



AFICS-Cyprus Newsletter

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EDITORIAL

This year's climate, political scenery and economic issues are all heating up in Cyprus.

- Summer is here, which means citizens and tourists alike are relaxing near pools and beaches. However, it is important to take note of how hot the oncoming climate will be. Prolonged heat, including several dangerous heat waves, is currently a major issue across southern and eastern Europe. High temperatures can be dangerous, especially for people who may be vulnerable such as older people, young children and those with serious illnesses, including cardiovascular, respiratory, renal conditions, diabetes or Parkinson's disease. The key message is follow public health advice on staying safe in the heat by staying cool, drinking lots of cold fluids and looking out for those who are most at risk.
- Marathon talks aimed at ending Cyprus's drawn-out conflict sputtered out early this July without a deal, despite valiant efforts from the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to jumpstart the process. Cyprus is one of the world's longest-running political crises and the UN-backed talks that began in the Swiss Alpine resort of Crans-Montana on June 28 had been billed as the best chance to end the island's 43-year division. Guterres himself was optimistic when he first joined the talks a week earlier, describing the negotiations as "highly constructive", and urging the rival Cypriot sides to seize "a historic opportunity to reach a comprehensive settlement to the conflict that has divided Cyprus for too many decades". But after pushing negotiations into Friday, just hours before he was set to leave for the G20 summit in Hamburg, Guterres was forced to acknowledge that the talks ended "without a result". It was obvious that there was still a significant distance between the delegations on a certain number of issues, and a deal was not possible. He stressed though that while the Crans-Montana conference had proved fruitless, "that doesn't mean that other initiatives cannot be developed in order to address the Cyprus problem". Albeit a failure, this process has taken Cyprus closer than ever before to a settlement.
- The UN Joint Staff Pension Plan deals with the pensionable remuneration, on which both contributions and benefits are based and calculated in terms of US dollars, and the benefits accordingly are payable in dollars. Basing the entire plan on United States dollars seems, on balance, to be a desirable course of action, although certain anomalies and inequities can occur as a result. Besides the ordinary developments that can affect a pension plan, currency variations can have an important effect on the level of pensions, particularly if the currency of the country of residence is appreciated in relation to that of the United States. The recent US government unpredictability has created fluctuations and uncertainty in the marketplace or with respect to the value of the dollar. UN pensioners could help to protect themselves against volatile currency market movements by securing a fixed exchange rate for anything from a few months to several years. Of course, the build-up of retirement assets is a complex process that varies with earnings, family changes, job changes, health status, individual choices, and stock prices, among other factors.

In spite of all these hot issues, summer is a time of relaxing, visiting, travelling and meeting with friends and family. Warm wishes from the Executive Committee for a peaceful and enjoyable summer.

*Miriam Pericleous
Newsletter Editor*

Association of Former International Civil Servants (AFICS)-Cyprus
c/o UNFICYP Registry, PO Box 21642, CY-1590 Nicosia, Cyprus
Telephone: +357 22 614726
E-mail: afics-cyp@un.org
Website: www.afics-cyprus.org

AFICS-Cyprus 5th Ordinary Assembly Meeting

The 5th AFICS-Cyprus Ordinary Assembly meeting took place on 7 March 2017 at HQ UNFICYP, Blue Beret Camp, United Nations Protected Area, Nicosia.

Ordinary Assembly meetings must be held with a minimum of 15 AFICS members. During the 5th meeting there were 25 members present who had paid their Association dues and another 10 in good standing were represented by their respective powers of attorney, so in total 35 members were present.

The President informed the Assembly that on 31 December 2016, AFICS had 72 active members who had paid their dues, as compared to 77 members in 2015 and 64 in 2014.

The Assembly then proceeded with the renewal of the Executive Committee in accordance with Article 8.1(e) of the Association's Statutes. The Assembly re-elected Mr. Ioannis Antoniadis for a third and last term of office for a period of two years. The Assembly also elected two new members for a period of two years, Mr. Terje Andersen (Norway) and Mr. Benon Sevan (Cyprus). These three members shall work together with Ms. Fredy Galatopoulou, Ms. Miriam Pericleous, Mr. Gianfranco Longo and Dr. Michael Voniatis, whose terms-of-office shall come to an end at the close of the 2018 Assembly session. Thus the Executive Committee shall consist of seven members, the maximum authorized by the Statutes. Furthermore, the Assembly elected Mr. Kikis Angelides as the Association's Auditor, with a term of office beginning on 7 March 2017 and ending at the close of its 6th Ordinary Session to be held in 2018.

Finally the Assembly approved the Association's 2017 budget, covering the period 1 January to 31 December 2017. The budget approved foresees fresh income amounting to €3,090 and expenditures of €3,000.

The meeting ended at 11.50 am. Many gathered outside for a group photo, and continued on to the UNFICYP Mess for a buffet lunch and further social interaction.



Certificate of Entitlement (CoE)

In accordance with UNJSPF (United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund) rules, pension payments cease for all retirees or their dependents who have not submitted their Certificate of Entitlement (CoE) by the end of March each calendar year.

After negotiations with FAFICS, the Pension Fund have agreed that before they stop payment of pension for those who have not submitted a CoE, effort should be made to locate each retiree through the local AFICS Association, in the case of Cyprus through the President, Ioannis (Yangos) Antoniadis.

