Statement by FAFICS President, Jerry Barton,
to the AFICS/NY Annual Assembly
29 May 2026

Dear colleagues, it is a great honor to address the AFICS/NY Annual Assembly. This will probably be the last time I speak to you in this capacity, as my four-year term ends in July, when a new President will be elected.

My thanks also go to Darshak and his team for their stewardship of AFICS/NY, and for all you have done to support your members over the past 51 years.

First, I want to say how proud I am of the change in FAFICS over the last eight years or so. Our processes are more transparent; more associations are involved in the daily work of FAFICS, and most importantly, our reputation for solid advocacy and our influence are both higher and more necessary than ever. Congratulations to AFICS/NY for strongly supporting this growth.

AFICS/NY and local Associations

Many colleagues from AFICS/NY have played a vital role in FAFICS over the years—too many to name. I do want to mention Darshak, Debbie, Nancy, Jay Pozenel, and especially the chairs of our two main advocacy standing committees – Suzanne Bishopric and Jay Karia.

AFICS/NY is an excellent example of why local associations matter. You provide community, local advocacy, a charity, and international expertise. Like other member associations, AFICS/NY supports not only former staff of the locally based organizations, in this case, but also former staff of other organizations living in the USA who need local information and support.

Our Member Associations face challenges today – older demographics, fewer former staff joining, fewer members volunteering, more surviving spouses needing care. Associations increasingly need support to reach former staff and provide aid.

Today, I would like to touch on two topics: how FAFICS works and a few of the major challenges it faces in supporting former staff rights in an increasingly chaotic world.

FAFICS Work

Over the past four years, the FAFICS Bureau has made our way of working more transparent and professional. When I took office in 2022, these changes were needed not only to manage a growing workload but also to rebuild confidence in FAFICS as a federation of active associations, not just a small circle of connected individuals. I have received criticism that FAFICS moves too slowly. On the contrary, I believe we have accelerated our work tremendously.

First, we have strengthened day-to-day operations. Our work plan, finances, and oversight are now clearer and more accountable. When I first joined FAFICS as a Vice-

President, the Bureau met perhaps twice a year. Now, because of the workload, we meet online every month. Communication has also improved through our new website and my regular updates to all associations. More communication and marketing are still needed to clearly demonstrate our value.

Second, we are expanding the number of associations that contribute expert volunteers. Through our Expertise Pool, we are identifying talent across associations and strengthening succession planning. We are also helping to establish or revive associations in Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. I believe that it is beneficial to have active participation and leadership from all corners of the world.

I hope we can eventually reduce the effort devoted to our internal procedures and focus on substantive issues. We have worked hard on reform and on adapting to the new world, but we need to further demonstrate our credibility and effectiveness on substantive issues that affect all former international civil servants.

Each of our major work areas now has a team of around 10 to 15 people from different associations working on issues throughout the year as members of a Standing Committee. At our annual Council in July, your delegation will also have a voice in deciding whether to add another Standing Committee on succession planning to help ensure strong leadership transitions in the future. FAFICS must remain “fit for purpose” and respond with agility and competence.

Health Insurance Issues

Regarding ASHI, the financial issues are indeed complicated, both by the IPSAS accounting standards, which exposed several billion US dollars in unfunded liabilities for ASHI across the UN system that Member States are unable or unwilling to finance, and by rapidly rising health care costs. On behalf of FAFICS, I recently wrote to USG Pollard as chair of the HLCM, asking that FAFICS have a voice there. I believe that organizations do have a duty of care for their former staff.

Long-term care is also an increasingly important aspect of health insurance, as are differences in the quality of care across countries.

Pension Issues

On pension issues, major FAFICS positions on matters before the Pension Board are determined at the annual FAFICS Council, although the dynamic world now requires many decisions throughout the year, which I communicate to all Associations as they happen.

FAFICS continues to follow many recurring issues, including the 0.5 percent deduction on first cost-of-living adjustments, improvements in Pension Fund services for retirees, suspensions from the two-track option, and investment risks, among others.

By far the largest issue is the General Assembly resolution adopted in December 2025, which calls for a “holistic review” of the entire Pension Scheme. This review specifically includes examining the option of moving away from the current rules-based defined-benefit system, which guarantees benefits for life, toward a defined-contribution model, under which each individual would receive what he or she paid in, plus interest and any investment gains. Such a move would not be proper or beneficial to the Member States or the UN family of organizations. Regarding the “safety” of the investments, Article XIV of GA Resolution 248(III) from December 1948 states specifically that the funds are separate from UN funds and can be used only for the fund’s purposes, i.e., retirement, disability, and death benefits.

The deadline for reporting back to the General Assembly is the summer of 2028. In April, the Pension Board established a working group to define the options, costs, and benefits to be examined in that report. All four regular groups are represented: the Governing Bodies, the Organizations, the Participants, and FAFICS. The four FAFICS representatives are people I trust to bring the necessary experience and who are respected by the other groups. I believe they will represent FAFICS strongly, competently, and collegially. They will be supported by a technical group of FAFICS volunteers, as necessary. The group is just starting its intensive work, including budget proposals for the next two years.

The goal of the General Assembly through this resolution is to reduce expenditure and risk for Member States. Our goal is to protect our acquired and accrued rights, including the purchasing power, disability, death, and surviving spouse benefits, and the defined nature of our pension benefits.

Other challenges to our Pensions will increase over the next few years, including the need to preserve purchasing power amid inflation, a volatile US Dollar, and investment growth below inflation. We need to advocate for continual improvement in retiree services, including for non-computer-literate former staff, even though the improvements over the last several years under Rosemarie McClean's leadership have been exceedingly impressive. The long-term sustainability of the Pension Fund is paramount.

Final Words

We need you. We are always looking to expand member association participation in our substantive work. At present, 30 individuals from 18 associations are contributing. There is room for more, and I am deeply grateful for their efforts on behalf of all of us.

This is not a time to step back. It is a time for former international civil servants to remain connected and assist in our efforts. It is a time to advocate for the values and the work of the UN system.

Thank you for your trust and for your attention today. I wish you every success in your General Assembly. Thank you.