



AFICS-Cyprus Newsletter

Number 010 July 2018

EDITORIAL

First of all, many apologies to our readers for the delay in publishing this newsletter, due to the complete breakdown of the Editor's computer and the loss of articles and photographs. Happily, we are now back on track.

The recent few months have shown that climate change is affecting every country on every continent, disrupting national economies and affecting lives, costing people, communities and countries dearly today and even more tomorrow. Weather patterns are changing, sea levels are rising, weather events are becoming more extreme and greenhouse gas emissions are now at their highest levels in history. Without action, the world's average surface temperature is likely to surpass three degrees centigrade this century, and the world's poorest and most vulnerable people are being affected the most.

Cyprus has just experienced a long, hot summer and climate change is expected to have a heavy impact on the island in the coming years with droughts and intense weather patterns taking their toll, not just on the quality of life but also agriculture. The threats to rural eco-systems are already visible, while soil fertility and water resources are under great pressure.

Nevertheless, there has been an 8% increase in tourist arrivals, outnumbering the total arrivals ever recorded in Cyprus during the first eight months of the year. The UK remained the main source of tourism, followed by Russia, Israel and Sweden. An increase from northern countries includes Poland, the Ukraine, Switzerland and Ireland.

However, what does Brexit mean for Cyprus? The UK has in one way or another played a major role for the island. UK citizens have for decades chosen Cyprus for their vacation, for their business activities, and have bought properties and invested in various ways due to the island's beneficial tax conditions and belonging to the commonwealth. Only in the long-term will we realise how the decision made by the British people to leave the EU will affect Cyprus.

24 October has been celebrated as United Nations Day since 1948. In 1971, the UN General Assembly recommended that the day be observed by Member States as a public holiday. Established in 1964, UNFICYP has maintained peace and stability on the island, thanks to its diligent and tireless efforts. UNFICYP continues to celebrate 24 October, and we wish them every success this year on one of the most important days on the UN's global calendar.

The AFICS-Cyprus annual dinner will be held this year on Friday 26 October at 8.00 pm. All AFICS members are invited to mark this date down in their diaries and are encouraged to attend. The venue will be announced in the very near future – so watch this space!

The Committee looks forward to seeing you all very soon.

*Miriam Pericleous
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Certificate of Entitlement: 2018/2019

Another year has come and the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF) has sent a Certificate of Entitlement (CE) to all beneficiaries of a UN pension to ascertain that they should continue to receive a pension.

Supposedly, the mailing this year took place on 31 May and some 58,700 letters were sent out by mail or the UN Diplomatic Pouch service. We say supposedly because in Cyprus, about two thirds of the AFICS pensioners had received nothing by the end of September.

On 28 September, the President sent an urgent e-mail to the Pension Fund in New York, following which pensioners in Cyprus began receiving their Certificate of Entitlement dated 30 September 2018, posted in 2 October 2018! It will take time before the letters to Cyprus reach all of us, probably towards the end of October. Each beneficiary is expected to date, sign and return the letter no later than 15 November and your signed CE should be received by the Pension Fund by 31 December 2018.

A word of caution: the UNJSPF has separate addresses for normal airmail and for letters sent by registered mail. You should send your letter with the pre-printed address to the UNJSPF **NOT REGISTERED**.

If you wish to send your CE by registered mail, you should use another envelope with the address indicated on the UNJSPF website as follows:

United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund,
37th floor, 1 DHP 885 Second Avenue,
New York, NY 10017,
USA.

If you have not received your CE by 15 December, please contact the Pension Fund and let them know in order for them to send you another original.

It should be noted that in the CE, we are requested to confirm our residential address. If you have moved, you should immediately inform the Pension Fund Secretariat and provide documents required as proof of change of address.

AFICS-Cyprus Membership and Finance

On 30 June 2018, 48 active AFICS members had paid their membership dues.

On 30 June 2018, the Association's income for the year amounted to €2,097 and the expenditure to €1,181. 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.

AFICS-Cyprus visit to Pachna

AFICS first social function for the current year was a visit to the village of Pachna on 15 April 2018.



Outside St. Stephen's Church (Ayios Stephanos)

Our first stop was the small, ancient church dedicated to St. Stephen the Martyr and Archdeacon, located about two kilometres south of the village. Built in the 13th century with asymmetric stones of the region, this sample of architecture is rare and unique to Cyprus and is perhaps the oldest church on the island dedicated to St. Stephen. This sacred temple was built on the foundations of an early Christian basilica which is being maintained by the Department of Antiquities.