During the last period, six persons had not submitted their CoE. The AFICS President, after a considerable amount of effort, managed to contact five individuals who were subsequently removed from the 2017 suspension list. The sixth could not be traced.

AFICS members are encouraged to submit their CoE forms as soon as possible to avoid any future complications, including informing the Fund of any change of address. The Executive Committee does its utmost to help with pension matters, and any question/problem should be addressed to the President who is ready to assist wherever he can.

AFICS Summer Outing

Friday 9 June was the date set for the next AFICS outing, a beautiful summer's day with a trip planned for the mountain villages of Kalopanagiotis and Kakopetria. 12 participants, accompanied by our guide, Dr. Sofocles Sofocleous and the driver, boarded a minibus and set off at 9.30 am.

The first stop was the picturesque village of Kalopanagiotis, known for its healthy sulphur springs and its church of Agios Ioannis Lampadistis. Originally a monastery, today it is a complex of three churches: Agios Irakleidios, Agios Ioannis Lampadistis and a Latin chapel – all under a single pitched roof. Originally built in the 11th century, the chapel was rebuilt in the 18th century and is a listed UNESCO World Heritage Site. The group also visited a very interesting Byzantine museum located near the church.

Participants then boarded the bus and headed for the village of Pedoulas, where lunch had been organised at the Flowers Hotel restaurant, set on the side of the mountain. During the meal, everyone was able to appreciate the beautiful mountain views.



Agios Nikolaos tis Stegis



Agios Ioannis Lampadistis

Then, on to the village of Kakopetria for a tour of the church of Agios Nikolaos tis Stegis (St. Nicholas of the Roof). This church, covered entirely in wall paintings dating from the 11th to the 18th centuries, derives its name from its steep-pitched timber roof that was built to protect it from the elements. It now functions as a simple country church and a pilgrimage site, and is also a listed UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Credit must be given to our excellent guide, Dr. Sofocleous, who is extremely knowledgeable as regards the history of this island.

Tired but happy, participants arrived back in Nicosia at approximately 5.00 pm. The whole excursion was at a cost of €10 per person – extremely good value for money! All AFICS members are encouraged to participate in the next outing.

Next AFICS Outing

During the last social gathering, suggestions were raised for the next outing. It has been proposed that the venue could be a visit to Monolithos Winery in the village of Pachna, followed by a lunch at a Syrian restaurant in Limassol.

We are currently proceeding with the arrangements. However any suggestions are welcome. Your opinion and participation count.

The Cultural Heritage of Cyprus: Part III – Palaepafos: Old Pafos and The Sanctuary of Aphrodite

Continuing our series on the cultural heritage of the island, we move to Cyprus's southwest, near the village of Kouklia. It's here that the old city of Pafos flourished, from the 15th century BC through to the end of the Middle Ages.

It's also here, just north of her legendary birthplace in the sea foam near Petra tou Romiou, that Aphrodite was worshipped from antiquity, prompting Homer to immortalise the relationship between the goddess and the island: "... laughter-loving Aphrodite came to Cyprus to Pafos, where is her precinct and fragrant altar..." (from Homer's Odyssey).



A legend that appears in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* tells us that Pygmalion created a statue of a woman so beautiful that he fell in love with her. When Aphrodite took pity on him and gave the statue life, Pygmalion was able to marry the woman. He named their daughter Pafos, and shared her name with the town as well.

Legends aside, we know for certain that the Sanctuary of Aphrodite in Old Pafos was her most important shrine in ancient times, drawing many pilgrims from Cyprus and abroad to worship the goddess of love, beauty, pleasure and procreation.

Palaepafos (Old Pafos) was one of the most celebrated pilgrimage centres of the classical Greek world and one of the city-kingdoms of Cyprus in antiquity. Here lie the ruins of the famous sanctuary of Aphrodite with remains dating back to the 12th century BC. The sanctuary remained a place of worship until the 3rd or 4th century AD. The museum, housed in a nearby Lusignan manor, contains impressive finds from the region dating from the Chalcolithic age to the Middle Ages. Excavations are continuing at the sanctuary, as well as in and around the ruins of the town and the necropolis.

Cyprus is renowned as the island of Aphrodite. The "Petra tou Romiou" ("the Rock of the Greek") area is one of the most beautiful coastlines



in Cyprus, where, according to mythology, Aphrodite rose from the waves. Over the years, Old Pafos saw the arrival of Christianity, devastating earthquakes, equally devastating raids from neighbouring countries and the Crusades.

During the medieval period, it flourished as the centre of the Lusignan sugar industry. A sugar refinery was established partially on the temple site and an imposing manor house was built nearby. The part of this manor house that still stands today dates from the Ottoman period that began in the 16th century when the site became a farm of considerable size.

Today, it is a museum that is well worth visiting, not only for its fine collection of objects found in the area (terracotta figurines, weapons, jewellery and script), but for its display of the fertility stone of Aphrodite. Near the manor house you can see many layers of Old Pafos's history, in fact the ground looks rather like several different jigsaw puzzles that have been tossed together, but there's no doubt that the pieces add up to a remarkable story – that of Aphrodite herself.