



MINUTES OF THE THIRD ORDINARY ASSEMBLY MEETING OF THE
ASSOCIATION OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS IN CYPRUS
(AFICS-CYPRUS)
HELD AT UNFICYP HQ ON 10 MARCH 2015

Agenda Item 1 – Opening of the Session and Adoption of the Agenda

1. Mr. Ioannis Antoniadis (President of the Association and Executive Committee) opened the meeting at 11.00 hours by welcoming all participants to the Third Ordinary Assembly meeting of the Association of International Civil Servants in Cyprus (AFICS). He advised that there were nine items on the agenda and it was anticipated that the meeting would be concluded by 1300 hours in time for lunch at the UNFICYP International Cafeteria. He further advised that, towards the end of the meeting, a member of UNFICYP Personnel would provide information about the new medical system (for former national staff members).

2. The President stated that according to the Statutes the Ordinary Assembly meetings could be held with a minimum of 15 AFICS members. Currently there were 35 members present who had paid their AFICS dues and another four members were represented by powers of attorney, so in total there were 39 members. The President accordingly invited the members to make any comments or additions to the agenda. As none were forthcoming, **the Agenda was adopted unanimously by the Assembly 'as is'**.

3. The President then proposed that Ms. Margaret Theophanous, like in previous years, be requested to take the minutes of the meeting. He also suggested that the appointment of two ballot supervisors be postponed until they were required. **The Assembly endorsed this approach.**

Agenda Item 2 – Adoption of the 12 March 2014 Minutes of the Second Assembly Meeting

4. The President referred to the minutes of the Second Assembly meeting and asked the members of the Association whether they had any comments to make. As none were made by the members **the minutes were approved by the Assembly.**

Agenda Item 3 – AFICS-Cyprus statutes – Revision

5. The President stated that it was necessary to proceed with the formal approval of the Statutes of the Association. He advised that the Statutes were adopted by the Constituent Assembly on 20 December 2012 and noted by the first Assembly

session on 13 March 2013. The Ministry of the Interior had, however, requested that the Statutes be translated into Greek. The Statutes, in Greek, were subsequently examined by the Ministry of the Interior and some cosmetic changes were made. As the official language of the Association is English, an English translation of the revised Statutes was accordingly made. The President requested the Assembly to formally approve the Statutes both in Greek and English as they appeared on the Association's website. The President queried whether the Assembly had any comments or queries to make. As none were forthcoming **the Statutes in both English and Greek were approved by the Assembly.**

Furthermore the President said that when we refer to our statutes in English and/or in Greek we shall always specify that **"the Statutes were approved by the Constituent assembly held on 20 December 2012, approval formally reaffirmed by the Association's Third Ordinary Assembly held on 10 March 2015"**.

Agenda Item 4 – Report of the President on the Activities for the Year 2014

6. The President referred to Item 4 of the agenda, namely, the report of the President of the Executive Committee for 2014. He reminded the Assembly that the Deputy President/Secretary, Mr. Gert Schmidt, had prepared a full report of all events that had taken place in 2014 which was a continuation of the combined report for the years 2012 and 2013.

7. The President stated that in the absence of the Treasurer, Mr. Michael Voniatis, who had accepted a new position abroad with the United Nations (UN), he would comment on Agenda Items 6 and 7 in his place. Other important items would be covered by the Deputy President, the Social Activities Coordinator, Ms. Fredy Gatalopoulou, and the NewsLetter Editor, Ms. Miriam Pericleous. The President added that the Web Master, Mr. Gianfranco Longo, was unable to attend the meeting due to illness.

