
AFICS/NY BULLETIN

Published periodically by the Association of Former International Civil Servants/NY

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Sustaining Our Mission Through Service and Innovation



AFICS/NY was founded to serve its members, and that purpose remains at the heart of who we are today. What has always made our Association strong is not only what we do, but who we are: a community shaped by decades of public service, shared values, and commitment to something

larger than ourselves. Long after our careers as international civil servants have ended, those values continue to guide us—often expressed through the simple but powerful act of volunteering.

Our strength has never rested solely on membership fees or external support. Indeed, support from the UN Secretariat has varied over the years in an increasingly uncertain funding environment, and we remain deeply grateful for its commitment, as well as for the consistent backing of the UN Federal Credit Union. Most of all, however, AFICS/NY has been sustained by the dedication of its members. While it is often said that “cash is king,” our experience reminds us that service matters just as much.

The past year has been one of thoughtful innovation and renewed energy. Members worked more collaboratively than ever, strengthening communication through our well-received semi-annual Bulletins. A particularly meaningful highlight was the commemorative film marking the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the creation of the United Nations, led by Jay

Pozenel, Vice President AFICS/NY, in collaboration with the UN. Projects like these demonstrate what a small, committed group can accomplish when experience, creativity, and service come together.

At the same time, we are keenly aware that sustaining this level of activity requires a broader base of engagement. This year we have taken steps to plan more effectively and work more sustainably: clearer and more timely meeting summaries, a forward-looking social calendar, interactive sessions organized by the Committee on After-Service Health Insurance and Long-Term Care (ASHIL), in direct response to member feedback, and the Membership Committee’s first Open House for new members. Each of these initiatives has strengthened connection and participation, and each has relied heavily on voluntary effort—supported, where necessary, by modest funding for essential projects such as system upgrades and the launch of our new website. However, the next phase of upgrades will require new funding that is not yet available.

This moment is also part of a much larger global recognition of service. The United Nations has designated 2026 as the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development, highlighting volunteerism as a key force in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Launched on International Volunteer Day 2025 under the message “Every Contribution Matters,” the year emphasises *Volunteering for People and Planet*—recognising that experience, commitment, and civic engagement remain essential to building

resilient institutions and communities. This global focus affirms what AFICS/NY has long understood: meaningful service does not end with retirement, and every contribution counts.

As the current UN Secretary-General has observed, “Everyone has something meaningful to offer, and every cause—from hunger to climate to humanitarian action—benefits from the enthusiasm and expertise of volunteers.” The same is true for AFICS/NY. Our Association thrives because members step forward, share their skills, and give their time. In doing so, they help weave a stronger fabric of care, continuity, and community.

Retirement is not an ending; it is a new chapter—one rich with opportunity to serve, connect, and make a difference. AFICS/NY relies not only on goodwill, but also on members who are willing to step forward and help carry out our shared work.

Every member has something valuable to offer: experience, ideas, time, or expertise. If you have

benefited from AFICS/NY’s services, events, or advocacy, now is the moment to give something back. Volunteering does not require a major commitment—often a small contribution of time or skill can have an outsized impact. Financial contributions, whether large or small, are another welcome way to support and sustain these efforts.

We need you. Reach out today. Send an email, express your interest, and let us know how you can help. By volunteering, you strengthen the Association, support your fellow members, and help ensure that AFICS/NY remains vibrant and effective for future generations.

This is how we sustain our mission. This is how we honour our shared legacy of service. And this is how—together—we continue to thrive.

Darshak Shah

President, AFICS/NY



FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS
FÉDÉRATION DES ASSOCIATIONS DES ANCIENS FONCTIONNAIRES INTERNATIONAUX
FEDERACION DE ASOCIACIONES DE EX-FUNCIONARIOS INTERNACIONALES
Palais des Nations, Genève, Suisse; Secretary@fafics.org; www.fafics.org

Bureau du
Président

Room C0249B, PO Box 100, Vienna International Centre, Vienna Austria
President@fafics.org

New Year's Greetings to All Colleagues and Friends of AFICS/NY from the President of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants

I take this opportunity to thank you all for the support you have given to FAFICS over the years, but most especially last year as we celebrated our 50th anniversary. I also trust that you and your families had a blessed past year.

During the previous year, in addition to celebrating our 50th anniversary, we have strengthened our voice in various UN bodies. Our voice is now heard as a trusted and competent partner in discussions on pension governance. Building on FAFICS' advocacy work, the FAFICS-sponsored increase in the Small Pension Adjustment scheme went into effect for new retirees in 2025. At the same time, we revitalized our connection to FICSA, the Federation of International Civil Servants Associations. Looking ahead, in 2026 I will be promoting a right-to-speak in the High-Level Committee on Management.

We are continuing to explore various ways of keeping in touch with FAFICS member Associations

through Google and WhatsApp groups, and the FAFICS website. We are still working on improving the transparency and reach of succession planning—making the search and selection of volunteers truly world-wide and best-of-class. The unexpectedly large number of staff leaving the UN this year has raised concerns for both current staff and retirees. We have followed these developments closely, and, both as FAFICS and through individual Member Associations, provided an unprecedented number of pre-retirement seminars to help inform affected staff of their options and challenges once they separate from their organization.

In 2025, several Associations and their members were deeply affected by natural disasters that have disrupted lives, strained local resources, and challenged community resilience. FAFICS stands in full solidarity with all those impacted. I encourage every member Association to extend support—whether moral, material, or operational—to

colleagues recovering from such challenges. Our unity is our strength, and moments of crisis underscore its value. As you know, FAFICS is not in a position to respond financially to humanitarian aid requests—but perhaps your Association can.

One of our purposes in our Statutes is to support the United Nations' principles and programmes. There is significant active criticism of the essential work of the UN. More positive voices are needed. I have been invited to be a founding member of the **United Nations Advocacy Community (on LinkedIn** and at <http://www.unadvocacy.net>) and have agreed to serve in my personal capacity. It offers a space for constructive exchange, advocacy updates, and broader visibility for issues that matter to our community. I invite you to consider joining the conversations there and share your personal support for the work of the organizations of the United Nations, given your unique proximity to goings-on in New York and the UN Headquarters.

The FAFICS Standing Committees on Pension Issues, ASHIL, Communications and Membership continue to work on their priority issues, guided by decisions and expectations from the FAFICS Council and the Bureau. The FAFICS Council Session will again take place in Vienna on 20-24 July 2026, and I once again look forward to seeing a dynamic delegation from AFICS/NY.

Finally, I again thank you for your dedication, professionalism, and unwavering support for various activities of FAFICS. I particularly wish to thank Debbie, Nancy, Romesh, Suzanne, Jay K and Jay P for their active engagement with the FAFICS Bureau.

I wish you all a healthy, peaceful, and fulfilling New Year and I look forward to our continued work, guided by your ideas, our shared commitment and collective efforts.

With warm regards,



FAFICS President

The Value of Community: Why AFICS Membership Matters

Membership is activism—it is an investment in our collective voice, our shared legacy, and our future.

When you join AFICS/NY, you are doing far more than adding your name to a list. You are strengthening a vibrant, global community of retired international civil servants who believe that service does not end at retirement. Together, we remain active, informed, and engaged—protecting our rights, supporting one another, and continuing the values that guided our careers. We are a volunteer organization, run by volunteers for our collective good.

Why Membership Matters

Your membership powers our impact. While AFICS advocacy benefits all retirees, it is our members who make this work possible. Membership sustains the advocacy that protects pension and health benefits, keeps communication channels open and reliable, and ensures we have a seat at the tables where decisions are made. Membership ensures we have a wide range of skills and experience to inform our work, so our volunteer Governing Board representatives and contributors represent the broadest possible range of needs and interests.

Through membership, we are able to:

- Preserve our collective voice by advocating effectively for retiree rights and benefits.
- Strengthen our community by funding events, publications, and platforms that keep us connected.
- Protect our legacy by sustaining the values of service, solidarity, and fellowship that define us.



Why Join AFICS/NY?

1. Be a part of the unique community of former international civil servants with **shared cultural diversity, ideals, and continued common links** to the work of the United Nations system.
2. Make **new friends and keep in touch with former colleagues** through the AFICS/NY Website, Directory and *Bulletin*.
3. Stay informed on the latest developments on **pension benefit management and investment issues**. The AFICS/NY Governing Board actively advocates for members' concerns and the full retention of benefits.



Why Join AFICS/NY?

4. Keep up-to-date on the **After Service Health Insurance (ASHI) benefits and premiums**, including Medicare Part B. The AFICS/NY Governing Board **actively participates in the Health and Life Insurance Committee (HLIC)** to advocate that health benefits remain optimal and increases in premiums are kept at a minimum.
5. Enjoy **social events/activities/workshops** organized by AFICS/NY promoting the welfare and wellbeing of members.
6. Get **up-to-date, easy to understand information** on: a) volunteer opportunities; b) income tax issues; c) legal advisory services; d) assisted living facilities, senior centres, and nursing homes; e) services provided by State and Municipal governments; f) ways to keep personal information up-to-date; and g) ways to assist other members in need of support.



Why Join AFICS/NY?

7. Contribute **articles and news items** for the AFICS/NY *Bulletin*.
8. Participate in the work of the AFICS/NY Charities Foundation which provides **short term emergency financial assistance** to members in times of need.
9. These, and other opportunities for engagement, are available through membership in AFICS/NY.

What are you waiting for?

AFICS is not a social media page or an occasional luncheon. It is a community of engaged activists and volunteers who believe in staying connected, staying informed, and standing up for one another.

A Global Community with Shared Purpose


AFICS/NY now brings together more than 2,000 members across the United States and 78 countries worldwide, and connects to a Federation of 65 AFICS member associations representing roughly 22,000 UN retirees and their beneficiaries, in every region of the globe. Our members share a rich cultural diversity, common ideals, and enduring ties to the United Nations system. That shared experience gives our community its strength—and our advocacy its credibility.

As a member, you can:


- Reconnect and build new friendships through social events, learning activities, Standing Committees, and soon-to-launch social media platforms.
- Stay informed and protected on pension benefits, investments, and governance through active representation by the AFICS/NY Governing Board.
- Remain current on health insurance and ASHI matters, including Medicare Part B, through our direct participation in the Health and Life Insurance Committee.
- Volunteer your time and talents—support fellow members, learn new skills, or rediscover creative abilities set aside during demanding careers.
- Find purpose and structure in retirement by staying engaged in a community that understands your professional journey and values your experience.

Active, Engaged, and Growing

In 2025 alone, AFICS/NY offered 14 member events, including a seven-week online class on Making Better Decisions, Mix & Mingles, luncheons, a post-General Assembly reception, a virtual UN architecture tour, open committee sessions, two bulletins, and an



AFICS/NY BULLETIN



A Publication Eagerly Anticipated by Members Around the World!


- A semi-annual publication that reports on AFICS/NY activities, welcomes new members and honors those that have passed.
- Includes articles on UN Pensions, UN Health Insurance and the UN Credit Union among many topics of interest to members.
- Publicizes UN System activities and AFICS/NY member events and engagements.




Standing Committees

< Membership drawn from the Governing Board and the Membership-at-Large >


- Ageing Smart
- Communications
- Health Insurance
- IT (Information Technology)
- Membership
- Pension
- Social & Other Events



AFICS/NY LIBRARY



- The Library is devoted to **works authored by former and current UN staff members** covering subjects ranging from **memoirs and novels to in-depth analytical studies**.
- The collection currently holds **over 250 books and optical discs**, available to borrowers in the tristate area.
- The collection **also contains historical materials of the Association**.
- The AFICS/NY Library is curated and maintained by the Association's Librarian and is **open the first Wednesday of the month from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.**



Services

Services are **managed by the Bureau and supported by the AFICS/NY Administrative Staff**.

- **UN System Support:** Fosters member participation in the substantive activities of the UN system through writing, public speaking, and NGO involvement, and represents AFICS/NY upon request.
- **Member Support:** Provides information on legal, insurance, and other personal matters, as requested and as appropriate.
- **Outreach:** Provides support and outreach to individual members, as appropriate.

inaugural Open House—along with opportunities to participate in UN system events. These activities reflect our commitment to connection, learning, and engagement at every stage of retirement.

