assigned reserves (Council document 53/2023/D.8f)

144. The Treasurer announced that the subject of financial reserves had been exhaustively discussed at the last Council's session. The Council recognized the usefulness of having these four reserves and agreed that the Bureau should move forward for the operationalization of these

Assigned Reserves. This report outlines the criteria, monitoring and reporting requirements for each of the reserves. In addition, he pointed out that the FAFICS Bureau was to take stock annually on the utilization and related performance of each Assigned Reserve established recognizing its specific purpose – and assess whether each of the Assigned Reserves continued to serve its specific purpose, and based on such assessment, propose its recommendations for Council approval.

145. **The Council approved the use of assigned reserves as proposed in the above-cited report.**

(h) Appointment of Auditors

146. The Secretary confirmed that the present auditors were willing to continue. **The Council then re-appointed Mr. Ambi Sundaram and Mr. Mohammed Bachiri as FAFICS auditors for another year by acclamation.**

Agenda item 11: FAFICS Communication Strategy and Web Development

147. The Presiding Officer, in stressing the importance of the Communication Strategy, noted that it was an extremely crucial issue with many of its aspects impacting the Federation. He called on Odette Foudral, Vice President (AAFI-AFICS-Geneva) and current Chair of the Working Group on Communications to introduce the item. She first thanked the members of the Working Group for their active participation and the work that they had accomplished in a very fair and timely manner. She congratulated Delia Barcelona for doing a lot of the hard work, writing and rewriting documents and her efforts to update the look of the documents. She stressed that the Working Group did as much as it could, having started a process that sometimes seemed endless, as communication would always be an ongoing concern of FAFICS. She hoped that eventually there would be a permanent Standing Committee in FAFICS to deal with this work on a regular basis. She also acknowledged some of the comments from the Council concerning funds which had been earmarked but not fully used as the Working Group had been judicious, thinking carefully about what and where to spend the money on the several demanding priorities, some of which would require outside expertise. The Working Group also undertook two surveys, distributed in three languages, to address the needs of the member associations and to get feedback on their activities and

challenges, as well as to gather up-to-date information for the Directory. However, the responses to the first survey were quite low, with only responses from about a third of the associations. As far as the second survey was concerned, the results were better with about half of the associations responding to the pre-council survey. However, the Working Group questioned why some associations did not react at all.

148. She thanked the President for his emphasis on sharing with associations, through his video messages, newsletters, and the way he engaged the Bureau in his decisions. It seemed that the Federation had a better image and as such was no longer the subject of adverse blogs or unfair comments. It was quite easy to damage an image, but it took time to build a good image. She also acknowledged the extensive comments received from Argentina and assured them that their suggestions would be a big help for the communication group.
149. She noted that this time around, the focus would be on the communication strategy and the website. At the last Council, most of the comments were general, but now that concrete documents had been produced it made it easier to discuss what had been done or where improvements were needed. She said that while the website was not appreciated nor used by many, it was in fact a very good repository of most Council documents. She hoped that in the future, the website would be more user-friendly, and its contents managed better.
150. The Presiding Officer then called upon Delia Barcelona, Vice President, and member of the Communication Working Group to make a presentation on the communications strategy. She emphasized that the strategy was a work in progress, but it was one that had been developed by the many recommendations received from the 52nd Council Session and then further reinforced by a similar set of recommendations unearthed from the 40th Council Session. In document Council 53/2023/D.7b before the Council, different elements of the strategy were outlined with progress in some areas highlighted, as well as plans for the coming year.
151. The Presiding Officer thanked both Odette Foudral and Delia Barcelona for their very rich and interesting contributions on a very complex and comprehensive topic – dealing with channels and means of communication, content, audiences, and the like which all needed to be

unpacked. He was fully convinced that communication was at the center of what the Federation did and could have a great impact on what it does internally and externally. He asked the Council if it would be considering the strategy for adoption or as work in progress and in any case asked the Council for guidance on how to proceed. He then opened the floor for comments from Council participants.

