

**FAFICS 2024**  
**May Session**  
**Bureau meeting on 15 May 2024**

**In attendance:** *Delia Barcelona (Secretary), Jerry Barton (President), Suzanne Bishopric, Juan Casas-Zamora, Jayantilal Karia, Abou Khadare Diahkate, Deborah Landey, Romesh Muttukumaru (Treasurer), Pierre Sayour, Marashetty Seenappa, Nancy Hurtz-Soyka (Rapporteur)*

**Actions/decisions taken by Bureau at this meeting:**

1. The President to clarify Standing Committees vs. Core Team.
2. The President to continue discussions with CEPA on large number of cases pending completion
3. Discussion on how the Minutes could be shared with the Standing Committees and Associations to be considered.
4. Demo of website to be shown at next Bureau meeting in June.

**Agenda 1. Approval of agenda for meeting**

1. The agenda was adopted as presented with one addition which the President suggested. This additional item concerns procedures for condolence reporting which would be discussed under agenda item 'Any Other Business.'

**Agenda item 2. Approval of the Minutes of the meeting**

2. The draft Minutes of the Bureau's 18 April meeting were accepted as presented.

**Agenda item 3. Review of decisions/action points from the 22 March meeting**

3. The President reviewed the decision/action points that were taken during the last Bureau meeting as follows:
  - a. Justification papers (TOR and justification on why there should be two Standing Committees) to be drafted by MS and JC for the establishment of Committees on Membership/Revitalization and Communications for a decision to be taken by the Council. Justification statements to be prepared and discussed at next Bureau meeting in May.  
**To be discussed during the agenda item.**

- b. President to talk to those that have been put forward as FAFICS representatives to the Pension Board and Committees to ensure their willingness to serve  
**To be discussed.**
- c. Terms of Reference of the Standing Committee on Pension Issues to be shared with the Bureau at its next meeting.  
**To be looked at online but see discussion of TORS**
- d. President to talk to Jay Pozenel concerning the Co-Chair position of the SC on Pension Issues. **Done and Jay Pozenel has accepted.**
- e. A formal letter to be sent to all Associations asking for nominations for vacant posts will now be issued jointly, that is from both the President and Secretary (as required under the Rules) -including all points listed in last Minutes, particularly on succession planning and including the need to be willing to sign the Declaration of Principles and to be made aware of expectations.  
**Letter has been sent with deadline of 10 June for nominations.**
- f. At the request of the CEPA and RSG, Bureau members to provide a list of subjects (by the end of April) that retirees might be interested in for a town hall meeting specifically organized for retirees in May/June.  
**No inputs received, perhaps after the July Council and PB meeting there may be more items to be discussed.**

**Agenda item 4. Updates on FAFICS four pillars**

- a. **Pension Issues**
  - 1. **Establishment of the SC Core Team on Pension Issues (TOR, composition, workplan, etc.)**
  - 2. **Brief summary of the April Pension Board meeting**
- 4. The President provided updates on the following points:
  - Terms of Reference for the Standing Committee on Pension issues have been set out and shared with the Bureau. They are currently

being reviewed by Jay Pozenel, the new Co-Chair of the SC on Pension Issues.

- Suzanne Bishopric is intending to write to Associations asking whether anyone from their organizations is serving on the SPCs (retiree members) and would be willing to be on the SC.
- The President then added that the TORS would be submitted to the Council in July, and they would be actively looking for new members to expand the SC and set out, along with the TORS, a workplan.

## **2. Brief summary of the April Pension Board meeting**

- Suzanne Bishopric briefed that at the last Pension Board meeting, FAFICS played a key role and were the ones behind some of the decisions taken at the meeting. She noted the document prepared by the President and Gerhard Schramek on small pensions was placed on the agenda of the Pension Board and noted that there was an Immediate response by the CEPA even before the Pension Board met since this situation had been in limbo since 2016. It was understood that the Pension Administration would provide a report to the Board on this subject which could lead to a onetime adjustment with the possibility of aligning small pensions with Minimum ones.
- The two-track system, brought forward as an issue by FAFICS, as almost the majority of countries are now outside of the two-track system, and it seemed that once no longer in the system the country remains forever outside. However, it was noted that now nine countries were being studied for possible reinstatement.
- The President reported that because of FAFICS intervention in February and the concern about the lack of information on investments, there was more information and better data reporting on investments at this meeting and it is expected that there would be even more information on investments at the next Pension Board meeting in July.
- In overall terms the Pension Fund was at the same level as before Covid – around \$91/ 92 billion. And he noted that more information was being provided by the Head of OIM.
- As for the performance of the Pension Administration, the President said that it was good and improving as inquiries were being responded to faster with the CEPA having set up some good teams.