8. The President referred to item 3 of the Agenda wherein he mentioned that the Greek version of the Statutes was submitted for approval to the Ministry of the Interior (on 31 January 2013). This was done in accordance with the 1972 law and the decree adopted by the Council of Ministers with respect to the registration of Associations in Cyprus. He added that approval was subsequently granted, a registration certificate was received on 23 May 2014 and the decision was published in the Republic Official Gazette in June 2014, copies of which are kept in the official records. He went on to say that the Association's advocates Mrs. Souroulla and her daughter, Marina, had spared no effort in obtaining approval of the Statutes. They had written eight letters to the Ministry of the Interior which remained unanswered. They subsequently appealed to the Minister of the Interior and the Presidential Palace. The President remarked that the Association's application was approved just one week after the appeal was made to the Presidential Palace. He added that the advocates had provided their services free-of-charge and only took money for the translation and registration fee (which had been paid to the Ministry). The President, therefore, suggested that the new chair send a letter with the

Association's heartfelt thanks to Mrs. Souroulla and her daughter. **The Assembly applauded them in appreciation.**

9. The President advised that AFICS-Cyprus had been a full member of FAFICS since 2013. He went on to say that Mr. Klaus Hoetchl, member of the Executive Committee until the end of this session, was nominated by the Executive Committee to attending the 44th FAFICS Council meeting in Geneva in July 2015 as he would be in the region at the time.

10. The President stated that after the 12 March 2014 Assembly meeting the Executive Committee had held six meetings, all but one of which had the required quorum. In 2015 the Executive Committee had two sessions, one in January and the other in February.

11. The President informed the Assembly that at its 11th meeting the Executive Committee proposed and approved a life-term Membership Certificate and a gold coloured life-term membership card, and that there were now five life members who had all received their Life Member Certificates and gold coloured ID cards.

12. The President stated that as Mr. Michael Voniatis was unable to continue his membership of the Executive Committee due to his acceptance of a UN appointment abroad, it was decided that he be replaced by the Assembly. He added that he would cover the existing membership of the Executive Committee, under item 5 of the agenda, which deals with the elections of Executive Committee members.

13. The President went on to say that contact had been established with UNAC (United Nations Association in Cyprus) and its president, Mr. Theodoulou, and an agreement had been reached on the exchange of information and invitations for social activities. Contact had also been established with Ms. Helen Indianos, President of the French-speaking Association "Vivre a Chypre" and again agreement had been reached on the exchange of information and sharing of invitations for social activities. Additionally, an arrangement had been arranged for Mr. Alain Verger of "Vivre a Chypre" to provide cookery lessons to AFICS members, in particular with regard to French cuisine.

14. Before giving the floor to the members for discussion, the President invited the Deputy President to talk about other matters, the Social Activities Coordinator with regard to social activities and the Newsletter Editor with respect to the Association's NewsLetter.

15. The Deputy President stated that in the folder provided to the Assembly there was a list of members as at 1 March 2015. He added that as at 1 January 2015 there were 77 AFICS members. He pointed out that in November 2014 the membership of ten members of the Association had been terminated in accordance with Article 5 of the Statutes for failing to pay their membership dues for both 2013 and 2014 despite three written requests.

16. The Deputy President referred to the application forms to join the Association located at the rear of the meeting room and encouraged the members to take them

and give them to any UN retirees/beneficiaries they knew who may wish to join the Association. He added that there were approximately 180 retirees and surviving spouses living in Cyprus receiving UN pensions compared to 77 actual members of the Association, so personal outreach to non-members was important.

17. The Deputy President went on to say that arrangements had been made for AFICS Executive Committee members to attend the UN Day celebrations which were held on 31 October 2014. A short article of this event could be found in the Association's NewsLetter No.3.

18. The Deputy President stated that he had received many telephone calls from members with respect to the annual certificates of entitlement (CE). Apparently many of the certificates, which were dated 30 October 2014, were only received by retirees and beneficiaries on 14 December 2014 or later which was a mailing time of 46 days or more. He opined that this was unacceptable in view of the fact that the Pension Fund expected the signed certificates to be returned no later than 45 days from the date that they were issued. The Deputy President complained by e-mail about the delay to the Pension Fund in January 2015 and subsequently a written response was requested from the Pension Fund by 6 March 2015, and a response was received on 7 March 2015. He added that in February 2015 a second mailing of CE (dated 31 January 2015) were received by some of the retirees/beneficiaries whose initial CE may not have been received and processed in time by the Pension Fund. He subsequently communicated with Mr. Aliamane Bacar Said of the UN Pension Fund, Geneva, who advised that there was a significant backlog, hence the delay. The Deputy Secretary stated that as of to date the Pension Fund had not acknowledged receipt of either his own first or second signed certificates (Pension Fund's online facility). As a matter of interest, the Pension Fund makes a mass mailing of approximately 56,900 CEs at one time. The majorities of these are packed by the Pension Fund and delivered by hand to the United States Postal Services (USPS) and thereafter are out of the Pension Fund's control. The Deputy President added that the retirees/beneficiaries could, if they wished, send a dated letter to the Pension Fund, providing their full name and pension number, stating that they were still alive and continues to be entitled to his/her benefit. Exceptionally, the Pension Fund would accept such a letter in lieu of non-receipt of a CE and not discontinue the pension. He said that even with a delay in the Pension Fund receiving the 2014 signed certificates of entitlement it would not discontinue the pensions prior to July of the following year.