Be Part of What Sustains Us

AFICS thrives because members believe in something bigger than themselves. Your membership—and your encouragement to others to join—ensures that our advocacy remains strong, our community remains vibrant, and our shared legacy endures.

How can you help?

You may already be supporting AFICS more than you realize—and each of these actions helps keep our community strong, visible, and effective.

- ***If you are already a member—thank you.*** Your membership is the foundation that allows AFICS to advocate, inform, and connect former international civil servants.
- ***If you contribute to our Bulletins:*** Your stories, insights, and updates are what make them worth reading and keep our shared experience alive.
- ***If you attend AFICS events:*** Your presence keeps these gatherings vibrant, relevant, and meaningful for everyone.
- ***Help us grow by recruiting one member.*** Invite a colleague who is new to retirement, or one who has never considered joining, or encourage someone whose membership has lapsed, to rejoin our community. For easy sharing with prospective members, this information is also available as a short [PowerPoint](#) overview.
- ***Share your skills and experience.*** Whether in communications, social media, community organizing, finance, budgeting, or your in-depth knowledge of pensions or ASHI, your expertise can directly support AFICS' work and advocacy.



ASSOCIATION OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS
IN NEW YORK


Why **JOIN** AFICS/NY?

- 1** Be a part of the unique community of former international civil servants with shared cultural diversity, ideals, and continued common links to the work of the United Nations system.
- 2** Make new friends and keep in touch with former colleagues through the AFICS/NY Website, Directory and Bulletin.
- 3** Stay informed on the latest developments on pension benefit management and investment issues. The AFICS/NY Governing Board actively advocates for full retention of benefits.
- 4** Keep up-to-date on the After Service Health Insurance (ASHI) benefits and premiums, including Medicare Part B. The AFICS/NY Governing Board actively participates in the Health and Life Insurance Committee (HLIC) to advocate that health benefits remain optimal and increases in premiums are kept at a minimum.
- 5** Enjoy social events/activities/workshops organized by AFICS/NY promoting the welfare and wellbeing of members.
- 6** Get up-to-date, easy to understand information on: a) volunteer opportunities; b) income tax issues; c) legal advisory services; d) assisted living facilities, senior centres, and nursing homes; e) services provided by State and Municipal governments; f) ways to keep personal information up-to-date; and g) ways to assist other members in need of support.
- 7** Contribute articles and news items for the AFICS/NY Bulletin.
- 8** Participate in the work of the AFICS/NY Charities Foundation which provides short term emergency financial assistance to members in times of need.
- 9** These, and other opportunities for engagement, are available through membership in AFICS/NY.

What are you waiting for?

Mail to: 405 E 42nd Street, Room U-400, NY, NY 10017; Street address: 801 E 45th Street, 4th Floor
In-Person Office Hours: Tuesday to Friday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Mondays closed)
Phone: (212) 963-2943 Email: afics@un.org URL: www.un.org/other/afics

- **Consider an additional financial contribution.** A top-up to your membership helps us meet mission-critical upgrades and strengthen our capacity (see giving options on page 15).
- **Tell us how we can do better.** Your ideas matter. Share no-cost suggestions for increasing our impact by writing to us at afics@un.org.
- Together, these small, practical actions add up to a stronger AFICS—and a stronger voice for our community.



* JOIN NOW *

AND CONTINUE TO BE PART OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY!

You can become an AFICS/NY member even before you retire!

AFICS/NY office location
UNITAR Bldg (walk-in address: 801 East 45th Street, 4th Floor)
Tel: 1(212) 963-2943 (Tuesday-Friday 10am – 4pm)
E-mail: afics@un.org
Website: www.un.org/other/afics

A Snapshot of AFICS/NY Membership: Who Are We?

(As of 17 December 2025)

Membership Count		Membership Types	
Type	Count	Type	Percent of Total
Life Member	1,744	Life Member	83%
Annual Member	176	Annual Member	8%
Over 85 Honorary Life Member	103	Over 85 Honorary Life Member	5%
Associate Life Member	77	Associate Life Member	4%
Associate Annual Member	4	Associate Annual Member	0%
Honorary Member	3	Honorary Member	0%
Grand Total	2,107	Grand Total	100%

Note: As per Article II:4 of the AFICS/NY By-Laws, the surviving spouse of a member or associate member of the Association shall be entitled to membership or associate membership of the Association, for as long as he or she continues to pay the annual dues or, in the case of the surviving spouse of a life member, for the duration of his or her life.

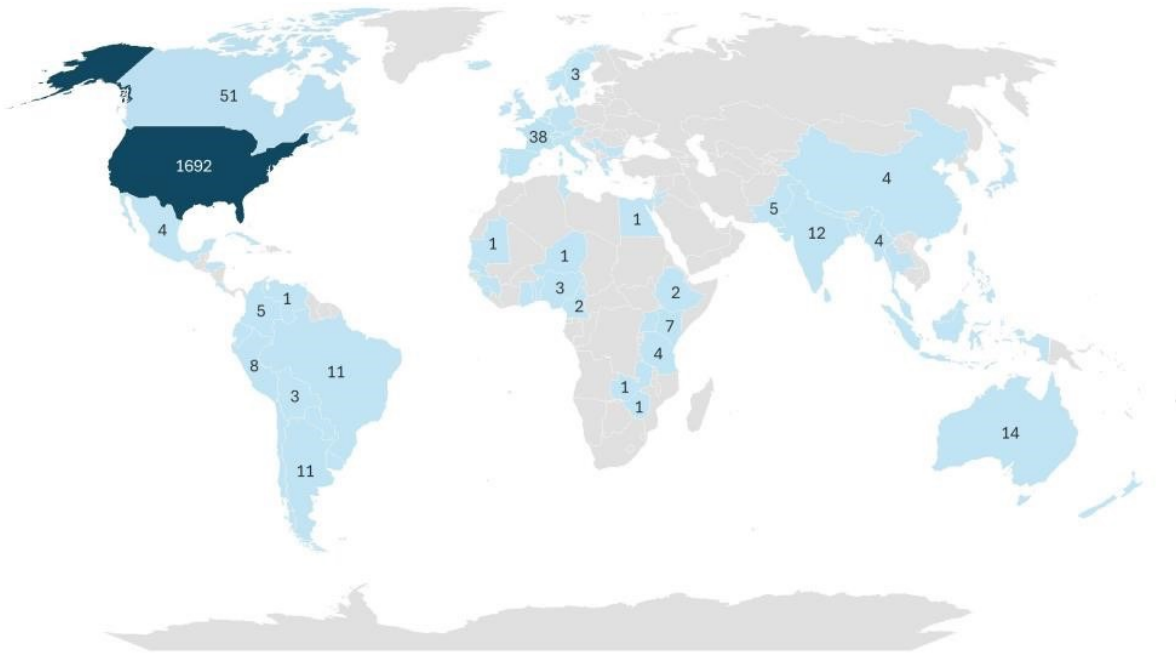
Age Distribution (1)		Age Distribution (2)	
Age group	Count	Age group	Percent of Total
Over 80	1,012	Over 80	48%
71-80	637	71-80	30%
60-70	268	60-70	13%
Unknown	172	Unknown	8%
Under 60	18	Under 60	1%
Grand Total	2,107	Grand Total	100%

AFICS/NY members geographical distribution

CountOfCountry

1692

1



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Geographical Distribution (1) Geographical Distribution (2)

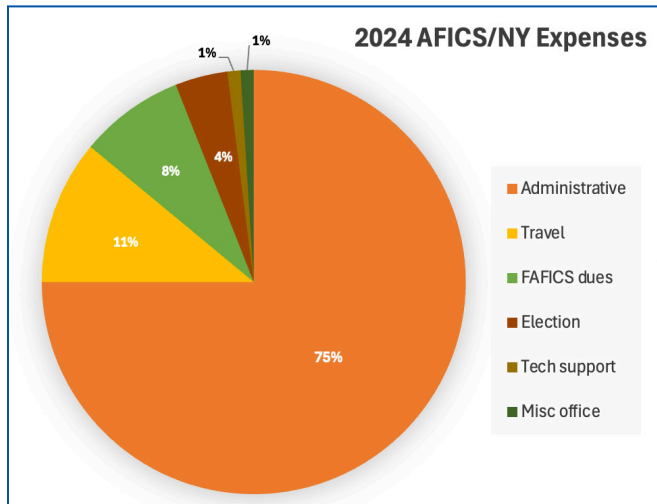
Region	Count	Region	Percent of Total
North America	1,744	North America	83%
Europe	159	Europe	8%
South America	74	South America	4%
Asia	69	Asia	3%
Africa	33	Africa	2%
Oceania	15	Oceania	1%
Middle East	10	Middle East	0%
Caribbean	3	Caribbean	0%
Grand Total	2,107	Grand Total	100%

Your Membership Dollars at Work

AFICS/New York is committed to using membership dollars carefully and responsibly to support our community and protect our future.

Each year, your contributions help cover essential operating costs, including:

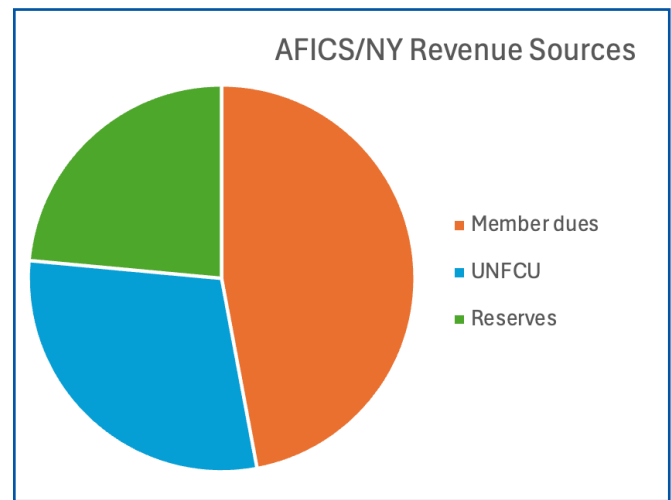
- Office and member support four days a week, provided by our dedicated staff;
- Travel and participation in FAFICS, pension, and related meetings;
- FAFICS annual dues;
- Secure electronic systems for our biennial Governing Board elections;
- Technical support for our hardware and software subscriptions;
- Office operations, supplies, honoraria, and small donations.



The United Nations Secretariat has been generous in its support of AFICS/NY over many years, including assistance with related administrative and technical expenses, for which we remain very grateful. As the UN responds to its own evolving funding constraints, certain long-standing arrangements are being revised. Going forward, these changes

will most immediately affect the support and hosting of the AFICS/NY website, with costs that will now need to be borne directly by the Association.

AFICS/NY's revenue sources are limited and depend largely on the strength of our membership from year to year. Over the past several years, this has resulted in a growing reliance on reserves built up over time. Our social activities, while central to member engagement, are run strictly at cost and do not generate net income for the Association. This model underscores a simple reality: without sustained growth in membership and contributions, our current trajectory is not sustainable in the long term.



Beyond these core annual costs, we are also facing several mission-critical projects that are essential to sustaining AFICS/NY and improving the member experience:

- A complete redesign of our website to make it more dynamic, accessible, and interactive;
- Modernization of our member database, enabling online payments, credit card processing, self-management, and directory access;
- Updating our outdated internal accounting system to ensure access for all office staff;
- Expanding events and activities for members.

Beginning in 2026, we will also face a significant new recurring expense of hosting and maintaining our redesigned website. The UN, which to date has hosted our website free of charge, has informed us of a new fee structure if we are to continue to use their hosting platform. This means that whether we remain with the UN or transition to a new hosting arrangement, the new costs will be substantially higher and well beyond our current budget.

Considerable volunteer time has already gone into reviewing alternatives and meeting the UN's migration deadline. Even so, these changes are placing substantial strain on both our volunteers and our finances—making strong membership participation and fundraising more important than ever.