A few meters away from this small chapel stand many ancient stones known as monoliths. One such stone, which once stood just behind the church, has now collapsed with time, however in the same area another great monolith has survived. These stones have been attributed to a number of myths, one local legend saying that a person passing through the holed stone can cure many ailments, including infertility.



Passing through the monolith

However, these monoliths are believed to be either ancient grape or olive presses. Their use was abandoned and soon forgotten on the introduction of the screw-press: but this was probably not until Byzantine times, judging from the pottery and other remains which were found near so many of the monoliths.

Leaving St Stephen's area we drove past the village of Pachna. The name Pachna is thought to originate from the ancient Greek word "πάχνη" (pachni) which relates to the white morning frost found on leaves following a chilly night. Another explanation could come from the alternative meaning of "πάχνη", a manger, in reference to its protected location amidst the surrounding high hills. During the Frankish and Venetian occupations of Cyprus, the village appeared on maps under the name of Patina.

Chalky soil, its elevation and its climate have made Pachna an ideal location for viticulture. Government statistics show that in 1987, more than 830 hectares of land were registered with the Department of Agriculture as cultivated with wine or table vines, making it the largest grape producing village (Kefalochori) on the island. Evidence that vines have been cultivated here since ancient times came from pottery found in excavations nearby (at Ayia Marina settlement).

Eventually the group arrived at its destination. The Monolithos Winery is well-known and respected in the local area, being a small, family-run concern, committed to combining traditional techniques with the quality control benefits of modern technology, and produces some of the best Cabernet and Chardonnay wines on the island. Only local grapes are used, which, thanks to Pachna's excellent climate and high altitude (about 750 metres above sea level), are grown and matured on the vines in a near optimal environment.



Checking oak barrels in the cellar of Monolithos Winery

There has never been a better time than springtime to visit a winery in Cyprus, of which there are more than 60 operating mostly in the Limassol and Paphos districts, many of which continue to be family-owned and run. The majority are small, boutique businesses, typically producing under 3,000 cases a year. Touring a wine region is tremendously enjoyable and it's good to visit the places that helped define a region. It can also provide a superb education in wine and an opportunity to learn about agriculture, grape growing, and how wine is made, bottled, aged and sold.

AFICS members walked through the fermentation room with its stainless steel tanks, the barrel and cellar room, the bottling line and the tasting room. They also had the opportunity to walk outside into the vineyards and enjoy a breathtaking view of the wine-producing region. Members spent time in the tasting room, sampling the wines and talking to the winemaker who explained the techniques used in making Monolithos wines and answered all queries regarding the winemaking processes.

Fortunately the bus had a driver who does not drink! Always take into consideration that when visiting a winery, chances are you will taste more wine than you expected to and those little tastes all add up.

After a hectic but enjoyable visit to the winery, the group ended up at the Pachna Youth Club next to the church of St. George, where typical local "mezedes" were served. Wine and other drinks continued to flow and before long, we realised that it was getting late and it was time for us to leave.

Overall, the event proved to be a long but memorable wine tasting experience and an enjoyable and authentic day of the Cyprus countryside in spring, away from crowded tourist centres and the hustle and bustle of city life.

The United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund – An Update

In the previous issue of the AFICS-Cyprus Newsletter (number 009 – January 2018), information concerning developments regarding the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund was provided, covering the period up to the end of 2017. As was done in the previous issue, for updates on developments concerning the Pension Fund, the readers are encouraged to check regularly Ms. Loraine Rickard-Martin's excellent UN Pension Blog <http://unpension.blogspot.com>, and the website of the Coordinating Committee for the International Staff Unions and Associations (CCISSUA): <http://www.ccisua.org/>

As was done for the article which appeared in the previous issue of the Newsletter, the current update is based mainly on the most valuable information provided in Ms. Rickard-Martin's Blog.

Unfortunately, Ms. Linda Saputelli, the current President of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) in her latest "update" dated 19 February 2018, posted on the FAFICS website has continued her misinformation campaign. Her update begins with a renewed attempt to denigrate and discredit the UN participant representatives, mixed in with a brief update on other issues. It is regrettable fact that FAFICS has had some success in wielding power by manipulation and control of the flow of information, including to AFICS associations around the world.

In connection with the above, the reader's attention is drawn to the Open letter, dated 4 March 2018, from Ms. Rickard-Martin, addressed to members and associate members of FAFICS, entitled, "The FAFICS's President's misinformation campaign no laughing matter, 4 March 2018". The full text of the letter is contained in the following link:

<https://unpension.blogspot.com/2018/03/the-fafics-presidents-misinformation-4.html>

The text of the FAFICS President's "update" appears as an attachment to the letter from Ms. Rickard-Martin.

