



Australian Association of Former International Civil Servants
(AAFICS)

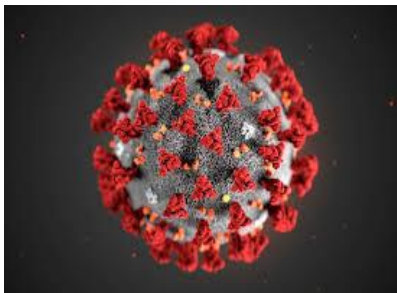


VOL. XXXI, No. 1

NEWSLETTER

JULY 2020

AAFICS represents retired officials from the United Nations and its agencies and funds. Former officials of other international organizations are also welcome to become members. We offer a link to UN retirees through occasional social events, as well as contacts for information and advice about retirement in Australia. We are affiliated to FAFICS in Geneva, the Federation of 63 Associations similar to ours and an essential source of advice on pension-related issues and on after-service-health insurance schemes. This newsletter has been prepared and circulated on a voluntary basis by the AAFICS membership.



EDITOR'S COMMENT: Dear AAFICS friends. To say that the year 2020 has been full of surprises and concerns is an understatement. You will recall that our Christmas 2019 Newsletter exuded joyful cheer and we never imagined then that lying in wait just around the corner was a dreadful virus known as COVID-19 that would change the life of each and every one of us. From a few isolated coronavirus cases early in 2020 to a full

global pandemic only weeks later, we have watched with astonishment and concern as death rates have climbed, hospitals have become overwhelmed and health workers have fallen victim, whole industries have been shut-down, airlines destroyed, travel curtailed, and huge queues of the newly jobless have formed at Centrelink. In an instance, political ideology on economic surpluses has been tossed overboard as massive budget deficits have become the order of the day in an effort to ensure that the world's economic situation does not completely melt-down. For we former UN staff members, it has also been disappointing to see our colleagues working in WHO take a battering from unfriendly world leaders and for the USA to decide to leave the organisation altogether at this crucial time. Despite all these woes, AAFICS members have kindly come forward with positive articles and stories for this winter 2020 edition of our Newsletter. We also have some news on pensions and many travel tales and cultural experiences from happier days. May those times soon return. Thank you again to all who have contributed. Stay safe and remain optimistic!



PRESIDENT'S REPORT: JENNIFER ASHTON

What a six months it has been...smoke, bushfires, COVID 19 and a complete change of life-style for most of us...slowly things are getting back to the new normal, but in faltering steps as Victoria is teaching us at the time that I write. I hope that you have all fared well in what we have to call these unprecedented times. I am very happy that my son returned to Canberra from Paris in February to take up a new job here. The international travel restrictions that may be extended until the middle of next year would otherwise have seen an unexpected and prolonged separation.

There have been significant changes in the UN Pension Fund as well. The new CEO (her post has been retitled Chief Executive of Pension Administration to reflect the decision to split a job function) was injured in a pedestrian accident shortly before she was due to join the UNJSPF at the beginning of 2020. Ms Rosemarie McClean, a Canadian with long experience in the pension system there, could not travel to New York for some weeks, but tele-commuted (as so many do now) so that our pensions could legally be paid. To add to the leadership changes, the Head of Investments, Mr. Sudhir Rajkumar, resigned with two-day's notice at the end of March. This was for personal reasons. He has been replaced temporarily by Mr. Pedro Antonio Guazo Alonso, a long-term and experienced finance officer, who among other things was Chief of Finance in WFP for two years before he joined the UN in New York in 2012. All this and the COVID lock down! As is to be expected, with the lockdown came the global economic uncertainties that led to investment fluctuations. Our Pension Fund, which held \$72 billion in assets at its peak in 2019, was valued at \$63 billion at the end of March. Nonetheless, the upgraded and very informative Office of Investment Management (OIM)



website (oim.unjspf.org) recently listed our current assets at \$69 billion.

There were allegations by the staff representatives on the Pension Board that there had been risky and speculative investments. In part this seems related to funds being diversified from the US to other markets. In a telecast meeting that they held with Ms McClean and Mr. Alonso in April, and which I stayed up until midnight to watch, the heads of the Fund reassured viewers that pension funds are notably conservative in their investments and that they take a long-term approach.

I would recommend the OIM website to any who are curious about our Fund. There is a very interesting section on the approach to sustainable investment and their use of something called 'climate analytics' to inform their decision making on future investments.

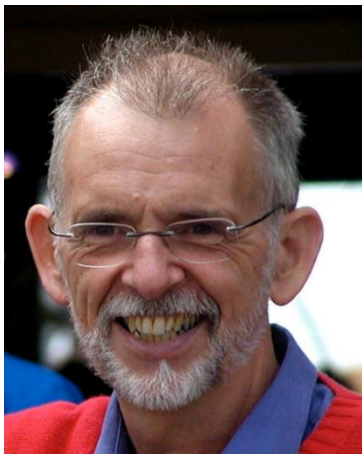
FAFICS, our federation of country-based pensioner Associations, is currently wrestling with the issue of how to hold the annual meeting. They are optimistically planning a physical meeting before the end of this year, but several Associations, including Australia and New Zealand, have voiced problems. Concern has also been voiced by the Associations that deal with the Geneva Office (we are covered from New York) that its financial functions are being transferred to New York. Members who have dealt with both places are strong in their praise of the responsiveness of Geneva-based staff. One issue that is being floated (there was an article in *Pass Blue*, a website on the UN) is that the two-track system of pension payment should be abolished because it is more expensive than regular US\$ payment. We shall see if anything eventuates.

And finally, there is little news from the Branches, as we have all been limited in our activities for the past 6 months. We managed to have a wonderful lunch in Sydney in February, thanks to Maurice Critchley, the new State Convenor, but some others had to postpone their lunches. Victoria has finalised two very useful documents that I am now working out how best way to circulate. Taxation remains an issue, with at least one member relocating to another country with a more favourable tax regime. One member has had difficulties with the signature of his spouse, who can no longer sign her Certificate of Entitlement. Australian laws regarding power of attorney have not been regarded as sufficient by the UNJSPF and he has had to register a formal guardianship with the Court at a cost of \$1,500 to be able to do so.

And a very last word. UNJSPF is posting the 2020 Certificate of Entitlement in July to those countries with an operating postal service. As Australia Post is still going strong, expect to receive yours soonish and don't forget to sign and return.

Jennifer Ashton, President, AAFICS

NEWS ABOUT MEMBERS



Sincere congratulations to Dr. John Clements on being awarded an AM (Member of the Order of Australia) in the Australia Day 2020 Honours List. Wonderful news John!

The official citation reads “For significant service to international public health through immunization programs”.

John is a medical practitioner whose career has spanned 50 years, 17 of them in the World Health Organization (WHO). Training in clinical Paediatrics and Obstetrics allowed him to experience the hardships of a year running a Christian mission hospital in the Peruvian Amazon. Further developing countries exposure in Bangladesh and Afghanistan determined his change of direction to Public Health and Infectious Disease Control. In 1983, he became head of Disease Control for the Department of Health in New Zealand, including manager of the national immunization programme.

He next became part of the small leadership team for the global programme for infant and childhood immunization in WHO in Geneva. He provided leadership by developing global immunization policies and by extensive travel to developing countries where he interacted with national programme managers in Ministries of Health. He has worked in around 100 countries, mostly in the developing world.

He writes extensively and has published over 20 books or book chapters, more than 150 articles in the medical literature as well as over 100 WHO documents, mostly on public health issues. He is an editorial reviewer for a wide range of international medical journals such as the Lancet, BMJ and the WHO Bulletin.

In 2003 he moved to Melbourne, Australia where, until recently, he worked as a consultant with WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank. He is Associate Professor at the University of Melbourne and Adjunct Associate Professor at Monash University. In 2014, he was appointed to the Geneva-based Independent Review Committee of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization.

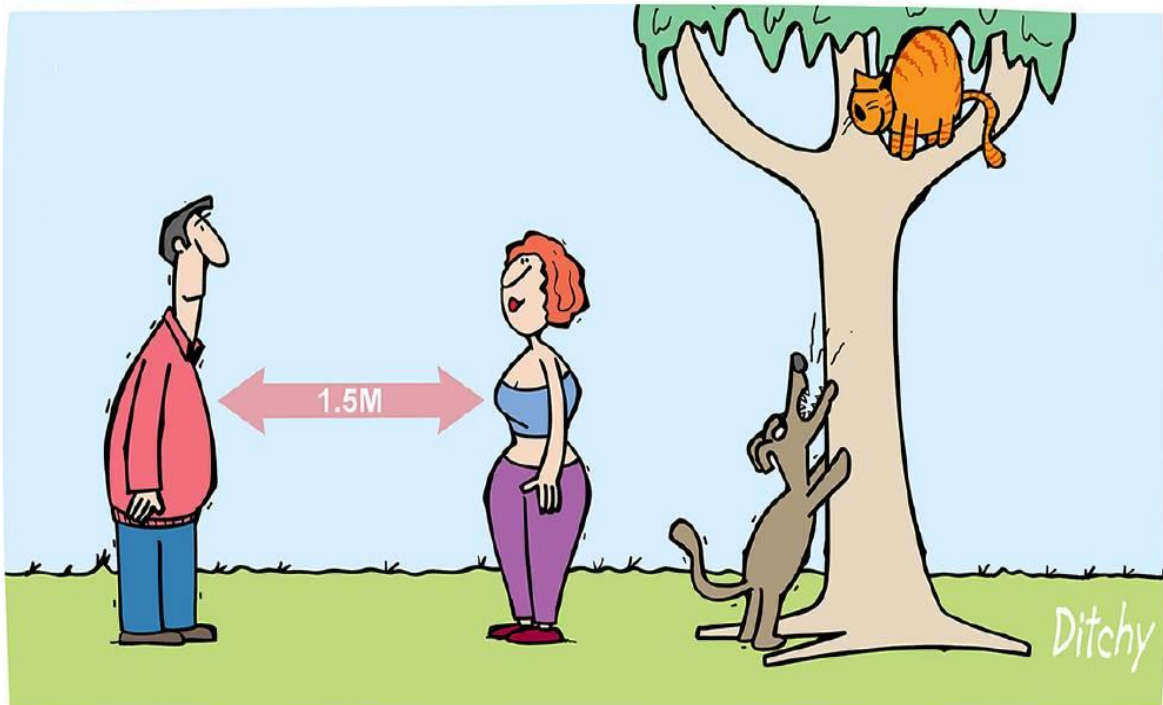
LIFE IN THE CORONAVIRUS ERA

MATT



'If Mickey Mouse catches coronavirus we'll have to tell Lord Lucan, Adolf Hitler, Marilyn Monroe...'

SOCIAL DISTANCING



PEOPLE

PETS

COOOEE! REPORTS FROM BRANCHES



TASMANIA

In December I wrote about a chance meeting with a local U3A coordinator, resulting in a speaking slot to talk about my UN experience. It was to be a lecture in a weekly series, called *Kaleidoscope*, where I would be book-ended by the launch of Richard Davis's *The Vision Splendid of Justin O'Byrne* and *My Work in the Department of Foreign Affairs* by Tim Ault. Later in April, other topics included *Pot Plants and Wallabies* and *Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*. As it happened, only Richard Davis' book was aired and U3A cancelled its activities indefinitely. I sat out the lock-down and watched a lot of CNN.

It was, however, a bonus to have read Stephen C Schelsinger's *Act of Creation, 2003*, while I was preparing for the lecture. As I mused over the lead role played by the US Government in the creation of the UN, the current American President ranted and raved on Twitter and Fox News, finally withdrawing US funds from WHO. As I write, he is claiming that high testing rates are inflating the COVID-19 numbers.

As we know, the US led the planning for the San Francisco Conference where the UN was created in October 1945. President Roosevelt had planned to address the Conference from his wheelchair but died suddenly thirteen days before the meeting in April 1945. The US installed Vice President Truman, whose direct involvement and leadership continued the theme that the Conference mattered greatly. In his opening remarks, he referred to the importance of providing sensible machinery for the settlement of disputes among nations. In contrast, the sitting US President focuses on dividing his nation and seeking his own re-election. It's hard to believe it is happening.

Several other features of the process in 1945 stood out for me. I relate a few bare facts, but each has a fascinating back story. President Truman appointed Edward Reilly Stettinius, an American executive, as Secretary of State. Stettinius had a strong sense of social responsibility and expertly tapped the expertise of others. The venue in San Francisco and even the way delegates travelled influenced the meeting. Many consultants were involved and played a vital role, influencing the future inclusion of NGOs and human rights. So many aspects of this Conference were innovative and forward looking. *The Act of Creation* is a fascinating read including a young 27 year old former naval officer, Kennedy, representing the Chicago Herald Tribune, who wrote, 'We must face the truth that

the people who have not been horrified by war to a sufficient extent to force them to go to any extent rather than have another war' [sic] (p. 156).

Perhaps this is the time to read about history so that we can stomach the peculiarities of the present times. Another positive experience recently was an *Intelligence Squared* debate between Boris Johnson and Mary Beard, 'Greece versus Rome' on *YouTube*. I must add that Mary Beard won. It was a relief to listen to intelligent debate.

Janet Cummins, a Tasmanian AAFICS member ends this article. "The anti-UN sentiments coming from the US White House, are a very sad state of affairs indeed. There must continue to be multi-national world fora, including all UN agencies (WHO in particular), and funded by all members. Cohesion would soon be replaced by chaos."

Jane S. Wilson PhD, Tasmania State Coordinator

VICTORIA

Following on from our report in the December 2019 Newsletter, as we all know and experienced, things began to heat up then with the COVID-19 outbreak overseas.

In November/December a sub-committee was called and met to map out our plans for producing two booklets for AAFICS members and potential members overseas. This followed on from a commitment we undertook following our annual Victoria meeting back in May 2019. Since then, with meetings and diligence from our sub-committee during the lockdown, the two booklets have been produced and sent to AAFICS HQ for approval and final editing. The booklet titles given were:

An Essential Checklist – Planning your return to Australia after service with the United Nations and Before Your Demise. Recording Your Personal Details/Instructions. (An AAFICS Handbook to Help You and Your Next of Kin).