A few facts help explain the challenge we face:

- 83% of our members hold lifetime memberships;
- 48% of our members are over the age of 80;
- Many lifetime members joined decades ago at significantly lower rates. Even members paying today's \$500 lifetime fee effectively contribute about \$25 per year over 20 years, compared with \$65 per year for an annual membership. While this structure has successfully encouraged lifetime membership, rising costs, changing demographics, and unexpected UN-related expenses mean that our current model is under pressure.

These facts led us to launch our first-ever Giving Tuesday campaign in early December, and we are most grateful for the support shown to date.

Your continued support helps ensure that AFICS/NY remains strong, responsive, and able to serve both current and future members.

Membership Dues

For new and existing members:

- ◆ Lifetime membership \$500
- ◆ Annual membership \$65 (with a prorated fee schedule)
- ◆ Associate lifetime membership \$250
- ◆ Associate annual membership \$40

Already a member and want to do more? We offer these suggested Giving Levels:

- ◆ Friend of the Association \$25
- ◆ Sustainer \$50
- ◆ Champion \$100
- ◆ Visionary \$250+

Every gift, no matter the size, makes a difference.

We gave our careers to the UN. Now, let's give back to each other.

Via bank or UNFCU Member-to-Member transfer:

Bank Name: UNFCU

Organization Name: "UN ASSOC OF FORMER ICS"
[please note spaces between words]

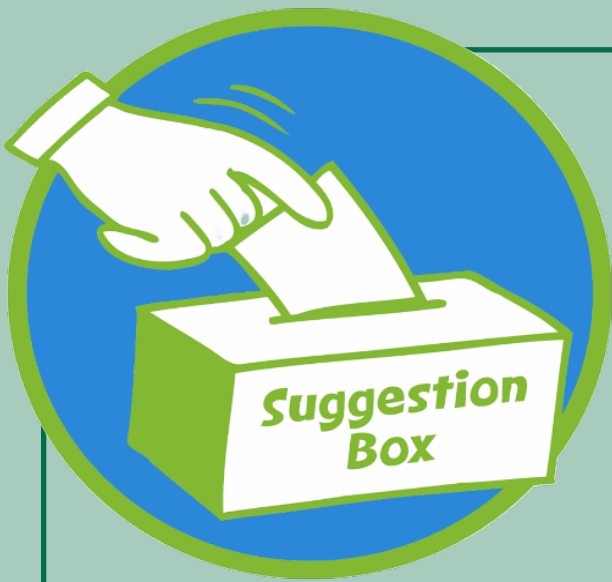
Member Number: 1171620

Or make your cheque payable to "Treasurer AFICS/NY" in US dollars and mail to:

AFICS/NY c/o United Nations
405 E 42nd Street
Room U-400
New York, NY 10017

We are grateful for your generosity and continued support.

*Please note that, as a 501(c)(4), donations to AFICS/NY are not tax deductible for US Tax purposes



We invited AFICS/NY member Steve Glovinsky to launch our new Suggestion Box by reflecting on the value of membership, how we can strengthen our shared goals of advocacy, connection and support, and how broadening our approaches—especially through social media—can help attract a new generation of retirees. Steve has spent much of his career developing knowledge networks that connect people and ideas, and we are pleased to share his stimulating thought piece here.

Reflections on Maximizing Value for Membership

By Steve Glovinsky

A year ago in November I saw a message from AFICS/NY in my inbox inviting me to join their community. It so happens that I am deep into building professional communities, beginning with UNDP in 1999, when I used the newly created e-mail group as a disruptive technology to connect our country office staff with each other and transform the organization's knowledge-sharing culture. I have been at it since then—even starting up a company, PeerConnect, after 15 years retired.

AFICS/NY celebrated its 55th anniversary in April. I was at the party. How did I miss it all these years?

My newly-found community was welcoming. I reconnected with many of my colleagues from my UN years, and met several whom I hadn't known then but would have enjoyed if I had. In addition to connecting us socially, AFICS is playing an important role safeguarding our

pension and healthcare benefits. Its website offers opportunities and useful information for current and future retirees. It nurtures close personal relationships, enabling us to remain in touch with the colleagues we shared our professional lives with. And most of all, it is sustained by volunteers, and passion works better than paychecks to get stuff done.

At the same time, I feel as if our composition can be broader, and better reflect the full range of retirees in our area. There will be a new generation of retirees who will be the future of AFICS, and we want to be sure we can attract them.

So I've put some thought into how we can make AFICS/NY more attractive to those who have not yet joined and those who will retire soon. Here are a few relatively simple suggestions:

A global membership directory: We are AFICS/New York, and I would love to see more

direct interaction between AFICS/NY and the other 64 AFICS member associations around the world. Most of our members have equally close connections with colleagues across the world. It was our nature as international civil servants to work with nationals from all locations. And while our New York colleagues certainly gain much benefit from AFICS/NY's local knowledge and perspective, there is a whole 'nother world out there of former colleagues, who I am sure would love to hear from us.

Just as we use the address information in our membership directory to locate ourselves, so could we use the address information in all AFICS membership directories to locate our internationally placed colleagues. And it would not be difficult to convert PDF directories into digital, searchable tables and produce a global geo-tagged map. So, say if I was travelling to Egypt and wanted to connect with my colleagues living there, I could search their member list and locate them on the geo-tagged map.

Share stories of interest: Another way to bring AFICS member associations closer together would be to feature a “stories from other AFICS” site on our website. Editorials, achievements, announcements, advice for challenges faced, links to their AFICS Bulletins—anything a member thinks other AFICS would welcome. These stories are not just informative; they open opportunities to connect with other colleagues having similar interests.

A global Facebook Page: For personal interest stories and for compiling news and views of members. The Facebook page for “Former & Current UN Staff” (12,900 members) currently hosts AFICS messages. Perhaps a dedicated Group for AFICS members would facilitate member participation.

Building a community calls for a champion in a position to make it happen. The AFICS associations are fortunate to have their Federation (FAFICS) in an ideal position to realize these initiatives. Expenses for developing these ideas would be minimal; however ensuring these initiatives are sustained would require a full-time coordinator. In the likely event it would call for a paid position, costs could be shared across the 65 associations of AFICS.

These suggestions, and others along the lines of widening our horizons to a global community, are likely to attract more new members. A critical factor in building a community is to directly and clearly answer a potential member's question: “What's in it for me?” If by joining you could access and interact with any of your former colleagues you would like to stay in touch with, it would be a big draw.

So yes, AFICS/NY's connections and information bring us together locally—nothing beats face-to-face interaction for building community. But we also benefit retirees everywhere with our work on pension and health benefits. So let's look at how we can connect across associations—and become more appealing to retirees.

We are not just the AFICS/NY Community—we are one member association of a Community of all Former International Civil Servants. Let's look at it that way, act on it, and watch what happens.

Steve retired from UNDP in 2010. He is currently shepherding a newly-created “United Nations Advocacy Community”. Sign up at www.unadvocacy.net.

SOCIAL EVENTS



Celebrating Membership: Highlights of 2025 Social Events

Every year we bring our members together in social activities. What better way to lift the winter doldrums, and reflect on the collective spirit that defined our careers at the UN? 2025 saw another much-loved and well attended gathering on The Bateaux. Our AFICS/NY President offered these words of welcome to the attendees.

Dear Colleagues,

It is great to have you with us on the Bateaux on this beautiful crisp day. Enjoy the food, the drinks and most importantly each other's company!

On this beautiful day, I wanted to share with you an extract of the SG's speech to the last GA:

“Our world is becoming increasingly multipolar. This is positive reflecting a more diverse, dynamic global landscape.

But multipolarity without effective multilateral institutions can court chaos—as Europe learned the hard way resulting in World War I. It was multipolar, but there were no multilateral institutions.

Let's be clear:

International cooperation is not naïveté. It is hard-headed pragmatism.”

I am sure you can all relate to these words. This reconfirms the importance of the UN and your contribution to the UN.

AFICS/NY with the UN Secretariat has produced a film for the 80th commemoration of the UN—“We the People of the UN”. The film will be screened as part of UN Day celebrations, organized by the United Nations Staff Union (UNSU). You are all invited to the UN Day celebrations—please come. If you cannot attend all the celebrations, please do join the screening of the film. It is an excellent film that stirs your emotion! The exact time of the screening and venue will be announced soon.

Members are what make AFICS/NY. There are a few people on this cruise as part of the AFICS/NY group who are not AFICS/NY members. We are happy to have you with us as guests. We would love to have you as members, please join immediately! The deal of the month is life membership; do not miss the deal! The alternative is annual

membership. There are many UN retirees in the tristate area who are not members of AFICS/NY. Convince them to join! Our mandate is to be the voice of retirees, especially in pension and ASHI. Tell us what we should do to attract more members. We have a Membership Committee, co-chaired by Dr Sudershan Narula and Debbie Landey. Please contact them or me with your ideas.

I would like to end by thanking Barbara, Veronique and Velimir for organizing this cruise, particularly thanks to Barbara.

Enjoy the cruise!

Darshak Shah

Bateaux, New York, 15 October 2025



Bateaux, New York, 15 October 2025

Opening the Door to the Next Generation of Members

By Gail Bindley-Taylor

Chair of AFICS/NY's Communications Committee

Milestone anniversaries invite reflection. They also demand forward thinking. As AFICS/NY enters its 56th year, the Association is taking stock—not only of what it has accomplished, but of what it must do to remain strong, relevant, and connected in a rapidly changing environment.

Much has shifted over the past five years. The COVID-19 pandemic fundamentally altered how members engage with one another. While in-person meetings have resumed, many members now prefer the flexibility of hybrid participation. This has affected attendance at the Annual Assembly and some long-standing activities. At the same time, a careful review of our membership database—sadly including the removal of members who have passed away—made clear that overall numbers have declined since the pandemic.

In response, AFICS/NY has turned its attention to two priorities: **attracting new members through targeted outreach** and **re-engaging current members—especially those in the Tri-State area—to play a more active role in supporting the Association.**

It was against this backdrop that AFICS/NY hosted its **first-ever Open House** at its offices in the UNITAR Building on 45th Street and First Avenue. Designed to welcome both staff approaching retirement and serving staff interested in joining the retiree association, the event aimed to clarify the role AFICS/NY plays and show, in practical terms, why membership matters.



AFICS/NY is somewhat unique among retiree associations in that serving staff may join before they retire—an opportunity that benefits both the individual and the Association. The Open House created a relaxed, informal setting in which prospective members could meet Governing Board members, ask candid questions, and learn directly from those who had already made the transition to retirement.

Planned by the Membership Committee and led by Co-Chairs Dr. Sudershan Narula and former AFICS/NY President Debbie Landey, the event ran from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. and attracted roughly two dozen serving staff, many of whom expect to retire in 2026.

President Darshak Shah shared his own experience of joining AFICS/NY six months before retirement, encouraged by former colleagues Debbie Landey and Jay Karia. He described it as “the best decision I ever made,” emphasizing the tangible support the Association provides. “Whether you have an ASHI issue, a life insurance question, or another concern, this is the one entity that represents you and gives you a voice,” he said. As an NGO, AFICS/NY offers retirees independent representation, free from the influence of funding partners, while amplifying the collective experience and expertise of former international civil servants.



Acknowledging that retirement can be daunting—particularly for staff who have spent much of their careers outside the United States—President Shah underscored the value of belonging to a community that understands those challenges. “This organization gives you people you can talk to, people who will guide you and help make your path easier,” he noted. He also highlighted opportunities for social engagement and committee involvement, concluding with a call to action: “When you become active,



you start to feel part of the fabric of AFICS/NY. Become a life member and let us support you. That’s what we are here for.”

The discussion that followed reflected both practical concerns and broader perspectives. Questions ranged from the optimal time to join—particularly amid ongoing UN separation packages—to whether AFICS/NY supports charitable initiatives. One participant raised the importance of reaching staff who are retiring from peacekeeping missions, noting the unique challenges they may face reintegrating into family and civilian life after years in the field—an insight that offered valuable food for thought as the Association looks ahead.

