



AFICS-Cyprus Newsletter

Number 009 January 2018

EDITORIAL

A new year brings the promise of fresh starts and the anticipation of what the next 12 months will bring. A new year is not just a change in the calendar, it represents an opportunity to recharge or rejuvenate our life. We do this by making resolutions that we believe will make us better or shed bad habits. Looking at the global scale, the world, as we know it today, needs plenty of healing and it would be a good start for those in power to recognize this. Political leaders (including the UN Security Council) must resolve to not only manage crises but also to prevent them.

Whether it's turning promises on climate change into action, rebuilding trust in the financial system, coming face-to-face with refugees, spreading peace around the globe, achieving gender equality between men and women in all aspects of life, tackling the issue of sexual harassment, one fact remains. The world's only truly universal global organization, the United Nations, has become the foremost forum to address all issues that transcend national boundaries and cannot be resolved by any one country acting alone.

Recent allegations have sparked a global conversation about the issue of sexual harassment, drunken advances from directors, bosses, doctors and other men in jobs above their ranking, and, more seriously, economic and social repercussions for those who dared to say no or to rock the boat by reporting offenses. The UN conceded that under-reporting within the organisation is a concern, but Secretary General António Guterres stated that he has "prioritised addressing sexual harassment and upholding the zero tolerance policy".

In this newsletter, you can read a brief article on the controversy and allegations that have been debated extensively about the mismanagement of the UN Pension Fund at the highest level. In order to allay any fears, Committee Secretary Mr Benon Sevan considered it essential to provide as much information as possible to friends and former colleagues on developments up to 21 January 2018. Hopefully – with most of us being pensioners – readers will find the report informative and enlightening.

Also included in this newsletter is the announcement of a book launch by Committee Entertainments Member Dr Michael Voniatis on "The History of Tuberculosis in Cyprus". This book, published in English and Greek, describes the history of the disease on the island. The launch will take place on 12 February 2018 at the "Solon Triantafyllides" Auditorium, Bank of Cyprus Head Offices at Nicosia.

Finally, the Executive Committee would like to see more of you taking advantage of the subsidised events and the opportunities to meet each other. Having an Association run by a Committee counts for nothing if we do not all use our presence and voice to express and share our wishes and thoughts. What will 2018 bring? We can speculate, but we don't know.

May all your dreams come true in the coming year. Stay close to us and keep reading our website.

Miriam Pericleous
Newsletter Editor

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The Executive Committee and its work in 2017

During 2017, the Executive Committee held four meetings, the first (28th) on 10 January, the second (29th) on 28 March, the third (30th) on 12 September and the fourth (31st) on 5 December. The Agenda for all the meetings is more or less standard, but the subjects discussed differ.

Thus during the 28th meeting, the Committee: reviewed the membership situation during the whole of 2016 and the active membership as of 1 January 2017; reviewed the income and expenditure throughout 2016 and the carry-over of reserves on 1 January 2017 and the preparation of the 5th Assembly Session. These discussions authorized the President and Committee Members to finalize the working documents for the 5th Assembly. The Committee also reviewed the articles which were to be included in the 7th edition of the AFICS Newsletter. During the 29th meeting, the main subjects were lessons drawn from the discussions during the 5th Assembly and the Elections of the Executive Committee Officers, the President, Deputy President, Secretary, Treasurer, Newsletter Editor and Webmaster. Also discussed were the suggestions for the 2017 social activities. During the 30th meeting two, subjects were discussed: the situation at the UNJSPF and the position of the new Secretary-General (see the relevant article in this Newsletter, page 3) and the participation of AFICS at the FAFICS 46th Council meeting held at Vienna. During the 31st meeting the main subjects discussed were the preparation of issue no 9 of the Newsletter, and the place, the date and the provisional agenda of the 6th Assembly.

AFICS-Cyprus Membership and Finance

On 31 December 2017, 59 active AFICS members had paid their membership dues. The number rose to 60 on 1 January 2018, due to the reinstatement of a former member.