There is unconfirmed information that Ms. Saputelli, whose four-year term as FAFICS President is coming to an end this summer, has decided to run for Vice-President of FAFICS. Bearing in mind her performance and controversial presidency, her election (elections are expected to take place on 20 July 2018) as Vice-President would constitute an unfortunate development.

Backlog in pension payments

Extent of the backlog: Finally, there is consensus on the extent of the backlog. It has been acknowledged by the Fund that the backlog is not 230 as it had reported, but 15,000 cases, of which some 75% are former UN staff or their survivors (including widows and orphans) and some 25% are former UN Agency staff or their survivors.

In response to a question from the audience at a pension briefing by UN participant representatives in March 2018, it was noted that the Deputy CEO of the Fund has decided that the Fund will no longer use the term "non-actionable" to describe cases in the backlog; the term will simply be "backlog". For more details on Pension information session by UN Participant Representatives/ members of the UN Staff Pension Committee, please check the following link:

<https://unpension.blogspot.com/2018/03/pension-information-session-finally.html#more>

Attempts to stall vital UN pension fund audit and how the Fund invests your money, 13 June 2018

An update on the above subject from the UN Staff Unions provides information regarding issues concerning the OIOS audit, described by the UN participant representatives in a recent broadcast as "detailed and in-depth" (called for by Para. 8 of the General Assembly Resolution 72/262). The audit is expected to address several conflicts of interest between Board members (which include FAFICS) and the Fund's CEO, and the lack of direct representation for retirees. Also addressed in the update are the concerns of the UN participant representatives about the Board's attempts to stall action on the audit, how our money is invested,

and the preparations for the annual Board meeting. For more details, please check the following link:

<https://unpension.blogspot.com/2018/06/attempts-to-stall-vital-un-pension-fund.html#more>

Open letter dated 25 June 2018 from Loraine Rickard-Martin, UN retiree, addressed to the AFICS/NY President, members of the Governing Board and to AFICS/NY members

An excerpt from the above letter reads as follows:

"Today, on the occasion of the AFICS/NY annual assembly, we recall that while the issue of chronic under-performance in investments was addressed by the Secretary-General in his appointment of his new Representative for Investments in 2017 and that we must remain vigilant, serious issues related to the Fund Secretariat remain unresolved.

As UN retirees, we have an obligation to hold accountable those who purport to represent our interests, which may entail a move to direct election of retiree representatives to the Pension Board. We must at the same time give voice to the voiceless by calling for swift and decisive action to end the suffering of those affected by the backlog in pension payments. In the meantime, and as we await the results of the governance audit, we must also call for an end to complicity among the leaders of AFICS/NY and other AFICS associations world-wide, and to insist that they ensure responsible and accountable leadership of FAFICS as the current president's four-year tenure comes to an end..."

Please note the letters from the outgoing President of AFICS Australia (AAFICS) and the President of AFICS Canada (CAFICSO) on the lack of and/or control of information from FAFICS and AFICS/NY. Please note in particular the statement in the first letter: QUOTE: "... the FAFICS leadership should be strongly reminded by its members that its task is to protect, defend and advance the rights of all UN retirees, not those of the CEO ..."

For the full text of the letter and the links to the letters from AAFICS and CAFICS, please check the following link:

<http://unpension.blogspot.com/2018/06/calling-for-end-to-complicity-of-un.html>

Lowell Flanders elected to the AFICS/NY Governing Board

Congratulations to Mr. Lowell Flanders for his very well-deserved election to the AFICS/NY Governing Board! (Results were announced on 25 June 2018, at the AFICS/NY annual assembly). Mr. Flanders served several consecutive terms as President of the United Nations Staff Union, and was involved in staff representative functions throughout his distinguished UN career. After retirement, he has followed closely pension issues, particularly how retirees have been represented in AFICS. Along with other concerned staff and retirees, he has been active in alerting the retirees and current staff members to problems within the Pension Fund and how AFICS has served (or not) our common interests.

The current status of the Chief Executive Officer of the Pension Fund

The much criticized and controversial Chief Executive Officer of the Pension Fund, Mr. Sergio Arvizu, who was reappointed by the Secretary-General in December 2017 for a second term for three years, has been on sick leave for several months. As was reported in the previous issue of the AFICS-Cyprus Newsletter, his continuation in office is subject to a performance review, thus practically placing him on probation, with continuation of his contract based on the Pension Board's report this summer on his progress in addressing performance issues of the Fund.

