



AFICS-Cyprus Newsletter

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EDITORIAL

The former Portuguese prime minister and UN refugee chief Antonio Guterres became the new UN Secretary-General on New Year's Day, promising to be a "bridge-builder". Guterres began his five-year term facing conflicts and global crises from terrorism to climate change, whilst the new US President's support for the United Nations remains a question mark.

Guterres aims to reform the United Nations to make it quick, efficient, effective and focus more on delivery and less on process, more on people and less on bureaucracy and ensure that the more than 85,000 UN staff working in 180 countries are being used effectively.

Mr. Guterres paid tribute to the statesmanship displayed by Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci for about 20 months of negotiations toward a united Cyprus. The UN chief said, "It is my hope that there will be a breakthrough that the people of Cyprus deserve and the world needs. We are facing so many situations of disasters. We badly need a symbol of hope. I strongly believe Cyprus can be the symbol of hope at the beginning of 2017."

Let us all hope that Mr. Guterres' aspirations are fulfilled.

The Executive Committee wishes all its readers a happy, healthy and successful 2017.

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The United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF)

During 2016, there were extensive criticisms from FAFICS and many AFICS associations as well as petitions signed by members on three pressing points concerning the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF) comprising: the so-called autonomy of the Fund's Executive Secretary to decide on all matters concerning the Fund, appointments, promotions, separations, investment policy and salary scales; the purchase of so-called junk funds as part of the Fund's investment policy; and the unacceptable delays in the first pension payment to new retirees who had to wait several months in view of the introduction of the Integrated Pension Administration System (IPAS).

In a draft resolution, the UN General Assembly included its comments and decisions concerning the first two points as well as its criticisms on the third point. The Fund was encouraged to continue its efforts to reach the annual target over the long term, and urged to continue efforts to diversify its investments wherever this serves the best interests of the participants and beneficiaries.

Concerning the third point, the unacceptable delays in the first payment of pensions to new retirees, the draft resolution welcomed the implementation of the IPAS, however stressed that the Fund should take appropriate steps to address the cause of any such delays and requested an update in the Board's next report.

The Committee believes that AFICS-Cyprus members who had unacceptable delays in receiving their first pension have now had their problems resolved. However, if there is any member who continues to meet difficulties, please feel free to contact any Committee member for assistance in this regard.

Influenza Season is here – protect yourselves

We are in the heart of winter and it seems that influenza activity has reached its peak among the Cypriot population and continues to spread. This year, we are experiencing the prevalence of a fairly new seasonal flu strain, namely Influenza A(H3N2), which is included in the flu vaccine (2016-2017). This strain attacks mainly those over the age of 65 with fairly high morbidity and mortality rates. How we can protect ourselves?

- Immunize yourself with the flu vaccine early in autumn (September-October) every year but always with the advice and approval of your personal physician. The flu vaccine is very effective among those aged 65+
- If you have not been vaccinated this season, it is not too late to do so now
- Avoid crowds and ensure you are in places with adequate natural ventilation

- Dress well and avoid anyone coughing or sneezing
- Wash your hands, particularly after handshaking

It is important to recognize the symptoms of influenza and distinguish it from the common cold. Influenza has a sudden onset with a high fever (>38.50°C), shivering, malaise, aching muscles and bones and a sore throat followed by a cough. Conversely, the common cold is due to many different viruses with milder symptoms including low grade fever (<38.00°C), a runny nose, mild cough and occasionally headaches. Once you recognize that your symptoms might be influenza, **do not take antibiotics but consult your physician**, especially those over 65 or those who have a serious chronic disease (e.g. diabetes mellitus, chronic respiratory/cardiovascular disease, etc).

*Dr Michael Voniatis, MD, MA
Public Health Specialist & TB Expert*

AFICS-Cyprus General Assembly

The fifth AFICS-Cyprus General Assembly will take place on
Tuesday 7 March 2017 at 1100 hours
in the SRSG's Dining Room,
Blue Beret Camp, HQ UNFICYP, Nicosia
All members are encouraged to attend

AFICS-Cyprus Membership and Finance

On 15 June 2016, AFICS-Cyprus had 70 active members. Of these, 64 had paid their dues for 2016 with five members taking up a life membership. 15 members had not yet paid for the year.