- The President also noted that the CEPA, Ms. McClean, had accepted a second term of 5 years which was supported by FAFICS.
- FAFICS was also supporting the work of the FSALM Committee and noted that the Chair of FSALM would be soon leaving which might decrease some of the animosity. But other groups, particularly the Governing Bodies, would like to take another look to fully understand the need for the FSALM. FAFICS believes that this is an important Committee as the Pension Board is limited to providing comments and observations as the investments are the purview of the SG, but in order to do so they must have the entire investment picture which this Committee provides.
- On the issue of suspensions of the two-track system, there have been repercussions as he has received complaints from Uruguay and the Czech Republic. Essentially there is nothing FAFICS can do as this is under the authority of the CEPA. The Pension Fund has set up a team to periodically review those countries suspended which was not done before so this was a new positive initiative.
- Some of the reports from various committees were postponed to July including the Ethics Committee report and that of the PRG so there would be more work to do at the July Pension Board meeting.
- Suzanne Bishopric reported that the PRG's final report might call for the removal of the 0.5 per cent decrease in the first inflation adjustment. This change looks likely assuming the actuarial information is good.
- Reference was made to the new Governance Working Group and all the items that this Group would be required to review which will require intensive and hard work by its members.

## **Discussion**

5. Deborah Landey questioned the outrageous number of pending cases because of incomplete files - something like 4,000 cases - which was hard to believe that the number was so high. It would be important for

the Pension Administration to put in place a special mechanism, if it has not yet been set up, to work on this high number of cases.

6. The President added that the CEPA has been a bit vague on this matter which was very concerning. This situation emanates from primarily the UN – not the specialized agencies – and it was the UN that had not provided all the documents to the Pension Fund. He did know that the Pension Fund was working closely with the UN on this matter. Suzanne Bishopric added that many situations required historical documents for beneficiaries that were not easy to obtain. The President said that he would follow up on this item with the CEPA.
7. Pierre Sayour mentioned the General Assembly of AAFI-AFICS and thanked the President for his very well-received statement at the Assembly. He then gave some background on the establishment of the FSALM Committee and said that the FSALM allows the Board to have better insight on investments, otherwise members can sometimes be lost. This type of Committee should be considered of high importance and FAFICS should fight to keep it.
8. Jay Karia asked about the 0.5% inflation adjustment that might be reinstated if approved in July at the Board meeting and queried that if it were to be reinstated then when and how would it take effect. He believed it would take effect after the GA had agreed to it, so it would be only happening next year. He then also asked about the 4,000 pending cases and recalled that it was not only an organizational issue but some of the cases related to those that needed to produce birth and marriage certificates which in many cases were sometimes difficult to produce. What was needed was to zero in on those people and the documents required which were not always available to survivors. Some education was also necessary for survivors to know what was needed after the passing of a retiree. As regards, the FSALM, FAFICS needed to keep fighting for its retention as sometimes people did not understand certain things and delegates did often change making it difficult to be on top of all investment knowledge. He was also concerned and noted that while data information was improving more could be done especially when comparing results between pre-Covid and after Covid when there were

substantial new contributions which should, in fact, be segregated showing real rates of returns.

9. Marashetty Seenappa congratulated the President and team on work involving the two-track system. He also was concerned about spousal benefits being delayed because of documentation. He suggested that FAFICS should convince the CEPA and make her more aware of the emergency and nature of the need to assist survivors and suggested that there should be an emergency email for those in need of spousal benefits as the MSS portal becomes closed and the spouse has nowhere to turn.
10. Suzanne Bishopric in replying to the comments made said that delayed pensions were a problem, but the CEPA had set up a desk to work with all the smaller agencies. She also noted that many peace-keeping missions were closed or closing which was adding to the backlog. On the investments, there were issues with benchmarks and performance and comments by FAFICS were incorporated into the Board's report which would be available in July.
11. Deborah Landey in speaking of the TORS for the Core Team on Pension Issues that had been shared said her understanding was that the Standing Committees remained Committees of the Whole and that the change foreseen in the Rules of Procedure was the creation of Core Teams which would meet periodically throughout the year to do the work, share knowledge and build capacity. She said her understanding was that the FAFICS Council had decided the Core Team on Pensions would be the Pension Board delegation with one or two additional individuals from the Expertise Pool. However, as presented, the TORS do not appear to be TORS for the Core Teams.
12. The President in reply noted that the TORS for the Core Team on Pension Issues were almost an exact copy of the TORS for the Core Team on Health and Life Insurance. He agreed the Standing Committees would meet as a whole, as these have been established by the Council, with Core Teams that would meet on a regular basis throughout the year. He also added that the Standing Committees were no longer held for a full day before the Council. He agreed that more clarity was needed on the roles of the Standing

Committees and Core Teams which would then follow for the other two Standing Committees on Revitalization and Communications whose establishment would be before the Council. He indicated he would give more thought as to how this could be clarified.