Overall, the Open House confirmed the importance of **greater visibility and early engagement** with serving staff. It created space to listen, learn, and refine our approach. With that experience in hand, AFICS/NY plans to build on this initiative next year—opening the door wider to new members, fresh ideas, and a more vibrant, sustainable Association.





Luncheon at the “Evergreen on 38th” on 11 December 2025

Thirty-seven members gathered for our Fall Lunch, sharing good food, lively conversation, and the pleasure of being together.



NEWS FROM THE UN

UN@80: A Living Legacy

Marking Eight Decades of UN Impact and Legacy

By Alice Harrison

In a world marked by global crises ranging from war and climate change to gender inequality and the ethical dilemmas posed by artificial intelligence, it was reassuring to witness the United Nations reaffirm its founding purpose of strengthening global cooperation and serving as a meeting ground—and a stage—for peace.

On 19 September 2025, on the eve of the High-Level Week, the General Assembly Hall—resplendent with its gold panel and newly unveiled UN80 logos—hosted a commemorative gathering marking the **80th anniversary of both the founding of the United Nations and the end of the Second World War**. Delegates, staff, retirees, and civil society representatives filled the Hall, under the theme “**Better Together: 80 years and more for peace, development and human rights**” which provided an overview of the key issues and context for the high-level meetings that would take place throughout the week.

A documentary film titled “**Voices of the world gather at the UN: What you need to know about UNGA80**” set the tone for the evening, which I attended as Convenor with two other colleagues, Pat Duffy and Geoff Baldwin, representing the UN Staff 1% for Development Fund. For those of us who served the UN as international civil servants, the evening carried a particular resonance. Familiar faces—leaders who helped shape the Organization across the decades—were present, underscoring the UN’s eight-decade legacy



Alice Harrison (Convenor), Geoff Baldwin, and Pat Duffy—Members of the UN Staff 1% for Development Fund.

and its continued relevance. The program opened with the UN Staff Recreational Council Chamber Music Society quintet performing Pablo Casals’ *Hymn to the United Nations*, last heard in this setting in 1971. The music set a reflective, almost reverent tone for what followed.

In his keynote address, Secretary-General António Guterres paid tribute to “lives in service that had seen action,” urging perseverance at a time when global challenges seem especially daunting. His message was clear and timely: “Global problems demand global solutions.” He concluded with a call to collective responsibility, declaring “Together, we must work toward a better future for all.”

That theme carried through the subsequent interventions, notably delivered by women leaders of the Organization, who spoke candidly about the UN’s role in strengthening the world amid human rights challenges, violent conflict, and widening inequalities.

Among the highlights:

- **Melissa Fleming**, Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications, who moderated this part of the program, warmly welcomed the audience and introduced the speakers, noting progress in gender balance at senior levels. Emphasizing the UN’s impact at the local level, she observed, “The Organization really does matter,” and praised the transformative role of young people.
- **Annalena Baerbock**, President of the General Assembly, reflected on a 72-year-old postcard written by a UN visitor—evidence that from its earliest days, the Organization understood what matters most to ordinary people. “We defend the most vulnerable, the unseen, and the forgotten,” she reminded the audience, remarking that change guided by UN principles makes the world “stronger and better, together.”
- **Sima Bahous**, Executive Director of UN Women, highlighted the UN’s transformative role in advancing girls’ education worldwide, mentioning the symbolism of commemorating UN Women’s 30th anniversary, which would be celebrated just days later on 22 September.
- **Catherine Pollard**, Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, paid tribute to UN staff and retirees alike, emphasizing their resilience in the face of growing complexity. “In uncertainty,” she said, “we must save humanity—and thrive—for the next 50 years.”

The evening also featured songs for the occasion by Nigerian singer, songwriter and actress Tiwa Savage, who performed, among others, her version of the Bob Marley classic “Waiting In Vain”. The **UN Deputy Secretary-General**, Amina Mohammed, closed the event by invoking the spirit of Dag Hammarskjöld. She likened the pursuit of peace to climbing a mountain: “We know the destination, yet we remain at base camp, fully aware of the challenges ahead.” At her invitation, mobile phones illuminated the hall, bathing it in a soft, fairy-like glow—a quiet reminder that each of us is part of the UN’s living legacy.

As the orchestra returned to the stage amid warm applause, the prevailing sentiment was unmistakable. Beyond the ceremony and symbolism, the evening affirmed a simple but powerful truth: despite the challenges it faces, the United Nations remains relevant, necessary, and deeply connected to the people it serves.

For more information, here is the video <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k11/k11ybd9197>

This is a momentous year: the United Nations will embark on the process to select its tenth Secretary-General. In these uncertain times, more questions are being asked of what the Charter says about the process and what is expected of a UN boss. Here is one reflection on how the process has unfolded in the past, and what that could mean to this year's selection process.

Spotlight: Selecting a New Secretary-General

By *Mita Hosali*

Article 97 of the UN Charter

The Secretariat shall comprise a Secretary-General and such staff as the Organization may require. The Secretary-General shall be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council. He shall be the chief administrative officer of the Organization.

The race to select the tenth United Nations Secretary-General has begun officially with two key actions in November 2025—a [meeting of the Security Council](#) where its working methods were discussed, including the critical steps to choose the next Secretary-General and a letter to Member States to begin sending in names of candidates for the position which António Guterres will relinquish at the end of 2026. Having served under five Secretaries-General, I must confess that while I was aware of the formal mechanics of how a Secretary-General is selected (and knew not to refer to it as an election), the details were always shrouded in secrecy. It has been compared to a Papal Conclave, with the winner of the race often referred to as a secular Pope.

From my recollection, there was very little in the public domain about the sprint which led to the choice of Boutros Boutros-Ghali when I first experienced this process. But there was a clear understanding that this was Africa's turn, and

I recall a few other names as [contenders](#). The decision came late in 1991 before he began his term in 1992. The incoming Secretary-General would take over from Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, the Peruvian who had served two terms—and under whom some major developments had taken place on peace in Central America, the transition of Namibia to independence from South Africa and the end of the Cambodian civil war.

The ascent of Kofi Annan to the position of Secretary-General remains firmly etched in my mind for many reasons. Firstly, I was more conscious of the process as it unfolded—the then UN Chief was clearly not going to be supported for a second term. Meanwhile, the UN insider from Ghana who had worked his way up from the junior ranks to head up the newly expanded brief of peacekeeping was a name being circulated as the front-runner. When the Security Council's decision was made public and sent to the General

Assembly, many of us recall how he was approved by acclamation.

The fact is that with every appointment, the race is conducted for the most part behind closed doors. The Security Council drives the process but the actual courting of countries for their support begins much earlier. The first step formally is for a letter to be sent out to all Member States for them to offer names of candidates. This has typically been generated by the Security Council but just a decade ago, both the Presidents of the Council and the General Assembly have jointly sent out this call for nominations.

The date by which the names are to be received is set out by this letter but it can be flexible. When the names come in, the Security Council is in the lead of the process. The Secretariat arm that services the Council, the Security Council Affairs Division, keeps track of these multiple rounds of candidates in the formal records of the Council. Another entity that has closely followed the process and is a goldmine of information is the [Security Council Report](#) which chronicles the many rounds of candidates and the issues that are raised in private.

In 2025, in a world where the clarion call for transparency rings out even more strongly than a decade ago, interest in the process is more subject to public scrutiny than ever. In 2016, a new dimension was introduced with a series of civil society Town Hall-style dialogues and a very public media conference organized by Al Jazeera. The letter sent out jointly by the Security Council and the General Assembly in 2015 enjoined Member States to put forward candidates' names. This precedent appears to be the basis for the [joint letter](#) outlining the appointment process for the next UN Secretary-General sent out by the President of the General Assembly Annalena Baerbock and the President of the Security Council for November, Michael Imran Kanu, on 25 November 2025.

The ground rules are set out in the letter and draw on GA Resolution [79/237](#) of 5 September 2025 on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. According to Security Council Report, this year's joint letter was largely negotiated between, on the one hand, the five permanent members of the Council (P5) and, on the other hand, the ten elected Council members (E10). The process began some months ago when conversations were held with the President of the General Assembly and when the Security Council discussed the issue under "any other business". In the weeks that followed the ten non-permanent members tried to insist on specific principles—such as fair geographic representation; encouragement of the nomination of women; and a commitment to a timely, transparent, and inclusive process.

The President of the General Assembly sees it as a solemn duty to ensure a serious and timely process. She has said in a subsequent note that this letter reflects improvements to the selection and appointment process in the latest resolution on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, including "a call to Member States to strongly consider nominating women as candidates for the position of Secretary-General, the importance of regional diversity, transparent campaign disclosures, and provisions on the withdrawal of candidates".

In an [article](#) first published in PassBlue.com on 18 November, the author breaks down some of what will transpire and how the Security Council and the General Assembly will jointly run the selection process. The November call for nominations is the first official step for countries or groups of countries to submit candidates. In the [Security Council on 14 November](#), Chile's representative was outspoken and called for the principle of regional rotation to be respected, pinpointing that it was the turn of the region of Latin America and the Caribbean to lead this post. He also made a strong push for gender, arguing: "As no woman

has ever held the post”, Chile’s representative spoke up for “an open, participatory and gender-inclusive process.”

A request has been made by the General Assembly for a public website to detail each officially nominated candidate’s name, the country or group nominating, a vision statement, curriculum vitae and campaign financing disclosures. Meanwhile, the **1 for 8 billion** is one site where some of these [steps](#) will be carefully followed. Another group advocating for qualified female candidates is [Global Women’s Leadership Voices](#) which comprise some 80 former women leaders including Prime Ministers and Presidents as well as former and current contenders for the position of Secretary-General.

As was the case in 2016, and as [announced](#) by the President of the General Assembly, interactive dialogues with candidates have been scheduled

for the week of 20 April where they will present their vision statements. There will also be bilateral presentations including civil society-led engagements with the candidates beyond what happened in 2016, which has been described as too tokenistic or formulaic. While there will still be Security Council straw polling, an informal voting option, there is immense pressure to move to a more formal voting process in both the Council and the Assembly to winnow down the list of candidates.

While the process will unfold somewhat organically, it is hoped that the final step will be concluded in the third quarter of 2026. Many UN staff are watching this time around more carefully. The stakes seem high especially as the Organization faces what many are calling existential challenges amidst threats to multilateralism.

AFICS IN ACTION

**UPDATES FROM
THE ASSOCIATION**

Pension Committee: Protecting Retiree Benefits

By Suzanne Bishopric & Jay Pozenel

Co-Chairs

The AFICS/NY Pension Committee has held monthly meetings throughout 2025, discussing local aspects of issues to be considered by FAFICS as a whole. This year, our thoughts have been focused on newly retiring staff affected by the UN80 initiative, especially in New York (and Geneva) which are the highest cost duty stations. Some individuals have already been given notice and some AFICS/New York members have been asked for guidance. Unfortunately, many of those notified that their contracts will not be renewed may have not planned to retire this year, especially those who will be required to leave the UN system before they are qualified for health or retirement benefits.

Our observations and suggestions about the impact of inflation have been a continuous topic, including the recent impact on retirees and their dependents. With the downsizing and cost-cutting measures imposed on the UN System, the AFICS/NY Pension Committee has focused on preserving the value of entitlements and ensuring that the surge in retirements, does not lead to any delays in benefit processing to be implemented in New York and in other duty stations. This is consistent with the stance taken by the FAFICS delegation at the Pension Board.

Key observations about inflation protection discussed in this year's AFICS/New York Pension Committee meetings were brought forward by the FAFICS delegation at this July's Pension Board meeting, and were strongly supported by the Participants Group. The Report of the

Pension Board to the General Assembly (A/80/346 paragraph 91) specifically noted that:

“FAFICS and the participants group inquired why the Fund was not investing in natural resources, particularly gold, citing its historical role as an inflation hedge, that is, without credit risk, especially under current fiscal conditions.”