19. The Deputy President also indicated that later this year, upon implementation of the Integrated Pension Administration System (IPAS), retirees on the US dollar track would be able access the CE online and print them off. However, this facility would not be available to those on the 2 track system.

20. In order to minimize delays in the receipt of the certificates of entitlement, a suggestion was made that the UN pouch could be used for the mailing of the certificates by the Pension Fund to the UNFICYP Registry, and, for members of the Association, addressed to AFICS-Cyprus for distribution to the members. The Deputy President said that there were 57 AFICS' and this may put an additional

burden on the Pension Fund if they all utilized this option. **The Assembly took note of the explanation provided above on the CE (item 9) yet found it difficult to comprehend why the differences in treatment of CEs in IPAS for beneficiaries on the US Dollar track and Two-track systems.** The Deputy President would follow-up with the Pension fund in this regard.

21. The Deputy President then referred to the rumours circulated in March 2014 with respect to the status quo on Pension Fund staff administration and investment of the assets of the Pension Fund which could have negatively impacted on UN retirees. These issues were taken-up in October 2014 by the President of AFICS-New York (also President of FAFICS) during a meeting with the newly appointed Representative of the Secretary-General (RSG), Ms. Boykin. The President of FAFICS confirmed that the RSG has indicated that it was her intention to continue with current arrangements which depended heavily upon internal management of pension investments; hence no major portion of assets of the Pension Fund would be outsourced.

22. The Deputy President pointed out to the Assembly that any significant investment policy issues would need to be referred to the 9 member Investment Committee appointed by the Secretary-General, endorsed by the Pension Board and approved by the General Assembly. He added that in accordance with a The Report of the Secretary-General on the investments of UNJSPF (A/C.5/69/2) the Pension Fund had direct security investments in 39 countries, indirect country investments through international/regional institutions (7) and 23 currencies. The UN General Assembly (A/RES/69/113) took note of this and gave direction on investment of the Fund.

23. The Deputy President stated that with regard to the Pension Fund investments there were four main criteria to be followed, namely safety, profitability, liquidity and convertibility, under volatile market conditions. He emphasized that with the safeguards in place there would be no significant outsourcing or administration by hedge funds. The UN General Assembly (69/113) recognized *inter-alia* the importance of the use of in-house expertise.

24. In response to a member's query whether there was a reduction of staff in the Pension Fund, the Deputy President replied that in the budget cycle 2014-2015 there were twenty-two new investment posts approved including the new RSG and that no posts had been abolished in the UNJSPF (A/68/303 and A/RES/68/247).

25. The Deputy President advised that the ASHI Van Breda administration had become CIGNA with effect from 2 February 2015. All participants should have been informed of this change. He emphasised that there would be no change in medical coverage and members would have access to the CIGNA website through a self-service portal and be able to print out medical claims forms, as well as CIGNA ID cards and insurance certification. A brochure on this change was available at the rear of the Assembly room.

26. He went on to say that members could now, in addition to USD and Euro currencies, be reimbursed in a number of other currencies as reflected by CIGNA in the online claim form.