At the AFICS/NY assembly held on 25 June 2018, it was announced that a search committee has been set up for selecting the CEO's replacement, given that his three-year contract ends in December 2020.

Finally, the Deputy CEO is slated to retire at the end of August 2018. Questions have been raised about the legality of the Pension Board's process of selecting a new DCEO.

Benon Sevan

AFICS-Cyprus supporting Alkionides



Alkionides Charity was founded in 1998 and is exclusively staffed by dedicated volunteers with the minimum possible administrative expenses.

The motivation behind the foundation started with a little girl called Stefania who was born with a serious heart problem and had to undergo a series of operations. Organising an afternoon tea to collect money was enough to give the sparkle for the foundation of Alkionides Charity.

Since then, the Alkionides family has grown and extended to other towns in Cyprus, as well as to the United Kingdom (London, Reading, Birmingham).

In a letter, Alkionides assured AFICS-Cyprus of their endeavours to bring relief to fellow citizens enduring unbearable hardship in the hope that their support sends out a very positive message. Even during the rainy days of life, Alkionides is ready to give strength and courage, no matter how difficult things are.

Amyloidosis is a disease which mainly affects the kidneys and heart. The Kyriakou family from Ayios Georgios village in Limassol has been seriously affected with the loss of the mother at the age of 42. Three of her children are afflicted with the same disease and are being treated in the UK.

AFICS-Cyprus is proud to announce that a donation of €300 was donated in 2017 to this family. Alkionides have extended their sincere gratitude to our Association for our help and support.

AFICS-Cyprus Annual Dinner

Our annual AFICS dinner this year is planned for **26 October**. As is customary, the Social Events Coordinator explored new locations in an attempt to find an appropriate location for as many AFICS members to gather together as possible. The location selected is the **SITIO Café and Restaurant**, 43, Archbishop Makarios III Avenue in Nicosia which offers a convivial atmosphere for this function.

The price this year will be €20 per person, members and guests alike. A pre-drinks gathering will be arranged for all to relax and socialize before the meal.

We look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible. More details will be posted on the website in the very near future.

AFICS-Cyprus 6th Ordinary Assembly Meeting

The sixth AFICS-Cyprus Ordinary Assembly meeting took place on 6 March 2018 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 sixth meeting there were 24 members present who had paid their Association dues and another eight in good standing were represented by their respective powers of attorney, so in total, 32 members were present.

The President informed the Assembly that on 31 December 2017, AFICS had 60 active members who had paid their dues, as compared to 72 members in 2015 and 77 in 2014. On 1 January 2018, the number of active members had increased to 61 with the reinstatement of a member, and 62 on 1 February 2018 with the admission of a new member.

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. Gianfranco Longo and Mrs. Miriam Pericleous (for a third and last term) and Dr. Michael Voniatis (for a second term) for a period of two years, ending at the close of the eighth Ordinary Session of the Assembly in 2020. The Assembly also elected one new member for a period of two years, Mrs. Aida Bichara-McNally. These four members shall work together with Mr. Terje Andersen, Mr. Ioannis Antoniadis and Mr. Benon Sevan, whose terms-of-office shall come to an end at the close of the 2019 Assembly session. Thus, the Executive Committee shall consist of seven members, the maximum authorized by the Statutes.

Furthermore, the Assembly re-elected Mr. Kikis Angelides as the Association's Auditor, with a term of office beginning on 6 March 2018 and ending at the close of its seventh Ordinary Session to be held in 2019.

Finally, the Assembly approved the Association's 2018 budget, covering the period 1 January to 31 December 2018. The budget approved foresees fresh income amounting to €2,800 and expenditures of €3,400.

The meeting ended at 12.10 am. Many continued on to the UNFICYP Mess for a buffet lunch and further social interaction.

The Executive Committee and its work after the 6th Assembly

After the Assembly Session of 6 March, the Executive Committee held two meetings, the first (33rd) on 20 March and the second (34th) on 21 June. The Agenda for all the meetings is more or less standard, but the subjects discussed differ.

Thus, during the 33rd meeting elected its Bureau as follows:

President: Mr. Ioannis Antoniadis
Vice-President and Newsletter Editor: Mrs. Miriam Pericleous
Secretary: Mr. Benon Sevan
Treasurer: Mr. Terje Andersen
Coordinator, Socio-cultural Activities: Dr. Michael Voniatis
Webmaster: Mr. Gianfranco Longo
Member: Mrs. Aida Bichara-McNally

During its 34th meeting the Executive Committee approved the draft minutes of the 6th AFICS Assembly, approved the contents of the present issue of the Newsletter and reviewed the income and expenditures of the Association at mid-year.