**FAFICS BUREAU (virtual) MEETING**

**14 November 2024**

**In attendance**: Jerry Barton (President), Juan Casas-Zamora, Abdou Khader Diakhate, Nancy Hurtz-Soyka, Pierre Sayour, Jayantilal Karia, Delia Barcelona (Secretary), Deborah Landey (Rapporteur).

**Absent:** Marashetty Seenappa, Suzanne Bishopric, Romesh Muttukumaru (Treasurer),

**Guests:** Chair and Co-Chair FAFICS@50 Anniversary Planning Committee, Jacques Daoust, CAFICS-Montreal, Aye Win, AFICS-Myanmar.

**Actions/decisions taken by the Bureau at the 13 November meeting**

1.The Bureau Work Program needs to be finalized and approved at the December Bureau meeting. Standing Committees on Pensions and Membership to provide more on outputs and Romesh on the budget.

2. Options for zoom accounts for Standing Committees to be presented in the December meeting.

3.Cover letter to accompany the FAFICS Brochures being sent out by the Pension Fund, to be prepared and sent to the Pension Fund. In the cover letter, it was recommended it be clear that the Brochure is about FAFICS, that retirees are encouraged to join their local Associations and, if there is no local Association, to consider forming one. The contacts for Marashetty Seenappa, Abdou Khader Diakhate and Maria Machicado will be provided as the focal points for those wanting to form an Association.

4. President’s Newsletter to be drafted and sent out end December/early January. Bureau members to provide the President with any further ideas they may have for the Newsletter.

5. President’s letter to some European countries offering the support of ARICSA to help them create their own Associations to be sent out via the Pension Fund.

6. President’s letter to the Secretary-General on the outcome of the Council and key issues on pension and health insurance to be drafted and sent.

7.A small section on the website for the FAFICS@50 Anniversary to be created.

8.A communication to local Associations on the FAFICS@50 Anniversary to go out from the FAFICS@50 Anniversary Planning Committee.

9.Invitations to the President of the General Assembly and the current and former Secretaries-General to the FAFICS@50 Anniversary event to go out in January.

10. A letter to the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the CEB, on issues emanating from the Council, needs to be sent, especially regarding key issues on pensions and health insurance and support for local Associations to be drafted and sent.

11.A special letter from the President to UNDP Nouakchott will be needed to facilitate the mission of the Membership Committee Co-Chair to Mauritania.

12. Delia will send a message to each Association with their specific username, password, and instructions for them to access the website.

13. A survey on the website to be sent to users in early 2025 to assess features and pattern of use.

**Agenda 1. Approval of the Agenda**

1.The President proposed the item on the FAFICS@50 Anniversary be moved up to be the first substantive item to be considered, given the late hour for Aye Win. The revised Agenda was adopted, and the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 October were approved.

**Agenda item 2. Review of decisions/action points from the 10 October Bureau meeting**

1.FAFICS Council Report-the numbers, as well as the percentages for the FAFICS election results, and the list of participants at the meeting, are to be included in the final Report. It will then be translated into French and Spanish and posted on the website. **Action taken: The Report was completed, translated and posted on the website in three languages. The President expressed thanks to Pierre and Tony for the French and Spanish translations respectively.**

2.The Standing Committees on Pensions, ASHIL and Membership are to provide their inputs for the FAFICS Bureau Work Program for final review by the Bureau at the November meeting. The Talent Management segment to be placed under Succession Planning. **Action taken: The Work Program needs some further work and will be approved at the December Bureau meeting.**

-The Treasurer to look into the financial allocations for the proposed Work Program.