It has been clear this year that the AFICS/NY Pension Committee has offered valuable suggestions, shared within AFICS/NY and with FAFICS worldwide. We look forward to future constructive dialogues in the coming year and wish everyone healthy and happy holidays.

Health Insurance Committee (HIC): Safeguarding Retiree Interests

By Jay Karia & Dr. Sudershan Narula

Co-Chairs

At AFICS/NY, the Health Insurance Committee is your voice and your advocate on matters related to Health and Life Insurance. We are committed to keeping members informed, resolving individual concerns, and ensuring that retiree interests are well represented in policy decisions. Here is what we have been working on over the last six months:

1. Navigating Premium Pressures: Protecting Your Pocketbook

Over the past months, AFICS/NY's Health Insurance Committee actively participated in semi-monthly meetings of the UN Health and Life Insurance Committee (HLIC). These discussions focused on reviewing the cost performance of the 2024-25 plans and the first six months of the current 2025-2026 health insurance cycle. This provided an opportunity to understand the trends in health insurance cost as well as opportunities for us to raise issues with the representatives of the third party providers (TPAs).

As we all know, premiums for all health insurance plans were increased for the 2025-2026 cycle with Aetna and Worldwide plan with double digit increases of 16% and 18% respectively. It appears that cost performance of the current cycle is also showing an increasing trend in health costs.

Noting the large increase in health claim costs, an obvious question is how do we continue to keep future premium increases at a minimum?

It is our collective responsibility to ensure that medical expenses are kept at a minimum as UN health plans are SELF-INSURED plans, so premiums are based on both the actual level of expenditures as well as ensuring adequate reserves for each plan. While members continue to take positive steps to use the plans efficiently, some areas continue to require more actions from all of us:

- **Emergency Room (ER)** visits for actual emergency treatment are, of course, necessary. It was noted, however, that several ER visits were for non-Emergency medical treatments. The cost of ER visits remain quite high, each costing over \$2,300 on average while participants also need to pay \$100. Furthermore, it was noted that some members were repeatedly using ER facilities for **routine** medical treatment. This should be avoided. It is better to use Urgent Care Facilities which are now available everywhere, and provide basic medical services at much lower costs and with lower wait times compared to an ER.
- While most members (Anthem—87%, Aetna—85%) use **In-Network providers**, it appears that many participants are still using out-of-network providers with significantly higher costs. One example is that most members who need physical therapy use **out of network providers** at a cost that is over four times higher than that of in-network providers. We understand that some of the

out-of-network providers may provide such services without charging the normal co-pay; however, they charge significantly higher amounts for their service. This results in all of us paying higher premiums. **Please use in-network providers for such services and ask the service providers to file their claims as in-network.**

- Switch to **generic drugs** where possible and select the Home Delivery Pharmacy programme to pay less.

2. Member Outreach: Listening, Responding, Solving

Communication is key, and our committee has taken significant steps to stay connected with members. In addition to responding to individual inquiries, we have continued the **open online sessions** to provide a forum where members can share their experiences, raise concerns, and get expert guidance on health insurance matters.

Here is how it works:

- Members receive an invitation and are encouraged to submit questions in advance.
- A secure link is shared just before the session.
- During the session, our team of subject matter experts addresses queries live or commits to following up after consulting the UN's Health and Life Insurance Section (HLIS).

So far, **three open sessions** have been held—and they have been a resounding success. Members found the discussions informative, appreciated the responsiveness, and helped reveal issues that have since been referred to HLIS for resolution. Some issues have also been discussed with representatives of the TPAs.

Looking Ahead

The AFICS Health Insurance Committee will continue to advocate, inform, and support our community. Your concerns are our mission. We encourage members to participate in future open sessions and to share any health insurance issues or concerns that you may be facing.

The UN's Health and Life Insurance Section manages these plans very well, with the aim of ensuring their sustainability by adopting cost-effective practices: emphasizing preventive care, use of in-network doctors and generic drugs, and timely treatment, as well as implementing technology-driven solutions such as telemedicine. We recommend that members review the HLIS website to get more detailed information. (<https://www.un.org/insurance/content/retirees>)

Together, we can ensure health coverage that is both fair and sustainable.

Membership Committee: Keeping our Association Strong

Dr Sudershan Narula & Deborah Landey

Co-Chairs

AFICS/NY continued to engage UN staff, retirees, and those transitioning from the UN system through membership drives, outreach, and advocacy initiatives.

Membership Drives

- Pre-Retirement Webinars: February (243 participants) and November (420 participants). All attendees received invitations to join AFICS/NY.
- UN Events: AFICS/NY tables at the UN Women's Guild Spring Bazaar (May), International Holiday Bazaar (December), and Health Insurance Campaign (June).
- Inaugural Open House: November event for staff transitioning out of the UN system.

As of 18 December 2025, 51 **new members** had joined ([see list](#)).

Outreach

- Event announcements posted on iSeek New York's homepage and calendar for PreRetirement Webinars and the Inaugural Open House.
- News Update posted on 8 December featuring the AFICS/NY Summer Bulletin and celebrating the UN's 80th Anniversary.

Advocacy & Information Campaigns

- "AFICS/NY At a Glance" PowerPoint, shown at UN Day and the Open House.
- Flyers: *Why Join AFICS/NY*, *Events for Members*, and *AFICS/NY Dues*, widely distributed.
- UNICEF Off-Boarding Package: Membership application forms included for soon-to-leave staff worldwide.

The Membership Committee remains committed to welcoming retirees and transitioning staff, and strengthening our community through outreach, engagement, and advocacy.

Communications Committee: Connecting Us Together

By Gail Bindley-Taylor and Andrew Nye

Co-Chairs

The Communications Committee meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at 10:30 a.m. via TEAMS and less frequently in person. 2025 has been a productive and energizing year for the Communications Committee, marked by several successful initiatives and important groundwork for the future. Among the highlights was the launch of our well-received **Summer Bulletin**, which paid tribute to the **80th anniversary of the United Nations**, the end of the **Second World War**, and the **50th anniversary of FAFICS**, the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants. The edition generated strong and thoughtful feedback from members, who praised its relevance, depth, visual design, and engaging articles. Several members also requested printed copies, and a cost-sharing arrangement is now being explored to produce a limited print run. We are entering the new year with the **Fall/Winter Bulletin** about to go to print, and we thank our members for their continued contributions, which remain the backbone of our publications.

A major focus of our work this year has been the **redesign of the AFICS/NY website**. While our long-standing presence on the United Nations platform has served us well, member feedback and our outreach goals have underscored the need for a more interactive and flexible system. Our objectives include enabling two-way communication, creating a members' portal for easy updating of personal information, modernizing our database, and allowing online payment of dues and event fees. With the support

of a Project Manager and a web developer, we have completed extensive research and planning. We are grateful to the UN for its guidance, but given current cost constraints, we are pursuing more affordable and sustainable alternatives. We aim to identify a workable solution by the **first quarter of the new year**.

We have also made progress in strengthening our digital presence by exploring a **pilot Facebook** group within the Governing Board. This will allow us to assess its usefulness internally before extending it to the broader AFICS/NY community.

Greater coordination with other standing committees—particularly **Membership** and **Events**—has been another priority. These efforts support more strategic member recruitment and more targeted public relations outreach to increase participation in our activities.

This year also saw the success of an innovative **virtual tour of UN architecture**, a collaboration of our Librarian and the Visitors Service of the Department of Global Communications. The event was well-subscribed and warmly received, and we look forward to expanding our online offerings in the coming year.

Internally, we have begun strengthening our communication systems to improve turnaround time and responsiveness. We have also welcomed several new committee members whose skills have enabled us to establish dedicated editorial,

website and social media, and content management teams. In the year ahead, we hope to add a special events communications team to further support the work of the Events Committee.

Finally, we continue to welcome your engagement. We would especially welcome a **videographer**

and encourage members with relevant skills or ideas to consider joining the Communications Committee. Your feedback is always valued, and we invite you to contact us at afics.org, attention Communications Committee.

Ageing Smart Committee: Supporting Healthy Retirement

Nicholas Alipui, Mary Ann (Mac) Chiulli, and Pilar Fuentes-Conte

Co-Chairs

The Ageing Smart Committee is dedicated to keeping our members informed, supported, and engaged. By monitoring media coverage, government resources, and the work of the NGO Committee on Older Persons, the Committee shares timely and relevant information that helps members navigate the opportunities and challenges of later life. Over the summer months, members were invited to take part in a seven-week Stress Management programme, and more recently were directed to the 2025 NYC Resource Guide for Older Persons (see box).

The Committee also maintains an active presence in the NGO Committee on Older Persons, ensuring that our members remain connected to broader conversations on ageing and advocacy. Looking ahead, with next year designated the Year of Volunteerism, the Committee will embrace volunteerism as a central theme for 2026—creating new opportunities for members to stay involved, share their experience, and contribute in meaningful ways to our Association and beyond.

Each year, New York State Senator Liz Krueger’s office publishes an Older Adult Resource Guide. The guide offers a broad range of information on topics such as aging in place, caregiver support, continuing education, cultural and recreational activities, health care services, housing, older adult centers, pet care, volunteer opportunities, advance directives, and more.

We are pleased to share the 2025 edition with you. The guide is attached for your reference and is also available on the AFICS/NY website: [Ageing Smart](#) | Association of Former International Civil Servants/New York

Although the guide focuses on New York City, many of its resources and ideas may be useful to those living in other areas who wish to explore similar services in their own communities.

We invite you to take a few moments to review the guide and see what information may be of interest.

How many of you have taken a tour of the UN while you worked there? Imagine that for millions of people, this is their only contact with the United Nations! The Visitors' Service at UN Headquarters in New York keeps updating the kinds of tours they offer for people who will never have the opportunity to come to New York. One such tour is featured below. For more information, check out what is on offer at the Visitors' Service [site](#).



UN Photo/Werner Schmidt

Virtual Architecture Tour of the UN

By Dawne Gautier, AFICS/NY Librarian

On 11 November, the AFICS Library hosted a virtual architecture tour of the UN, presented by Visitors Services and led by Ben Danieli, Public Information Assistant/Tour Guide. The presentation reviewed the site's history, design and evolution, as well as the implementation of the Capital Master Plan (CMP) (<https://media.un.org/photo/en/photo-essays/construction-un-headquarters>).

Ben noted that 80 years ago, following WWII, 51 governments met in San Francisco to establish the UN. Several U.S. cities competed to host the new organization before New York was selected. The Rockefeller family contributed \$8.5 million for the site; New York City provided \$20 million; and the United States extended a \$65 million interest-free loan. At the time, the First Avenue site—formerly an industrial area known as “Blood Alley”—contained a brewery and a slaughterhouse. Eleven architects submitted their own sketches but unanimously agreed on the importance of creating open, publicly accessible spaces.

The Secretariat Tower, intended to symbolize peace and hope, was reduced from a planned 45

floors to 39 due to budget constraints and was completed in 18 months in 1949–50. The cornerstone contains the UN name in six languages, as well as copies of the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Innovations included thermopane glass curtain walls and Vermont marble siding. The top two floors, originally the Secretary-General's residence, were later converted into office space funded by Austria.

The General Assembly building features Vermont marble and progressively smaller glass tiles to enhance the illusion of height. Its dome—added at the suggestion of a Vermont senator—helped expedite U.S. funding approval. Heating ducts are embedded within the glass walls. The complex's heating and cooling system uniquely draws water from the East River, eliminating the need for rooftop tanks. It remains the only complex in New York State authorized to do so. The knotted-gun sculpture at the GA entrance was a gift from Luxembourg, and the garden—formerly open to the public—is now restricted for security reasons.

The Conference Building that houses the principal councils, extends over the FDR Drive—a security concern today. As a result, under the CMP its supports were reinforced.

After decades of deterioration, the CMP was launched to bring the Headquarters into compliance with New York City codes while preserving its architectural integrity. Upon completion, the Fire Department was invited to inspect the site and awarded the complex a gold rating, and the Secretariat a platinum rating, for efficiency. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library was not renovated at that time due to its location near the FDR exit but is expected to undergo refurbishment once the exit is relocated.