13. Jay Karia added that the way the Standing Committee on ASHIL operates is that the Core Team is part of the Standing Committee, and this should be the same concept for the Standing Committee on Pension Issues. It meets monthly and members inputs are taken into consideration in preparation of the Report to the Council. The idea was that the Core Team would not be composed of just a couple of people as there had been only two people working on health insurance issues in the past, but a group of people who were regularly meeting and devoting time to studying the various issues.

**b. ASHIL**

14. The Chair of the Standing Committee, Jay Karia, offered the following updates:
  - The Committee was meeting monthly and was currently focusing on its report on the replies received from Associations to the general questionnaire which would be submitted to the Council. The final report should be available in about a week which would be shared with all Associations
  - The report was already translated into French, but he needed help with the Spanish translation to which Juan Cases agreed to provide assistance.
  - As for the replies to the survey sent to those Associations in Africa, he noted that they had received ten responses out of eighteen but due to various reasons they could only use seven of the responses.
  - One issue that had been brought to the SC's attention was the MIP benefits where there are some issues including that some of the facilities in certain countries were not as good as in others. This would be taken under review to see what FAFICS could do. A report on MIP was also being finalized.
  - The SC was also reviewing the JIU report to which the SC had a mixed reaction as some of their recommendations were good while some were rather mild.

- However, there was one positive recommendation which also happened to be their first one which was that if an organization had not yet done so they should ensure that in any health or advisory committee representation of field base staff representatives, as well as retirees, should be formally included in that committee. He was pleased to note that this would impact AFICS/NY 's observer status in the UN's Health and Life Insurance Committee where AFICS/NY has been fighting for full participation for many years and this recommendation would certainly help in that regard.
  - As for the deadline of 10 June for reports to be submitted for the upcoming Council session, the SC reports may not be ready for that date but would be ready by 15/16 June. The Secretary replied that the 10 June date was put in place to ensure that the documents were submitted in a timely way and as much as possible reports should be submitted by that time.
  - There was also a request from the SC on whether the Bureau Minutes could be shared with the Standing Committee or perhaps at least the Summary. or main decision points be shared with them.
15. The President did not think it was a good idea to share Minutes where there were personnel items represented but a summary or action points could be shared. This would be taken under consideration to see how best to implement this action. The Secretary clarified that she followed the previous practice, and the Minutes were posted on the website on a restricted basis, which is only for members. However, perhaps an Executive Summary could be created and shared with Associations.

### **c. Communications**

#### **1. Further website updates**

16. The Chair of the Communications Committee, Juan Casas, reported that the demo of the proposed new website was available to be reviewed and noted that it was still a work in progress. He presented the following updates on its content and status, many of which were still be discussed in the Committee itself. He welcomed any comments or suggestions by Bureau members to any of the points listed below:



- The structure of the web site content should fall under the four pillars of work under a title like **'Topics of interests' (may have a different name – which needs to be decided on)**
- More diversity is needed in the pictures and more photos from Associations
- A section on 'News' is very important as well as an 'In Memoriam' section
- A decision on where the resources for each pillar should be presented was needed**
- There would be an AI language component so material could be translated, and the site itself could be translated into any language by such an AI addition
- The use of country flags for each Association had been created by the developer but not sure that this was an appropriate insignia to use**
- Recommendation of the Committee:** Maintaining the information under each of the pillars should be the responsibility of the four Standing Committees who would have this work embedded in their TORS.
- In this regard he suggested that a website management team be created which would have the responsibility of overseeing the updating of each pillar. This team would include the Content Manager, the Secretary, and representatives of the four pillars with possible support from interns.
- Information contained in the brochure should also be included in the website.
- A Governance section is also being considered
- Each of the pillars would contain: the TORS, the SC, the workplan, useful links and frequently asked questions
- Streamers across the website could also be considered
- Good news is that all the material from the current website has been transferred to the new website and the Committee itself was debating on a structure that made sense
- Since all the material is in place it is now up to the Committee and Bureau to focus on the structure and once finalized the website could be ready in a month's time.

17. The President and Bureau did not think that the use of the flags was the best insignia and other ideas should be considered. The President also requested the Committee to continue their discussions and noted that the site map could easily be modified even after a decision was taken. The use of a management team for updating content was a very good idea and essential. One member suggested that the information concerning member Associations should include the date when it was updated. It was also suggested that the website should also ensure the idea that FAFICS and its Associations are for everyone including locally recruited staff. A question was also asked if there would be a separate area for Council decisions and asked how it would be ensured that the Member Associations information was updated on a regular basis. Some provision for archiving was also mentioned as an important component for the website. It was also suggested that there be a link to the UNJSPF to show investment levels so that FAFICS was always showing the most updated figures.