On 31 December 2017, the Association's income for the year amounted to €3,236 and the expenditure to €4,546. On 31 December 2017, the reserves of the Association, which were transferred to 2018, amounted to €8,104 compared with €9,414 at the beginning of 2017.

The Executive Committee

President: Mr Ioannis (Yangos) Antoniadis
Vice-President/Newsletter Editor: Ms Miriam Pericleous
Secretary: Mr Benon Sevan
Webmaster: Mr Gianfranco Longo
Entertainments Member: Dr Michael Voniatis
Member: Mr Terje Andersen
Member: Ms Fredy Galatopoulou

Ioannis (Yangos) Antoniadis, President

Social Activities

Since our last newsletter, the Executive Committee has organised two outings for our AFICS-Cyprus members, their families and friends. The first took place on 20 October when 27 members arrived at the De Moss Café & Restaurant in Nicosia for an excellent evening meal. The second was on 15 December at Pissas Taverna, again in Nicosia when in true festive spirit, the 26 members who attended enjoyed a delicious meze lunch to celebrate the season of goodwill.

The AFICS-Cyprus Executive Committee does its best to find places of interest and restaurants to visit for our members, all of which is subsidized by the Association. The EC welcomes any suggestions or ideas from members. Everything will be considered!



The Cultural Heritage of Cyprus: Part IV Salamis – City Kingdom and Capital

In our fourth article describing the cultural heritage sites of Cyprus, we visit Salamis, one of the richest archaeological sites on the island. It's also one of the most visually rewarding, with its Roman columns, baths and restored theatre. The site's history stretches back to the 11th century BC, with the city playing a leading role for centuries as a major trading centre and as the island's capital.

Today, its ruins – located about nine kilometres north of Famagusta – are spread over a large forested area, and include a major necropolis from the 8th and 7th centuries BC, plus numerous structures from the later Roman and Byzantine periods, including a gymnasium, stadium, theatre, agora and basilicas.

Salamis owes much of its historic prominence to its location on the northeast coast of Cyprus, where, backed by the fertile Mesaoria Plain, it was close to major eastern Mediterranean trading centres. It is linked to the most glorious page in the history of Cyprus, from its founding by Teucer, son of Telamon, ruler of the island of Salamis, until the early years of the Christian era.

Built around a natural harbour on a large bay in the east of the island, it was an open window to the Levant and simultaneously a recipient and preserver of Greek civilization. The location made it possible for the town to develop as a wealthy and powerful commercial centre.



Columns surrounding the athletes' exercise ground



The amphitheatre

Perhaps the most visually appealing of the ruins of Salamis are located close to the site's main entrance. The stone columns of the gymnasium, which date back to Roman times, originally surrounded an athletes' exercise ground, bordered on its eastern side with a series of swimming pools, baths and sweating rooms.

At about 100 metres south of the gymnasium lies the theatre. It is the largest theatre found in Cyprus with capacity for some 15,000 spectators.

A large stone cistern, built into a hill, would have stored water that was brought to Salamis by aqueduct. South of the cistern lies the agora (or market place). Although partially excavated, the agora and temple only hint at the area's former grandeur. Much likely remains underground, as yet undiscovered.

Located inland and west of the main Salamis archaeological complex, nine Royal Tombs tell us a great deal about how Salamis, and its older Mycenaean culture, buried its dead. Ritual sacrifices played a role in the funeral proceedings.

Some of the most impressive finds on Cyprus come from Salamis. The huge necropolis, first excavated in 1957, yielded a rich cache of bronze cauldrons containing human remains, wooden royal thrones sheathed in ivory, necklaces, rings and weapons. Many of these are on display at the Cyprus Museum in Nicosia.

Dear AFICS members,

In this issue of our newsletter, I am pleased to announce the publication of my latest book entitled "Tuberculosis in Cyprus through the Centuries", both in Greek and English. Dr Mario Raviglione, Director of the Global TB Programme, World Health Organization, has written a very interesting and informative preface of the book that perfectly reflects its major contents. I believe it is well worth reading.