Once approved, **Booklet 1** will be circulated overseas to those seeking membership of AAFICS and in UN service wanting to return to Australia. **Booklet 2** will be circulated to all AAFICS members in Australia so they can develop a personal record of all their information for reference when they die to help their next of kin attend to arrangements.

Our annual Victoria membership meeting was scheduled for 4th April 2020 at a new venue in Carlton that promised to be far superior to our last. However, in the interests of members' safety over COVID-19, this was cancelled. Given the elevated risk of infection for us in the Methuselah class, at this time we have not arranged an alternative date, despite some restrictions being lifted.

Of course, since the lockdown little else has happened at our Branch other than we are very pleased to welcome some new members to AAFICS Victoria. These are: Ashok Madhavi & Robert Johnson – UNICEF; Peter and Denise Bud – ICAO; Alan Wilkinson – WFP

Our sincere thanks to Jennifer for all her hard work and to the Editor for whipping us into shape to develop material for the Newsletter. Finally, we sincerely wish all AAFICS members at the other regional branches the best of health and hope you remain safe until a vaccine is developed and this pandemic passes...hopefully by 2021.

Mike Patto, Victoria State Coordinator

QUEENSLAND

Let's start with some good news. Conditions in Queensland have improved to the point where we were able to legally go ahead with our postponed May lunch with effectively no limit on the number of participants. It was held at our usual Brisbane venue on Wednesday 8 July in mellow sunshine.



*AAFICS members enjoying a pre-lunch drink at Zegatos restaurant, the Ashgrove Golf Club, Brisbane.
(All photos M.Hadlow)*

A week before our lunch, the State Premier had announced a further relaxation on Queensland's pandemic restrictions. There had been major speculation as to what she would do with the NSW border closure. Until recently, I was critical of the closure, feeling that the economic damage it did to the State's tourism businesses, especially in regional Queensland, far outweighed the possible health risks of people coming in from other states. Now with the upsurge in community-transferred cases of the wretched virus in Victoria, I'm not so sure. What I do know is that over the last four months, running governments must have been a bloody nightmare. Finding the right balance between health safety and economic prosperity must have involved some exquisitely painful discussions and decisions.

Back to our lunch. Some 18 people attended.



(L to R: Raghwan & Srimathy Raghwan (ILO), Bill Edeson (FAO), Valerie Hay (WHO), Eileen Sackett (FAO/WFP/UNDP), John & Anita Powell (FAO)).

Appropriate precautions were taken with elbow bumps and social distancing *de rigueur*. I think we all appreciated the opportunity to let our hair down a little. It was interesting that the chatting and sharing of anecdotes went on for rather longer than usual. I guess we feel that regarding the wretched virus, Queensland is in a fortunate space at present through a combination of luck and good management. At some point there will be additional cases, possibly many more, as so sadly our colleagues in Victoria are experiencing.



(L to R: Anne Hadlow (UNESCO), Cheryl Williams (ITU), Tim Henry (UNRWA),
Leik and Khamnoan Boonwat (UNODC), Ian & Cathy Douglas (FAO).

We're also tentatively planning our Spring lunch in delightful Maleny for late October/early November. Necessarily we will only confirm that event much nearer the time. I suspect that the current mess is going to be with us for quite some time, with the roller-coaster of optimism and pessimism going on, if not from week to week, then certainly month to month. The pundits are warning us not to expect a significant number of scheduled international flights before July *next year*, quite an issue for those of us with family spread around the world.



Word has it that the UN Pension Fund is working on ways to improve its certification of entitlement to pension procedure. As you know we currently have the quaintly 1950s snail-mailing of flimsy bits of paper on which our increasingly shaky (speaking for myself anyway) signatures are inscribed before snail-mailing. Really? In 2020? Apparently, a random sample of former WFP pensioners is taking part in a Pension Fund pilot trial biometric authentication of entitlement akin to what the Australian Border Force uses when we return through an international airport. I wonder when the new Pension Fund procedure will see the light of day? For the rest of us, mailing out of the Certificates of Entitlement from New York has, apparently, been delayed by one month this year, so don't expect to receive them before the latter part of July.



State Coordinator Mike Sackett delivers the goods at lunch. (Name badge to remind self.)

Finally, I heard a sad tale recently of an AAFICS member submitting their health insurance claim to Cigna in Belgium by snail mail at the beginning of this year. It was never received at the other end. The claim was re-sent in March by registered mail, taking six weeks to get to Belgium and finally being paid in June. It really is worthwhile taking the plunge and loading the insurer's app (if available). The claim I submitted that way in April resulted in reimbursement to my Australian bank in five days. If a mug like me can do it, pretty well anyone can.

Mike Sackett, Queensland State Coordinator

CERTIFICATE OF ENTITLEMENT TIME!



Just a reminder from our President, Jennifer, that the annual CofE should be hitting our mailboxes soon. Although most of us (apart from US President Trump, it seems) trust the postal system to receive and deliver with security and on time, it might be a good idea to keep a photocopy of your CofE and a note of the date you dispatch the document back to New York.

ROYAL CORNER



LOOKING FOR CARAVAGGIO

When I retired from the ILO in Geneva in 2003, after 31 years of service, having packed up and shipped my goods and chattels off to Sydney, I went to Italy, to Florence, to enrol in one of those rigorous drawing and painting schools there. Silence and punctuality were required while I learned how to put the sharpest possible point on my 2B pencils, how to shade from dark to light across the page without smudging, and how to strive for photographic accuracy while copying the prescribed exercises each day. Progress was slow and painful, especially when the mysteries of perspective were revealed, but I loved it. As we all know, when you retire you have to have a project that gets you out of bed each morning and gives structure to your day. My project was my lifelong wish to be able to draw well and to learn to paint. These Florentine art schools concentrate on technique, they don't provide instruction on art history. But of course, when you are in Florence you are surrounded by art history and after a while I began to realise that the paintings I most wanted to look at were by the Baroque era painter Michelangelo Merisi, born in 1571 in the small town of Caravaggio near Milan, dead by 1610, after an incredibly productive and dramatically short and violent life.

In Florence, there were 8 paintings by Caravaggio, and one more in nearby Prato. Comfortable and convenient train rides to Rome allowed me to see 28 more, some of them still *in situ*, in the churches for which they had been commissioned over 400 years before.

I began to formulate a further project for my retirement years - I would try to see every existing painting by Caravaggio, travelling each year to Europe with the purpose of visiting a city with at least several Caravaggios. London has 11 of them, Vienna has quite a few as well, Madrid is also worth going to. I tried wherever possible to coincide with exhibitions that included Caravaggios on loan from other countries and, in that way, I didn't have to go to Texas or Ireland or Russia. There have been increasing numbers of splendid exhibitions in Rome, Milan, Paris and London as scholars and curators have rediscovered his work and brought it back into intellectual fashion and the public view, after centuries of indifference.

How could the world have paintings? In his lifetime innovative, you could say other painters and the tastes aristocrats and princes of the commissioned his work. can look pretty and compelled his viewers to at times shocking reality. He contrasts of light and dark his canvases with life size the composition, giving a



ever been indifferent to his Caravaggio was hugely radical in his influence on of the rich merchants, Catholic Church who Other paintings of the time charming, while Caravaggio look at scenes painted with achieved this by strong (*chiaroscuro*), by crowding figures placed to the front of sense of the artist's physical

effort to produce the painting. Sometimes his paintings give the impression of puncturing the wall of the picture plane, feet seem to protrude into the viewer's space and often the feet are none too clean, as in the old couple worshipping the Madonna di Loreto in the church of Sant'Agostino in Rome. Many of the people who modelled for him must have come from the streets and taverns of Rome, with work-hardened faces and hands. His angels mostly look like tough street boys with white wings sprouting from their shoulder blades.

A singular characteristic of Caravaggio is his choice to depict the exact moment in which something violent happens - a lizard bites a young man's finger. We see the moment when the knife is drawn through St John the Baptist's head. Or we see Judith as she cuts off Holoferne's head in that exact moment, not after, her curled lip and slight disgust on her beautiful face alongside her old maid's wrinkled countenance.

Sometimes the painting conveys the instant when a momentous spiritual decision is reached as in the Calling of Saint Matthew in the Church San Luigi dei Francesi, or the Conversion of Saint Paul, in Santa Maria del Popolo in Rome. In Naples at the wonderful Museum of Capodimonte on the hill behind this grand and decrepit city, in a museum where there are usually few visitors, you can stand alone and weep in front of the Flagellation of Christ because you will see on Christ's face his terrible sorrow at the knowledge that he has been abandoned even by God his father.



These are paintings for our own times, they have a physical and human presence that speaks to us; they are often troubling and turbulent.

There are also many paintings that take us into charming moments. A group of musicians show the enjoyment of making music together, people play cards, people sing together, people have their fortunes told by a gypsy. But Caravaggio has the gypsy slip the gentleman's ring from his finger, and among the card players there is a cardsharp.

Caravaggio was very prolific and when he wasn't painting, he probably went to taverns and got into brawls, eventually into murderous brawls. Thanks to Italy's thousand-year habit of conserving documentation, we can still read the transcripts of some of Caravaggio's interviews with magistrates; there is no doubt about his irascible violent behaviour. As he escaped from Rome and into the protection of minor nobility in the different jurisdiction of Naples, he must have taken with him his rolls of fine twill linen canvases, and I think he also took with him his large bolt of red cloth that appears in so many of his paintings, used as a curtain, as a drape over a figure, as a framing device around a scene. The red cloth continues to appear in paintings he produced during his downward trajectory to Malta, Sicily, Naples and death, trying to set himself up properly in each new place and always getting into terrible conflicts.

Caravaggio's painting technique has always fascinated artists. He used few and mostly earth colours, with the exception of the red cloth, and some beautiful blue robes on his female figures. He paid enormous attention to the background colour of his paintings (the *campitura*) and during his life he was famous for painting *alla prima*, that is, straight onto his canvas without preparatory sketches. People thought he show off, but thanks to recent technology, we know he did overpaint and correct his (*pentimenti*). And while he didn't make preliminary sketches, he scratched marks onto his background colour with the handle of his brush, to remind himself where significant highlights should be placed. In one of his last paintings, the Adoration of the Shepherds, still to be seen in Messina, Sicily, painted the year before he died, a sweet and humble Virgin Mary sits with her child among the hay bales in a vast dark barn, with a donkey and a cow nearby.



The shepherds' worn faces look at her with love and compassion. Most of the picture is taken up by the dark gloom of the barn's high ceiling and because you can get up close and study the painting, you can see that Caravaggio has just painted the light coloured areas and highlights, leaving you the viewer to fill in with your own eye the shape of the objects. If you are lucky you can also see the scratch marks.

Do I have a favourite Caravaggio? Perhaps not, but I certainly have never tired of visiting the Rest on the Flight into Egypt, at the small Galleria Doria-Pamphilj in Rome, where you will also see one of Western art's greatest psychological portraits, Pope Innocent X by Velasquez.

But I do want to invite you to sit for a while in the Chapel of the Pio Monte della Misericordia in the crowded heart of Naples where Caravaggio was commissioned by the chapel's charitable foundation in 1607 to depict the Seven Works of Mercy (*I sette atti di misericordia*). This is a huge painting, metres and metres high and wide and you will never see it sent on loan to an exhibition. In any case its context is very much part of your viewing experience.

At the pinnacle of the painting the Virgin and Child sit on a cloud indifferent to the earth below. Two Neapolitan lads masquerading as winged angels tumble around below her cloud. But it is the wildly crowded goings on in the lower part of the painting that will grip you. Fortunately, the Chapel gives you a guide to the seven works of mercy among which on the right-hand side of the painting is a young woman offering her breast milk to an old man. In the nearby Naples Archaeological Museum, you can see Greek and Roman sculptures illustrating the same act of hospitality so to speak, so there is clearly a long classical precedence. It is nevertheless unnerving and some of the other works of mercy are just as ambiguous. The Chapel is never crowded so you can stay as long as you like, just as Australian artist Brett Whitely did years ago. I think he said it did his head in.



Will I achieve my ambition to see all the Caravaggios before I die? Over these years I have come to realise that I will not. Several great Caravaggios were lost in bombing Germany in World War II; one or two others have disappeared, stolen or hidden. A large Caravaggio altar piece was stolen out of a church in Palermo in 1969 by a group of ambitious young criminals; unfortunately for them the established Mafia took offence and took the rolled-up canvas away from them. Recently one of the Mafia protagonists, now ageing, revealed that a Zurich art dealer had been convoked to Palermo, the painting was cut up into 5 pieces and taken to Zurich in a suitcase, never to be seen again.

This year I would have gone to Malta to see a couple of grand Caravaggios in the cathedral in Valetta, which are too fragile to be loaned to other countries. Perhaps I will never get to Malta. But I have seen many, I could say most, of this exceptional painter's works and I hope I have been brought by my search to understand a little better the beauty and the complexity, the sorrow and ambiguity of human nature.

Mary Johnson, Sydney

[Editor's note: absolutely uplifting and erudite contribution, Mary. Thank you so much. Your tale takes us to wonderful intellectual places and cultural spaces. Malta awaits. You will get there.]

MORE ON THE 2020 CERTIFICATE OF ENTITLEMENT EXERCISE

[Thanks to Mike Patto, Victoria State Coordinator for passing on this piece from a Facebook site apparently managed/frequented/accessed by former UN personnel.]

Dear members,

In the past several days, there have been several posts asking about the UNJSPF 2020 Certificate of Entitlement.

The following summary of main points and the text and a link to the 29 June 2020 announcement on the Fund's website may be helpful. Note, in particular, that the deadline for return is 30 December 2020 and that the Fund says it will consider special measures as necessary to ensure that all Fund members are able to comply.