152. Many delegations congratulated the Working Group for the interesting and positive communications strategy. The AAFU/AFUS delegate suggested that with the UN's 80th anniversary to be celebrated in 2025 that the Working Group might wish to think on how to give visibility to FAFICS, with the possibility of the FAFICS President addressing the General Assembly as a way of giving tribute to international civil servants. She also commended the efforts made by the new President of FAFICS over the year to produce in three languages his newsletter and executive summary documents.
153. Others felt that what was produced was useful, although still incomplete, and that it required a budget as well as a work plan within that budget. The most important aspect for a large organization like FAFICS is how its members can support each other, how to work together whether a big or small association, how to relate to the Bureau, how to have a social communication strategy that allows these. Some very low-cost activities such as using WhatsApp should be researched. Another delegation called for documents to be simplified and shortened through bullet points and that went straight to the point. FAFICS should explore asking for support from the UNJSPF, to fund the communication strategy, or the website.
154. AFICS Argentina highlighted the feedback that it had already shared earlier in its written submission and was appreciative of the work that had been undertaken by the Working Group and fully supported the creation of an expanded working group following the model of the ASHIL core group which has shown fruitful results and included not only Bureau members but representatives from some member associations. Such a group could eventually be a Standing Committee as the issue of communication was of vital importance to the Federation. He reiterated that timely, comprehensive, clear, and transparent communications were pre-conditions for good governance. FAFICS needed to brand itself as the only and true representative of retirees to the Pension Fund. By

emphasizing this role, the associations that have remained dormant may reactivate their membership. For a website to be attractive, FAFICS branding and marketing strategy must demonstrate FAFICS values, and the value of being an association as well as the benefits of joining FAFICS. The approach of the communication strategy must not only be towards associations but to the global community of retirees and how FAFICS can be of service to the 83,000 retirees around the world, where currently it is only reaching 19,000. The website itself needs a specialist to be on top, and efforts be made to provide information to all retirees, members, and non-members alike. The group has looked at many aspects that need improvement, but has not spent much of the available resources, as this just might be the most vital investment FAFICS can make. There are many technical tools and apps, e.g., for editing/translations, that can be used to facilitate FAFICS work. The Working Group should also look at existing websites of many associations, and how they are using social media, and to focus on content that is most relevant to retirees, including frequently asked questions, ASHIL, the Emergency Fund, etc. What the strategy is missing are key performance indicators that can indicate, for example, how many entries/hits to the website, where users are coming from, what are they looking for and so on. This and more can easily be done by available apps such as google analytics and can help the Working Group determine where it stands today and where it stands in the future. What is needed in the strategy is a lot more of the what, and less of the how, but also stress 'the when' and the money. With these in place, the Working Group needs to provide regular updates on what is happening so the Council is apprised of progress in this area.

155. Secretary Jay Sundaresan then presented another paper prepared by the Working Group, and that was document Council 53/2023/D.7.4, that provided some history about the website and what was currently on the public website and what was in the protected/restricted site for members only. He emphasized the importance of having a protected area especially when it came to documents that may have sensitive personal information like CVs of candidates. The Working Group was also reviewing smaller associations that did not have a website, and whether it would be more practical to assign them more pages to the FAFICS website or help them set up their own website with links to the FAFICS website. With these links it should enable member associations,

for instance, to update their own directory whenever there is a change in their executive leadership, which then consequently reduces delays in updating information on the website. He also noted that there have been all kinds of visitors to the public website, like students/researchers using documents on the website for their study on UN matters. In any case, it would be good to get guidance from the Council on what kinds of documents should be on the public page of the FAFICS website.

