USG POLLARD'S REMARKS TO THE ANNUAL MEETING

ASSOCIATION OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS (AFICS)

New York, 21 May 2024

Ms. Deborah Landey, *President of AFICS/NY,*

Members of the AFICS Governing Board,

Honorable former staff members of the United Nations System,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to join you again today at the Annual General Assembly of the Association of Former International Civil Servants in New York.

First and foremost, I extend my gratitude to your executives for their warm welcome. Your continuous dedication and ongoing support for our Organization and its values remains deeply appreciated by the Secretary-General, who has asked me to convey his gratitude to all of you.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are living in an unprecedented era of new, interconnected crises and global uncertainty, representing some of the dangerous moments of global insecurity in decades. At the same time, the climate crisis is deepening. Temperatures are surging. Wildfires and raging floods with devastating consequences have become commonplace.

All these challenges require our collective response. A response that can guarantee global peace and security, sustainability, equality, and solidarity.

The Secretary-General's vision and commitment as outlined in his Common Agenda, aims to address these global challenges. By accelerating the implementation of existing agreements especially through providing a renewed impetus to push forward the 2030 Agenda; we can make the Sustainable Development Goals real in the lives of people everywhere. The Common Agenda provides us with a clear roadmap for global governance that is more effective, inclusive, and resilient. As a system, we continue to also strengthen our capacities to better confront the challenges of this twenty-first century.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me now turn to some of the pertinent issues of immediate concern to the membership of AFICS.

I am pleased to report that despite the many challenges posed by international developments in 2023, the Pension Fund is in a strong operational and financial situation and continues to be well-funded.

Throughout 2023, the value of the Fund's assets significantly recovered with a preliminary annual increase in the market value of assets by 10.4 per cent from 2022. Consequently, the preliminary value of the portfolio reached **US$ 88.2 billion** as of 31 December 2023.

Pension payments continued to be issued on time, and retirees and beneficiaries can now receive their pensions in 18 currencies, including the newly introduced Russian Ruble. The Fund's Pension Adjustment System ensured that retirees and beneficiaries could receive, in a timely manner, cost-of-living adjustments to their pensions, helping to preserve the purchasing power of their periodic benefits.

Efforts to modernize pension services are ongoing, resulting in efficiency gains [*Example*: *saving thousands of pieces of paper and mailing costs*], but also leading to saving staff time and reduced risks of errors, which all lead to significant cost savings.

As usual, I note that pension matters is on the agenda, so I will not go into all the details on those measures but to conclude on this, I am happy to note that in its most recent resolution adopted in December 2023, the General Assembly approved amendments to the Fund's Regulations and Rules related to Financial Rules and introduced a new Administrative Rule to clarify the restoration of deferred retirement benefits under Article 24 *bis* of the Regulations. The General Assembly also approved the extension of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF) guidelines to determine the eligibility for spousal benefits, allowing for the retroactive recognition of beneficiaries arising from marriages following changes in national law.

I am delighted to share with you that the administration continues to value the inputs provided by AFICS/NY to the Health and Life Insurance Committee. Your active and meaningful participation in the discussions and deliberations at HLIC meetings has significantly contributed to decisions being made on a consensus basis of all participants.

Regarding the funding of ASHI, as in the past, the UN's budgets continue to provide for annual ASHI requirements. Aside from pay-as-you-go funding, the Secretary-General continues to be committed to actively pursuing a solution to address the issue of funding ASHI liabilities, and, along with relevant stakeholders, will continue to work towards finding a viable solution.

I also want to touch on the recent changes in the application of United States immigration laws and regulations concerning adjustment of status to permanent residence (Green Card). The change in the interpretation of applicable regulations has impacted the application for a Green Card to former officials and employees of international organizations and their eligible family members.

As you may be aware, we have been in communication with AFICS leadership on this issue; and over the past several months my department has worked very closely with Secretariat staff representatives, representatives of other International Organizations including the IMF and the World Bank to ensure a coordinated approach as we engage relevant US officials with our concerns.

As we raise awareness of this matter and its impact on individuals, we have stressed that throughout their long careers in the UN, some staff members have established their homes in this country, and their children have developed strong ties to the United States.

We are particularly mindful of, and are raising awareness in our discussions of the significant disruption for staff to have to uproot themselves and their families, despite years of expectations of being able to remain lawfully in the USA, and enjoy the benefits of their United Nations pension and a comprehensive, after-service health insurance. Our retirees are positive economic and civic contributors to their United States communities.

We will continue to inform staff so that potentially affected staff members may plan ahead of their retirement, including seeking appropriate legal advice.

I can assure you that together with these various representatives, including your Association, and other concerned entities, we will continue to be seized of this issue and keep you all updated.

Before I conclude, I understand some of you would also like to know more about the financial situation of the Secretariat considering that we started the year with a liquidity challenge. This situation, I must say, has no direct impact on AFICS membership.

The challenge for 2024 has been to execute a budget of $3.3 billion with an assessment of only $3.2 billion. As it stands, we need to collect 115 per cent of the 2024 assessment to meet our liquidity needs in full and mitigate the impact on liquidity for 2025.

As of 30 April, 71.8 per cent of the assessment had been paid by Member States and though there are some positive developments, we still need to be cautious as we still have uncertainty around payments in 2024 from some member states.

The Controller’s Office is regularly monitoring the situation and I will not want to take too much of your time by going into the details, but anyone interested in this issue, is more than welcome to contact my department for additional information.

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to reiterate on behalf of the Secretary-General as well as myself, the administration’s deep appreciation for the dedication of AFICS leadership to the concerns of retirees. I will continue to look forward to our engagements but also to your leadership as we work together in finding solutions to all emerging challenges.

As I always say, your outstanding service in the advocacy for retirees and ongoing support to our dear Organization, means a lot to many of us, as future retirees.

On this note, I wish you a very successful event and happy to respond to any burning questions that you may have.

Thank you.