27. The Deputy President advised the Assembly that, in order to minimise costs and increase efficiency, the General Assembly had requested ICSC (International Civil Service Commission), to carry out a review of alternative after-service health insurance (ASHI) options within the UN system which included administration of ASHI by the UN Pension Fund. The UNJSPF Board (A/69/9) agreed that it would not be advisable to broaden the mandate of the Pension Fund to include the administration of ASHI benefits, noting that this option could jeopardize the Fund's operational viability and could negatively affect the long-term sustainability of the Fund. He was pleased, however, to advise that the ICSC had subsequently recommended to the General Assembly that there be no change to the current situation.

28. The Deputy President expressed gratitude to UNFICYP, its Chief of Mission Support (CMS) and support staff for facilitating the Assembly meeting and providing gifts for the members, and proposed that the Executive Committee forward its appreciation to them. **The Assembly participants gave a round of applause in appreciation and recognition of the contribution by UNFICYP to the Association.** The Deputy President added that the CMS had been invited to speak at the meeting but was unable to attend.

29. In the absence of the Web Master due to illness, the President asked the Deputy President to speak on his behalf.

30. The Deputy President advised the Assembly that Mr. Longo (Web Master) had sent his best wishes to the Assembly.

31. The Deputy President stated that the members had been given pink ID cards for 2015 and gold cards had been given to life members. He added that the website was now more user friendly than before and had been upgraded to provide more storage space. Even more space had been created by moving photographs from the website to the new AFICS-Cyprus Facebook which was intended for access by AFICS members only.

32. The President then requested the Social Activities Coordinator (Ms. Fredy Galatopoulou) to report on social activities that took place in 2014.

33. The Social Activities Coordinator stated that she had expected more people to attend the excursions which had been held. She listed the events that had taken place which included the following: The first annual dinner was held on 7 October 2014 and the next would be held in October 2015. On 16 June 14 there was a visit to the new Leventis Gallery which was followed by lunch. In November there was an excursion to Larnaca which was attended and guided by Ms. Rita Severis. Other places were visited followed by lunch. The Social Activities Coordinator added that

more events were proposed in April by Ms. Severis and it was hoped that a trip to Famagusta would soon take place. She hoped that the members would participate.

34. The President pointed out that the Association had covered the additional cost of €70 involved for alcohol consumption at the 2014 annual dinner. He added that in order to give members the opportunity to circulate/mix with other members it was proposed that in future, prior to the sit down meal the annual dinner would start a little earlier with stand-up drinks/cocktails.

35. The President then asked the Newsletter Editor (Ms. Miriam Pericleous) to take the floor.

36. The Newsletter Editor stated that she hoped the members liked the new format design of the NewsLetter. She added that the NewsLetter provided news of events that had taken place and also upcoming events. She hoped that the members enjoyed reading the NewsLetter and welcomed any comments they had to make.

37. The President then opened the floor to the Assembly for discussion.

38. In response to a member's query whether UN retirees were required to complete the Cyprus Government income tax return forms, a lengthy discussion took place in which the Deputy President stated that the issue was discussed at both the Founding, First and Second Assembly meetings and the consensus was that it was a private issue and AFICS-Cyprus should not be involved. Another member was of the opinion that according to the Convention on the Immunities and Privileges of the United Nations, UN retirees were exempt from paying income tax. The President took the floor and stated that in some countries UN retirees were not required to pay income tax on their pensions, however in other countries they were required to pay.

39. The President stated that income tax was payable on income from abroad when a person was residing in Cyprus for over six months and a day. Another member mentioned that he had retained the services of an accountant to deal with his income tax form.

40. The Deputy President stated that there was a Deloitte 2014 taxation guidance document which he found to be very useful and which he said he would pass on to the members for their information. He stated that it was an official company document outlining the Cyprus Government taxation laws and applicability. *(Secretary's Note: The document referred to above by the Deputy President entitled 'Deloitte's Annual Cyprus tax facts (2014)' was transmitted by him to the members via email on 12 March 2015).*

41. The President queried whether there were any other topics for discussion. As there were none, he invited the Assembly to take note of his Report and to approve a vote of thanks to Mrs. Souroulla, advocate. **The Assembly took note of the President's report and approved a vote of thanks to the Association's advocate.**