156. Other delegations felt it was time for FAFICS to make use of social media like YouTube, twitter, etc. and including answers to frequently asked questions by retirees on pension matters and ASHIL. The Working Group provides oversight into all these. It does not need to wait for 2023 to see a website, a lot has been analyzed, so it is time for action, as soon as possible. However, one delegation stressed that particular attention must be given to access and security issues. FAFICS would not want sensitive information to fall into the wrong hands.
157. Several delegations, however, felt that the communication strategy focused too much on the how, and not enough on the who and the what. The delegation of FFOA further explained that FAFICS was not there to serve each retiree but rather to serve every association who pays dues to FAFICS and expects services. In the past the lack of transparency and information sharing had been a serious issue, but with the President's new activities such as his newsletters identifying key issues and providing updates has demonstrated what FAFICS was doing for membership. On the what of the strategy, it should stress what is new and useful to the membership, what the Bureau was doing on issues of pensions and ASHIL, what roles the various Vice-Presidents had been assigned and what they have been able to achieve through their positions, what was the value of FAFICS in establishing stronger dialogue with FICSA, CCISUA and other stakeholders and, finally, what issues were being tackled in the broader General Assembly, and so on. The Vice Presidents should be charged with monitoring these issues and should be able to prepare short synopsis that can be shared with member associations. FAFICS also must be circumspect in terms of the media use; with the talk about social media and the danger of putting too much out into the public domain. Only when the who and the what were addressed could the website be talked about, which is just a tool. Any plans to make it more attractive would be useless if the content was

not good. FAFICS' primary audience focus should be the member associations, not the retirees.

158. Some delegations stressed the need to spend on communication and the need to clarify the target beneficiaries. As FAFICS was a service organization, it must always keep in mind who will benefit from its work – from the associations to the retirees in the associations. Therefore, FAFICS should keep member associations informed through relevant and regular updates. For instance, what happened in Council meetings was not always of interest to all retirees, but only to executives of member associations, so not all information needed not be put in the public domain. It was also very difficult to deal with so many long documents, so FAFICS should facilitate communication between member associations, formally and informally. The Communication Strategy has been conceptualized well but now the details must be worked out. Member associations are interested in knowing about what is being discussed in decision-making bodies, i.e., Pension Board, FSALM Committee. FAFICS should explore asking for support from the UNJSPF, to fund the communication strategy, or the website.
159. BAFUNCS called on the group to focus more on action, and much less on strategy, citing the Nike tagline, just do it! On the survey methodology, it was advised that FAFICS should use available user-friendly apps rather than forms that are difficult to respond to. The website is a central pillar of the communication strategy so the group must ensure support for its design, for managing content and security issues, and the need to pay for professional support. The content of the website is FAFICS's responsibility, but it can pay for writers and communicators who can synthesize, translate, and make documents more digestible for member associations. BAFUNCS has good experience it can share, and FAFICS can learn from. The President's e-newsletter is a good example of something that is working and is useful.
160. In a follow-up to the statements made, the Chair of the Working Group, Odette Foudral said that last year at the Council session discussions were more general, but now with more details and more extensive discussions, now was the time to decide whether to adopt the communication strategy or to use it as a working document for future reference. The need for a proper budget was important and acknowledged the comments that the Working Group had not used the budget allotted for it last year as the

Working Group had spent a great deal of time on what needed to be done and on developing the Strategy. She noted that some delegations wanted quicker action, but it was a difficult task to meet the needs and requirements of all, especially as regards the website. Delia Barcelona added that the Working Group valued all the comments received from the Council, which would serve as a basis for improving the strategy. She also added that the frustration on the part of some Council delegates is understandable, as this issue seemed to have surfaced repeatedly, and with some concrete recommendations from as far back as 12 years ago that have not progressed significantly. Having done at least two surveys now, with a better turnout, especially in the Pre-Council Survey, the Working Group now had more information about what member associations do, their challenges, and expectations. FAFICS was truly a diverse organization, as its retirees are in various situations and come with different backgrounds and interests, also different capacities to use communication tools. In any case, the working group will try its best to address the needs of member associations in this very crucial area.