1. CE's were mailed in two batches beginning in June 2020, to countries where postal services are currently functioning, and will continue to be mailed as postal services return to functioning.
2. A second mailing will go out at the end of September to Fund members from whom the Fund has not yet received CE's.
3. As of 30 June, most Fund members (except members on the two-track system) may access their CE's electronically through Member Self Service (MSS).
4. Wherever possible, all Fund members are requested to return the original, hardcopy 2020 CE form by pouch, postal or special courier mail, as soon as possible and before the end of December 2020.
5. If by end October 2020, Fund members are still precluded from returning the CE by postal mail, they should submit to the Fund at that time an electronic copy of the signed, barcoded form via the online Contact form.
6. The Fund will continue to monitor the situation to determine whether special measures are needed to ensure that all Fund members are able to comply with the 2020 CE requirements.
7. For any questions, Fund members are requested to contact the Fund via the Contact Us page.

"The 2020 Certificate of Entitlement (CE) Exercise has started: Information for retirees and beneficiaries
29 June 2020

The 1st mailing of the 2020 Certificates of Entitlement (CE) is in the process of being dispatched. A total of 64,443 CE forms will be sent to beneficiaries worldwide via the UN mail and pouch services. When can I expect to receive my 2020 CE form?

Taking into account that UN mail and pouch services are functioning at reduced staffing capacity and the fact that postal services in numerous countries are still suffering disruptions due to Covid-19, CEs will be dispatched in batches.

The first batches of 2020 CEs are being dispatched to those countries where postal services are currently functioning; beneficiaries in those countries will start receiving their 2020 CE forms over the coming days and weeks.

The following batches of 2020 CEs will be dispatched whenever postal services re-open in the countries where such services are currently suspended; beneficiaries in those countries will receive their 2020 CE forms over the coming weeks and months.

Please be assured that the Fund, together with the UN mail and pouch services, is closely monitoring the status of postal services worldwide so that CE forms are being dispatched as soon as that is possible for all countries.

In any case, as per usual processes, the Fund will dispatch a 2nd mailing of 2020 CEs at the end of September 2020, to all those beneficiaries from whom at that time the Fund has not, yet, received their returned barcoded CE form. We hope that by that time, mailing services worldwide have resumed their services.

Can I access my 2020 CE form online?

Effective 30 June 2020 most beneficiaries can access, view and print their 2020 CE form inside their UNJSPF Member Self Service (MSS) <https://www.unjspf.org/member-self-service/>, under the DOCUMENTS tab.

This barcoded CE form is referred to as the MSS CE and is a valid CE form. Only beneficiaries whose benefits are being paid under the two-track/local track, cannot access their CE form inside MSS, in line with audit requirements.

You can return to the Fund either your 2020 MSS CE or the hardcopy 2020 CE that you received via postal mail; the importance is that the Fund received from you a duly dated and signed 2020 CE form that holds a barcode, as the barcode will allow the Fund to automatically track your returned CE form, which in turn will allow you to track receipt by the Fund of your returned 2020 CE inside your MSS under the PROOF DOCUMENTS tab.

How and when should I return the 2020 CE to the Fund?

A duly completed (dated and signed), barcoded 2020 CE form, should be returned to the Fund by the end of December 2020.

Please note that due to Covid-19 all UNJSPF walk-in client services remain suspended and CE forms CANNOT be dropped off in person at the Fund's offices.

Wherever postal services function and the Covid-19 circumstances permit, beneficiaries are requested to return to the Fund the original, hardcopy 2020 CE form by pouch, postal or special courier mail, as soon as possible and before the end of December 2020.

However, the Fund understands that due to Covid-19 related restrictions beneficiaries in many countries may not be able to return the 2020 CE form to the Fund by postal mail at this time. In that case, IF by end of October 2020 the beneficiaries concerned still cannot return to the Fund their 2020 CE forms by postal mail, they should please send to the Fund at that time an electronic copy of their duly completed, barcoded 2020 CE form; such electronic version of the 2020 CE form would have to be submitted to the Fund via the official channel of the online Contact Form, to which the CE form can be attached. Only this means of contacting the Fund via the online Contact Form will allow for accurate tracking of such submission and ensure that such electronic CE form will be added to the individual case file of the beneficiary.

Of course, the Fund will continue to closely monitor the impact of Covid-19 on beneficiaries and postal services in the world, to determine whether special measures will be implemented for the 2020 CE Exercise so that regardless of their location, UNJSPF beneficiaries can comply with the 2020 CE Exercise requirements.

We encourage all beneficiaries to closely monitor the Fund's dedicated CE webpage, which we continuously update and where more detailed information about the 2020 CE Exercise is available. Additional, Covid-19 specific CE guidance is also available as part of the Covid-19 FAQ which you can access here.

Please submit any questions you may have via the official channels for contacting the Fund, i.e. the online Contact Form or other contact details provided on our Contact Us page."

<https://www.unjspf.org/the-2020-certificate-of-entitlement-ce-exercise-has-started-inform>

THE CORONAVIRUS SAGA GOES ON...

MATT



*'Breakfast on the terrace,
wine with lunch and a siesta
in the afternoon. It will be
just like working from home'*

LOCKDOWN EXPERIENCES

24 March, Ballarat, Victoria. Australia

I watch a video clip of my just born grandson Leo for the tenth time as I sip masala tea, sitting in my home in Ballarat. Images of Leo sent via WhatsApp by my son-in-law. Leo was born in Cardiff on the day the UK entered lockdown. These images are the closest I can come to cuddle him. I do not know when we will actually be able to touch and feel him. My husband and I have cause for celebrating life in this moment of global confusion and panic. We give each other an elbow pump and a pretend high five. We are happy that our daughter and the baby are alright and will be back home soon.

The Premier of the State of Victoria, where Ballarat is located, has announced a locked down. Essential services and supermarkets will be open, but schools and cafes will close from today. We have run out of toilet rolls. We leave for the supermarket and stroll nonchalantly past empty shelves marked toilet paper, alongside a few other lost souls. We maintain social distancing. People do not make eye contact and veer away from each other out of instinct rather than intent. We do not spot a

single toilet roll in the first three supermarkets. We are lucky as my husband chances upon a toilet paper pack of 20 in the fourth one. For the next six weeks, we are in the clear, and if we are frugal, they could even last for two more weeks! It is reason enough for another mini-celebration.

In Ballarat, a regional town overshadowed by its proximity to Melbourne, social distancing is easily practised even at 'normal' times.



Having moved here from New York last year, I have had a hard time adjusting to the town's quietness. Now, my husband and I are grateful that we are here, as we watch CNN. The virus is in New York City. We lived and commuted within New York City for several years. We used rat-infested and grimy subways and witnessed homeless and mentally ill people wandering the streets of the Big Apple. We wonder what is going to happen to them and the countless immigrants who are the driving force behind the city's energy and economy. Many of them are undocumented. Who will provide them care if the virus enters them?

My husband defaulted on borrowing a mower from the local community group last week. With the lockdown, we would not be able to go there anytime soon. I am obsessing over the possibility of an overgrown yard. I decide to snip grass in my front yard using a pair of scissors. Desperate times call for desperate measures. I cover a large patch of grass, bent down kneeling on the ground, cropping the green grass back to a certain precise height with my scissors and clearing the area of weeds. I am also trying to enhance my zen this way. I had read that a monk, as a young boy, used to snip grass for hours as punishment for being naughty. Snipping grass had given him ample perspective on life and the time to calm down his hyperactivity.

I take a break after an hour and a half, with a mild feeling of accomplishment and focus!

Our friends, David and Julie, have messaged and asked us to come to the front of our house. They have been cycling and stop in front of our garage, safely a metre and a half away. We take part in a 'shouting' match across our front fence. Julie shares tips on how to grow herbs in our back yard, while I share news about baby Leo. David and Robert talk about the Federal government's economic package in response to the coronavirus. We promise to have a video chat on Zoom once a week. We used to be able to meet them for a coffee, share a hug and a chat, until last week. Julie is diabetic, and Robert has had a triple by-pass. Three of the four of us are in our seventies. We decide to err on the side of caution and just wave to each other.

My feeling of aimlessness has reduced somewhat. I prepare dinner, paneer masala, roti, and rice consciously using less of the onions, the paneer, and rice. We don't know how long this lockdown will last. I reach out for my mobile to watch Leo again. I feel a huge weight of responsibility.

Thoughts of my daughter living alone in Chennai nigger at the back of the head. I have seen the announcement of a lockdown in India and images of people crowding into pharmacies and shops to do panic buying. No one has assured them things will be under control. There is no social distancing.

Sitting far away, I see my country going into free-fall. My constant voyage into Twitter and news channels is not helping me. I message her and call her for the umpteenth time to find out how she is coping. I counsel myself – she is an adult, she has an extensive network of friends, she is capable of looking after herself.

Over the years, I have accepted that I can never be in the same town as my family for any length of time. Now, with the coronavirus, I do not know when I will be able to see them and hug them. Six months? One year? Or until the world finds a vaccine?

I try to wrap my head around this, just as millions of others are doing the world over. It is not only the physical threat of the virus. It is about the psychological danger of an imagined enemy. How can we come to terms with that?

As country after country announces lockdown, I snip grass with a pair of scissors in my garden. I will have to wait for it to grow a few inches before I start again.

Madhavi Srinivasan Johnson aka Madhavi Ashok, Ballarat

[Editor's note: As Madhavi is a new AAFICS member, we asked her to share a few lines about herself. Madhavi Srinivasan Johnson (aka Madhavi Ashok) is from Chennai, India. She lives in Ballarat, Australia with her partner Robert. She spent her early career working as a Copy Writer in India. Her engagement in women's issues and rights of girls led her into a 26-year career in international development/humanitarian work with UNICEF in India, Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Kenya, Namibia, and the USA (New York). She has travelled extensively in the southern African region and lived in Zambia in her early teen years. She is fluent in Tamil, Hindi, English and has a working knowledge of Bahasa Indonesia. Madhavi uses triggers from her real-life experiences and builds in her rich knowledge of cultural and social contexts while writing fiction and nonfiction. She is writing a collection of short stories for release around November 2020. Welcome Madhavi!]

A FEW WORDS FROM THE EDITOR

As always, many thanks to AAFICS members who have submitted articles, photographs and stories for this winter 2020 edition of the *AAFICS Newsletter*.



Some really great tales and a wonderful eclectic mix of material which exemplifies the international depth of knowledge and interests of our former UN colleagues. A word of sincere apology is needed! Your Editor missed the end-of-July deadline by just over a week as 'life got in the way' during the compilation of the *Newsletter*. Quite rightly, he was taken to task by a member keen to receive the *Newsletter*. Sorry! Very embarrassed. A better performance is assured for the future. To be honest, your Editor also lives in fear that

he might have missed a contribution which came into his mailbox and was then 'forgotten' when *Newsletter* publication time came around. If I missed your article this time, my apologies...please contact me and let me know! In the meantime, don't forget our next *Newsletter* is due in December 2020. Let us have *your* contributions for this pre-Christmas/holiday special. All articles welcome!

UN - 75 YEARS OF SERVICE



Pierre Savour, the Secretary of FAFICS, the overall body of which AAFICS is a member, recently sent this communication to our President, Jennifer.

Dear Colleagues,

You will remember that during the 48th Council under the agenda item 14, AFUS proposed to

draft a tribute to 75 years of international civil service. Please find hereunder an extract of the Council's report

'(c). 2020 - the year of tributes sans pareil

1. *Georges Kutukdjian drew Council's attention to the clutch of anniversaries that would be celebrated in the coming year: the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, the seventieth anniversary of the UNJSPF, the fortieth anniversary of FAFICS and the centenary of the League of Nations. Considering that all of these landmark anniversaries will occur in 2020, the President of AFUS/France proposed that FAFICS seize this opportunity to pay tribute to all international civil servants of the United Nations system (past , present and future) who have dedicated their lives over the past 75 years to enhance, support and uphold the noble ideals of the UN and the universal values it stands for. Such recognition would deservedly highlight their contribution throughout the world to promote peace, mutual understanding among nations and the welfare of humankind in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, as well as their commitment to secure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity during their years of service.*

2. *If agreeable to Council, AAFU/AFUS would prepare a draft. That offer was truly appreciated and gladly accepted.*

3. *The president of AFUS/France will propose a draft text in this spirit to FAFICS members for their review by the end of the year. The final approved statement ("Tribute to 75 years of International Civil Service") would be sent to the UN Secretary-General and members of the CEB. FAFICS President could read it out during next year's General Assembly session celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Organization.'*



Herewith the draft statement which Jennifer shared with State Coordinators for reaction. It was overwhelmingly endorsed, with many Coordinators also suggesting practical ways in which the UN's 75th anniversary could be marked here in Australia.

Tribute to 75 years of International Civil Service

Prepared by AFUS/France

I. Context

The United Nations and many of its specialized agencies will be celebrating their 75th anniversary in 2020.

This important milestone will coincide in 2020 with the 40th anniversary of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS).

Also, 2019 marked the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF), the 70th anniversary of the establishment of a United Nations administrative justice system (with the creation of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal (UNAT) by UN General Assembly Resolution 351A(IV) of 24 November 1949, later reformed in 2009 with a new two tier system) and the 45th anniversary of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) (established pursuant to UN General Assembly Resolution 3357 of 18 December 1974), whereas 2021 will be the 75th anniversary year of the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization (ILOAT) which hear cases from serving and former international civil servants of more than 50 UN agencies and international organizations recognizing its jurisdiction.

Last, but not least, 2020 will also mark the centenary of the creation of the League of Nations, which was founded on 10 January 1920 and led to the establishment of the first international civil service dedicated to the promotion of peace, mutual understanding among nations and the welfare of mankind at a global level.

At its 48th session in Vienne (15-17 July 2019), the FAFICS Council agreed to: *seize this opportunity to pay tribute to all international civil servants of the United Nations system (past, present and future) who have dedicated their lives over the past 75 years to enhance, support and uphold the noble ideals of the UN and the universal values that stands for. Such recognition would deservedly highlight their contribution throughout the world to promote peace, mutual understanding among nations and the welfare of humankind in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, as well as their commitment to secure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity during their years of service* (Report of the 48 FAFICS Council, paragraph 178).

The Council accepted the offer of AFUS/France to draft such a Tribute in this spirit for the review of FAFICS Members. The statement approved by the Council ("Tribute to 75 years of International Civil Service"): *would be addressed to the UN Secretary-General and members of the CEB, and FAFICS President could read it out at the [2020] General Assembly session celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Organization* (Report of the 48 FAFICS Council, paragraph 180).