3.The agreed elements of the Action Plan for the FAFICS@50 Anniversary to be implemented with full support from the Bureau. The FAFICS@50 Anniversary Planning Committee to look into how to engage past FAFICS Presidents in the work of the Committee.
**Action taken: Jacques and Aye Win will report.**

4.The Treasurer to continue to explore the option for Zoom account(s) for Standing Committee meetings. **Action taken:** **Romesh will report at the next Bureau meeting.**

5.Co-Chair Standing Committee on Pensions will follow up with the Pension Fund Secretariat on the status of the preparation of a paper on the two-track system to go to the Pension Board meeting in February. The Committee will also keep track of upcoming Townhalls being organized by the Pension Fund if it will make sense to advertise them to our members. **Action taken: This item will be covered under Committee report backs.**

6.The FAFICS Bureau to take one final look at the website prior to it going live. The FAFICS website to be launched at the end of October/early November. **Action taken: The website went live in October.**

7. The updated FAFICS brochure to be posted in approximately two weeks and sent to the Pension Fund and they will circulate it to Participants and Beneficiaries. **Action taken: The Brochure has been finalized in three languages and will be placed on the website.**

8. Standing Committees to identify focal points who will be able to communicate periodic updates to the Standing Committee on Communications for the website.

9. Maria Machicado, President, AFICS-Bolivia, will be included in the Standing Committee on Membership. **Action taken: Maria has accepted inclusion in the Standing Committee.**

10. The President will visit Geneva to discuss FAFICS office issues with the UN Administration if appropriate after liaising with the AAFI-AFICS-Geneva President. VP Pierre will investigate what has happened to the FAFICS files in the Palais. **Action taken: The President has determined that we have one small office, one that can be shared with FICSA, and a file storage area shared with FICSA, so there is no need for the President to visit Geneva at this time but instead the President mentioned the possibility of going there in February 2025, with prospects of a possible hybrid Bureau meeting**

11. Bureau members to forward suggested inputs for the President’s Newsletter to the President. **Action taken: The Newsletter will go out in late December/early January. This item will be covered later in the agenda.**

12. The President’s letter to some European countries regarding setting up Associations to be finalized and submitted to the Pension Fund for sending to retirees in those countries. **Action taken: The President has drafted a letter and will be sending it out. It was pointed out that the only support that ARICSA can provide is in the forming of an Association and representing them at the Pension Board, but that ARICSA cannot help with local issues. People can certainly join ARICSA.**

 **Agenda item 3. Update on the FAFICS@50 Anniversary**

2.The Co-Chairs of the FAFICS@50 Anniversary Planning Committee, Jacques Daoust, CAFICS-Montreal, Aye Win, AFICS-Myanmar reported on progress as follows:

* the FAFICS@50 Anniversary Planning Committee had its first meeting on 5 November. Jacques mentioned that the 80th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations will also be commemorated in 2025. The Committee members are: Jacques Daoust (CAFICS-Montreal), Aye Win (AFICS-Myanmar), Debbie Landey (AFICS-NY), Maria Machicado (AFICS-Bolivia), Michael Atchia (AFICS-Mauritius), Jay Sundaresan (AAFI-AFICS-Geneva), Souleymane Diabate (AIAFI-SNU-Cote d’Ivoire), Ana Lucia Pedreira (AAFIB-Brazil), Jacques Rao (AAFU-AFUS-France), Josianne Taillefer (AAFU-AFUS-France), Girija Devi (AFUNPI-India), Nancy Hurtz-Soyka (FAFICS and AFICS-NY), Delia Barcelona (FAFICS and AFICS-Philippines). Nancy Hurtz-Soyka will serve as Rapporteur. Ten Members attended the first meeting. The Committee will meet every month, and the next meeting is on 25 November. Updates will be provided to every Bureau meeting. Its Terms of Reference are to draw up the work plan, timeframe and logistical requirements for the celebration; oversee the commemoration, event planning and implementation; liaise with local Associations on their local celebrations; work closely with the FAFICS Standing Committee on Communications; coordinate with the FAFICS Bureau and its Committees
* an Advisory Committee has been set up. Members to date are Andres Castellanos, former President and President Emeritus of FAFICS, Linda Saputelli former President and President Emeritus of FAFICS, Lydia Ontal, Honorary Assistant Secretary of FAFICS, Georges Kutukdjian, former President of AAFU-AFUS-France. Marco Breschi (former FAFICS President and Mary Johnson, Past President of AFICS-Australia) have both declined the invitation. Its Terms of Reference are to share their experience and insights on the history of FAFICS and help capture the rich history of FAFICS and memories of events, people, and activities; and, to provide guidance/inputs/ideas to the Anniversary Committee on plans for the commemoration
* four sub-committees have been set up, Program, Logistics, Publicity and Finance
* the Program sub-committee met on 11 November. Members of this sub-committee are Jacques Daoust, Aye Win, Debbie Landey, Jacques Rao, Maria Machicado, Souleymane Diabate. The Program sub-committee put together a tentative program for the morning, 9am-noon, of the Anniversary Day. The idea is for the event to have a Townhall format with a lot of interaction. The morning session might possibly include an Opening by the President of FAFICS, live or pre-recorded statements by the President of the General Assembly, the current and previous Secretaries-General, a Minute of Silence for the Fallen led by the President of FAFICS, a Panel moderated by the President of FAFICS to include the management of the Pension Fund, CEO of UNFCU, FICSA and others, a presentation by the President of FAFICS on the achievements of FAFICS and challenges ahead, a Panel on health insurance issues with service providers, moderated by Jay Karia, and a closing of the morning by the President of FAFICS. A second meeting of the Program sub-committee will take place on 18 November to discuss what the afternoon and evening of the day might look like
* the Publicity sub-committee will meet on 19 November. Members of this sub-committee are Jacques Daoust, Aye Win, Ana Lucia Pedreira, Girija Devi, Nancy Hurtz-Soyka and Michael Atchia
* the Finance sub-committee is so far made up of Josianne Taillefer and other members will be added
* Aye Win advised that he had met with the FAFICS Standing Committee on Communications and one of the suggestions was that the event is to be celebratory and therefore it might be important not to have too heavy an Agenda.

Discussion

3. The President indicated the Council will take place from the 14-18 July so the Anniversary event will be on the 18 July. The President and others felt the Program sub-committee was off to a good start, but to remember that as the Anniversary Day will be at the end of the Council that the program should not be too heavy. He also indicated that if the program is to include a social event, it is important to liaise with the hosting Association.

4. With regard to the draft logos that had been prepared by Jacques Daoust, with the acronyms in English, French and Spanish, the President expressed preference for the ones which had the 5 and 0 more or less parallel. One Bureau member preferred logo number 10.

5.Juan and Delia shared the suggestions of the FAFICS Standing Committee on Communications on the proposals so far made by the FAFICS@50 Anniversary Planning Committee, namely, that a small section on the website regarding the FAFICS@50 Anniversary be opened; information on the FAFICS@50 Anniversary be disseminated, including through a communication from the FAFICS@50 Anniversary Planning Committee; that there be some gold in the logo since we are celebrating a golden anniversary; a shorter by-line/theme of 2-3 words to promote the event. In some countries not enough is known about FAFICS, so more information is needed on FAFICS as part of the build-up to the Anniversary. In this context, it was suggested to translate the Brochure in some local languages, for example into Portuguese as there are many members in Brazil. The translations would have to be checked carefully to ensure consistency with the original version, but it is another way of promoting the Anniversary event. Next year is also the 70th anniversary of AAFI-AFICS-Geneva.

6. It was mentioned invitations should go as quickly as possible to the President of the General Assembly and the current and former Secretaries-General. These letters should go by January. It was also mentioned that a Concept Note has been prepared for an International Day for International Civil Servants and will be further discussed.

**Agenda item 4. Feedback on the President’s Newsletter**

7. The next President’s Newsletter will go out at the end of December, early January. The President plans to focus again on the main outcomes of the Council and the follow-up work being implemented on various topics. He will use the next Newsletter to announce the 50th Anniversary commemoration. Bureau members should forward any further ideas they may have to him for the Newsletter.