161. The President emphasized that next year would be an implementation year. The Communications Working Group had accomplished many things, and all the useful suggestions would be reviewed including the use of social media including What's App, which could be investigated more in the coming year. He was not sure about piggybacking on other organizations of the UN for use of their services and thought it would be better for FAFICS to remain independent. He assured everyone that he responds to emails quickly, and that he would make sure that communication was prioritized in the budget. He then said he had two questions for the Council: (i) was the Council ready to accept the strategy as an approved document and compliment the group for the work they have done and (ii) was the Council willing to expand the working group to a Council Committee with core members and ask member associations to point out expertise that they have, as way forward.
162. Many delegations again in their follow-up statements said that they supported the Strategy and its approach but noted the need for a plan of action with a larger Working Group with adequate resources through a budget to support the initiatives.
163. As it was noted by the Presiding Officer that all issues had been addressed, he proposed that action be taken by the Council on how to move forward

and expressed thanks to the Council for their approval and added that with the adoption of the Strategy he would now set the process in motion for an expanded working group which would most likely be called the Council Working Group or the Council's Communication Committee. He reminded the Council that per the Rules of Procedure, the President nominates the Chair and Vice-Chair of Committees, which are then reviewed by the Bureau and approved by the Council. He said he will set this process in motion after the upcoming Pension Board meeting, and if the Council agreed, the approval process could be done by email. He would also prepare a statement calling for communication experts from member associations to be brought into the expertise pool.

164. **The Council approved the adoption of the Communications Strategy by acclamation and agreed to the expansion of the Working Group to a Council Committee.**

Agenda items 12 and 13: Election of FAFICS Officer and Results of elections

165. The President informed the Council about the nominations for the various executive positions. Delia Barcelona (AFICS-Philippines) had been nominated to serve as Secretary. If elected, her post of vice-president would be vacated. **She was approved to be the next Secretary by acclamation.**
166. With the stepping down of Vice-President Odette Foudral, another position of vice-president had thus become vacant. One of the candidates for this position was Pierre Sayour (AAFI-AFICS-Geneva) and the other was Abdou Khadre Diakhate (ASAFI-Senegal). **Both were approved by acclamation as vice-presidents.**
167. Note was taken of the work that Veronique Whalen had done in preparations for the Council and for the elections even though it was not necessary. She was warmly thanked.

Agenda item 14: Date and place of the 54th session of the Council

168. The President announced that as the week before the Pension Board meets is the usual week for FAFICS, in July of each year. The Pension Board most likely will decide at their meeting next week to meet during the third week of July 2024 in Bangkok. If FAFICS were to meet there as well, as is the normal course of scheduling, he noted that their

conference facilities were good, and they would most likely have space to accommodate FAFICS. However, more details would need to be worked out. In light of this possibility, he asked the Council if they thought that this would be a feasible meeting venue.

169. Many delegates supported this opportunity to meet in an Asian country where transport was good, UNFCU would be there, hotels were excellent and there were good medical facilities.
170. Other delegations in noting the cost of traveling to Bangkok felt the travel expense might be prohibitive. Others mentioned that now that hybrid meetings were de rigueur, the question of a quorum would not arise. One delegate pointed out that while the cost of air travel was high, the cost of hotels was relatively less expensive than in other locations and therefore the total cost should be looked at not just a comparison of air cost. Another delegate suggested that the establishment of a consolidated list of previous venues and number of AFICS participants in person (given the travel costs) would prove useful to establish a tentative rotation list of host agencies for future FAFICS Council meetings.
171. One delegation felt that the proximity of the Pension Board to the FAFICS meeting was very important and FAFICS should continue with their meetings in the same location as the Pension Board which also provides less air travel if the meetings were to be held in different locations.
172. The President said that there were several steps to be taken before a final decision was taken on the proposed venue. He had not heard anyone express a totally negative response and was reminded that with the use of good technology and the acceptance of hybrid meetings ensuring a quorum was no longer an issue

Agenda item 15: Any other business

173. The delegate of AFICS-Niger spoke about the association of retired WHO staff who worked in Africa. He said that this was an organization that was open to all that had worked in Africa and currently there were over 1,000 members. They meet every three to four months and suggested that this might be a way for further collaboration with African associations as well as a partnership with such a regional organization.

