

**UNFPA DED-M Andrew Saberton's Statement at  
2024 Annual Assembly of the  
Association of Former International Civil Servants/New York (AFICS/NY)  
21<sup>st</sup> May 2024**

Good morning, good afternoon, and good evening colleagues.

I am delighted and honored to speak at this 2024 Annual General Assembly of the Association of Former International Civil Servants/New York.

I wish to extend my deepest gratitude and admiration to all of the current and former international civil servants who have stepped up at some point in their career to carry out some of the world's heaviest responsibilities in order to transform complex situations, including service conducted in the most challenging of times and settings, in the service of humanity.

I would like to thank AFICS for helping retirees to stay engaged and continue to belong to and contribute in service to this international community. This is an organization run by volunteers who I know work extremely hard and I want to express our deep appreciation for this work. The dedication of your time, on a volunteer basis, to give back to the Organization you served, is to your great credit. Thank you. This ongoing dedication is inspirational and moving.

Part of what initially attracted me to working at UNFPA is the mandate. It is a mandate that you can get hold of and believe in. And the best thing about it is knowing that 99.9 percent of your fellow employees at UNFPA feel the same. They are all trying to deliver on the mandate for UNFPA and you all have each other's backs. And it makes a lot of difference.

UNFPA continues to do vital work around the world. Let me say a few words about our successes and challenges: our mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled. Challenges such as Covid, famine, war and conflict, humanitarian crises, and economic turbulence continue to threaten to set us back, in addition to the climate crisis and other emerging challenges that loom. The work and the demand for International Civil Servants to continue to step up to meet these challenges head on is ever present.

And yet, remarkable progress has been achieved over the 30 years since the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development was adopted in Cairo in 1994:

- Between 2000 and 2020, maternal mortality declined by fully one-third.
- Family planning is accessible to millions more women and couples; more pregnancies are planned and wanted than ever before.
- More good news. Women made steady progress in government representation. Not a single parliament or congress today is male-only.

- Average life expectancy increased from 65 years in 1994 to more than 73 years today. We now live in a period of healthy longevity!

This final point brings me back to underscore the importance of preparing for retirement and for the transition to it, no matter what one ends up doing during and after a career as an International Civil Service professional.

Debbie and her team met recently with UNFPA HR management to ensure that we have AFICS/NY information on our website and that we encourage our staff to join AFICS as they move into this exciting chapter of their lives.

UNFPA knows that AFICS/NY does an excellent job supporting UN System retirees through their close monitoring and advocacy on a range of pension issues, both on the investment and client service side. I wish to commend their focus on after service health insurance issues, and their continuous advocacy to maintain broad benefits at the lowest possible premiums and service quality to retirees, as well as their ongoing service to provide briefings to current staff at pre-retirement seminars so that they may be informed on the vital issues they must attend to as they leave their organizations. Finally, to applaud and encourage their dedication to the organization of social events including a recent spring luncheon and the reception to be held after this Assembly.

At UNFPA, we certainly want to invest in an organization that supports UNFPA staff as they prepare for and go into a new and exciting chapter of their lives and which monitors and advocates on the all-important issues of pension and health insurance, as a measure to facilitate and promote a healthy life and wellbeing for our former staff.

We also know that AFICS/NY makes an excellent contribution to the work of the Federation of Associations Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) along with the other 67 member organizations and that AFICS/NY's role is key for the staff of the Funds and Programmes as well as those of you from the UN Secretariat.

In closing, I would again like to express my admiration and gratitude to AFICS/NY and our retired International Civil Servants for your dedicated service to the UN system and for your ongoing engagement, even in retirement. You continue to play an important role in promoting the ideals and objectives of the United Nations. As I mentioned, the best thing about my work at UNFPA and in the UN system at large, is knowing that 99.9 percent of my fellow employees feel the same. They are all trying to deliver and have each other's backs. And it makes a lot of difference. You are continuing to make a difference.

Thank you.