**Agenda item 5. FAFICS Bureau Work Program**

8. The Secretary explained that she awaits feedback from Romesh on the budget. More specific outputs from the Standing Committee on Pensions are to be included regarding the intended Papers to the Pension Board on countries suspended from the two-track option, as well on the merging of small and minimum size pensions in the Pension Fund Regulations. Work will start on both in January and need to be reflected. Delia will coordinate with Suzanne. Clarity from the Membership Committee on outputs is needed. Delia will follow up with Abdou. Talent management and succession planning have been moved further up in the Work Program.

9.The Work Program will be completed and adopted at the December Bureau meeting.

10. Jay reminded that a letter to the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the CEB, on issues emanating from the Council, needs to be sent, especially regarding key issues on pensions and health insurance and support for local Associations. The Secretary-General can then draw these issues to the attention of Heads of Organizations. He mentioned the letter that had gone out to Resident Coordinators asking them to support local Associations had been helpful. The President indicated it would be important for FAFICS to be able to present critical issues next year to the CEB and/or HLCM.

**Agenda item 6. Updates from the Standing Committees**

**Standing Committee on Pensions**

11. The Standing Committee Co-Chair, Suzanne Bishopric, had sent an update to the Standing Committee on Pensions but this had not been shared with the Bureau. In her absence, the President provided the update.

12. On the investment side, there is an issue regarding the value of ESG investments which are going down considering the election of Donald Trump whereas the value of investments in fossil fuels, tobacco, weapons, in which the Pension Fund is not supposed to invest, are increasing in value. The Fund will probably continue to reach 3.5% but the funding margin which was down below 2% in July will likely continue to decrease so the outlook for any improvements in pension benefits is not good.

13. Regarding pension administration, there has been an announcement of the first step in the new client management system, with a change to the Contact Us Form. Changes are being made incrementally. The President sent a note to the CEPA thanking her for taking small steps. Second, FAFICS will be looking for improvements and statistics on the handling of special cases, e.g. surviving spouses. Third, a Paper will be put forward by the Pension Fund to the Pension Board meeting in April proposing reinstating a handful of countries back into the two-track option. The content of the Paper FAFICS is preparing on this topic to the Pension Board will need to be coordinated with that of the Pension Fund’s Paper. We cannot say no countries have been reinstated but can still say we think the algorithm is too harsh, looking back as it has been over 30 years. Fourth, the help of FAFICS will be sought when the criteria for the merger of small and minimum pensions are elaborated by the Pension Fund. Fifth, Gerhard Schramek and Jay Pozenel attended the recent meeting of the Working Group on Governance. One of the issues the Group is looking at is the funding of the FAFICS delegation to the Pension Board. The outlook looks positive given the recognized value FAFICS provides to the Pension Board. We will need to await the outcome of the Pension Board deliberations in February. This means FAFICS will fund two participants to the Pension Board meeting in July. If the meeting is held in Vienna, then this funding support will be for Theresa and Suzanne. Sixth, the ACABQ Report is out, and we are aware of two concerns that have been raised, the need for less travel in the budget put forward by the Pension Board and some skepticism regarding some of the new posts being requested for the investment side of the Pension Fund. The ACABQ has asked for more details on those. Finally, work has begun to advertise for the Deputy CEPA post and the President is on the Committee reviewing the job description before it goes out and will participate in the interviews.

14. A question was raised as to whether there was any discussion of a move to a defined contribution system. The President explained that the actuaries indicate the Pension Fund is viable for at least the next 50 years. The Pension Fund is now a mature Fund and income balances outflow. It was mentioned that while there is no discussion now on a move to a defined contribution system, there could be in the future. A question was raised regarding the 35% increase for small pensions. The President believes the 35% increase for small pensions had been recommended.