II. Purpose

Considering all these landmark anniversaries, and particularly those which will occur in the year 2020, the FAFICS wishes to seize this opportunity to solemnly pay tribute to all the International Civil Servants of the entire United Nations system and its affiliated institutions, who have dedicated their lives over the past 75 years to enhance, promote and uphold the noble ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

On this occasion, this Tribute is rendered to all past, present and future generations of international civil servants who were, are still, or will join in the service of the UN system with the same shared sense of duty and commitment to its universal values.

III. Tribute

The Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS),

a) Considering that the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) will be celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2020,

b) Considering also that the United Nations and many of its specialized agencies and institutions will be celebrating their 75th anniversary similarly in 2020,

c) Recalling that a first true international civil service was established following the creation of the League of Nations a centenary ago,

d) Noting that the **Administrative Tribunal** of the International Labour Organization (ILOAT) , the United Nations Administrative **Justice** system (UNAT), the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF) and the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) were established respectively 75, 70 and 45 years ago,

e) Recognizing the paramount role played by the international civil servants of the UN system since 1945 in defending, upholding and implementing the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations,

f) Appreciating their invaluable contribution in promoting peace, mutual understanding and international cooperation throughout the world and mindful of the need to preserve their institutional memory,

g) Acknowledging their unswerving commitment over these years to secure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity in the discharge of their responsibilities as international officials responsible only to the UN organization and its specialized agencies,

h) Commending their active participation in the delivery and execution of programmes of the UN system for the betterment of humanity in all parts of the world,

i) Remembering also those who lost their lives in the line of duty and in the service of the noble goals of the United Nations,

j) Emphasizing that the UN and its specialized agencies embody the highest aspirations of the peoples of the world, that the international civil service bears responsibility for translating these ideals into reality and that international civil servants have a special calling to serve the ideals of peace, respect for fundamental rights, economic and social progress, and international cooperation,

Hereby,

1. Pays tribute to the international civil servants who have dedicated their lives in serving the UN system over the past 75 years with competence, integrity, impartiality and independence;

2. Praises their loyalty, dedication, commitment and professionalism in the discharge of their duties around the world;

3. Recognizes that the international community must guarantee the security and safety of the international civil servants serving around the world, especially in hardship duty stations;

4. Expresses its gratitude for all their achievements in the delivery of UN mandates, programmes and activities, thereby proving the relevance of the UN system in a globalized world;

5. Reaffirms its belief that true international cooperation among nations can only be reached with a strong and dedicated international civil service;

6. Reaffirms also its full adherence to the highest Standards of Conduct for the UN international civil service which are integrity, loyalty, independence, impartiality, tolerance and respect for diversity, since the international civil service can be exemplary for a just and peaceful world;
7. Stresses the need to further ensure that all the UN membership is fairly represented in the UN common system staff in order to attain its highest universal character;
8. Supports the enhancement of gender equality in strengthening the international civil service;
9. Calls for the proclamation of an International Day of the International Civil Service [or of International Civil Servants] by the General Assembly of the United Nations to be celebrated each year throughout the UN system on ... **[a symbolic Date to be proposed by FAFICS];**
10. Requests that this Declaration be shared with the UN Secretary-General and, through him, with heads of UN specialized agencies and institutions in the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB);
11. Recommends that this tribute to international civil servants be read out in the General Assembly of the United Nations on the occasion of its 75th anniversary in 2020.

[Editor's note: AFUS/Paris is the Association of Former UNESCO Staff Members. As a onetime UNESCO staffer himself, your Editor is not surprised by the crafted nature of the draft statement. At UNESCO HQ in Paris, such bureaucratic/diplomatic writing skills are highly valued, often above most other talents, and have been elevated to the level of an art form.]



LUXURY STEAM TRAVEL IN 'PICTURE BOOK LAND' 90 YEARS ON

It was a day out with a loved one. Couple of weeks earlier we had travelled over 20,000 km to catch up with family and friends – our original people, those who began life with us and with whom we had once travelled (and still do – albeit at a distance) and the people who remain as memories – those who helped determine whom we eventually became. All that family history then - condensed into a single day on a luxury train in an elegant carriage named 'Lucille'.

Our train journey had started the year before with the gift of tickets - celebrating a special wedding anniversary that comes around just once in a lifetime. We had 12 months in which to enjoy the anticipation of the adventure offered.

Apart from all those *Airmiles* (somehow '*airkilometres*' doesn't sound right), a few days stopover in that mirage of modern urban development on the edge of the Arabian Gulf, time spent racing around London with our kids and their families and, finally, one night in a small hotel next to Victoria

Station before fronting up to the train reception opposite platforms 1&2 the following morning. We checked-in for 07.45 h.– everyone dressed in their finery and contrasting the regular rail commuters of the day. Steam travel in Britain has clearly changed a lot since the 1950s.

There was a friendly coffee stop immediately outside and just sufficient time in which to wander the length of the train to find the locomotive. The fine condition of the carriages, the elegance of the staff manning the carriage doors, the ambiance of the images and that sense of participation – exciting.



Pristine locomotive ready for departure Victoria Station. Curious passengers in all their finery.

Of course, we had to start with the locomotive green and black paintwork trimmed with fine lines in red and cleaned to perfection – neither a line/curve out of true, nor that unexpected mark, scratch, dent. Built in England in 1948 to Merchant Navy Class with a 4-6-2 wheel configuration and serviced by 27,000 L water tender. Both engine and tender originally had matching curved side profiles to improve appearance/airflow but this proved a service/operational disaster.

With the train due to depart at 08.30 h, the camera brigade dominated the platform next to the locomotive with, to one side, driver and fireman hanging out of the cab fielding questions. *'Hop up – take a look'*, came the invitation. *'Thanks, I'd like that'*. There was the firebox, bank of control wheels/levers, the view along the boiler through small windows; it was the 19th century again with that sense of the machine as a living entity. Couple of quick photos and we were hustling back to *'Lucille'* to find our seats – at a table for two.

'Lucille'? The carriage dates from 1928 having worked the LNER London-Edinburgh/Glasgow routes and then switching to BR's Southern Region for the Bournemouth Belle train. Subsequently renovated in France to pristine levels of artwork.

During the outward journey, brunch was served ... slowly; each plate and its artistically presented food arriving half an hour after the next - plentiful coffee to follow. So, lots of time to appreciate the food, the pretty table, our surroundings, the changing views behind the curtains on the windows - the novelty of it all.



View of the world from a table for two on luxury wheels. Brunch served once underway that morning.

Coffee finished, now was the time to wander the train, to explore the different carriages - fittings, furnishings, wooden fascia/veneer with inlaid patterns - and the toilets too, with the images enhanced by the moving carriage, the feel of the track/wheels/suspension through the floor, the rattle of passing traffic/structures/trees and the unreality of this facsimile of early 20th century rail travel – luxury travel of course.



First Class Parlour Carriage named 'Phoenix' - once the haunt of Kings, Queens and Generals.

At Warwick for 12.30 h the passengers divided into two groups, respectively, for visits to Warwick Castle and William Shakespeare's Stratford-Upon-Avon, making certain to select the correct coaches. We were there to catch a glimpse of Shakespeare's life starting with his mother's farm followed by his wife's cottage, before being released into town to see where the Bard was born. William Shakespeare then - sufficient to the day to provide that distraction from the luxury train – English poet, actor and playwright and generally considered the best-known writer in the English language. He is credited with 39 plays, 158 sonnets and all manner of poems, verses and other shared/collaboration.

Shakespeare and his words are part of the background of Anglo school kids everywhere - those of us who read/learned/explored/acted their *Henry V* or *Much Ado About Nothing* or *Midsummer Night's Dream* for their school-leaving certificates and/or amateur dramatics and/or because we liked the stories, enjoyed the plays, treasured the history or simply became captured by the language.

We returned to the coach park by 16.45 h for transfer back to the train at Stratford-upon-Avon Station for departure for 17.30 h – an easy comfortable timetable. Before boarding, this is where you get to see the locomotive in action. Hitched in reverse to the carriages, it backed along the platform, stopped, unhitched from the train and then continued backwards to a rail switch/crossing before returning alongside the adjacent rail track to a second crossing – then to the original track and, backing up, it re-hitched to the carriages the right-way-around. Some hundreds (if not thousands) of action photos from the platform crowd, those on the cross-platform bridge and those along the road outside.



Locomotive hauling the train backwards into Stratford-upon-Avon Station. Passengers waiting.

Four hours return to London/Victoria and the *'piece de resistance'* of the day's train programme – our gorgeous four-course champagne dinner - *'cuisine élégante'* on wheels.

Ask yourself ... would we have chosen the Stratford-Upon-Avon run if the train had been hauled by a diesel or electric locomotive? Of course ... but we didn't. You *'pays your money and makes your choice'* but, once aboard, the locomotive does not feature – you don't see/notice it. What you do see are the bucket-loads of railway enthusiasts at key bridges, crossings, roadsides and hills – all men/boys (of course) and all with cameras/sound equipment capturing a glimpse of the train.

Steam added that image of romance to the day ... like many others we grew up with W. H. Auden's popular poem *'Night Mail'* (which dates from 1936). It captured the urgent rhythm of a moving steam train with the celebration of ordinary people in contact with each other. The lines have remained a memory over the years. Our experience/pleasure of the train last year reminded us of times past – that original childhood appeal of steam trains – in the picture book land of luxury rail travel.



Twelve hours later and travel shifts from luxury to normal – heading home beneath London.

Story and photos: Peter Steele, Victoria

[Editor's note: Lovely story, Peter. Great images too. Thank you. What a wonderful experience. Congratulations to you and your loved one on the special wedding anniversary outing, with a Shakespearean twist. In the spirit of 'Romeo and Juliet' perhaps?]

WILL THE UN MAKE IT TO 100?

By Thomas G. Weiss on Jun 02, 2020



Secretary-General António Guterres about to sign a book of condolences in memory of former Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, who died on March 4, 2020, at 100. The UN marks the 75th anniversary of the signing of the UN Charter in June. MARK GARTEN/UN PHOTO

Seventy-five years ago this month, delegates in San Francisco signed the United Nations Charter. Anniversary events were supposed to culminate in the commemoration of the entry into force of the world organization's constitution on Oct. 24. That, of course, was before Covid-19 turned the world upside-down. Like school and university commencements, the UN's celebration will likely be postponed or held remotely.

The UN's 75th birthday should call attention to the 1942-45 United Nations Alliance. The end of World War II — like World War I and the Napoleonic wars — resulted in an experiment with a new international organization. Yet "the scourge of war" that opens the Charter's preamble is no longer the main threat to us or "succeeding generations." Covid-19 is the latest in a growing list with climate change and terrorism, WMDs and inequalities.

What does the aftermath of the pandemic and the related global economic meltdown mean for the UN? Will it even be around to celebrate a centenary?

Such questions are missing from domestic politics, in the United States and elsewhere. They should not, however, get lost despite the mind-numbing national concerns — racism, corruption, lies, tax benefits for the rich, attacks on the environment and Constitution. International cooperation was missing in the November 2018 midterm elections as in the 2016 presidential campaign. Other than brief mentions of NATO, [Democratic presidential aspirants](#) were silent. President Trump's [announced withdrawal](#) from the WHO in the middle of the pandemic elicited, finally, condemnations from commentators, including even a handful of Republicans.

As we are looking backward, let's begin at the beginning. The "United Nations" was not established in San Francisco in June 1945 but rather in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 1, 1942, when 26 (and later 44) countries signed the Declaration by United Nations. The military alliance to crush Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan was also to continue and maintain international peace and prosperity after the war. While reform is necessary — think about peacekeepers' spreading cholera in Haiti or trading food for sex in the Central African Republic — the UN remains essential. Indeed, after three-quarters of a century, it is so embedded in the international system that it is often taken for granted.

This is an underappreciated danger lurking since the inauguration of Trump, who aims to destroy the rules-based international order. Freezing US funding for WHO and then withdrawing in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic was an extension of the schoolyard fight with China that also poisons the [atmosphere](#) in the UN Security Council.

It is, however, merely the latest foray in his onslaught against multilateralism. Trump routinely sneers at international cooperation outside of the UN as well — not only is NATO obsolete, but the Trans-Pacific Partnership and Paris agreement are worthless. Partners and allies are for dummies. Yet the United States, despite lapses and inconsistencies, has championed and sustained the liberal order and benefited from it. That reality and realization hopefully can return after November.

Ironically, what could illustrate better how intimately the well-being of US citizens is linked to that of others than a pandemic? Let's recall the clearest historical analogy, the international campaign to eradicate smallpox. Total expenditures were \$300 million — \$100 million were international funds, with the US share \$35 million. For one-third a fighter jet's cost then, the planet has avoided that scourge's human costs and saved billions of dollars in vaccines and administration since 1977. Health is a quintessential global public good; more recently, other communicable diseases (polio and guinea worm) have almost succumbed.

The world without the UN? John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev recognized the contribution of Secretary-General U Thant's shuttle diplomacy during the Cuban missile crisis. Would we like to test the proposition that states can do without such mediation? Other assets on the UN system's balance sheet include formulating women's rights; analyzing climate change; emergency aid to war victims in Syria and Sudan; peacekeeping in Kashmir and Cyprus; facilitating decolonization; alternative development thinking; protecting cultural heritage; and prosecuting war criminals. The list goes on. What could be more obvious amidst a crippling pandemic than the fundamental disconnect between global challenges and international problem-solving? We have occasional, tactical and short-term local views and responses instead of sustained, strategic and longer-run global perspectives and actions. And now we have Trump.

So why go back to 1942-1945? Because no one questions the effort by the US and its Allies, not even the current cabal of my-country-firsters. Examining the wartime UN contradicts the conventional wisdom that liberalism was abandoned to confront World War II's existential threat. It shows that the ideals of Kant were found to be essential to the Hobbesian objective of state survival.

As the host for the Charter conference and the first country to ratify it, Washington appreciated the UN's value-added for US vital interests. The fallout from the failed League of Nations did not produce Hobbes on steroids. Those overseeing the Allied war machine — in Washington, Whitehall and elsewhere — were resolute: multilateralism and the rule of law, not going-it-alone and the law of the jungle, should underpin the postwar order.