174. The President agreed and was willing to talk to the WHO group on a person-to-person basis. He believed that this would be a good initiative which would increase the awareness of FAFICS. He would arrange this on the Bureau's agenda to see if FAFICS could provide some assistance in the area of pensions. However, this would not be a formal resolution of the Council, but an initiative that could be part of the FAFICS agenda.
175. Gerhard Schrameck, one of the FAFICS representatives in the UNJSPF Plan Review Group, raised a point of concern regarding a statement made earlier in the meeting by the delegate from AAFU/AFUS- Paris. In her intervention, she mentioned that there was a problem in respect of retirees participating in the local Staff Pension committees. He referred to a similar problem that had occurred with IAEA when the retiree association was able to attend but not able to review disability cases and most meetings concerned just that which meant that the retirees could only be part of the approval of the agenda and not part of the rest of the meeting. As a result of this situation FAFICS took this up in 2016 when they raised it with the chair of the Pension Board and produced a document in which a request was made for a clear statement within the rules (quoting Rule A.9/section C.1) that retiree representatives had to be part of the committee meeting. After some negotiations a consensus developed, and it was determined that retiree representatives were to be entitled to attend and participate in Staff Pension committees but not allowed to vote and this is now the underlying basis for all SPCs. He noted that some administrations ignore this and if this is done, then FAFICS should be informed so this issue could be followed up with the Pension Board. On the issue of challenging the existing two-track scheme, he gave a word of caution as this could backfire with the risk of reopening discussions on the post adjustment mechanism now in place and obtained after lengthy negotiations with all parties concerned.
176. On the issue of ageing, one delegate requested FAFICS to include this topic as an item on next year's agenda. It would be important to hear what associations were doing to help retirees with the ageing process and receive reports from the Open-ended Committee on Ageing in New York and the NGO in Geneva and in the framework of the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030).

177. On this issue of ageing and beneficiaries one delegate raised the situation of those unable to sign the certificate of entitlements and requested that the Pension Fund allow Member Associations to verify other means of signing the certificate. Some other associations advised on ways to help beneficiaries in such situations. Another delegate spoke on how signatures of the elderly change over time and wondered if the Pension Fund could devise a way to recognize changed signatures.
178. Another delegate in thanking the President for the quality of information provided had one suggestion that could help all. This was to have a segment of the session devoted to information on best practices on retiree issues. He thought that receiving feedback on how associations dealt with various situations would be beneficial for all.

Appreciation and closing of session

179. The Secretary began this concluding part of the session by reading out a note he had received from George Saddler, President of FAFICS from 1997-2002, and a pillar of FAFICS for many years. Mr. Saddler conveyed his greetings to all and at the age of 97 wished he could be there with everyone in Vienna. As this was not possible, he wished everyone success in the important role that members of FAFICS play in the best interest and livelihood for all hard-working staff and retirees around the world.
180. Many delegations thanked the Presiding Officer, Werner Blenk, for the productive session and the positive way he handled the session with both efficiency and respect for all in an open manner and with patience and graciousness. They remarked on his ability to translate and summarize interventions in both a concrete and intellectual way with an open mind providing speakers the confidence to share their thoughts and questions.
181. Delegations also expressed their thanks to President, Jerry Barton, for his and the Bureau's hard work throughout the year. Many described this session as constructive, engaging and focused on key issues and they would now be able to bring back to their members a great deal of information on the very complicated issues discussed at this session. The word transparent was one word that was repeatedly used in describing the President's way in reporting on activities

accomplished as well as his positions on future FAFICS activities.