On 31 December 2015, the Association's finances amounted to €7.891,35, with the reserves increasing to €9.413,59 on 31 December 2016.

AFICS Members out to Dinner Again!



Enjoying dinner the at Evochia Restaurant

During this reporting period, the Executive Committee organized two social functions, both of which were well attended and very successful.

The first was a dinner on 12 October at the Evochia Restaurant, Nicosia with 16 members accompanied by 12 guests. This venue came highly recommended and all present were of the same opinion – a great atmosphere, delicious food and pleasant, helpful staff. We could easily have accommodated a larger group, and those members who did not attend missed an excellent buffet, especially as the meal was subsidized!

The second was a lunch attended by 19 members which took place on 15 December at the “48Bistro” dining venue in central Nicosia.

Held in the spirit of the festive season, there was a large selection of delectable Mediterranean and international dishes on the menu, all excellent and much enjoyed by everyone.

Visit to the Nicosia Byzantine Museum

The Byzantine Museum in Lefkosia (Nicosia) was the latest guided tour conducted by Dr. Sofoclis Sofocleous, Director of the Cultural Heritage Centre Nicosia. This visit took place on 15 November, attended by eight AFICS members and five guests.

This museum, located within the walls of Nicosia, contains the richest and most representative collection of Byzantine art on the island. About 230 icons dating from the 9th to the 19th centuries, as well as other typical examples of the Byzantine art of Cyprus, such as sacred vessels, vestments and books, are on display. The collection includes many icons dating from the 12th century when iconography was at its height. Among the star attractions are the famous 6th century mosaics torn from the church of Kanakaria, sold abroad and later repatriated.

As is tradition, a lunch was organized at the end of the tour at a small colourful tavern, “Peiraios 17”, with AFICS-Cyprus inviting Dr. Sofocleous as their guest. And as usual, a delightful time was had by all.



The Cultural Heritage of Cyprus: Part II – The Port City of Enkomi



In our third article on the cultural heritage of Cyprus, we span the Copper and Bronze Ages, starting with the port city of Enkomi. Situated near Famagusta, Enkomi grew from a humble farming community into a thriving port city. By 1200 BC, it boasted some 15,000 inhabitants and formed a major centre for commerce and culture in the eastern Mediterranean. Although little can be seen at the site today, several of Enkomi’s wonderful finds can be seen in Nicosia’s Cyprus Museum.

Enkomi is one of the most important archaeological sites on the island. Not only is it one of the richest cemeteries of the late Bronze Age in Cyprus, but Enkomi was also active during a period when dramatic outside influences changed the character of the island, moving it from Oriental influences towards the culture of the Aegean.

Enkomi’s story begins with the original farming community in the last years of the Middle Bronze Age (around 1700 BC). This coincided with a troubled period in the eastern Mediterranean, as the Hyksos (raiders from Syria and Palestine who invaded Egypt) probably also affected the eastern shores of Cyprus. Fortresses were constructed and destroyed during the 16th century BC, and it’s the floor of one such fortification, excavated near Enkomi’s North Gate, that reveals the city’s importance. Traces of copper smelting found here confirm that Enkomi was a copper trading centre where copper ores from the island’s mines were refined and exported as ingots.

The expulsion of the Kyksos from Egypt in around 1550 BC resulted in a prosperous period for Enkomi which developed a vigorous trade with its eastern and western neighbours.

Enkomi’s tombs reflect the prosperity of the time: they are rich with Mycenaean works of art including pottery and gifts such as gold, ivory and scarabs (beetle-shaped gems) imported from Egypt, the Levant and the Aegean.

Close to the end of the 13th century BC, Enkomi received new settlers from the Peloponnese (southern part of Greece), bringing with them their religion and language. These settlers contributed to the development of metal-lurgy and engraving and they fortified the towns with walls, ramparts and gates.

Although the raids of the “Sea Peoples” (plunderers who came from the west) in the 12th century BC prompted the decline of Enkomi, the city remained an important site in island affairs such as religion and commerce until around 1075 BC. At that time, an earthquake and the loss of the port finally forced Enkomi’s inhabitants to abandon the city.



MP The bronze “horned god” from Enkomi