Agenda Item 5 – Election of Members to Executive Committee Vacant Seats

42. The President referred to the detailed document on this agenda item and stated that the Executive Committee consisted of himself, Ms. Fredy Galatopoulou, Mr. Klaus Hoecthl, Mr. Gianfranco Longo, Ms. Miriam Pericleous, Mr. Gert Schmidt and Mr. Michael Voniatis. He added that at the end of Assembly session his tenure of two years on the Executive Committee would expire and both Mr. Michael Voniatis and Mr. Klaus Hoecthl did not seek re-election to the Committee. The tenure of the remaining four members would continue to the end of the 2016 Assembly session. The President said that he was prepared to continue as a member of the Executive Committee for a further two years and Ms. Ero Kimoni had agreed to serve on the Committee for two years as well. He added that a third candidate was required. He informed the Assembly that the constitution required between five and seven members.

43. The President queried whether there were any volunteers for the seventh vacant post. As there were none, the President therefore submitted himself and Ms. Ero Kimoni to serve on the Executive Committee each for two year tenures, respectively. **The Assembly voted unanimously to elect Mr. Ioannis Antoniadis and Ms. Kimoni to serve on the Executive Committee.**

Agenda Item 6 – Report by the Auditor (Mr. F. Clancy) on the 2014 Income and Expenditures

44. The President referred to the report of the Association's auditor. Mr. Frank Clancy, and the financial statements for 2014.

45. Mr. Clancy introduced his report as the Association's Auditor and stated that according to his examination, the AFICS' accounts were in good order and that the Association's funds had been spent prudently. The President queried whether the participants had any comments to make and as there were none, **the Assembly approved this Agenda item.**

Agenda Item 7 - Review and Adoption of the draft 2015 Budget and 2014 Actual Income and Expenditure and Related Statements

46. The President referred to the documents under this heading. Mr. Clancy stated that only approximately 25% to 30% of the funds available at the bank had been utilised and that the Association's accounts were in a healthy state.

47. The President asked the participants whether they had any observations to make on this agenda item and as there were none, **the Assembly adopted the budget for 2015 and the 2014 actual income and expenditure and related statements as presented.**

Agenda Item 8 – FAFICS Matters

48. The Deputy President stated that the 2015 FAFICS membership fee had been paid in full in early January 2015. He added that the 44th annual FAFICS meeting

would take place in Geneva between 27 and 29 July 2015 and that Mr. Klaus Hoechtl, as mentioned by the President in his brief above, would attend. He also stated that he had taken part in the 43rd annual FAFICS meeting in Rome in 2014, as specified in the report of FAFICS. He advised that at the 43rd FAFICS meeting, the Council had agreed, amongst other issues, to the following priorities for FAFICS representatives on the Pension Board: Defending the claim to voting rights at UNJSPB, defending the 2 track system, improving the pension adjustment system, absorption of bank charges, reform the UNJSPF's appeals procedures, reviewing entitlements of family members and small pensions. As for the latter priority, he advised that effective 1 January 2016 an one-time increase of 10% would be implemented (the first adjustment to small pension in 16 years) and that hopefully small pension would in the future be linked with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or similar index. **The Assembly did not raise any objection to nomination of Mr. Hoechtl and took note of this agenda item.**

Agenda Item 9 - Other Business

Locally Administered MIP – Payment of Quarterly Contributions by EFT.

49. Due to the unscheduled UNFICYP Personnel brief on the new medical system (CIGNA), for former national staff members, there was insufficient time to discuss the issue under this heading, which was deferred to the next Assembly Session.

Receipt of Certificate of Entitlement (CE) Letters

50. This issue was discussed earlier under agenda item 4.

Next Assembly

51. In line with established practice, the next Assembly Session (4th) will take place on a date in March 2016 to be established by the Executive Committee in line with Article 7 of the Association's Statutes

52. Finally, the President thanked the Assembly for approving the 2015 budget in which an amount of Euros 300, budgeted for, would be given to the CAVR foundation (Centre for Visual Arts and Research). He advised that a thank you letter would be sent to Ms. Severis for the assistance she had provided with respect to the excursions. **The Assembly took note of this agenda item.**

53. There being no further business, The President adjourned the meeting at 1252 hours.