

**Message from the President of FAFICS  
at AFICS/NY Annual Assembly**

**22 May 2025**

*Commemorating 80 Years of the United Nations and 50 Years of FAFICS*

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It is a great honor to once again be addressing the AFICS/NY Annual Assembly. This year in person. Thank you, Mr. President, for the kind invitation.

Over the years many colleagues from AFICS/NY have played a vital role in FAFICS, contributing to the work of FAFICS as Presidents, Vice-Presidents, and Pension Board delegates and committee experts. Congratulations on your support of FAFICS. I have found that the volunteers from our Member Associations around the world have expertise, work well together, and bring benefits that individual Associations could not achieve. In this joint work, AFICS/NY has been a constructive and competent partner. Well done. And a special thanks to Darshak Shah for his solid and thoughtful leadership of AFICS/NY.

Eighty years ago, in the aftermath of the devastation of World War II, the UN was born out of hope — hope for peace, cooperation, and a future in which nations would choose dialogue over conflict. This anniversary is a significant milestone — not only for the Organization, but for the world it was created to serve. The world has changed profoundly since 1945, yet the founding ideals of the United Nations remain as vital today as they were then, despite and perhaps because of signs around the world of division, intolerance, inequality, and autocracies. The immense suffering around the world from that war gave birth to an organization pledged to work to relieve suffering, help nations agree on beneficial ways of living together, and recognize the world-wide need for individual and universal dignity and health and peace.

The many enduring missions of the United Nations have been carried forward by people like us — by generations of dedicated international civil servants whose expertise, commitment, compassion, and perseverance have helped advance peace, human rights, development, and humanitarian support around the globe. Your work helped give life to the Charter's promise, and that legacy lives on.

Even in retirement, we remain part of the UN family — a community still committed to the principles we served. As the world faces growing challenges — from climate change and conflict to inequality and

threats to multilateralism — our voices, experience, and values are more important than ever. Let us continue to support one another, advocate for the Organization's mission, and help ensure the goals of the United Nations remain alive and relevant for future generations. In these challenging times, I urge all of us to do what we can, especially in ensuring that future retirees have the information they need, so they know their options and have access to social environments.

And let us not forget the role that FAFICS has served over the last fifty years. As one of the founding members of FAFICS, this anniversary is also a celebration of your commitment. For the last half century, volunteers from Member Associations, such as AFICS/NY, have made a difference in the lives of countless retirees — through solidarity with each other, through responsible social awareness and action, and through communication and advocacy for rights such as pension benefits and health insurance. Working together as a global Federation, we have achieved much, such as surviving spouse pension benefits, cost-of-living protections, after-service health insurance. There is still more to do, especially during these unpredictable times.

As President of FAFICS, I represent your interests at the Pension Board meetings of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF). Even if you have heard it already, I will repeat that the pension benefits are secure, for all current beneficiaries and current staff. This may not be the time to ask for changes in benefit regulations, but we will continue working to address your concerns, especially trying to improve small pensions and address cost-of-living adjustments. I worry much more about the loss of humanitarian programmes of the United Nations than I worry about our pensions.

We also continue to address issues such as After-Service Health Insurance — an even more challenging concern, since many ASHI reserves in UN system entities are not well funded, and some organizations are reducing health care coverage for staff and retirees.

I will say little about the internal adjustments in FAFICS — only that I have tried to increase active participation from Member Associations and to increase transparency in our activities and communications from and with all our Members. I am supported by an excellent executive Bureau and committees, all staffed by volunteers from numerous Member Associations. I see my job as President of FAFICS as being present, being transparent in my actions and the Bureau's actions, and looking for talent from our world-wide Member Associations, plus of course worrying about financial and technical issues to keep FAFICS solvent and effective long past the end of my tenure. I try to spread information about FAFICS. One example: Earlier this year I was invited to speak at the AGM of FICSA, the staff

association, in Paris. To my surprise, almost none of the delegates knew that FAFICS exists, and very few even knew that there is an AFICS association in their location. More work is necessary. At our annual Council meeting in July there will be elections for Vice-Presidents and proposals for appointment of Standing Committee chairs. I urge you to volunteer through AFICS/NY.

In your charter, as in the charter of FAFICS, we pledge to support the principles and objectives of the United Nations. Now is the time when this support needs to be visible, in our programs and in our daily lives. We all can show through the way that we support others that the principles of common dignity and respect for all people, as well as for our home planet, can be effective and enlightening and help to bring peace around the world. I congratulate you on the work you have done during the previous 55 years since your founding and urge you to continue to work for better lives for all of us.

I remind all of you that, like all Member Associations of FAFICS, it is you who make FAFICS effective. I urge you to continue to do three things: First, continue to find ways to support your own members, regardless of which organization they retired from; Second, continue to discover among your members various kinds of expertise that could be useful for our joint work advocating for our rights and dignity; Third, find ways to continue to be examples of the best of humanity – open, tolerant, compassionate, and respecting the dignity of all people. In this more fractured and intolerant world, we can be the examples that help unite others with respect and growth. Your association has contributed many outstanding volunteers to help support our causes – from Pension Board representatives to past Presidents. Your AFICS/NY committees, and active interactions with the UN bodies in New York are of immense aid to your members and to FAFICS. Your support of meaningful after-service health insurance is exemplary. I hope we will continue to work well together.

Our annual FAFICS Council in July will be in Vienna, Austria. It will be a hybrid event, but I hope to see the AFICS/NY delegation there in person to discuss our achievements, challenges, and opportunities. Last, but not least, we will celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an illustrious panel of speakers and social activities. Please plan to participate, either virtually or even better in person.

With deep appreciation and warm regards,

**Jerry Barton,**

President, FAFICS