Inside the GA lobby, curved walls and varying ceiling heights create deliberate optical effects. The ceremonial staircase leads to the General Assembly Hall where the downward sloping ceiling provides another optical illusion. The rostrum is made of serpentine marble and, in earlier years, the UN emblem above the rostrum served as a speaker. The ceremonial entrance, known as a “vomitorium”, once used by dignitaries, is no longer in use. As membership increased, seating was expanded to accommodate all 193 Member States.



UN Photo/Manuel Elias



UN Photo/Jonathan Mishal

The Security Council Chamber, a gift from Norway, includes a mural symbolizing humanity's emergence from war.



UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

The ECOSOC Chamber has been modified several times but retains the original open ceiling symbolizing development as an ongoing process.



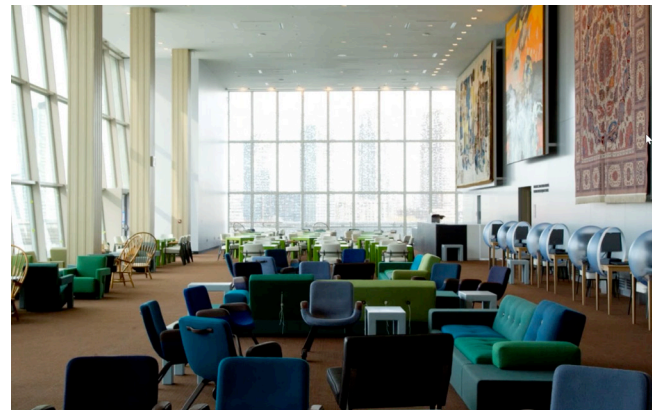
UN Photo/CCOI

The Trusteeship Council Chamber, a gift from Denmark, incorporates seven types of wood and a teak sculpture representing hope. The room was redesigned under the CMP after the Council's suspension in 1994 and is presently used to hold meetings.



UN Photo/Milton Grant

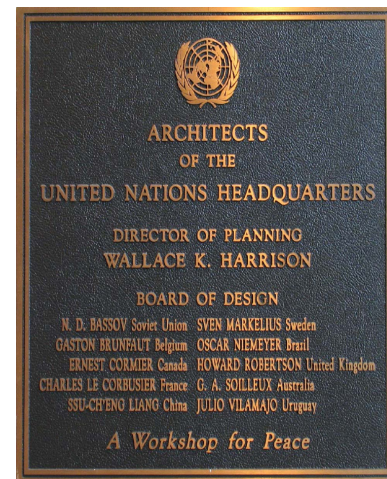
The Delegates' Lounge, a gift from the Netherlands, was also modernized with new workspaces and design features.



UN Photo/C McIlwaine

Ben concluded by outlining the range of discounted in-person tours available to retirees, including architecture, art, garden, women's, children's, Black history, and general tours.

We would like to thank Ben for his informative and enlightening presentation.



Gift ID: UNNY104G

**AFICS/NY RETIREES IN
ACTION: STORIES FROM
FAR AND WIDE**

On the Hunt for Red Gold in Abruzzo

By Mac Chiulli



On a recent trip to Italy, my husband and I spent a pleasant day participating in the saffron harvest, in Navelli, in the province of Abruzzo. To our surprise, we learned that Italy produces up to 600 kilograms of high quality saffron per year (about half a ton), on about 320 farms all over Italy. While not a lot (Iran produces 90% of the world's saffron), it is thought to be of very high quality, and given that the three red pistil threads weigh next to nothing, 1,000 pounds is a sizeable mountain!

Saffron is produced from a cultivated crocus plant—it is not found in nature. Although they look identical, it is not the plant we see at the first sign of spring. The cultivated plants all descend

from Persia, thought to be the birthplace of saffron, via Spain.

The production is very labor intensive, but the process lasts a relatively short time, from August when the crocus bulbs are planted, until October, when they are harvested. The rest of the year is dedicated to preserving and cultivating the bulbs for the next year, enriching the soil, etc.

We gathered early in the morning, as picking the blossoms before they open is easier then. The plants are only about five inches tall, so it can be back breaking to think about doing it for a full day.



Once the blossoms are gathered, they are brought to a common working area, where each blossom is opened by hand, and the petals (purple), the stamens (yellow) and pistil (red) are separated.



The petals can be eaten, and are added to salads, or used for dye—strangely enough, the purple petals produce a delicate green dye! The yellow stamens are also used as yellow dye for cloth, and the red pistils are the red gold which is saffron.

About 50 of us harvesting for about an hour in the field, and after separating the harvested blossoms for about another hour, produced the following



rather paltry paper plate of saffron. One can easily understand the price of about \$15 per gram.

We also learned about the best methods of cooking with saffron—both fresh and ground. Hint—you must soak the saffron for hours and use the water to cook with rather than sprinkling it onto your food to get the optimal flavor. We also learned how ground saffron is made.

Our efforts were rewarded with a saffron cake snack, followed by a saffron rich meal—pasta with saffron pesto, sausages and roasted potatoes cooked with saffron, saffron cream puffs and saffron liqueur, all of which were quite tasty.

After our meal, we toured the village, and walked by a house with open doors, where at a table some eight women were singing, and processing a huge pile of crocus flowers in the middle of the table.

We have, in years past, helped with both wine and olive harvests, and found this a very interesting and entertaining experience.

We learned that production of saffron has been declining over the years, but in the interest of keeping the industry and the cultural traditions alive, you can receive a free saffron plot from the Italian government. So, gardening enthusiasts, grab your trowels and stake your claim—become the next generation of ‘red gold’ diggers in Italy!



Digging Through My UN Files

By Bepty Antoine Laurençon

My husband Michel (from Grenoble, France) and I (from Port-au-Prince, Haiti) were married on 24 October 1970 at St. Jerome R.C. Church in Brooklyn, New York.



Looking back through my UN files, I am convinced that without the United Nations and its humanitarian principles, I would not have been able to raise the four wonderful citizens who are our children and who make us proud as grandparents. Our four children owe their careers, success and prosperity to the UN.

As a young recruit, I was grateful and privileged to teach newly

recruited UN staff members about the principles of the UN Charter and the many services the UN offers.

After successfully passing the UN entrance exam, I started my career on 16 January 1973 at the United Nations as a G-3 bilingual Secretary in the Africa Branch in the Office of the Technical Co-operation Unit in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Over the years, I was promoted to G-4, and then to Programme Management Assistant in 1983 after handling a Somalia workload of more than \$3.5 million. I successfully passed oral and written proficiency examinations in English and Spanish; and was equally proficient in other courses offered such as Effective Training Workshop; Introduction to Management Information Systems; and a seminar for French Editors.

In January 1985, I became a GS-6, and a year later I became the first GS-7 Technical Co-operation Assistant in the United Nations system, from which a Special Post Allowance to the Professional category



propelled the G-7 to a P-2, which lasted until my retirement.

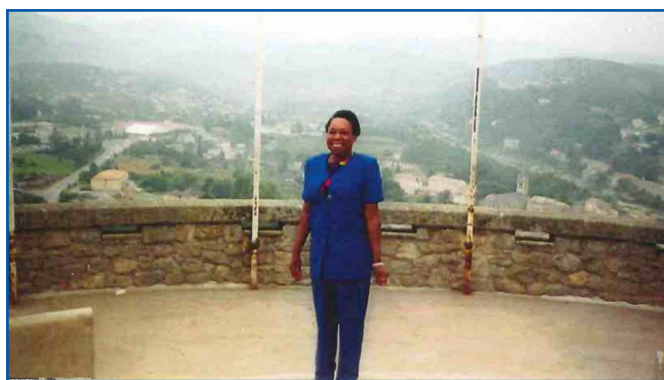
My success at the UN was defined not only by the role I chose, but also by my involvement in staff representation. In 1983 a cherished colleague proposed that I run for Staff Representative, and I was voted in with overwhelming support and ended up handling both the Professional and General Service staff issues. I was also instrumental in supporting staff on matters of justice on the Panels on Discrimination and Other Grievances in New York, helping safeguard staff careers; and in preparing the job descriptions for the newly established Classification Exercises of GS-6 and GS-7.

I also took an interest in the fun side of the UN. In 1990, through the United Nations Staff Recreation Council, I founded the “Aux Antilles Club” that served the UN Haitian staff members.

As Technical Cooperation Assistant, I had some unique opportunities to travel for work. I was honored to organize a well-attended seminar in St. Vincent and the Grenadines for Small-Island Nations economies and their natural resources, and to travel to Beijing for the UN Women's International Conference, as well as to Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan. I also took trips to Canada, England and the Netherlands to attend UN conferences, and taught courses in administrative procedures in Kenya, Madagascar, Comoros, and Mauritius. On another UN mission, I traveled to Côte d'Ivoire and Sénégal.

As I look back, I am grateful and humbled that throughout my career in the Department of Technical Cooperation and Development, I met graceful, professional and caring individuals who helped me navigate the complicated U.N. system, allowing me opportunities to achieve justice and peace of mind for staff members whom I successfully defended.

I fondly remember many of my colleagues Aliou Diallo, Patrice Blacque-Belair, Lai Shian-Lung, Hanifa Mezoui, Anna Chang, Luìs Maria Gòmez, Margaret Howard, Ivan Friscic, Lowell Flanders, Chaim Ouziel, Chantal Casséus, Mikio Tajima, Elsa Wurfl. I also express deep gratitude to Martha Natale, who worked tirelessly and with such compassion to save the careers of many staff members.



Focusing on What's Excellent

By Phil Reynolds

Retired in 2001 as Director, International Waters, UNDP

Like many UNDP staff, I spent my career (17 years at UNDP HQ and 17 Years in Vienna, Iraq, Pakistan, Tanzania) working with government officials on high-level projects and programs. It was only in retirement that I began to delve into the messy details of life in my community.

In my 20 years as a community and court mediator, I have had the opportunity to help neighbours live in peace, assist a poor African American mother to stay in her home, guide divorced parents to make a plan for their children and facilitate the reintegration of former convicts into their communities with the support of their families and friends.

I have served on the board of the Community Action Agency, which helps reduce extreme poverty through energy assistance, preventing homelessness, supporting delinquent youth and giving poor pre-schoolers a Head Start. It is amazing how even a relatively prosperous city like

Annapolis has a soft underbelly of poverty. Rotary has given me a crash course in self-consciously getting to know others and working together on service projects. Lobbying for the UN, the environment and mediation in Washington and Annapolis has also given me an appreciation for the strengths and weaknesses of our legislators.

Living in a cul-de-sac court has allowed me the privilege of getting involved in the lives of my neighbors—with all the adventure that involves. My family is still my core joy, but I feel that I am now connected with my neighbourhood and my neighbours. I am currently president of the International Club of Annapolis, which brings Ambassadors to have dinner with about 100 members once a month. So far so good!

I have heard, and seen, that aging causes one to become more self-centered. Indeed, my doctors are increasingly calling attention to my failings with

words like “degenerating” this or that. As a result, I am obliged to become increasingly aware of my own condition. But, like the prolific American epigrammatist and humourist Ashleigh Brilliant said: “I may not be totally perfect, but parts of me are excellent”. I hope that my days of exclusive navel gazing are still in the distant future.

From Village to Global Service: Reflections After Retirement

By Ambassador Cecilia Forgbé McGill (Ret.)

*Former Deputy Permanent Representative and Chargé d’Affaires,
Permanent Mission of Liberia to the United Nations, New York*



Retirement from active international service is often understood as a formal conclusion to one’s professional responsibilities. However, for many of us who dedicated our careers to the principles of the United Nations, retirement represents a transition rather than an ending. The values of multilateral cooperation, peace, human dignity, and ethical leadership become more deeply rooted in one’s identity.