The proverbial bottom line: when states decide to use intergovernmental organizations, they work. Calculations by the UN's founders expose our shriveled imaginations, which formulate second-best

surrogates instead of more robust multilateralism. If global problems require global solutions, we require strengthened intergovernmental organizations. A most urgent task, then, is to reinforce the crumbling foundations of the UN system.

The often cited, almost trite yet apt remark attributed to Dag Hammarskjold jumps to mind: “The UN was not created to take humanity to heaven, but to save it from hell.” Its existence is one reason we are not in the netherworld already. But a world without it is not impossible if current political conditions continue or deteriorate further.

“We are calling for a great reawakening of nations,” is how Trump concluded his 2017 performance on the UN General Assembly’s stage. No, Mr. President, the United States helped to create the world organization to curb the demonstrated horrors of nations and nationalism run amok. The rest of us should demand a great reawakening of the United Nations, as Trump and other new nationalists will certainly not.

[Thank you to AAFICS member Margaret O’Callaghan for alerting us to this PassBlue commentary on-line.]



UN AND BEYOND: KEEPING ONE'S HEAD ABOVE WATER

I worked for of the United Nations for almost 20 years in DTCD (Dept for Technical Cooperation for Development). My UN journey began in Ethiopia in 1973 where a team of eight were to strengthen the Geological Survey Department of the Ministry of Mines. My role was to establish a groundwater division and to train in hydrogeology about 15 newly graduated geologists. Civil war broke out at the time of Emperor Haile Selassie's ousting and demise in 1974, curtailing project objectives. Over 10 months we lost 8 staff members, and security concerns led to my premature departure.

We were assigned for 5 years to the Bahamas where a huge tourist influx was already underway. The change of duty station from war-torn Ethiopia was like going from hell to heaven! Our two young boys took a while to be unafraid of anyone in uniform and of low-flying aircraft. There was an abundance of groundwater, but previous over-pumping had induced sea water intrusion. Over the project duration the reserves were quantified, and a carefully controlled extraction regime saw salinity in domestic water reduced to acceptable standards, delaying the eventual need for expensive desalination.

During the 1960's and 1970's, many small island countries sought independence from Britain or France and asked for United Nations aid. My role as a geologist was to define where fresh groundwater occurred, and to develop, and sustainably manage those resources. The experience of the Bahamas illustrated how the delicately balanced water resource in small islands could, with care, be safely used.

From the Bahamas, the UN favoured a regional approach. In Barbados for 6 years, I managed projects for 15 Caribbean countries, and was also used as a consultant in a further six, including Trinidad, Jamaica, and Bermuda, while Associate Experts were assigned to Antigua, Bahamas, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St Vincent, St Lucia, and Turks & Caicos. The projects successfully generated substantial bilateral and multilateral investments.

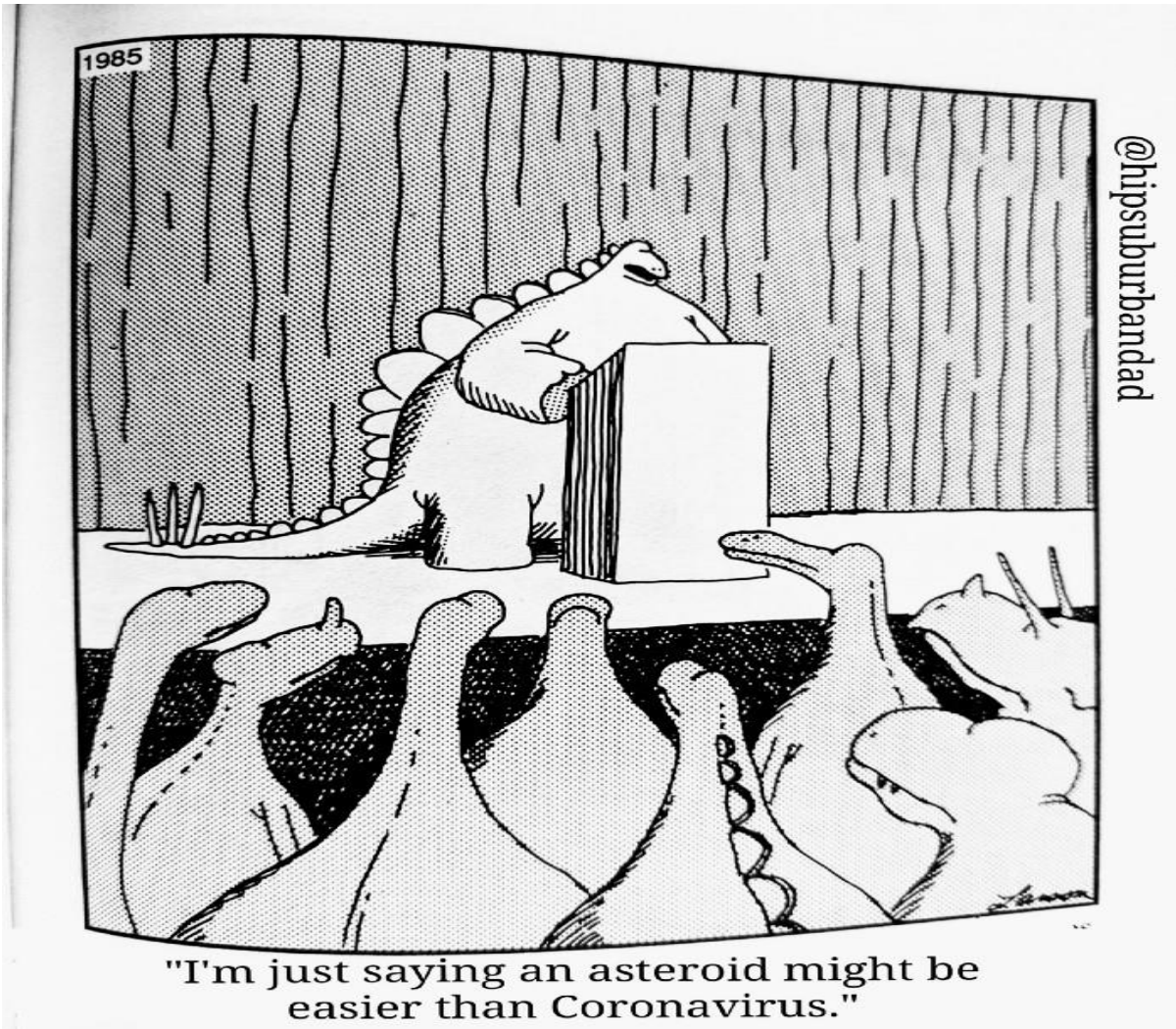
I then transferred to Fiji from where, for six years, I managed projects in 15 Pacific Island countries as well as making short visits to Indian Ocean countries. I made several visits to Manila, where major bilateral and multilateral agencies were based. Unlike the Caribbean, where no countries were more than 3 hours distant from Barbados by air, there was much travelling involved. The Pacific is much vaster than people think. A jet journey from Fiji to Solomon Islands, one of the nearest, took over 3 hours. Because of the vast distances, it proved impossible to supervise extended work in Micronesia and the Indian Ocean but I made two short visits in the Pacific to each of Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, and four visits to each to Samoa and Tonga. My role as a geologist was to define where groundwater occurred, and to develop, and sustainably manage those resources.

Major components in most island countries were short term consultancies in water legislation, computerised accounting, rainwater harvesting, marine delivery/export of water by barge and tanker, desalination, and water pollution & chemistry.

Most of DTCD's activities folded in 1991 when the UN introduced cost-cutting measures, which sadly brought to an end my services. I then served as personal advisor for six years to the Minister of Water Resources in Muscat, Oman. My main role was to introduce innovative solutions to water resources in an arid country, and to organise an international conference to celebrate the 25th anniversary of accession by Sultan Qaboos. After working in 80 countries, I retired to Australia where, for 15 years, I lectured in Natural Science, Business Management and Water Law. I am now happily settled in a retirement village with my wife of 52 years. Both of us are in good health and I am in my 84th year.

Peter Hadwen, AAFICS, Victoria.

[Editor's note: Thank you, Peter. A fascinating and important career. Wonderful travels too!]



**OPINION -
THE WHATS AND WHYS OF LEAVING WHO**



In all likelihood, Trump can't legally pull the United States out of WHO without giving the agency a large amount of money and can't unilaterally do so without a vote of approval from Congress, according to the global health legal expert Alexandra Phelan of Georgetown University. Though the WHO constitution does spell out how a nation may withdraw, Phelan says, it is clear that a departing country must settle all its debts with the agency. And joining WHO required U.S. Senate ratification. Exiting would require Senate approval, payment of all debts, and a full year's notice. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, which tracks such things, U.S. dues, which are assessed based on national GDPs, have ranged year by year between \$107 million and \$119 million over the last

decade. In addition, the United States commits up to \$400 million annually in voluntary support, making it the single largest donor to WHO. The 2020-2021 budget for WHO is \$4.8 billion. The Trump administration has been a scofflaw, having never paid \$81 million of its dues in 2019 and none of its \$118 million for 2020. And \$900 million in Obama administration commitments made for 2018-2019 have not been honored by the Trump White House.

If Trump can get over the congressional and financial hurdles, he still faces significant moral hazards. Most of the agency's spending is on health programs for the world's poorest and most vulnerable. In addition to the loss of U.S. funds, WHO is facing a \$1.3 billion shortfall in funds from other sources and cost overruns due to emergencies, including the Congolese Ebola epidemic and the COVID-19 pandemic.



Immunization programs worldwide, including the polio eradication effort, have suffered thanks to lockdowns and diversion of public health and medical personnel to the COVID-19 fight. On May 22, a host of international organizations, including WHO, warned that 80 million children under the age of one were at risk of acquiring measles, diphtheria, polio, and other vaccine-preventable diseases. With the United States withdrawing its financial support from WHO, those vaccination efforts will likely suffer further setbacks.

The U.N. estimates that 130 million people could sink backward into extreme poverty due to the pandemic's impact on the global economy, creating further health needs. Malaria programs worldwide have been disrupted by supply-chain issues and lockdowns, which have interrupted the delivery of mosquito nets, drugs, and testing equipment.

[This Op-Ed by UN retiree Lowell Flanders was kindly submitted by Kate Gordon.]

MEMORIES OF CORONAVIRUS DAYS

MATT



*'Loo roll for sale, £350,000.
Comes with two
bedroom flat'*

COCAINE COUNTRY

In my youth, I volunteered to work as a physician for a Catholic mission organization in Peru. At only 26 years of age, I found myself in charge of a small bush hospital in the middle of the Peruvian Amazon jungle. The settlement of San Francisco that I was to serve sat along the banks of a huge tributary of the Amazon – the Rio Apurimac.



In 1972, at the time I was working there, cocaine for recreational use had not yet reached the global epidemic it is today. For my team of British ex-pats, cocaine use still had a certain mystique. We knew there was an illegal trade of the drug to industrialized countries, but it was not the devastating trade that now corrodes the world. Coca, the plant whose leaves are harvested to extract cocaine, grew plentifully in the Amazonian jungle. Indeed, the shrub grew well in the vicinity of the San Francisco hospital. Most households had some land nearby which grew the coca shrub. At the right time, the leaves were stripped from the branches and laid out to dry in the sun on enormous rush mats. It was the job of the wife or older daughters to rake them from time to time to allow complete drying of the leaves. Finally, they were bundled into very large sacks and one member of the family

would stagger with his enormous, albeit light load of leaves to the nearest point on the road. Here he could get a ride on a truck on its long bumpy journey to market in Ayacucho, high in the Andes.



At that time, Peru's society had no special objection to coca being grown and marketed. In fact, it provided a desirable ingredient for living for a large proportion of the working force. In the recent past, wages were paid partly in money and partly in leaves. The impoverished, landless labourers would stave off the pains of hunger by rolling the leaves around a pellet of "tocra" lime or other substance which released the cocaine from the leaf. The small wad would be placed inside the mouth between the cheek and the lower gum. The cocaine would be slowly released from the leaves, spreading a numb sensation through the mouth. After a while the numbness would extend to the central nervous system. To add insult to injury, men would sit around drinking the local beer and smoking cigarettes, becoming steadily more stoned on the combination cocktail. This was the exception, however, and most workers who chewed coca just used it in much the same way as other societies use nicotine. It was very common to see a labourer with a bulge in one cheek, as he slowly chewed the coca leaves.

Most growers of coca were content with the meagre profits from selling the leaves in the market, a day's ride up into the mountains. But even then, a few embarked on the dangerous game of illegally distilling the cocaine from the leaves into a paste before it left the jungle. This meant the drug was concentrated, compact and readily transported. It was no longer in the easily recognised bulky sack, so attracted no taxes and brought in vastly increased revenue.

But the local farmers did not yet know how to market cocaine in the cities. As a result, the dealers used to descend into the jungle at the appropriate season looking for the growers. Isolating them also meant the dealers were in a stronger negotiating position for buying the leaves cheaply. As a result, we would notice the appearance in the village of a few 'city slickers'. No tourists ever came down to our part of the jungle, nor did Peruvians accustomed to city life generally venture down the mountain road to our area. No matter how they dressed, these figures stood out clearly to all the locals for what they were. We assumed that key persons were encouraged to look the other way with appropriate gratuities because we did not hear of any arrests.

Machenti was a village two hours up the road from us where the jungle began to thin, making way a few miles further on for the more barren high sierra. Here, there was a barrier across the road manned at all times by the khaki uniformed Guardia Civil - the regular police force of the country. Apart from checking the credentials of passengers, there was a heavy duty imposed on all sacks of coca. The duty was sufficiently high to make it worth attempting to conceal the odd sack in amongst the peanuts or baskets of fruit. To levy the tax, the police first had to find the sacks of coca in the trucks. For the game of 'find the coca sacks', the police had long metal rods which they poked between the vegetable produce attempting to find the softer contraband. On discovery, the offending sack and its owner would be hauled out unceremoniously into the 'nick'.

