

**Remarks by USG Pollard to the Annual Assembly of the Association of
Former International Civil Servants (AFICS/NY)**

Friday, 29 May 2026

Mr. Darshak Shah, President of AFICS/NY,
Members of the AFICS Governing Board,
Honourable former staff members of the United Nations system,
Dear Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to join you today and to once again engage with members of the AFICS community here in New York.

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I would like to begin by thanking the AFICS leadership for its continued engagement with the Secretariat and for consistently ensuring that the perspectives and concerns of former international civil servants remain part of our broader institutional dialogue.

We are meeting at a time when the multilateral system continues to face significant pressure. Around the world, conflicts are deepening, humanitarian needs are rising, financial uncertainty persists and demands on the United Nations continue to grow in both scale and complexity.

At the same time, the Organization itself must continue adapting to a rapidly evolving environment — one that requires us to operate with greater agility, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability.

It is within this broader context that the Secretary-General launched the UN80 Initiative.

The initiative builds on earlier reform efforts and seeks to ensure that the Organization remains fit for purpose while responding responsibly to the financial realities facing the United Nations. Its focus is on strengthening coordination and

collective delivery, reducing fragmentation, modernizing structures and processes, and improving operational effectiveness across the system.

Following approval by the General Assembly, implementation of the first phase of administrative efficiency measures under the UN80 Initiative is now well underway. The Secretariat is currently advancing a number of measures approved by the General Assembly in the context of the revised estimates for 2026, including *the establishment of Common Administrative Platforms in New York and Bangkok, the consolidation of payroll processing functions into a global structure, and a number of relocation measures*.

Since its inception, a number of important milestones have already been achieved. First, the General Assembly approved the initial package of administrative efficiency measures in December 2025, providing the legislative basis for implementation.

Second, implementation of *Common Administrative Platforms* is now underway in both New York and Bangkok. In New York, the OneEO model is being rolled out together with governance arrangements and standardized workflows. In Bangkok, entities are being onboarded in phases, with implementation continuing throughout 2026.

Third, payroll consolidation has begun, moving toward a single global structure operating through centres in New York, Nairobi and Entebbe. This process is already generating efficiencies through greater standardization and the elimination of parallel processes. The relocation measures approved to date involve the redeployment of 223 posts and positions from locations including New York, Geneva and Tripoli to receiving duty stations such as Vienna, Nairobi, Entebbe, Tunis, Valencia, Bonn and Brindisi.

The reform programme is already generating efficiencies, although many of the savings will materialize progressively over time as implementation advances. These include efficiencies associated with payroll consolidation, expected economies of scale through Common Administrative Platforms and standardized service delivery, as well as savings linked to the relocation of functions to lower-cost duty stations.

At this stage, however, many initiatives remain in implementation, and the Secretariat has therefore been cautious about assigning definitive long-term savings figures before implementation is fully stabilized.

I know many of you may understandably be interested in what these reforms may mean for current staffing, workforce adjustments and the future configuration of Headquarters functions. On the question of how many staff will remain at Headquarters, it is important to underscore that the reform approach is not based on eliminating Headquarters functions, but rather on ensuring that functions are located where they can be delivered most effectively and efficiently. Headquarters will continue to retain core policy, intergovernmental, coordination and leadership functions.

While several aspects of these reforms continue to evolve — I want to assure you that the Organization remains committed to approaching these efforts carefully, responsibly and with due regard for staff welfare, organizational continuity and operational effectiveness.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

You have also raised some important questions concerning the General Assembly-mandated review of the pension system. As representatives from the Pension Fund will discuss these matters in greater depth, I will limit myself to a few observations.

The review is being conducted pursuant to GA resolution 80/243 and is being led by the Pension Board, which has established a dedicated Working Group to carry this work forward. Progress reports are expected in 2026 and 2027, with a final report to be submitted to the General Assembly at its 83rd session in 2028.

I know many of you will want assurance that retirees' voices will continue to be heard throughout this process. I am pleased to confirm that FAFICS holds four seats on the Pension Board and is also represented within the Working Group itself, ensuring that retiree perspectives remain an integral part of the deliberations.

The Pension Fund also remains in a strong operational and financial position. We all know the Fund is the only retirement income for most international civil servants,

with no social security entitlement at their home countries, and we are committed to maintaining it as a credible and stable pension system to honor the UN's commitment to staff and to remaining competitive as a global employer. Independent actuarial valuations and asset-liability management studies conducted regularly continue to indicate that the Fund is well-positioned to meet its obligations and continue paying benefits for many decades to come.

It is important to mention that the General Assembly's mandate explicitly calls for the review to *respect accrued pension rights* and to maintain the long-term sustainability and viability of the Fund.

In addition to pensions, the After-Service Health Insurance programme continues to remain a vital part of the UN's social protection framework for retirees. The rising cost of healthcare globally is an issue we take very seriously, particularly during periods of financial challenge for the Organization. Reviewing and implementing cost-containment measures therefore remains an important priority and a key part of the annual health insurance renewal process.

Measures introduced in previous years — including requirements relating to U.S. Medicare Part B enrollment for eligible participants — together with more recent initiatives, have helped moderate annual cost increases. At the same time, as the UN's health insurance plans are self-insured, we all share a responsibility in helping contain costs. Being knowledgeable consumers of healthcare, using in-network providers where possible, and carefully reviewing explanations of benefits all contribute to helping maintain the sustainability of the system. The administration continues to value the active and meaningful participation of AFICS representatives in discussions of the Health and Life Insurance Committee, and we appreciate the constructive engagement that continues to characterize these discussions.

On the issue of visa retrogression and immigration-related concerns affecting separating staff who wish to remain in the US, my office was informed that colleagues from DOS will touch on this, so I will not go into any details except to indicate that it is an issue that continues to receive attention and we welcome AFICS and other stakeholders to monitor developments closely.

Dear Colleagues,

We can all agree that periods of institutional reform and financial constraint inevitably bring uncertainty.

But throughout its history, the UN has repeatedly demonstrated resilience during periods of profound geopolitical change and institutional transition.

That resilience has always depended on the dedication, professionalism and commitment of international civil servants — including all of you gathered here today. Your service over the years helped shape the Organization that current generations now have the responsibility to strengthen and carry forward.

As we go through this current period of reform and adaptation, every engagement and contribution you bring on board remain deeply valued; and I thank you once again for your years of dedicated service and continued commitment to the ideals and principles of the United Nations.

I wish you a productive and successful Assembly.

Thank you.