

**Secretary-General's remarks to the Association of Former International Civil Servants
[as prepared for delivery]**

Statements | Ban Ki-moon, Former Secretary-General

Your Excellency Mr. Michel Tommo Monthe, Permanent Representative of Cameroon and Acting President of the General Assembly, Ms. Linda Saputelli, President of AFICS, Members of the AFICS Governing Board, Honorable former staff members of the United Nations System, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to join you.

Let me start by thanking all of you for your service.

You held diverse positions, covering many issues and duty stations. But you were all part of our single mission of advancing peace, development and human rights and you upheld the values of our beloved and indispensable Organization?.

Thank you for the long hours, the sacrifices, and the commitment. All current staff member recognize that we stand on your shoulders and build on your contributions.

Thank you as well for staying engaged even in your retirement. I guess one can say that you can take the civil servant out of the United Nations, but you cannot take the United Nations out of the civil servant!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is an important year for our United Nations.

In 2016, we are determined to get off to a strong start in implementing the landmark agreements of 2015.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an inspiring new blueprint for peace and prosperity for all.

The Paris Agreement on climate change is our peace pact with the planet.

The Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction offers solid recommendations for building resilience and improving global response.

And the Addis Ababa Action Agenda points the way toward mobilizing the necessary financing.

I was very encouraged by the way in which world leaders came together to forge these agreements despite global divisions over Syria and other issues. Now we need to sustain momentum and move from aspiration to action.

As you know, 2016 also marks the final year of my tenure as Secretary-General.

I have served at a time of multiple crises -- from conflicts and violent extremism to the spread of Ebola and global financial troubles.

But what stands out most of all is the dedication of our staff and the formidable power of partnership and international cooperation.

There were remarkable gains towards the Millennium Development Goals. We have strengthened our focus on conflict prevention, and sought to intensify the spotlight on violations of human rights and other root causes of instability. We have made good progress in women's empowerment, including at the United Nations.

We have also tried to modernize and reform the United Nations, building on the reforms of my predecessors.

We are strengthening peace operations and peacebuilding, based on recommendations put forward by high-level panels and reviews. That includes strong steps against sexual exploitation and abuse.

The World Humanitarian Summit, which I proposed at the outset of my second term, will take place this coming Monday and Tuesday in Istanbul, and can point the way toward improving global efforts to help people caught up in conflict and disaster.

Among various reform initiatives, I am especially pleased that after many years of discussion, my plan for staff mobility was finally accepted by the General Assembly. This will help in building a truly global United Nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank AFICS for helping retirees in so many ways over so many decades. The fact that you give up your time, on a volunteer basis, to give back to the Organization you served, is to your great credit.

You have provided sound advice and helped draw the attention of senior managers to the concerns of retirees.

I know that today, one of those concerns is the Pension Fund.

As someone with fiduciary responsibility for the Fund, I would like to take this opportunity to reassure you on several counts.

First, the Fund remains strong, with solid performance based on a conservative investment strategy.

Second, the governance of the Fund, including the Pension Board -- which has representatives of Member States, member Organizations, participants and retirees -- continues to have the checks and balances it needs. I remain confident that this structure will continue to serve us well in the future.

At the same time, I am very concerned about the problems we have recently experienced with the initiation of pension payments to new retirees. Such delays put people through needless hardship, especially those who may not have ample savings or other means of support. This is not a way to treat staff after their service.

The delays have several sources. The necessary paperwork can take time to be submitted to the Pension Fund by member organizations. Delays also followed the introduction of a new payments system in the Fund.

Whatever the reasons, every effort must be made to eliminate the backlog and ensure timely payments to retirees.

The Pension Fund has been working with the Department of Management, and has provided assurances that the current backlog will be eliminated by the end of this month.

Going forward, we are also exploring ways to streamline all related processes to reduce the time needed to initiate payments.

I have sent a strong message to those charged with managing these issues. It is simply this: People who gave their all to the United Nations every day during their career, deserve to be given their hard-earned pension as quickly as possible after they retire. We who take care of so many people across the world have a basic duty to also take care of our staff.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I, too, will soon be a retiree. I am told that Korea does not yet have an AFICS association. Perhaps my first order of business should be to ensure that one is established!

Thank you again to AFICS and to all of you for your outstanding contributions and your ongoing support.