Dr. Michael Voniatis

"The wise Latin philosopher and politician, Cicero, understood clearly that knowledge of history is fundamental in identifying solutions for the present and the future: history is life's teacher. It is from a thorough assessment of the past actions of people, especially the great ones, that new generations can comprehend how humans have dealt with challenges and difficulties, thus finding inspiration for innovations and new ways.

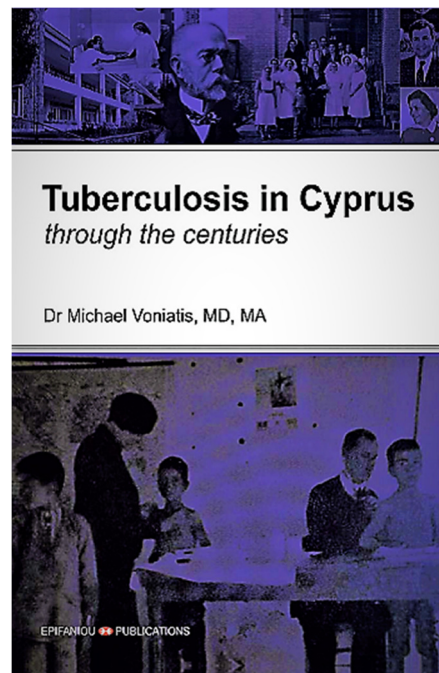
The work of Dr Michael Voniatis, my former colleague at the World Health Organization, is an excellent reflection of this philosophy, as he applies the knowledge of the history of tuberculosis (TB) in his own country, Cyprus, to assess the chances of TB elimination. In a long journey through the centuries he tells the story of the efforts against TB that have resulted in major achievements to the point of near-elimination today. The journey begins with some assumptions – given the lack of specific information – about TB in the ancient times through an account of historical events in Cyprus and the Mediterranean basin.

Starting in the 19th century, information on TB in Cyprus becomes clearer. Dr Voniatis takes us through the establishment of the

Cyprus Anti-Tuberculosis League in 1936 that managed the construction of sanatoria and dispensaries and contributed essential epidemiological information through landmark studies. These not only allowed clarity about the burden of the disease in the 1930's, but also the conclusion that poor social economic conditions and a variety of what we would call today "social determinants of health" were nurturing the epidemic. It was a realisation that more vulnerable people existed and that efforts should be focused on these high-risk populations.

A very inspiring section of the book presents the heroes of Cyprus in the fight against TB during the last century. These are remarkable individuals, physicians and nurses who devoted their existence to the fight against TB and this book by Dr Voniatis rightly celebrates them to inspire new generations. Some of these heroes led the historical sanatoria in Cyprus, the history of which is detailed in the section devoted to institutions that were the key to treatment of TB for a good part of the last century. As a reminder of the suffering TB has imposed on humankind for centuries, Dr Voniatis recounts stories of real people – not just statistical numbers – who were affected by, and died from, TB. He tells us of the terrible stigma that was dominant at the time with people buried in the sanatorium cemetery because "their relatives refused to receive the dead for burial". He tells us of a small three-year-old child, Titos, whose last name remains anonymous at his burial site, most likely because this would have stigmatized his parents.

In the last few chapters, the book goes through the most recent



decades of TB care and control in Cyprus. Looking at the statistics, Dr Voniatis concludes that the TB is a solid one that managed to nearly eliminate TB among native Cypriots. This is a remarkable achievement that we, together, highlighted in a recent scientific article that presented the latest burden information, assessed the results of efforts conducive to a major annual decline of incidence of the disease until a few years ago, and evaluated the interventions that are necessary to achieve elimination in the country. These measures need to focus on high-risk vulnerable populations and require innovations, such as management of latent TB infection and introduction of all new tools available as promoted by the new WHO End TB Strategy.

Building on history and a full understanding of the conditions that have characterised the TB epidemic in the country, this book prepares for the last effort that, one day, will lead to elimination and, ultimately, eradication of the TB epidemic in Cyprus."