182. The President then offered thanks to all and especially to the ARICSA team as well as UNOV conference services. He also wanted to honor several people who would be leaving the Bureau:
- First, Jay Sundaresan who would be stepping down as Secretary, after serving for many years and stepping in last year when he again volunteered to serve as Secretary. He noted that he already earned the title of ‘emeritus’ which was well deserved.
 - He also expressed gratitude to Georges Kutukdjian who served as Vice-President for ten years and Chair of the Standing Committee on ASHIL and noted that as awards now follow a process under the Rules of Procedure, he proposed to give him a round of applause for all his work noting that any further award could be acted on at a later date by the Bureau. He will also send him a letter of commendation and gratitude on behalf of FAFICS members.
 - In thanking Odette Foudral, he noted her hard work as Vice-President over the past four years and as such had to step down and thanked her for her differing but respectful opinions that helped the Bureau in its many decisions, and especially for her work in moving FAFICS communications strategy forward.
 - He also thanked Veronique Whalen who was leaving ARICSA and thanked her for her behind-the-scenes work at every Council session and wished her luck in her future endeavors.
183. He welcomed the new members to the Bureau and the new association that joined and the other rejoined at this session and wished everyone fruitful year and looked seeing everyone again either virtually or in person at the 54th FAFICS session.
184. The Presiding Officer declared the 53rd Council session closed at 12.55 CET on Thursday, 20 July 2023.

Appendix 1. List of Participants

Association	Country	First Name	Last Name	Title
	Association			
Bureau member	ARICSA	Jerry	Barton	President
Bureau member	AAFI-AFICS	Jay	Sundaresan	Secretary
Bureau member	AFICS/NY	Romesh	Muttukumar	Treasurer
Presiding Officer	ARICSA	Werner	Blenk	Presiding Officer
Rapporteur	AFICS /NY	Nancy	Hurtz-Soyka	Rapporteur
Polling Officer	ARICSA	Veronique	Whalen	Polling Officer
AFICS Argentina	Argentina	Alejandro	Henning	Head of Delegation
	Argentina	Roses	Mirta	
	Argentina	Isabel	Kantor	
	Argentina	Mercedes	Acuna	
AAFICS Australia	Australia	Jennifer	Ashton	Head of Delegation
ARICSA Vienna	Austria	Gerhard	Schramek	
	Austria	Rosemarie	Orkan-Lecki	
	Austria	Manijeh	Torabi	
AFUNSOB Bangladesh	Bangladesh	Ali Reza	Kazi	Head of delegation
	Bangladesh	Mashud	Ahmed	
	Bangladesh	T I M Nurunnabi	Khan	
	Bangladesh	AKM	Sharfuddin	
	Bangladesh	AK Masood	Ahmed	
	Bangladesh	Romela	Murshed	
AAFIB Brazil	Brazil	Giovanni	Quaglia	Vice-Chair, SC on ASHIL
	Brazil	Maria Angelica	Gomes	Head of delegation
	Brazil	Francisco Claudio	de Meneses	
	Brazil	Joao Carlos	Alexim	
	Brazil	Milton	Nogueira	
AAFNU-BF	Burkina Faso	Sidiki Marcel	Bonzi	Head of delegation
	Burkina Faso	Alizata	Tamboula	
	Burkina Faso	Azara	Bamba/Louguet	
	Burkina Faso	Julien	Daboue	
	Burkina Faso	Leonard	Tapsoba	
CAFICS/ACAFI-Montreal	Canada	Jacques	Daoust	Head of Delegation
	Canada	Johanne	Huppe	
	Canada	Jean-Pierre	Mercier	
AFICS-Chile	Chile	Adriana	Gomez Saguez	Head of delegation
	Chile	Carol	Chatterton	
	Chile	Maria Teresa	Vergara	
ASOPENUC	Colombia	Jorge	Rincon	Head of Delegation
	Colombia	Helene	Hasselbalch	
	Colombia	Zirnis	Enita	
AEFSNU-AFICS	Ecuador	Durval	Martinez	