In my case, this transition has allowed for renewed engagement in areas where experience, institutional memory, and quiet diplomacy remain essential. My professional journey has been shaped significantly by diverse postings and responsibilities. Prior to my long tenure at the United Nations, I

served with the United States Peace Corps for two years in Gjirokastër, Albania, as Coordinator for Organizational Development. Working in an environment navigating post-transition reforms, I supported civil society strengthening, municipal development initiatives, and community leadership training. This period was foundational, reinforcing my understanding that sustainable progress must emerge from locally grounded processes, cultural respect, and inclusive participation. The lessons learned there have remained central throughout my diplomatic and multilateral service.

During my tenure as Deputy Permanent Representative and Chargé d’Affaires of Liberia to the United Nations in New York, I had the privilege of contributing to intergovernmental deliberations, peace and security dialogues, humanitarian coordination, and negotiations involving complex geopolitical dynamics. Representing one’s country requires not only technical competence, but careful judgment, discretion, patience, and the ability to build bridges across differing national perspectives.

Over the past year, I have continued professional involvement through Diplomats Without Borders (DWB), headquartered in Amsterdam. The organization convenes diplomats, peace practitioners, and policy experts to support conflict resolution efforts, dialogue facilitation, and the strengthening of governance capacities. In parallel, I have focused attention on documenting my personal and professional journey through a forthcoming memoir titled “From Village to Ambassador: A Journey of Resilience.” The work reflects on my early life in Liberia, the transformative impact of Father Edward J. Galvin, whose support enabled my educational advancement, and the trajectory of service across continents and institutions.

Reflection on the Holiday Season: The holiday season continues to serve as a period of reflection, gratitude, remembrance, and renewal.

Why I Joined AFICS/NY: I joined AFICS/NY to remain connected to colleagues who share a collective professional identity rooted in service to humanity.

A Thoughtful Journey Into Retirement

By Keziah Kirika



With UN/UNEP Executive Director on the day I retired.

During my service at the UN (1992-2022), I decided to face the retirement transition well before I actually opted for early retirement. I identified a number of concerns and opportunities that seemed to preoccupy those approaching retirement and those already retired, and what follows reflects the deliberate plans I put in place during my UN career to prepare for retirement.

1: To address the risk that pension money would be less than monthly earnings, I invested in real estate during my leave periods to ensure I had

a steady income equivalent to, or greater than, my UN salary.

2. Financially dependent children can place a significant strain on retirees after retirement. As a widow, with only myself to count on, I made a deliberate decision to invest in my three children. I committed to educating them up to university and also empowered them to ensure each of them was employed as well as financially self-sufficient, before I opted for early retirement.

3. Staying active after retirement is so important. Managing my real estate keeps me busy. I have developed my idle parcels of land through fencing, constructing rental rooms and planting trees. In addition, before my retirement, I joined the Parklands Sports Club to ensure I would stay fit. I go to the gym, swim, and enjoy regular body massages.

4. Engagement in philanthropic and community activities in my society is very satisfying. As a widow (my husband passed away during the 2007 political crisis in Kenya), I became acutely aware of the mistreatment

widows face in this society. Retirement allowed me to belong and to participate in the Outreach Ministry at my church (CITAM located in Nairobi, Kenya), where I visit widows and orphans alongside other widows in the congregation.

5. Boredom due to lack of social connectivity can also affect retirees. In addition to my church activities, I also privately visit a rehabilitation Centre for the elderly and for street children where I donate clothes whenever I am able. I also contribute to:

A. Rotary International District 9200 the Githogoro slum.



**B. Little Sisters Of The Poor
(Nyumba Ya Wazee).**



C. A centre for rehabilitation and reintegration of street children, the Watu Wa Maana Centre.



While undertaking construction work at Ruiru/Kenya, I encountered a street child who regularly begged me for food. I arranged for him to eat at a nearby hotel and would pay at the end of the day before leaving the site. When the project ended, I became concerned about his welfare and conducted inquiries that led me to a rehabilitation centre for street children where I took him. I later learnt from neighbours that his mother was a drug addict and frequently abused him as he was a financial burden to her, which had driven him to sleep on the streets. I paid for his admission to the Centre, and he is now

performing very well academically. From January 2026, I have committed to paying his fees at a private Academy Primary School near the centre. (In the image labelled C on the left, I am wearing pink while holding the boy). This is one of the most satisfying achievements in my life and gives my life deep purpose. Having come from a financially poor family myself, helping those in need whenever I can afford to gives me immense fulfilment.

Retirement has also allowed me the time to visit the sick and very needy relatives both from my late husband's family and my own. The photo below is with my only auntie, who passed away last month at over 100 years. I am seated next to her, wearing a black hat.



I now also enjoy frequent bonding with my children and grandchildren, as well as opportunities to travel both locally and abroad whenever time allows.

I look forward to learning from other retirees and hearing how they are spending and enriching their lives during retirement.



2025 My Year of Care, Engagement, and Gratitude

By Robertson Work

2025 was a challenging year for climate, democracy, social justice, peace, and elderhood, and a happy year of being alive, writing, caring for others, and being with loved ones. My annual report to people and planet covers my and others' actions of care for the world, country, local community and neighbours, friends and colleagues, family members, and my body/mind. May you and I, and all beings everywhere, continue to encourage each other, cooperate with one another, learn from each other, and care for one another.

Caring for the World

In 2025, I wrote and published eighty-nine essays of [“Compassionate Conversations” \(CC\) on Substack](#) for readers in fifty countries. I shared my five books—[a manifesto/handbook](#), [poetry](#), [essays](#), [speeches](#), and [autobiography](#). I heard from many readers of CC including Dr. Margaret Wheatley, Dr. Gus Speth, Bill McKibben, Dr. Sohail Inayatullah, and the Thich Nhat Hanh Foundation. I worked on a new book compiling CC essays with a working

title, *Reflections of a Mindful Elder: Compassionate Actions for Planet, Society, and Body-Mind*. Dr. Cosmas Gitta, a former UNDP colleague, wrote a foreword for the upcoming book. I also published a guest essay on CC by Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) colleague and yoga teacher, Tina Spencer, in Australia; gave a lecture on civil society on Zoom to Pakistani Fellows at the request of Dr. Ameena Zia, Brevard College professor and founder of Blue Ridge Consulting; and saw The Center for Ecozoic Studies, founded by ICA colleague Dr. Herman Greene, publish an article about my book *Society, Spirit, Self: Essays on the One Dance*.

I posted messages each week on Facebook and LinkedIn to encourage and inspire friends around the world. The Association of Former International Civil Servants (AFICS) published my article in the UN 80th Year Bulletin. I also discussed with ICA colleague Dr. Terry Bergdall the subject of lessons of the ICA-related intentional community of Litibu in Mexico.

Caring for our Country

I supported No Kings events, getting out the vote (GOTV), and the Blue Wave of Democratic wins. I also joined the ICA Path Forward group on Zoom at the invitation of Bill Parker, founder of the Human Community Network in Oklahoma. I took part in a Third Act Zoom meeting with Bill McKibben, and another with Rebecca Solnit and was interviewed for a Democratic Perspective broadcast at the invitation of social artistry/mystery school colleague, Stephen Williamson, in Arizona.

My writing continued to reach a wide audience: *Compassionate Conversations* was read in thirty-five U.S. states, and I wrote and published Substack essays focused on how to strengthen democracy, social justice, human rights, peace, and ecological regeneration in the US. I also published a guest essay on CC by Dr. Joyce Bonafield-Pierce in Minnesota.

Caring for our Local Community

At the local level in Swannanoa, North Carolina, I was inspired by the community's resilience and ongoing recovery efforts following the 2024 Hurricane Helene. I supported local grass-roots meetings, helped launch a group focused on ageing in place, and joined community planning and climate initiatives. Through collaboration with local leaders and experts, we worked to strengthen connections and build greater community resilience.

Caring for Friends and Colleagues

This year also brought moments of remembrance and gratitude. I honoured the lives of seven dear friends and colleagues who have passed away: Dr Shabbir Cheema, Thord Palmlund, Dr Larry Ward, Gene Marshall, Dr Humphrey Nyapuodi, Ike Powell, and Dr Tho Ha Vinh.

I also wrote recommendations for several friends and colleagues, including Dr. Ameena Zia's book on climate education for youth, Larry Ward's poetry collection, and discussed with Dr. Fouzia Saeed of Georgetown University, the wife of a former UNDP colleague, Paul Lundberg, her impressive work advancing women's rights in Pakistan.

Personal Practice and Daily Life

Daily practices grounded my year: meditation, journaling, ritual, reading, Qigong, exercise, and walking. Beginning each morning with mindfulness meditation before going online proved especially beneficial. I practised mindful breathing, sitting, walking, eating, and resting, and deeply appreciated the Lotus Institute's online dharma talks and meditation offerings. I particularly enjoyed conceiving, writing, editing, and publishing one or two essays each week.

My favorite holiday tradition remains sharing meals with family members.

Continuing Connection

I joined AFICS to stay connected with former UN colleagues and would welcome opportunities for online dialogue and exchange.

Closing Reflection

I am deeply grateful for 2025 and hopeful that 2026 will be filled with compassionate action—for all people and for the planet. As Thich Nhat Hanh taught us: ***Slow down. Stop. Smile. Become aware of breathing in and breathing out, here and now, in love and gratitude. I am solid. I am free.***

Cruz de la Orden de Isabel la Católica Honoured at Home for Service to the World

By Pilar Fuentes-Conte



Being in protocol at the United Nations is to live in a world where precision meets diplomacy. Our days are filled with orchestrating high-level meetings, arranging seating plans for visiting dignitaries, and ensuring that every handshake, every flag, and every movement happens exactly as it should, often with last-minute surprises that require us to adapt quickly to unfolding situations.

It is a job that demands organization, cultural awareness, and the ability to think on your feet, all while maintaining a calm, professional demeanor. It is high-pressure work, yes, but it is also filled with moments that bring a smile: a perfectly timed

toast, a grateful nod from a diplomat, or simply the knowledge that you helped world leaders in a meaningful moment...one protocol at a time.

Work has always been intense but profoundly fulfilling, even in the most challenging moments. Time seems to have passed almost unnoticed, one event following another, until, suddenly, it was time for retirement. Then came the most wonderful surprise: I was deeply honored to be awarded the medal of the Order of Isabella the Catholic, in recognition of my distinguished diplomatic career and contributions in the international arena. It was like a dream coming true!



The Order of Isabella the Catholic was established on 24 March 1815 by King Fernando VII to reward

extraordinary civil conduct. It was later reorganized in 1847 by royal decree, renamed the Royal Order of Isabella the Catholic, and given a broader purpose: to recognize outstanding service to the Spanish nation and to foster positive relations between Spain and other countries. The most recent regulation, approved in 1998, updated the Order's statutes to reflect modern social and administrative realities. Today, award ceremonies are organized by the General Directorate of Protocol, based on the recipient's location. In my case, I had the great honor of receiving it at a wonderful ceremony with my colleagues, friends, and family at the Spanish Permanent Mission in New York.



Reflecting on the United Nations' global impact, I would like to note that among last year's recipients was Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA's Commissioner-General, who was recognized for the critical and sustainable work of his agency and received the award at the Spanish Consulate.

Receiving this medal was a deeply meaningful and unforgettable moment. During the ceremony, I felt touched, honored, proud, and genuinely grateful. It was truly an extraordinary experience and a memory I will treasure forever.

I have always been passionate about my work, as many of us at the UN are. Those of us in the United Nations family know how much we give of ourselves to fulfill our duties. We often sacrifice a great deal to ensure a job is done well, all while carrying the weight of these responsibilities. And when the moment calls for it, we respond together.

Many years ago, while escorting Heads of State to the General Assembly Hall, the Chief of Protocol shared a thought that has stayed with me: "We, UN staff, are truly fortunate to be part of the Organization, and with this privilege comes the responsibility to serve it to the best of our ability."

One example comes to mind from an advance planning mission. Upon arriving in the host

country to manage the protocol aspects of an international conference, I learned that the conference coordinator had fallen ill. The colleagues in charge of logistical preparations urgently needed to finish their work before the conference staff arrived, so I had to switch hats from protocol to support them. Thanks to the remarkable dedication and teamwork of everyone involved, we completed all the logistical and technical tasks on time. It was a powerful reminder of how much can be achieved when people come together, adapt to challenges, and share a commitment to success.