United Nations pensioners worldwide, as well as UN Staff Unions, among others, have been expressing their serious concerns regarding the mismanagement, as well as the poor financial performance of the United Nations Pension Fund, and have petitioned the Secretary-General to replace the Chief Executive Officer of the Pension Fund, Mr. Sergio Arvizu. Numerous pensioners have also emphasized the need for effective leadership of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) and for the resignation of the current President of FAFICS.

The Secretary-General has finally taken action, exercising his prerogatives. On 19 October 2017, he appointed Sudhir Rajkumar, the head of the global pension advisory programme at the World Bank, to replace Ms. Carol Boykin as his Representative for Investments at the UN Pension Fund, which has experienced chronic investment under-performance and other managerial deficiencies. In 2016, the Joint Staff Pension Fund with total assets of a record \$61.5 billion at the end of October 2017, experienced a massive currency loss of almost \$1 billion, with almost \$5 billion dollars in cumulative losses since 2013.

Furthermore, exercising his power of appointment of the Chief Executive Officer of the Pension Fund, pursuant to Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations and Article 7 of the Regulations of the Fund, the Secretary-General accepted, on 7 December 2017, the Pension Board's recommendation to reappoint Mr. Sergio Arvizu for a second term of three years. However, Mr. Arvizu's continuation will be subject to an annual review performance, thus practically placing him on probation, with a renewable one-year contract based on the Pension Board's report of his progress in addressing performance issues of the Fund.

In brief, the Secretary-General has put the Pension Board Chair and its members on notice, calling on them to assume responsibility for exercising oversight over the Fund and the CEO.

For more details, please check the relevant link of the UN Pension Blog, which is as follows:

<http://unpension.blogspot.com/2017/12/pension-fund-ceo-on-probation-un.html>

In resolution A/RES/72/262 adopted of 24 December 2017, the General Assembly likewise was very critical of the management of the Pension Fund and called for checks and balances between the Pension Board and the Pension Fund leadership and a comprehensive audit of the governance structure of the Fund. It was very critical on the lax oversight by the Pension Board and in paragraph 8, Section XV, of its resolution, it requested the Secretary-General "to entrust the Office of Internal Oversight Services with the conduct of a comprehensive audit of the governance structure of the Pension Board, including a review of the checks and balances between the Board and the leadership of the Fund", and requested "the Office to submit a report with key findings to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, to be considered in the context of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund".

For more details on the resolution and to read the full text of the relevant section of the resolution, please check the relevant link of the UN Pension Blog, which is as follows:

<http://unpension.blogspot.com/2017/12/pension-fund-un-general-assembly-calls.html>

In connection with the General Assembly resolution A/RES/72/262 of 24 December 2017, Ms. Loraine Rickard-Martin of the UN Pension Blog, in her letters dated 14 and 21 January 2018 addressed to

FAFICS members and associate members, provided an excellent and detailed response to the letter dated 8 January 2018 from Ms Linda Saputelli, the President of FAFICS. For the texts of the letters concerned, please check the following link:

<http://unpension.blogspot.com/2018/01/todays-email-purportedly-from-un.html>

You are also encouraged to check the UN Pension Blog's article, dated 14 December 2017, entitled "FROM THE UN STAFF UNIONS: Procurement scandals and cover-ups at UN Pension Fund; SG urged not to renew its CEO". The link to the article is as follows:

<http://unpension.blogspot.com/2017/12/un-staff-unions-procurement-scandals.html>

Finally, while we might be disappointed with the failure to replace the CEO of the Pension Fund despite the call for the Secretary-General to do so, the current outcome was the best that could be achieved under the circumstances of a divided Pension Board. The initial recommendation by the Pension Board was to renew the term of the CEO for another five years, which was then reduced to three years. Subject to scrutiny of his performance by the Board, and its report to the Secretary-General next summer, his performance is up for review before any further renewal of his contract.

For updates on developments concerning the Pension Fund, you are encouraged to check regularly the UN Pension Blog referred to above. For your information, the article above is based mainly on the valuable information provided in the said Blog:

<http://unpension.blogspot.com>, and on the website of the Coordinating Committee for the International Staff Unions and Associations (CCISUA):

<http://www.ccisua.org/>

Benon Sevan