I felt somewhat vulnerable running a hospital partly staffed by expatriates. We volunteers were only paid keep and pocket money. Had we so wished, we could have made ideal couriers. We were also ideal to be set up, as the feelings towards us 'gringos' was not always amicable. I accordingly discussed it with all the staff, and we agreed for our safety to have nothing to do with any proposition that might come our way. As it transpired, none did!

Dr. John Clements AM, Ex-WHO Staff, Geneva



AAFICS ADMINISTRATIVE NOTE

**An important message from our AAFICS
President, Jennifer Ashton.**

Dear members,

In past years, the February gathering of AAFICS members in NSW has been treated as the AAFICS AGM because NSW always had the largest number of members (currently almost half of the members in Australia). It is also necessary to have a forum to submit an annual financial report.

I therefore attach several documents relevant to this meeting that was held in February, just before COVID-19 and isolation hit. They are the Agenda, the Minutes of the meeting, and the Treasurer's Report.

I also attach the old Constitution and the proposed revision. These have already been circulated to the State Convenors, but it was thought best to circulate to all members so that if there were any objections, these could be noted. In passing, a revision was felt necessary as the old Constitution, which was type-written and referred to postal distribution, also listed the first President's home address as the AAFICS HQ! It is an effort to modernise, not change the spirit of the original Constitution.

[Editor's note: all the relevant documents are attached as the last pages of this AAFICS Newsletter and are designated ANNEXES I to V.]

FROM BATTLES TO BUBBLES

The Road to a New Intergovernmental Technical Organization

A brief History of JCOMM



Preamble

The relationship between meteorologists and oceanographers has historically been a rather rocky one. This stems in large part from the differing nature and objectives of the two professions: meteorologists studied and sought to understand the workings of the atmosphere in order to provide information and products on weather and climate to support societal well-being and safety, with data and products being freely shared globally as an essential component. To do this, meteorologists became organized nationally and internationally from the very beginning. Oceanographers, on the other hand, were concerned primarily with understanding oceans and ocean processes from a largely scientific viewpoint, where data and information were closely guarded for fear someone else might publish first – fortified by the old adage that there are two types of data, *My Data and Bad Data!* When I first arrived in the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in 1984, this was largely the situation, though there had been signs of a thaw when WMO and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) joined forces to press the case for continued open access to data collection from the newly designated Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) within the negotiating process for United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

This last issue raises an interesting and very important point. As I noted above, meteorologists have always adhered to the basic principle of the free and open exchange of meteorological data and information, since clearly the atmosphere recognizes no national boundaries. While there were restrictions in place during both world wars, for obvious reasons, international cooperation and coordination in meteorology continued and even strengthened during the post WW2 period, under the auspices of WMO. The only potential glitch in this came during the 1990s, when certain western governments suggested that meteorological and related data which they collected on their territories had commercial value, and therefore should be charged for. This was anathema to practicing meteorologists, but it was only after a protracted period of some tension and heated discussion that WMO was able to resolve the matter to allow the continued free and unrestricted exchange of data and related products for the common good.

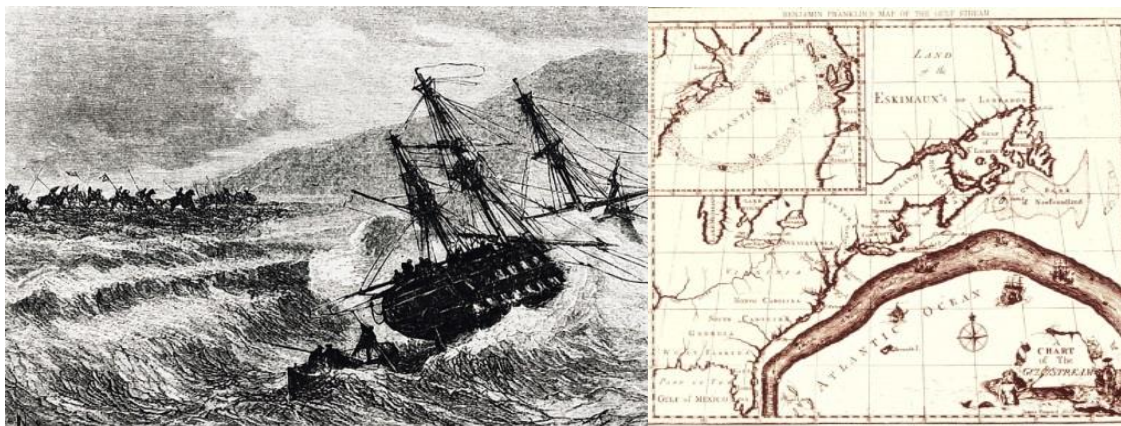
The same basic principles also apply now, in general, to oceanography, though they took a bit longer to be recognized. Perhaps the first example of large-scale oceanographic cooperation was in the International Indian Ocean Expedition (IIOE) of the early 1960s, where scientists and even navies from many countries combined for the first major and systematic study of the Indian Ocean, with

the data freely shared. The advent of the major climate studies a couple of decades later, largely under the auspices of WMO and IOC, further reinforced the value of open data exchange in oceanography. With a couple of minor exceptions, related to a belief in the potential strategic value of data such as sea level in certain countries, this principle remains and has been reinforced over recent decades.

In summary, the point I would make here is that wherever there is a perceived and understood issue of common good to be addressed, in this case measuring, analysing and eventually predicting the state of the atmosphere, oceans and climate, meteorologists and oceanographers have always displayed a high level of international cooperation, coordinated at the intergovernmental level by WMO and IOC. True international coordination could not exist without the strong presence of these Organizations to guide, facilitate and in some cases regulate what individual countries could not do alone.

Historical background

With this as background, this short article seeks to present the history, including the institutional context, driving forces, key elements and players, of the establishment by the WMO and the IOC of the Joint WMO/IOC Technical Commission for Oceanography and Marine Meteorology – otherwise known as JCOMM. While it is based on some 30 years of personal involvement, perspective and recollections, the History seeks to be as accurate as possible with historical events. It also gives us an optimistic view of how future collaboration can only help us advance our understanding and development of global long-term solutions.



Representation of a warship floundering, Black Sea, during the Crimean War and Benjamin Franklin's map of the Gulf Stream.

Any historic analysis of JCOMM should begin with the general historical context for institutional marine meteorology and oceanography. This is relevant because key historical events have paved the way for the development of JCOMM, in particular the Brussels Maritime Conference of 1853, the formation of the International Meteorological Organization (IMO, dated to 1873), the development of radiotelegraphy, allowing real-time communication with ships at sea, and the establishment by IMO of the Commission for Maritime Meteorology (CMM) in 1907. All of these developments are also indicative of the strong links at the time between institutional meteorology and the maritime community, where early endeavours to map the oceans also played a big part. In fact, meteorological services in a number of countries were established precisely because governments realised that they had to do something to try to improve the safety of ships at sea in the face of extreme weather events. One particular example of this occurred in France following the sinking of several French ships in the Black Sea during the Crimean War, with heavy loss of life.

These links softened a bit with the advent of aviation, which led to some refocusing of the service-related interests of IMO. However, the critical need for meteorological support to naval and amphibious operations in World War II once again brought the maritime community to the fore. It held this position through the transformation of the non-governmental IMO into the intergovernmental WMO in 1950 as a specialized agency of the newly created United Nations System. As an interesting sidelight here, the great oceanographer, Walter Munk, who was still publishing well into his 90s and died in 2019 at age 101, was one of the science team which did the critical weather and wave forecasts to allow the D-Day landings in Normandy in 1944 to go ahead and succeed.

IOC and inter-agency rivalry

The real back story to JCOMM began, however, with the establishment in 1960 of IOC as a component body of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) with functional autonomy.

WMO took an immediate interest in this new entity and moved quickly to stake its own claim to ocean affairs beyond traditional marine meteorology. This ushered in a long period of sometimes intense competition, but also some collaboration, between WMO and IOC. IOC initially established a technical Working Group on Fixed Ocean Stations, in which WMO proclaimed some interest. As the name implies, this was a technical body to coordinate the implementation and manage the operation of networks of ocean observation platforms, eventually to support as yet unspecified ocean services as well as weather services.

Partly to counter this, WMO established its own Executive Committee Panel of Experts on Meteorological Aspects of Ocean Affairs (MAOA). These two groups collaborated on some issues, with joint meetings, but also spawned further rivalry. In 1971 a proposal was put to the World Meteorological Congress, the highest decision-making body of WMO, to rename CMM as the Commission for the Marine Environment, incorporating CMM, the IOC Working Group and MAOA. While the proposal was rejected as being too provocative to IOC, seeming to be a takeover of a number of IOC activities, it represented the first hint of the JCOMM concept to come almost three decades later.



Peter Dexter with the President of WMO, President of Iceland and Head of Icelandic Meteorological Service, JCOMM-1, Akureyri, June 2001

A further sign of collaboration came through the establishment in 1969, within the overall UN System, of the Inter-secretariat Committee on Scientific Programmes Related to Oceanography (ICSPRO), a body to coordinate a system-wide approach to ocean science, and under which WMO (and other Organizations such as FAO) seconded a professional staff member to IOC to work on activities of mutual interest. This secondment continued into the early twenty-first century. This post represented a bit of a WMO worm in the IOC apple, but it did bolster the limited existing IOC Secretariat capacity.

In the late 1970s, IOC decided to convert its Working Group into an intergovernmental committee. WMO agreed to the IOC invitation to co-sponsor this new body; a move by WMO rather designed to control IOC expansion, but still a positive sign that the two organizations could potentially work together in some areas. Unfortunately, this collaboration did not yet extend to any national counterpart bodies.

Cometh the climate programmes cometh the change

That, however, was about to change. The First and Second World Climate Conferences, held in 1979 and 1990 respectively, spawned a number of programmes and subsidiary bodies whose successes depended on meteorologists and oceanographers working closely together – at least at the level of climate research. This was especially the case with the Tropical Ocean Global Atmosphere (TOGA) project (1985-1995), which spawned the development of the El Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) models and prediction systems we have today. The Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) and the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS), both of which emerged from the Second World Climate Conference, also demanded collaboration and co-sponsorship.

A major development of the 1990s was the move to design a blueprint for an ocean observing system that could provide the sustained ocean data stream required for climate research and prediction. A by-product of this work was the realization that some form of intergovernmental body, along the lines of a WMO technical commission, might be required to provide intergovernmental support for the ocean observing system. This idea essentially represented ocean climate science support for the JCOMM concept.

Parallel to this, the WMO and IOC Secretariats were facing financial and staffing challenges and agreed that there was substantial overlap in certain aspects of their work. This included the Secretariat support required of CMM and a number of other jointly sponsored technical bodies. They acknowledged that it would be more efficient and cost-effective if these could be joined in some way. The initial concept, developed in WMO, was put to the then WMO Secretary-General Patrick Obasi, IOC Executive Secretary Gunnar Kullenberg, WMO President John Zillman and IOC Chairman Geoff Holland. All agreed, though some reluctantly and expressing scepticism, that the idea should be further explored and developed. A process of consultants' reports, assessment by CMM and other bodies in session, and consultations with stakeholders followed. A formal proposal to establish JCOMM was then put to both the WMO and IOC Executive Councils in 1998, who endorsed it and sent it on to the supreme Governing Bodies of both Organizations. The proposal was formally approved by the World Meteorological Congress and the IOC Assembly in 1999, with the oceanographic and climate research communities strongly behind JCOMM's establishment. This was widely acknowledged at the time as something unique in the UN System, where two totally independent Organizations combined to establish a joint intergovernmental technical subsidiary body. In fact, this is only partially correct, as WMO and UNEP in 1988 had jointly established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – though in practice IPCC now operates largely independently of both parents.

With JCOMM, then what?

With JCOMM established, work began on putting it into operation. A joint regulatory environment was devised, at times combining the differing regulations of WMO and IOC, while a set of standard operating procedures was prepared. Again, there was scepticism in both Secretariats that this could be made to work, but good will and pragmatism won the day.

The first meeting of the interim JCOMM Management Committee, comprising the officers of all the former bodies incorporated into JCOMM, took place in St Petersburg in July 1999. This was followed by a second meeting in Paris, in June 2000. These meetings led to the preparation of a draft internal structure for JCOMM and a set of proposals for the extended JCOMM work programme, in the form of draft recommendations. These were then put to the First Session of JCOMM, which took place in Akureyri, Iceland, in June 2001. This was a unique and interesting setting, the north of Iceland in mid-summer. The locals partied all “night” long, and so did my Russian delegation colleagues, the consumption of copious quantities of vodka and related medicines making life difficult for the Secretariat, which, as always, had to still do the real work, especially report drafting at night!

This Akureyri meeting was at times a stormy affair, in which oceanographers and meteorologists learned to work closely together, also learning the arts of compromise and cooperation within an intergovernmental environment. Ultimately, the meeting turned out a success and laid the groundwork for JCOMM to move forward on its mission. The Akureyri meeting also included the election of the first two JCOMM co-Presidents – Johannes Guddal (Norway) for meteorology and Savi Narayanan (Canada) for oceanography. They worked tirelessly over the next four years to ensure the success of JCOMM. Savi, the Canadian Hydrographer at the time, and as a relative newcomer to intergovernmental processes of this type, was a great stimulus, asking difficult questions of the Secretariat and driving the process forward.



*Gita Kamath, Australian Ambassador to UNESCO, Peter Dexter and Irina Bokova, UNESCO DG
at IOC Assembly, Paris, June 2011*

In my personal role with the WMO Secretariat, the next three years of work were hectic for me and my staff. This included annual Management Committee meetings and advancing the newly formed Programme Area Coordination Groups and a raft of Expert Teams. I then retired from the WMO Secretariat in mid-2004 to return to the Bureau of Meteorology in Melbourne, Australia, while my IOC Secretariat co-partner Colin Summerhayes retired from IOC to take up a post as the Executive Director of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research in Cambridge, UK. Fortunately, Secretariat support for JCOMM continued through several excellent ongoing Scientific Officers in both Secretariats.