AFICS Addis Ababa	Ethiopia	Tedla	Teshome	Head of Delegation
	Ethiopia	Ayele	Afewerk	
	Ethiopia	Degefu	Workneh	
AAFU/AFUS Paris	France	Neda	Ferrier	
	France	Josiane	Taillefer	Head of Delegation
	France	Brigitte	Moller	
	France	Jacques	Rao	
AFUNPI India	India	Marashetty	Seenappa	Head of Delegation, FAFICS Vice-President
	India	Shankar	Narasimhan	
	India	Srinivasan	Nanjundappa	
	India	R.M.	Manohar	
	India	Magdalene	Chand	
FFOA Rome	Italy	Edward	Seidler	Head of Delegation
	Italy	Alan	Prien	
	Italy	Theresa	Panuccio	
	Italy	Mariam	Ahmed	
	Italy	Marius	de Gaay Fortman	
AFICS Japan	Japan	Junko	Sato	Head of Delegation
	Japan	Noriko	Nagayoshi	
AMAFINU-Mali	Mali	Bah	Keita	Head of Delegation
	Mali	Brehima	Koumare	
	Mali	Fadimata	Haidara	
AFICS M	Mauritius	Michael	Atchia	Head of delegation
AFPNU-Mexico	Mexico	Maria Luz	Diaz-Marta	Head of Delegation
	Mexico	Adriana	Romero	
AFICS Myanmar	Myanmar	Kyi Kyi	Nyein	Head of Delegation
	Myanmar	Kathleen	Khin San Aye	
	Myanmar	Chit	Ko Ko	
	Myanmar	Sandra	Chit Hpo	
	Myanmar	Aye	Win	
AFICS Netherlands	Netherlands	Lucien	Back	Head of Delegation
AAFNU Niger	Niger	Kadri	Tankari	Head of delegation
	Niger	Ari Toubo	Ibrahim	
	Niger	Amadou	Maiga	
	Niger	Hadiza	Gado	
	Niger	Rene	Wright	
	Niger	Jean Marie	Trapsida	
	Niger	Mariama	Keita Birama	
	Niger	Adamou	Loco	
AFICS Pakistan	Pakistan	Dil Nawaz	Khan	Head of Delegation
	Pakistan	Shahida	Fazil	
	Pakistan	Muhamad	Zafar Iqbal	
	Pakistan	Shabbir	Ahmed	
	Pakistan	Shamsul	Haq	
AFICS Panama	Panama	Juan Antonio	Casas Zamora	Head Delegation, FAFICS Vice-President
	Panama	Maria Isabel	Aramburu Porras	

AEFNUP-Peru	Peru	Iliana	Giuria	Head of delegation
	Peru	Rosario	Guevara	
	Peru	Haydee	Olcese	
AFICS Philippines	Philippines	Alcestis	Mangahas	Head of Delegation
	Philippines	Delia	Barcelona	FAFICS Vice-President
	Philippines	Lydia	Ontal	
	Philippines	Marlene	Arduo	
APAFI Portugal	Portugal	Willem	Van Milink	Head delegation
ASAFI	Senegal	Abdoukhadre	Diakhate	Head of Delegation
	Senegal	Djibril	Ndiaye	
AFIJUB-Spain	Spain	Angel	Escudero de Paz	Head of Delegation
	Spain	Enrique	Yeves Valero	
	Spain	Diego	Echaz Brigaldi	
AFICS Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	George Anthony	Michael	
AAFI-AFICS Geneva	Switzerland	Odette	Foudral	Head of Delegation, FAFICS Vice-President
	Switzerland	Katia	Chestopalov	
	Switzerland	Mohamed	Sebti	
	Switzerland	Pierre	Sayour	
	Switzerland	Wolfgang	Milzow	
UNAPATA- Tanzania	Tanzania	Eva	Ruhagos	Head Delegation
BAFUNCS-UK	United Kingdom	Robert	England	Head of Delegation
	United Kingdom	Claudine	Pichon	
	United Kingdom	Alnoor	Nathoo	
AFICS/NY	USA	Deborah	Landey	Head Delegation, FAFICS Vice-President
	USA	Darshak	Shah	
	USA	Nancy	Hurtz-Soyka	
	USA	Jay	Karia	Chair SC ASHIL
	USA	Suzanne	Bishopric	Chair, SC-Pension Matters
AFICS Uruguay	Uruguay	Annie	Bourgeois	Head of Delegation
	Uruguay	Gustavo	Casas	
	Uruguay	Jan	Steverlynck	
<i>Emeritus</i>	<i>Emeritus</i>	<i>Andres</i>	<i>Castellanos del Corral</i>	