15. Abdou indicated that while he was in New York recently, he had met with a Pension Fund focal point on some issues for members in ASAFI-Senegal. In Senegal, there are 777 beneficiaries, and 451 individuals using the DCE. A focal point in the Pension Fund for Senegal had been established and there are now no pending pension issues. The idea of a Pension Fund mission to Dakar to conduct a seminar on the DCE and other pension issues was proposed by the Pension Fund focal point, and to which Associations in the sub-region could be invited, was agreed. The President indicated that the outreach has indeed improved and support for the switch to the DCE has been excellent. Abdou also advised that ASAFI-Senegal is undertaking a membership drive.

**Standing Committee on ASHIL**

16. The Standing Committee Chair, Jay Karia, provided the update. The Standing Committee has been holding regular monthly meetings. The Committee has submitted a comprehensive work plan. Within the work plan, the work has been subdivided into sub-groups with a leader within each sub-group from its members. This is an effective way of delivering the work plan. The sub-groups report to the larger group and there is a lot going on and a good team spirit.

17. One of the issues being followed up is the MIP. The UN Secretariat has a working group on the MIP, including UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR and others to address issues which will hopefully improve the situation. The governance issue may be raised in this group. For example, the MIP working group is a management group and they need a stakeholder group. On the issue of long-term care, the Standing Committee is trying to get more information from UNIDO on their long-term care insurance policy. The President could not find any information on the internal website so recently passed the request to the Head of Social Services, HR, and will follow up. One of the major contacts in UNOV is retiring and she is an excellent HR person. We are hoping her replacement will be as good.

**Standing Committee on Communications**

18. The Standing Committee Co-Chair, Juan Casas, provided the update. The Standing Committee had just met this week. Two new members have been added to the Committee, Djibril N’diaye from Senegal and Ana Lucia Pedreira from Brazil. So, there are now ten members representing a good geographic spread. Regarding the FAFICS website, there is a need to better inform Member Associations as to how to access the member section. Delia will send a message to each Association with their specific username, password and instructions. There is a need for Association information to be updated on the website. The Committee met with the contractor to review comments from Committee members. It was decided to conduct a survey to see what recommendations users might have. There is already information on who is using the site, numbers, provenance, what section users are looking at. Within the first month of going live, there have already been 340 users who have accessed the site 400+ times, many from the US and France. This kind of information will be updated. Delia will ensure updates to the site. There will be a special section on the FAFICS@50 Anniversary.

**Standing Committee on Membership**

19. The Standing Committee, Co-Chair, Abdou Khader Diakhate, provided the update. The Committee is working hard with Eva Ruhago, President of the Association in Tanzania, on support to Zimbabwe, Somalia and Comoros. For Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Zambia, the process is ongoing. For Mauritania, Abdou has been able to secure the correct information regarding the new Bureau leaders with the help of UNDP Nouakchott. Abdou will go there on mission to support their efforts. A special letter from the President to UNDP Nouakchott will be needed to facilitate the mission. Abdou will need financial support for accommodation in Nouakchott. Delia reported on a contact she has made with a former UNFPA colleague regarding the possibility of an Association being started in Jordan. She will connect her contact to the Standing Committee. On the website, the instructions on how to join FAFICS are in the members only section and will now be moved to the public section.

**Agenda item 7. Next Meeting**

20. The next meeting will be on 12 December 2024.

**Agenda item 8. Any Other Business**

21. The idea of dedicated Standing Committee meetings on day one of the Council on 14 July was raised. The plenary is scheduled for 15-18 July. The Standing Committee on Pensions would like a meeting on the morning of the 14 July. The discussions would be open to everyone and then a report will be made to the plenary summarizing the recommendations coming out of the Standing Committee meeting to be taken forward to the Pension Board. The President asked if the other Standing Committees needed such a session. For the Standing Committee on ASHIL, the Co-Chair indicated he will consult the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee on Communications Co-Chair believes the communications issues can be handled in plenary.