With some urging from the oceanographic community and the support of the Bureau of Meteorology, I was then elected, in September 2005, JCOMM Meteorology Co-President at the Second Session of JCOMM held in Halifax, Canada. Jean-Louis Fellous (France) was elected oceanographic co-President. The next two intersessional periods, up to the Fourth Session of JCOMM in Yeosu, Republic of Korea in 2012, were very much a period of consolidation. Yet, two notable innovations emerged – preparation of a *Guide to Operational Ocean Forecasting*, and the Coastal Inundation Forecast Demonstration Project, now a major factor in coastal protection systems in developing countries worldwide.

In 2012, at the Fourth Session, two new co-Presidents were elected, and I moved on from direct JCOMM involvement. Subsequent developments, driven largely by WMO restructuring its Technical Commission system at its Congress in 2019, meant though that JCOMM would no longer continue in its original form. The technical work of JCOMM was then divided among other WMO and IOC bodies, while policy development involving coordination between the two parent organizations would now be the responsibility of a Joint WMO-IOC Collaborative Board. This Board has terms of reference very similar to those of the former JCOMM Management Committee. However, the Board is now appointed by the WMO and IOC Executive Councils, rather than elected by Member States in session, so it has become rather un-democratic, in my view. In addition, the new structures negate the original concept of JCOMM, as being a mechanism to coordinate the organization of operational meteorology and oceanography jointly from observation, through data exchange and management to product preparation and service delivery. It remains to be seen how this new structure will work out in practice.

What have we learned?

One of the key lessons from the JCOMM experience is that it is essential that meteorologists and oceanographers work together at all levels to address the many issues we have before us in climate and the marine environment. While this has been obvious now since at least the late 1970s, I believe that it is only through the process to establish JCOMM that we really learned how to make this work at the intergovernmental level. Prior to the advent of JCOMM, and even at the time of its forebears in WMO and IOC, the cultures of the meteorological and oceanographic communities were significantly different, as I noted at the beginning. Meteorology, as essentially an operational and service process, depended fundamentally on cooperation and data sharing. Oceanographers, on the other hand, being focused mostly on research, continued to work in isolation or small groups, ever reluctant to share data. It was this cultural difference, above all, which began to change in the late 1970s and 1980s, to allow JCOMM to happen.

In the end, the active support of the oceanographic community was essential to the establishment of JCOMM. This support involved the ocean research community, and crucially also the intergovernmental ocean community through IOC. It is critical that IOC has, and is seen to have, a real ownership of all collaborative activities in equal partnership with WMO, despite the differences in size, mandates and operations of the two Organizations. Equally important is for the successors to JCOMM to facilitate, assist and even drive closer relationships between meteorological and oceanographic communities at the national level. This is happening, of course, as National Meteorological and Hydrological Services begin to rely more heavily on ocean data in undertaking their basic missions, and as oceanographic institutions move from pure research to a more operational orientation. JCOMM has provided an important mechanism and forum to guide this national integration.

In closing, I have a couple of further thoughts and comments. As we all know, UN organizations and programmes, like other big bureaucracies in government and business, can be very difficult to

navigate and get to change their ways. They have very entrenched systems and internal fiefdoms, and of course the organization heads in many cases regard themselves as equivalent to heads of state. However, I have found with this process that if you understand and learn to use effectively existing mechanisms, have onside key secretariat and organizational personnel, plus influential Member States, then you can effect real and positive change. Another upside of this is that once clearly good things are happening in the international organizations, this acts to spur Member States to do likewise.

The other point is that Australia has always been a very strong supporter of and advocate for both WMO and IOC since their establishment. The Bureau of Meteorology was always the focal point for WMO, and initially CSIRO assumed this role for IOC. However, in recent years the Bureau has largely taken on the lead role for both organizations. This involvement has been driven very much by two key people, John Zillman, long-time Director of Meteorology, and the late Angus McEwan, former Chief of CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research. Both believed passionately in the intergovernmental process and the value for Australia of being engaged with this. John was President of WMO for 8 years, and Angus played a senior role in many of IOC's key activities. Both became strong supporters of the JCOMM concept and process, and this support was crucial in many ways to its success. Another significant player was Neville Smith, a world-renowned oceanographer who worked for the Bureau and was also deeply engaged with IOC. Neville did a lot to bring the ocean and climate science communities onside with JCOMM. With a major changing of the guard now in both agencies in Australia, I can only hope that the support for WMO and IOC and their joint work continues into the future.

As a postscript, in case you were wondering about the title of this article. The "battles" refers to the somewhat fractious relationship between WMO and IOC in the 70s and 80s. The "bubbles" refers to the bubble in the logo of JCOMM, which represents the air-sea interface, with the bubble either or both a bubble of air entrained in the water and a drop of water in the surface air. It was done by a clever graphic designer in Meteo France. I have put this logo at the head of this article.

Peter Dexter

Marine Programme Manager, WMO, 1985-2004

Co-president of JCOMM for Meteorology, 2005-2012

This is an edited, modified and somewhat embellished summary of "The Establishment of the Joint WMO/IOC Technical Commission for Oceanography and Marine Meteorology; A Personal History", by Peter Dexter, published by WMO as MMO Series no. 2, WMO No. 1250, June 2020.

Glossary of Acronyms

CMM - Commission for Marine Meteorology (of WMO)

EEZ - Exclusive Economic Zones

ENSO - El Nino-Southern Oscillation

FAO – Food and Agriculture Organisation

GCOS - Global Climate Observing System (of WMO and partners)

GOOS - Global Ocean Observing System (of IOC and partners)

ICSPRO - Inter-secretariat Committee on Scientific Programmes Related to Oceanography (of the UN)

IMO - International Meteorological Organization (until 1949)

IMO – International Maritime Organization (formerly International Maritime Consultative Organization, IMCO)

IOC - Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (of UNESCO)

IPCC - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (of WMO and UNEP)
JCOMM – Joint WMO/IOC Technical Mission on Oceanography and Marine Meteorology
MAOA - Meteorological Aspects of Ocean Affairs (of WMO)
TOGA - Tropical Ocean Global Atmosphere
UNCLOS - United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNEP – United Nations Environment Program
UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WMO – World Meteorological Organization

[Editor's note: It's not often that we have a chance to learn how a UN related inter-agency, multifaceted body is initiated, established and operates. Thank you, Peter, for this most informative experience.]

THE LAST WORD

Cleaning up the AAFICS membership database - a task for COVID lockdown

Ghastly task, but it had its rewards as I came across some of the memorable and wonderfully diverse characters who have, in their time, contributed to the UN.

My very favorite was Dr Peter Blizard, a character if ever I heard of one, who died in 2014. According to the very affectionate obituary, penned by his children:

“After a pretty poor show at school, followed by a stint in national service, Peter emigrated to Australia as his life-long dream was, at the time, to become an air steward for Qantas.”

“After squandering his savings in the bars and clubs of Kings Cross - his penchant for a good time an enduring trait over the years - Peter became a cook for a shearing gang in rural Australia. In a twist of fate, he then went to New Zealand, where he discovered what would become a life-long love of education. In a move that would have stunned his schoolteachers, Peter went on to earn a BA, a Masters degree and a PhD.

“He worked for the WHO for many years focusing on programmes to treat and control malaria in Asia, along the way living in Indonesia, India and Malaysia. Peter loved to read. He loved food, good food especially and he loved his home in the Blue Mountains. Quirky and unconventional are two words to describe him. Eccentric is another. He loved all things to excess, especially bread topped with thick slices of butter and cheese.

“Peter lived by his own rules, lived for the moment and if he taught us anything it was to love life, get out there and see the world in all its richness and to believe you can do anything you set your mind to. Having bounced back from so many scrapes and mishaps in his life you could be forgiven for thinking he would live forever. He made it to 80 which, we all agree, was a pretty good innings, especially in light of his enjoyment of vice over the years.”

Another of our members, Mavis Dorothy Sommerlad, died at the age of 101 this May. She and her husband Lloyd (UNESCO) epitomize an older style of Australian contribution to the UN that arose out of the effects of World War Two and a desire to make the world a better and more peaceful place.

Of Mavis I know little, but on Lloyd, who died in 2014, there is much. He was the grandson of German migrants. His father was a missionary to Fiji, a newspaper editor in Tenterfield, a businessman and one of the founders of the Country Party, who also served as a NSW MLC. Sydney Grammar School and Sydney University educated Lloyd served in the military from 1940-1945. He returned to work for the NSW Country Press Association (established by his father) until 1961 when he joined UNESCO in Paris. He was an indirectly elected member of the NSW Legislative Council from 1955-1967, representing the Country Party. From 1970, he held a variety of senior positions in radio, press and television. But he did not forget UNESCO. He was a member of the Australian Advisory Committee for UNESCO between 1949 and 1961 and again from 1965 to 1969, finally becoming the UNESCO Regional Communication Advisor for Asia, based in KL from 1977-79. We can only hope that the National Party will continue to learn from the example of internationalism established by Lloyd.

Jennifer Ashton, AAFICS President

ABOUT US

The *AAFICS Newsletter* is an informal communications tool designed to keep former UN staff members residing in Australia in touch with each other and their Association's activities. Editorial responsibility for articles is held by the individual contributor. The Editor appreciates any stories or articles of interest and thanks all who have contributed to this edition. Photographs are either supplied or taken from public Internet sources for non-commercial, private use. Please send any articles via the office of the President at jenniferlashton@gmail.com or to the Editor or through your local State Coordinator. The next *Newsletter* will be released in December 2020. Articles should reach the Editorial team by the end of November 2020 at the latest.

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ANNEX I

AAFICS, NSW Branch, Annual General Meeting 27 February 2020. Sydney Flying Squadron

Agenda

- Nomination of Chair.
- Nomination of Rapporteur.
- Approval of agenda.
- UN Pension Fund update.
- Taxation issues – Capital Gains Tax on primary residence sale
- Revision of Constitution
- After Service Health Insurance (ASHI)
- Any problems encountered with pension or ASHI. Includes signature of certificate of entitlement
- Membership drive
- Victorian initiatives – pre-retirement checklist; preparing for your decease
- AAFICS Financial Report.
- Any other business.

ANNEX II

Affiliation/AFICS (N.Y.)

CONSTITUTION OF THE AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS (AAFICS)



By-laws

Article I. Nature and purposes

1. The Australian Association of Former International Civil Servants, hereinafter referred to as "the Association", is, for all mailing and business purposes, established at 212 Old South Head Rd., Vaucluse, N.S.W. 2030.

2. Its aims and purposes are:

- (a) To keep members informed of actions and developments affecting their interests;
- (b) To represent the members' interests in their relations with the administrations of the United Nations and of other organizations in the United Nations system;
- (c) To encourage members to maintain links with the United Nations through voluntary and other work and through the United Nations Association;
- (d) To represent the interests of its members and their next of kin with the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund;
- (e) To help members, where possible, in matters of taxation and other important concerns;
- (f) To promote the welfare of individual members and to maintain and enhance social contacts between members.

Article II. Membership

1. Membership of the Association shall be open to former officials of the United Nations and its subsidiary organs, the specialized agencies, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the World Bank, and other organs or former organizations of the United Nations system. Present staff members of any of these organizations who wish to join in anticipation of retirement shall also be eligible for membership.

2. The surviving spouse of an official, or of a member of the Association, shall be entitled to membership.

3. A member may resign from the Association effective at the end of a calendar year by submitting a written communication to that effect.

Article III. Organs

The organs of the Association shall be:

- (a) A Membership Forum;
- (b) An Executive Council.

Article IV. The Membership Forum

1. The Membership Forum shall consist of all the members of the Association. It shall hold an annual meeting in September of each year unless, for reasons it deems important, the Executive Council fixes another date, at which the officers of the Association and other members of the Executive Council shall be elected.

2. Notice of the annual meeting shall be circulated by means of the July issue of AAFICS News, which shall also contain the annual report on the activities of the Association, and the annual financial statement.

3. The functions of the Membership Forum shall be:

- (a) To review the activities of the previous year as reported by the Executive Council;
- (b) To approve a programme of future activities;
- (c) To examine and approve the financial statements and annual accounts;
- (d) To establish the rate of the annual dues;
- (e) To decide on any other matter submitted to it by the Executive Council.

4. An attendance of at least seven (7) members of the Association shall constitute a quorum. In the absence of a quorum, the Chairman shall adjourn the meeting to another date.

5. Normally, the Membership Forum shall take its decisions by a majority vote of the members present and voting. When, however, in the opinion of the Executive Council, a matter to be submitted to the Membership Forum is of such import that the widest expression of the will of the membership is desirable, the Executive Council may establish a procedure for voting by mail. In such cases, votes by mail shall be taken into account in the determination of the necessary majority.

Article V. The Executive Council

1. The Executive Council shall consist of not more than seven (7) members. It shall consist of the President (who will act as Chairman at meetings), a Vice-President, a Secretary and a Treasurer, and shall also have the authority to co-opt other officials of the Association from within its own membership or from the membership of the Association at large, including liaison officers for regions where numbers of members reside.

2. The Executive Council may consult the membership of the Association by means of questionnaires.

3. The functions of the Executive Council shall be:

- (a) To prepare the agenda of all meetings of the Membership Forum and to carry out its decisions;
- (b) To present to the Membership Forum an annual report on the activities of the Association, as well as the annual accounts and financial statements;
- (c) To take all appropriate measures in pursuance of the purposes of the Association in conformity with the by-laws.

4. In exceptional cases, where the Executive Council considers that urgent needs of the Association require early action without it being practical to convene a meeting of all members, the Council may poll the members of the Association by mail on a given matter. The matter is then decided by a majority vote of the members casting their ballots within forty-five (45) days.

Article VI. Dues

1. The Association shall be financed by the dues paid by its members at the rates established from time to time by the Membership Forum. All members shall pay annual dues.

2. The dues established by the Forum shall be payable in January of each year. Members who fail to pay dues for two consecutive years shall have their rights and privileges suspended until payment is effected.

Article VII. Amendment of the By-laws

On the proposal of the Executive Council or at the written request of at least seven (7) members of the Association, these by-laws may be amended at the annual meeting by a vote of two thirds of members voting. Notice shall be sent to all members of the proposed amendments in the July issue of AAFICS News.

Article VIII. Dissolution of the Association

1. On the proposal of the Executive Council or at the written request of at least twenty (20) members of the Association, the dissolution of the Association may be decided by a vote of two thirds of the membership voting, provided that notice has been sent to all members, accompanied by a copy of the proposal or request, not less than sixty (60) days in advance of the meeting at which the vote is to be taken.