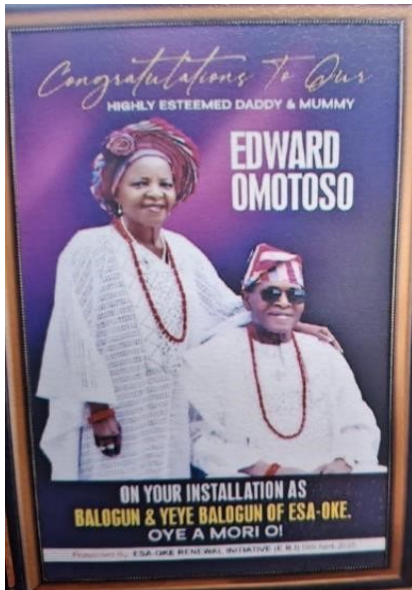
Every conference, in every country, brought something new, different challenges, unexpected situations, and unique needs. Many lessons had to be relearned because even when events were similar in format, each one was genuinely unique. You realize that adaptability and openness to the unexpected are just as important as careful planning.

This is what I love about being part of the UN. Often, you meet colleagues for the first time at a distant conference. Time is short, and the workload immense. Yet it doesn't matter, because everyone gives their best, and together, we make it happen. We come from different countries, cultures, and beliefs, yet here we are, all united as one. That is the most remarkable feeling.

While I am deeply grateful for the extraordinary honour I have received, I know that this journey would not have been possible without all of you, my colleagues here and across the UN. From my first day to my last, every person I was fortunate to work with contributed to fulfilling our shared commitment to the Organization's values. I have been incredibly fortunate to collaborate with such a remarkable group of people, each of whom has left a meaningful and unforgettable impression on me. The lessons we shared will always remain. Thank you for being part of this extraordinary journey.

Balogun Omotoso

By Ed Omotoso



A vibrant, colorful, all-day celebration took place earlier this year in the southwestern Nigerian town of Esa-Oke to mark the official installation of our fellow UN retiree, Edward Omotoso— an emeritus AFICS/ NY President and current Honorary Governing Board member—as a High Chief of the community.

He received the distinguished title of Balogun of Esa-Oke Land. “Balogun” translates to “High Commandant” or “Generalissimo.”

The day was filled with joyful trumpeting, singing, dancing, and rich cultural displays.

Celebratory gunshots were fired into the air as the new Chief was escorted into the king’s palace for the formal installation rites.

After the historic initiation and its accompanying protocols, the festivities continued with music, dancing, serenading, and plenty of feasting—well into the

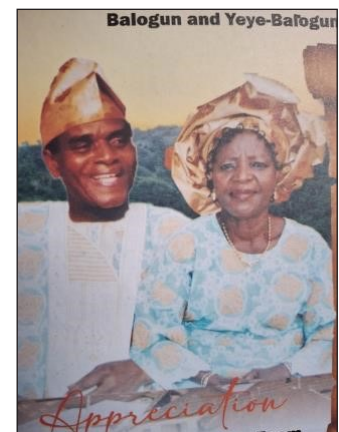


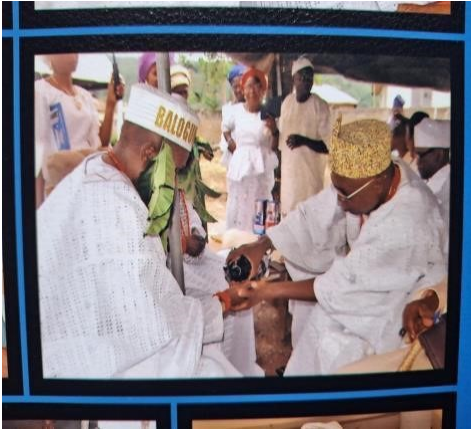
night—at the town hall and at the Omotoso family compound in the town.

Several Nigerian dignitaries were present, represented, or sent goodwill messages. Among them were AFICS/NY members Ambassador Ibrahim Gambari, former UN USG and Chef de

Cabinet to the President of Nigeria, and Otunba Bamidele Dada, retired FAO Assistant Director General and former Federal Minister. The ceremony was live-streamed and watched by friends and family across Nigeria and abroad.

In conferring the prestigious Balogun chieftaincy—one of the community’s highest honors—the Oba (king) and town leaders emphasized that it was granted “after careful consideration and in recognition of (Omotoso’s) unwavering dedication, significant contributions, and steadfast commitment to the development of the Esa-Oke community.” His wife, Florence Ayo Omotoso, accordingly received the title of Yeye (mama) Balogun of Esa-Oke.





Edward Omotoso served more than 30 years with the UN, UNDP, and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). He retired in 2001 as UN Resident Coordinator, UNDP Resident Representative, and UNIC Director, after which he joined AFICS/NY and was elected to its Governing Board.

Throughout his career, he remained deeply devoted to his hometown, launching and supporting a number of charitable and philanthropic initiatives.

Through the Edward Omotoso Foundation, he has provided scholarships and bursaries to hundreds of Esa-Oke indigenes studying at universities and other higher-learning institutions across Nigeria. The Foundation also runs a Women's Empowerment Programme, offering financial grants to market women to sustain and expand their businesses.

Balogun Omotoso is also the Co-Founder, Publisher, and Editor-in-Chief of ESA OKE TODAY, the town's pioneering news magazine, widely cherished by citizens both at home and in the Diaspora. It is available in print and online at esaoketodayonline.com.

His biographical book, *A Life Around the World*, recounts his early years in Esa-Oke and other Nigerian towns, along with his wide-ranging career at the UN and OPEC.

In his remarks after the installation, the new Chief shared, "I accept the honour with tremendous appreciation, profound respect and great humility." He pledged "to His Royal Majesty the king, the other chieftains, and all the great people of Esa-Oke land, my strong dedication and commitment to the task of uplifting our town."

IN MEMORIAM

As we bring this edition of the *Bulletin* to a close, we pause to remember those members of our community who have passed away since our last issue. In keeping with our use of a digital format, we are providing a link to the full list on our website under the In Memoriam pane, where you can search for the names of colleagues and friends.

We honour their memory, their service to the Organization, and the lasting bonds we shared with them. You will find the names here: [2025 QPDF4PDF](#) and [2025 Q3PDF](#)

Over the past six months, AFICS/NY has bid farewell to several of its most dedicated and cherished members. In this edition, friends and colleagues offer heartfelt tributes, remembering their contributions and the lasting bonds they forged within our community.

Honouring The Life and Legacy of Dr. Shabbir Cheema

By Robertson Work

A few days ago I learned that my close friend Dr. Shabbir Cheema passed away on Thanksgiving Day. His wife Sherry and other family members were with him. Blessings to Sherry, their children, and grandchildren. I am filled with gratitude for Shabbir's life of kindness and world service.

Here are a few highlights about Shabbir's remarkable life from the summary of his insightful memoir *Journey from Kamalpur*.

In *Journey from Kamalpur*, Shabbir Cheema traces his life, from growing up in a mud house in rural Pakistan—suffering a decade of sickness, poverty, and sectarian prejudice as a child and teenager—to becoming a leading scholar of and advocate for democratic governance at the United Nations, the U.S. State Department's East-West Center, and Harvard University.

In his compelling memoir, Cheema interweaves stories of his own struggles, perseverance, motivation, and self-realization, recounting the opportunities provided to him by the United States and Pakistan, and reconciling, as an immigrant, the cultural differences between his two worlds.

He discusses his life as a Muslim American after 9/11; the political turmoil in Pakistan and relations between the U.S. and Pakistan. He describes his efforts to give back by engaging in American public diplomacy programs in Iraq and Pakistan and in the United Nations initiatives to alleviate poverty, improve urban slums, and build democratic institutions in Asia, Africa, and the Arab region. He makes the case for continuing the struggle for social justice, good governance, and the rule of law.

I am forever grateful for working with Shabbir in UNDP for many years. In fact, it was Shabbir who invited me in 1990 as a UNDP Consultant and then as Principal Policy Advisor and later as Deputy Director. I learned so much from him about decentralization, urban development, democratic governance, and kindness in leadership.

Shabbir was the Director of the Governance Division of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a Senior Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School, and the Founding Director of the Asia-Pacific Governance and Democracy Initiative at the East-West Center.

He taught at the University of Hawaii, the Science University of Malaysia, and New York University; he also worked for the U.S. government's program on strengthening governance in Iraq and on initiatives to promote exchange and dialogue between American and Pakistani journalists.

He led the preparation of UNDP's first policy papers on governance, human rights, urbanization and anti-corruption. He was the Program Director of the UN Global Forum on Reinventing Government and the convener of the Harvard Kennedy School's Study Team of Eminent Scholars on Decentralisation. A featured speaker at global and regional forums, he was an adviser to a number of countries to strengthen governance, democracy, and urban management.

After I retired from UNDP, Shabbir asked me to consult for the East-West Center, UNDESA, and other international organizations. He graciously wrote recommendations for my books; and I wrote chapters for some of his books.

Shabbir was a best man at my wedding ceremony with Bonnie Myotai Treace. Bonnie and I attended his daughter's wedding, and visited his wife and him in Hawaii. We also visited each other's homes in New York and met in Vienna at a UN conference.

About a month ago, Shabbir called to tell me of his prognosis. Then recently, Sherry wrote me about his passing. I miss him very much—his smile, his voice, his wisdom, and his kindness. Deep gratitude for his life of care for family, colleagues, country, and the world. His wise words and deeds will continue to touch many lives.

Thank you, dear Shabbir, for the past thirty-five years of our friendship and our work together and for many precious memories.

Some of the best ways to honour Shabbir are to do what you can to strengthen and decentralise participatory democracy, support better urban management, help the urban poor, and be kind to everyone.

Aloha!

Honouring Kibbe Neal Fitzpatrick, UN Interpreter

A Life of Language, Travel, and Compassion

Kibbe Neal Fitzpatrick passed away peacefully on 9 December 2025, at the age of 90, following complications from a stroke. He was born on 29 March 1935, in New York City.

Kibbe was the son of Paul J. Fitzpatrick, founding Sports Editor of Newsweek magazine, and Dorothea D'Auby Kibbe. His maternal grandmother, Flora D'Auby Jenkins, founded New York City's first no-kill animal shelter in 1903, Bide-a-Wee, now known as Bideawee.

He was educated at Loyola, Allen-Stevenson, Pelham High School, and Kent School, where he graduated cum laude in 1953 and was a member of the tennis team. Kibbe went on to Yale University, majoring in Romance languages and serving as captain of the cross-country team. Following graduation in 1957, he joined the U.S. Navy and trained as an aircraft carrier pilot.

After his naval service, Kibbe traveled to Brussels, where he worked as a guide at the American Pavilion during the Brussels World's Fair. When the fair concluded, he traveled throughout Europe and then settled in Paris, spending three years working at the renowned perfumery Guerlain. These years reflect his lifelong interest in languages, travel and international life.

In 1962, Kibbe returned to New York and began a distinguished career with the United Nations as a simultaneous interpreter, translating from French and Spanish into English. A gifted linguist, he also spoke Italian, German, Russian,

and Mandarin Chinese fluently, and was conversant in several other languages. He served as a simultaneous interpreter at the UN until 1995 and continued as a freelance simultaneous interpreter at the UN until 2018.

An avid athlete, Kibbe had a lifelong passion for sports, particularly cross-country running, tennis, and golf. He competed in age-category cross-country races and achieved a national ranking in the 35-and-over tennis championship.

In 2020, Kibbe and his wife, Merrill Ashley—former principal dancer with the New York City Ballet—relocated to Naples, Florida, where they lived until his passing. He is survived by his beloved wife of 45 years and by his niece, Hope Astor. His two sisters, Diana D'Auby Fitzpatrick and Dorothea Riddell Nelson, predeceased him.

Services will be private. Donations in his memory may be made to Bideawee, honoring the family legacy of compassion for animals.