18. Juan Casas said that he looked forward to the demonstration of the new website at the next Bureau meeting as well as at the Council in July. The President suggested that he would like to be able to put the website into action during the Council's session.

**2. Justification for elevating the Communications Committee into a Standing Committee (Not discussed)**

**3. Draft certificate for Douglas Helland (may be deferred to next meeting in case not ready) (Not discussed)**

**d. Membership/Revitalization of Member Associations**

**1. Further updates on outreach efforts**

**2. Justification for elevating the Committee into a Standing Committee of FAFICS**

19. Marashetty Seenappa, Co-Chair of the Committee, spoke about the terms of reference for a new Standing Committee on Membership and provided justification in a paper that was circulated to Bureau members that would be formally presented to the Council for approval. He also outlined the proposed membership of the new Standing Committee which would include

eight to ten members selected from the expert pool. Members would be drawn based on geographic locations with the membership coming from Central and East Africa, Francophone Africa, the Middle East, the Americas the Caribbean Eastern Europe, Asia, and East Asia.

20. Abdou Khadre Diakhate, Co-Chair of the Committee, detailed the events surrounding his Association's upcoming General Assembly and was happy to report that the membership has grown from 72 to more than 120 retirees and that everyone was pleased to be part of FAFICS. He also announced that they had created a new platform called AFRICA FOR FAFICS.org where questions and problems can be added and there would be links for every country. He then reported on new Associations:

**Nigeria:** The Resident Coordinator was ready to help in whatever way to help create this new association.

**Ghana** – sent some information two weeks ago. They will put the issue of FAFICS on the agenda for their next meeting.

**Côte d'Ivoire** – they may be the first to join FAFICS because they were willing to even be at the Council in Bangkok. They are hoping to join this year.

**Burkina Faso** – has been invited to send in a request to receive a subsidy to attend the Council session in Bangkok.

**Tanzania** – as Abdou is planning to visit family in Tanzania, he will try to visit friends and provide them some support after the flooding that occurred.

He was also in touch with Ms. Ramsdale of UNFCU who is currently in the process of opening a new UNFCU Office in Senegal.

21. Marashetty Seenappa reported that AAFI-AFICS had informed him that they had been supporting Somalia by paying their contribution to FAFICS for the last 8 to 10 years as Somalia was unable to pay its dues. However, at this point AAFI-AFICS was not too sure if the Association was still in existence and that he had agreed to take this on board.

##### **5. Treasurer's Update**

22. The Treasurer reported that he was updating the contributions table for 2024 and he then would send out letters to those that had not yet paid. He also noted that some Associations do not identify themselves when paying their dues through banks which makes it very difficult for him to know which Association was paying. monitor. He also noted that confirmation had been made to Myanmar and Bolivia that they would be getting a subsidy for travel

to the Council. There was still the possibility of granting two more subsidies to Associations from the international side and one from the region.

## **6. Updates on FAFICS 54**

### **a. Brief update from Bangkok**

- The Secretary reported on arrangements in Bangkok as she was there to oversee some of logistics needed for the Council's meeting.
- The President reported that the CEPA would be participating in person and the RSG would attend but it was not yet sure if he would be in person or virtual.

### **b. Feedback/questions coming in from Member Associations**

- Most questions were concerning hotel bookings.

### **c. Status of online registration on Indico/registration period**

The Secretary reported that there were 42 registrations from 14 countries.

### **d. Elections**

- The Secretary was still looking for a Polling Officer.

### **e. Updates on agenda and list of documents**

- No new updates on documents.

### **f. Draft council session programme flow (may be deferred to next meeting in case not ready)**

The Secretary reported that she would have a draft on the programme for the next Bureau meeting

## **7. Schedule of next Bureau meetings leading up to FAFICS 54**

23. The next Bureau meeting will be held on 20 June.

## **8. Any Other business**

### **24. The following issues were brought up:**

- The President reported that he had addressed the AAFI-AFICS Assembly this week with a recording, on 21 May he would be addressing AFICS/NY virtually live and on 26 June he would address FFOA's (Rome) general meeting.
- The Treasurer questioned whether there were any membership tools for existing Associations on how to do membership drives to attract international and local retirees.
- It was clarified that there were no observers at the Council but there can be candidates for membership. If documentation were more or less finalized without any constraints, then these soon to be associations could attend as a prospective member.