2. In case of dissolution of the Association, the Membership Forum shall decide on the disposition of the assets of the Association.

**STATUTES OF THE FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL
CIVIL SERVANTS**

Preamble

Associations of former international civil servants who have served in the organizations of the United Nations system, aware of the interests of the former staff of those organizations, have agreed to coordinate their efforts through a Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS), hereinafter referred to as “the Federation”, whose Statutes are set forth below:

Article 1 – Headquarters

The Federation is a non-profit association with its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

Article 2 – Purposes and functions

The aims and objectives of the Federation shall be to bring together Member Associations of former international civil servants and provide a framework for their activities.

In so doing, the Federation will:

- (a) support and promote the purposes, principles, programmes and achievements of the United Nations system;
- (b) promote and defend the interests of the community of former international civil servants;
- (c) maintain and develop solidarity and close contact between and among Member Associations;
- (d) represent the community of former international civil servants on appropriate organs of the United Nations system and in particular retirees and beneficiaries of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund;
- (e) promote exchanges and coordination with federations of staff members in service and cooperate with other associations and organizations as appropriate;
- (f) support and coordinate the activities of Member Associations, particularly in matters of pensions and health protection.

Article 3 – Membership

Membership shall be open to associations of former international civil servants of the organizations of the United Nations system which meet the criteria spelled out by the Council and included in the Rules of Procedure.

Article 4 – Council

There shall be a Council which shall meet at least once a year and be responsible for all the activities of the Federation. The Council shall consist of representatives of each Member Association. The Council shall establish its Rules of Procedure.

Article 5 – Officers

The Officers of the Federation shall be a President, Vice Presidents, a Secretary and a Treasurer. The Officers of the Federation shall be elected by the Council, as specified in the Rules of Procedure.

Article 6 – Decisions and voting rights

The Council shall take its decisions by consensus. If consensus cannot be attained and a vote is necessary, each Member Association present or represented in the Council shall have one vote. Decisions shall be by a double majority, which is a majority of the member associations present or represented in the Council and a majority of the total membership of those associations.

Decisions may also be taken by correspondence.

Article 7 – Finances

The Federation shall be financed by annual contributions from each Member Association in an amount to be determined by the Council. The Federation may accept other contributions as appropriate. The Federation shall have an annual budget approved by the Council, which shall receive an annual audited Statement of Accounts.

Article 8 – Amendments

A proposal to amend these Statutes shall originate from the Council or from a Member Association and shall be communicated to Member Associations at least three months before a Council session. Such a proposal shall be considered by the Council in the first instance. If it is supported by a simple majority, it shall be circulated for approval to all Member Associations. For adoption it shall require a double majority, which is a majority of all Member Associations and a majority of the membership of all Member Associations.

These Statutes were adopted by the 36th Session of the Council of the Federation on 5 July 2007, on the understanding that they would take effect on 7 July 2007. They replace the Statutes adopted by the Council of the Federation on 26 October 1979 and amended on 29 May 1980 and 1 July 1983. These Statutes are published in English, French and Spanish, the version in English being the authoritative text.

ANNEX III

Affiliation: FAFICS (Geneva)

Constitution of the Australian Association of Former International Civil Servants (AAFICS)

By-laws

Article I. Nature and purposes

1. The Australian Association of Former International Civil Servants, hereinafter referred to as “the Association”, is, for all mailing and business purposes, established at the address of the current president. It is a non-profit association.
2. AAFICS is recognised by the United Nations Joint Services Pension Fund (UNJSPF) as the representative association for former UN staff and their dependents in Australia
3. Its aims and purposes are:
 - (a) To keep members informed of actions and developments affecting their interests
 - (b) To represent the members’ interests in their relations with the administrations of the United Nations, specialised agencies of the United Nations system and any organisation recognised by the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund as a participatory organisation
 - (c) To encourage members to maintain links with the United Nations through voluntary and other work and through the United Nations Association of Australia
 - (d) To represent the interests of its members and their next of kin with the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund
 - (e) To help members, where possible, in matters of taxation in Australia and other important concerns including the After Service Health Insurance
 - (f) To promote the welfare of individual members and enhance social contact among members

Article II. Membership

1. Membership of the Association shall be open to former officials of the United Nations and its subsidiary organs, the specialised agencies or any organisation recognised by the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund as a participatory organisation. Present staff members of any of these organisations who wish to join in anticipation of retirement shall also be eligible for membership.
2. The surviving spouse or other family beneficiary of an official, or of a member of the Association, shall be entitled to membership
3. A member may resign from the Association effective at the end of a calendar year by submitting a written communication to that effect

Article III. Organs

1. The organs of the Association shall be:
 - (a) A membership forum
 - (b) An executive council, composed of the President, the State Coordinators, the Treasurer and the newsletter editor

Article IV. The Membership Forum

1. The membership forum shall consist of all the members of the Association. It shall hold its annual meeting each year in a place and time decided by the Executive Council
2. Notice of the annual meeting shall be given 6 weeks in advance, which shall also contain the agenda, a report on the activities of the Association, and the annual financial statement
3. The functions of the Membership Forum shall be:
 - (a) To review the activities of the previous year as reported by the Executive Council
 - (b) To approve a programme of future activities
 - (c) To examine and approve the financial statements and annual accounts
 - (d) To confirm or modify the rate of the one-off membership dues
 - (e) To decide on any other matter submitted to it by the Executive Council
4. An attendance of at least fifteen (15) members of the Association shall constitute a quorum. In the absence of a quorum, the President shall adjourn the meeting to another date.
5. Normally, the Membership Forum shall take its decisions by a majority vote of the members present and voting. When, however, in the opinion of the Executive Council, a matter to be submitted to the Membership Forum is of such import that the widest expression of the will of the membership is desirable, the Executive Council may establish a procedure for voting by mail. In such cases, votes by mail and/or electronically shall be taken into account in the determination of the necessary majority.

Article V. The Executive Council

1. The Executive Council shall consist of the President (who will act as Chairperson at meetings), one State Coordinator for each State or Territory in which there are Association members, the Treasurer and the newsletter editor. The former Association President will be invited to be a member. The Executive Council shall also have the authority to co-opt other officials of the Association from within its own membership or from the membership of the Association at large.
2. The Executive Council may consult the membership of the Association by means of questionnaires.
3. The functions of the Executive Council shall be:
 - (a) To prepare the agenda of all meetings of the Membership Forum and to carry out all of its decisions

- (b) To present to the Membership Forum an annual report on the activities of the Association; as well as the annual accounts and financial statements
 - (c) To take all appropriate measures in pursuance of the purposes of the Association in conformity with the by-laws
 - (d) To produce at least twice yearly a newsletter to be sent to all members either electronically or by mail and shared with FAFICS and the National Library of Australia
4. The State Coordinators shall:
- (a) Organise social functions for state Members as wanted
 - (b) Identify issues of concern to members
 - (c) Offer support to State members as needed
 - (d) Provide a point of contact/advice for members newly returned to their State

Article VI: Dues

1. The Association shall be financed by the dues paid by its members at the rate established from time to time by the Membership Forum. All members shall pay a one-off membership fee.
2. The dues established by FAFICS shall be payable each year by the Treasurer.

Article VII. Amendment of the By-Laws

1. On the proposal of the Executive Council or at the written request of at least seven members of the Association, these by-laws may be amended at the annual meeting by a vote of two thirds of members voting. Notice shall be sent to all members of the proposed amendments

Article VIII. Dissolution of the Association

1. On the proposal of the Executive Council or at the written request of at least twenty members of the Association, the dissolution of the Association may be decided by a vote of two thirds of the membership voting, provided that notice has been sent to all members, accompanied by a copy of the proposal or request, not less than sixty days in advance of the meeting at which the vote is being taken
2. In case of dissolution of the Association, the Membership Forum shall decide on the disposition of the assets of the Association

ANNEX IV

ATTENDANCE at the AAFICS AGM, 27 February 2020, Sydney Flying Squadron, Millers Point, NSW

Con Dawson	UNCTAD	condaw@ozemail.com.au
Ram Prasad Koirala	UNICEF	ramkoirala@msn.com
Peter Button	UNU	peterbutton@hotmail.com
Christopher Wilkinson	UNDPKO	cjw.online@gmail.com
Anis Chowdhury	UN-DESA/ESCAP	anis.z.chowdhury@gmail.com
Raphael Crowe	ILO	raphaelfcrowe@gmail.com
Gehl Crowe	ILO	swisscrowesnest@gmail.com
Linda Wirth-Dominice	ILO	Lindawirth718@gmail.com
Bill Salter	ILO	wsalter@rocketmail.com
Lorrence Salter	ILO (spouse)	lorrence@gmail.com
John & Sally Peacock	UNICEF	johsal@bigpond.com
Kate Gordon	UNHCR	kategordon@yahoo.com
Yvonne Desauettes	FAO	yvonedes@tpg.com.au
Alexander Roche	FAO	ar.roche2@gmail.com
Dr Kyi Lwin	WFP,FAO,IAEA,ESCAP	wplwin@optus.com.au
Mary Johnson	ILO	mcg.johnson@gmail.com
Maurice Critchley	UN Secretariat	mauricecritchley@yahoo.com
Jennifer Ashton	UNHCR	jenniferlashton@gmail.com

REPORT OF THE MEETING

Introduction

A quorum being present at the meeting on 27 February 2020 at the Sydney Flying Squadron, Millers Point, NSW, the AAFICS State Coordinator for NSW Maurice Critchley, declared the meeting opening and welcomed the members, especially the older members who had been attending for many years. Maurice was nominated Chair of the meeting, Mary Johnson the rapporteur, and the agenda as given was adopted.

Item 4 UN Pension Fund Update was given by Jennifer Ashton, President of AAFICS. The newly appointed chief administrator of the UNJSP, Ms MacClean, had taken up her position at the beginning of the year but had unfortunately suffered a pedestrian accident and was still in Ottawa recovering but able to take charge electronically. Her title, formerly CEO of the Pension Fund, had been changed and the tasks separated from those of Secretary to the Board of the Fund. The Fund was now worth \$US 70 billion but given the times we live in, volatility and fluctuations in the value of the investments are to be expected. Jennifer Ashton will attend the FAFICS Council in Geneva next July and will learn more of the issues that are currently causing discussion around the Pension Fund. The governance and the structure of the Fund had been raised in the most recent UN General Assemblies. The role of FAFICS, the Federation of Retirees Associations to which we belong, had been questioned.

Item 5 Taxation issues – Capital Gains Tax on primary residence sales are to be modified. This is a matter which might concern UN officials who are still employed. There seem to be differing definitions of foreign residence within the government and ATO and professional advice should be sought about ownership and subsequent sales of property. In the discussion which followed, the Undeducted Purchase Price (UPP), the one tax offset available on the UN Pension, was mentioned, as was the current government Review of Superannuation.

Item 6 AAFICS Constitution. Two versions of the AAFICS Constitution were tabled, one being the original dated 1983 and the other being a current up-date. These have been distributed to all State Coordinators and will be sent to all members after this AGM, with the request that any proposed modifications be sent to the State Coordinators and the AAFICS President by email.

Item 7 ASHI (After Service Health Insurance). Two aspects were apparent – each of the many UN After Service Health Insurance schemes had its own methods and rules for submission of claims and reimbursement but overall, recent electronic processing had brought about improvements and more rapid reimbursements; and those members who were not used to making claims via emails and websites were an exception to this.

Item 8 – Any problems encountered with the UN Pension or ASHI brought up a query about surviving spouses' benefits. All were advised to make use of the information on the UN Pension Fund's website, and to check the figures and amounts given on the statement handed to each beneficiary at the time of retirement.

9. AAFICS Membership drive. AAFICS is open to all international civil servants even before they retire. The membership currently stands at 290 as a result of the recruitment drive held two years ago with the assistance of the UNJSPF Secretariat in New York, which mailed out the attractive brochure developed by the Victorian branch of AAFICS. Discussion also took place about those retirees who have missed sending back to New York their annual Certificates of Entitlement and who risk having their monthly benefits suspended. These missing retirees are easier to find when they are AAFICS members, and locating their whereabouts is more likely to

prove complicated when they are born elsewhere and have joined family members in Australia, without joining AAFICS.

10. Two draft booklets were circulating thanks to the Victorian branch of AAFICS. One was titled “Are you in UN Service and Contemplating Returning/Retiring to Australia?” containing a checklist with explanatory notes; the second and more substantial booklet is “Recording your Personal Details/Instructions before your Demise”, subtitled “A handbook to help you and your next of kin”. These booklets are being circulated for comments and it is hoped they will be finalised and published during 2020.

11. AAFICS Financial Report. The Treasurer had provided the annual report on the state of AAFICS finances, which were excellent.

12. Any other business. The AAFICS Newsletter is issued twice a year and Martin Hadlow the editor warmly solicits the written contributions of AAFICS members on any and all topics.

Two members had contacted AAFICS to say they felt that age now exempted them from attendance at the lunch and AGM. Those present sent them every good wish and noted that they would be most welcome to return should they feel up to it.

The AGM was adjourned by Maurice Critchley and lunch took place.

Sydney

March 2020

ANNEX V

FINANCIAL REPORT of the TREASURER for the period 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2019.

As at 31 December 2019 the accumulated capital of AAFICS was A\$ 34,790.49. This represents a substantial increase of A\$ 6,692.58 since the end of 2018.

Income from Members Contributions and Interest

Over the year 2019 A\$ 7,700 was received in respect of contributions from fifty-five new Members. Interest received during the period under review amounted to A\$ 643.36 for a total income of A\$ 8,343.36

Expenditure

Total expenditure for the period amounted to A\$1,650.78 being,

Contribution to FAFICS	564.28
Bank Charges	2.50
Wreath	50.00
Cost of attendance at FAFICS Council	1,034.00

The accounts are kept on a cash basis. Interest accrued at 31 December on our Fixed Term Deposit will be reflected in the 2020 year accounts.

In conclusion, the financial situation of AAFICS remains sound, and financing the present level of activities is assured for the foreseeable future.