Appendix 2: Agenda (adopted)

- 1. Adoption of the Agenda**
- 2. Election of the Presiding Officer and the Rapporteur**
- 3. Report of the 52nd Session of the Council**
 - (a) Follow-up of the decisions**
 - (b) Implementation of the Work Plan**
- 4. Status of membership and admission of new members**
- 5. Report of the President**
- 6. Association matters**
- 7. Pension Issues**
 - (a) Report of the Standing Committee**
 - (b) Situation of the former UNJSPF participants in the former USSR Ukrainian SSR, and Byelorussian SSR**
 - (c) Meetings with the Secretary/CEO of the UNJSPF and the RSG for Investments**
- 8. After-service health insurance and long-term care (ASHIL)**
 - Report of the Standing Committee**
- 9. Quadrennial report to ECOSOC for the period (2018-2022)**
- 10.. Administrative and financial matters**
 - (a) Report of the Auditors for the accounts ending 2022**
 - (b) Interim report on the management of the budget for 2023**
 - (c) Proposed budget for 2024**
 - (d) Write off of outstanding receivables**
 - (e) Policy on Travel subsidies**
 - (f) Use of assigned reserves**
 - (g) 2022 Accounts**
 - (h) Pending subscription**
 - (i) Appointment of the Auditors**
- 11.. FAFICS Communication Strategy and Web Development**
 - (a) Relationship with associations (surveys, Directory**
 - (b) Communication strategy**
 - (c) New website**
- 12. Implementation of Procedures according to new Rules**
- 13. Results of elections**
- 14. Date and place of the 54th session of the Council**
- 15. Other business**

Appendix 3: List of documents – Council/53/2023/D.

- D.1** Provisional agenda
- D.1.a** Work Programme
- D.3** Summary of actions requested by 52nd FAFICS Council
- D.5.a** Report of the President
- D.5 d** President's Proposals for Succession Planning
- D.7.b** Communication Strategy
- D.7.b.1** FAFICS Communication Strategy: Executive Summary
- D.7.1** FAFICS Communication Strategy and Web Development: Report of the Working Group on Communications
- D.7.4** Secretary's Note on Current FAFICS Website and Future
- D.8.a** Report of the Auditors
- D.8.b** Interim Report on the Management of the Budget for 2023
- D.8.c** Proposed budget for the year 2024
- D.8.d** Proposal to Write-Off of outstanding membership dues as of end of December 2021
- D.8.e** Proposed policy for providing travel subsidies to a limited number of delegates towards having a broad range of Member Associations participation by size in region in FAFICS Council Sessions
- D.8.f** Establishment and approach on the utilization of FAFICS related Assigned Reserves
- D.9** FAFICS Standing Committee on After-Service Health Insurance and Long-Term Care (ASHIL)
- D.11.a.1** Pension Matters: Management of Investments
- D.11.a.2** Pension Matters: Risk Management
- D.11.a.3** Pension Matters: Information and Communications Strategy in the Office of Investment Managements
- D.11.a.4** FAFICS Standing Committee on Pension Issues: Plan Review Group Progress
- D.11.a.5** Standing Committee on Pension Issues: Application of paragraph 26 of the Pension

- D.11.a.7** **Adjustment System**
Report of the Fund’s Solvency and Assets and
Liabilities Monitoring Committee
- D.11.d** **Small Pensions**
- D.12** **Quadrennial report provided to ECOSOC**
- D.13.a** **Candidate for Vice-President – C V. of Pierre**
Sayour
- D.13.a.1** **Candidate for President AAFI-AFICS Nomination**
for Pierre Sayour
- D.13.b** **Candidate for Vice-President - C.V. of Abdou**
Khadre Diakhate
- D.13.b.1** **Candidate for Vice-President: Motivation letter of**
Abdou Khadre Diakhate
- D.13.c** **Candidate for Secretary: C.V. of Delia Barcelona**
- D.14.c.1** **Candidate for Secretary: AFICS-Philippines –**
Nomination for Delia Barcelona